



Shafiuazzaman, head of corporate and large loan of Bank Asia, and ZA Zakir, chief financial officer of Gemcon Group, exchange signed documents at the former's corporate office in Dhaka on Wednesday for the bank to finance the group's suppliers in advance against approved invoices. Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of the bank, was present.

BANK ASIA

Huawei eyes smartphone supremacy this year after record 2018 sales

REUTERS, Beijing/Hong Kong

China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd on Thursday said it could become the world's biggest-selling smartphone vendor this year even without the US market and as global scrutiny of the firm intensifies.

The bullish forecast contrasts with those of market-leader Samsung and other rivals such as Apple Inc, both of which have flagged weakening sales in China - the largest smartphone market where demand has long been slowing, and where economic growth is at its lowest pace in nearly three decades.

It comes as the United States and its allies restrict market access for Huawei, alleging its products could be used by China for espionage. Huawei has said the allegation is unfounded.

Meanwhile, the firm's chief financial officer - the founder's daughter - has been arrested in Canada in relation to US sanctions violations. Huawei has denied wrongdoing.

"Our customers have trust and confidence in us," Richard Yu, Huawei's consumer division chief,



REUTERS

People arrive for a product presentation at a Huawei event in Beijing.

said at a new-product news conference in Beijing. "It's only politics guys which are trying to put pressure on us."

The maker of telecommunications equipment, spanning aerials to handsets, reported a 50 percent jump in consumer business revenue last year to in excess of \$52 billion. It said it aimed to keep the momentum with the launch next month of a foldable smartphone powered by its new fifth-generation

(5G) chipset.

The jump meant the consumer business accounted for 48 percent of total revenue, contributing more than Huawei's business for telecoms network providers for the first time.

"Even without the US market we will be number one in the world," Yu said, referring to Huawei's smartphone division, which shipped 208 million handsets last year. "I believe at the earliest this

year, and next year at the latest."

Worldwide smartphone shipments likely fell 3 percent last year, returning to low single-digit growth this year and through 2022, when 5G mobile network technology is likely to give the industry a boost, showed forecasts from consultancy IDC.

Yu said Huawei will launch the foldable phone at the Mobile World Congress next month with sales beginning in April at the earliest. He said its Balong 5000 chipset, a rival to Qualcomm Inc's Snapdragon X50, is the world's most powerful 5G modem and can be used in vehicles. The modem is also the first to support countries' differing 5G architecture, Huawei said.

Huawei uses its own chipsets in its high-end phones and servers but said it does not intend to become a standalone chip vendor to rival the likes of Qualcomm and Intel Corp.

Huawei also introduced a 5G base station chipset, dubbed Tiangang. Carrier business chief Ryan Ding said Huawei has won 30 5G contracts, including 18 in Europe, nine in the Middle East and three in the Asia-Pacific region.

US voices concern as India's e-commerce restrictions hit Amazon, Walmart

REUTERS, New Delhi/New York

The United States government is concerned about India's revised e-commerce regulations and has told officials in New Delhi the policy will hinder the Indian investment plans of Amazon.com and Walmart Inc, three sources familiar with the talks told Reuters.

The tussle marks the latest in a number of US protests over Indian government policies which impact American companies and comes at a time when the two countries are trying to iron out other trade irritants. In 2017, the US lodged a written protest against India's decision to cap medical device prices, which upset American companies.

India's e-commerce investment

rules, which kick in from Feb. 1, ban companies from selling products via firms in which they have an equity interest and also bar them from making deals with sellers to sell exclusively on their platforms.

The policy has dealt a blow to Walmart, which just last year invested \$16 billion in buying 77 percent of India's Flipkart, and Amazon, as it would force them to change their business structures in the country and raise their operational costs.

"There is a very strong undercurrent as to how this should be made a bilateral issue," said a Washington-based industry source aware of the companies' thinking.

"This has gone way beyond being a local (India) tussle."

A US government official earlier this

month told Indian officials to protect Walmart and Flipkart's investments in the country, an Indian trade ministry official told Reuters.

The US government cited "good relations" between the two countries and stressed that American companies should be given concessions in the larger interest of bilateral trade, but India gave a "non-committal" response, the source added.

But Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is unlikely to delay the revised rules or amend them in any meaningful way as he is seeking the support of the tens of millions of small retailers and traders in India ahead of a general election that must be held by May. The small firms see Walmart and Amazon as a threat to their businesses.



IFIL

Anis Salahuddin Ahmad, vice chairman of Islamic Finance and Investment Ltd (IFIL), and AZM Saleh, CEO, pose with a "Most Innovative Shariah Compliant Financial Institution - Bangladesh" award presented by UK-based finance magazine International Finance at International Finance Award 2018 in Dubai recently.

French private sector activity at 4-year low

AFP, Paris

French private sector business activity fell to a four-year low in January, a provisional indicator released Thursday by the IHS Markit group showed, amid protracted anti-government "yellow vest" protests.

A reading of the sector as a whole fell to an indexed 47.9 points from 48.7 the previous month, an IHS statement said, marking the biggest contraction in activity in more than four years.

Any figure below 50 indicates a decline in business activity, and January was hit in particular by a drop in the service sector amid recurrent protests by the "yellow vest" movement against government reforms and the globalised French economy.

It was the latest sign that economic clouds have gathered over France, where growth has slowed markedly in recent months and is expected to reach just 1.5 percent for 2018 according to the central bank, after 2.2 percent in 2017.



EXIM BANK

Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director of Exim Bank, opens an authorised dealer branch at its Garib-E-Newaz branch in the capital's Uttara on Tuesday.

Most EU trade deals to be replicated by Brexit day: minister

REUTERS, London

Britain expects that it will have most of the agreements it needs to replicate existing trade deals between the European Union and third countries ready by the end of March, trade department minister George Hollingbery said on Thursday.

With just over two months until March 29 Brexit day, parliament is at an impasse over how and even whether

Britain should leave the world's biggest trading bloc, increasing the risk of a no-deal exit with no provisions to soften the economic shock.

The government has said it hopes to roll over around 40 EU free-trade agreements with third countries by the time Britain leaves the bloc.

It has said it has reached continuity agreements with Switzerland and Israel as well as mutual recognition agreements with Australia and New

Zealand, but Hollingbery said the government had not yet formally signed any free trade deals.

"I believe that the majority of those will be in place by March 29," he told parliament.

"Some of them are challenging, one or two are even more than challenging - they are close to impossible," he added, citing Turkey as one such difficult country as it is part of a customs union with the European Union.

From bait to plate: blockchain platform tracks food's journey

REUTERS, Sydney

With a scan of their smartphones, consumers can now track the journey of their fish meal to ensure it's a legal, ethical and sustainable product.

OpenSC, a global digital platform developed in Australia, allows users to scan QR codes with a smartphone camera to see where the product came from, when and how it was produced and follow its journey along the supply chain.

Launched by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and investment firm BCG Digital Ventures, it uses blockchain technology that records information such as the movement of the product and details of its storage.

This makes available accurate information on supply chains, enabling consumers to seek sustainable, ethical and fair products from companies, its developers said.

"What the OpenSC platform does is it democratizes that information," Paul Hunyor, Managing Director of BCG Digital Ventures, told Reuters Television.

"What is the journey that the food that they're consuming has been on? Where was it caught? How can they verify the location?" he added.



REUTERS

A worker smells yellowfin tuna meat sample for its freshness at a fish port in General Santos city in southern Philippines.

Blockchain technology makes use of a database of records shared across a network that constantly checks record details to ensure any changes can be seen across the whole network.

OpenSC evolved from a WWF-led project that used blockchain to track tuna caught in the Pacific Ocean. BCG Digital Ventures was brought in to help build the platform.

The platform is now tracking fish and the developers expect to add other seafood this year. OpenSC is also in commercial discussions with potential partners on commodities such as palm oil and timber, a WWF spokesman said. The platform was launched on Jan. 17 at the Aria restaurant of famous Australian chef Matt Moran in Sydney. Guests were able to track the journey of their lunch - fillets of Patagonian toothfish - from bait to plate.

Microsoft says Bing has been blocked in China. OpenSC-tracked food will be served on Thursday to business leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

"This will enable business leaders to sit down for a meal at Davos and have full transparency of where their food has come from," the WWF said in a statement.

Business Development Conference 2019

Chief Guest:
Alhaji Abdus Samad Labu
Chairman, Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd.

Presided by:
Farman R Chowdhury
Managing Director & CEO
Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd.

Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dhaka.
Date: 23 January 2019, at 09.00 am

Business Development Conference 2019

Abdus Samad Labu, chairman of Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited (AIBL), attends the bank's Annual Business Development Conference 2019 at the Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka on Wednesday. Farman R Chowdhury, CEO, was present.

AIBL



BARI

Abul Kalam Azad, director general of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), receives a crest on behalf of the institution from Aminul Islam, chairman of METAL, an agro-mechanisation and agribusiness group, and Sadid Jamil, managing director, at METAL's biennial conference 2019 at Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka recently.