Al Mulla Motors aftersales team bags 'Best Customer Satisfaction Performance Award'

Maseelah Trading Co honored during Mitsubishi Aftersales conference

KUWAIT: Maseelah Trading Company SPC (MTC), the authorized distributor for Mitsubishi vehicles in the State of Kuwait is proud to announce the achievement of Best Customer Satisfaction (CS) Performance Award. They were honored with the Best CS award during recent Annual Mitsubishi Aftersales conference held in Dubai for their commitment and hard work towards delivering premium Aftersales care to customers and demonstrating highest standards of Customer Excellence to guarantee exceptional service rendered throughout the year to their valued customers.

The award was aimed at Highest Quality of service activities, which improved in the Customer satisfaction and Increased Retention rate of customers during FY18.

The award was presented by Takahashi Masahiko, who is the President of Mitsubishi Motors Middle East Africa with presence of other senior managers from Mitsubishi Motors Company Japan. MTC lives by its dynamic motto - which is to ensure the best experience possible through passion and innovation in everything they do. Each year, the home grown brand supports evolving market needs and demands by empowering its employees with modern, international best practices and up-to-date training exercises to maintain overall Customer satisfaction.

New trade tensions as US imposes tariffs on Mexican tomatoes

MEXICO CITY: The United States imposed tariffs on Mexican tomatoes on Tuesday, adding to tensions between the two neighbors just as debate deepens over their new-but not yet ratified-trade deal with Canada. The 17.5-percent tariffs came into effect after the countries failed to renew an agreement that suspended a US anti-dumping investigation first opened 23 years ago. The US Commerce Department said Tuesday that negotiations to revise the agreement would continue. "We remain optimistic that there will be a negotiated solution," US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said in a statement.

The tariffs could ultimately be blocked should an independent body, the US International Trade Commission, find that no US industry has been harmed by Mexico's alleged dumping of tomatoes on the US market. Mexico, which supplies half the fresh tomatoes consumed in the United States, estimated the tariffs would cost its exporters more than $350 million a year.

"We expect many small and medium-sized exporters will find it impossible to cope with this heavy cost," the economy ministry said in a statement, expressing its "disappointment and concern."

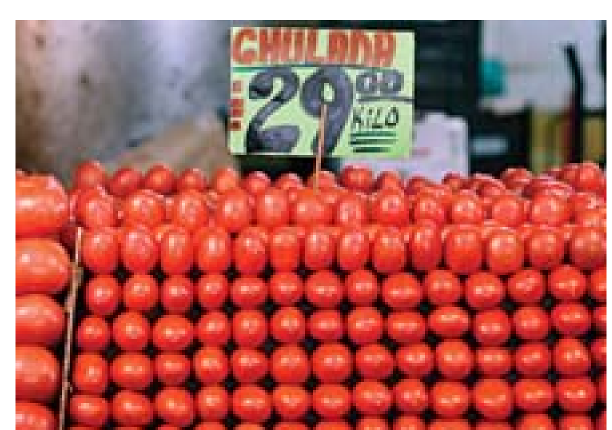
The Mexican tomato growers' association denied dumping. Its vice president, Manuel Antonio Cazares, told AFP the industry would take a "heavy hit" from the tariffs, and predicted US consumers would also pay a price. The United States opened an anti-dumping investigation against Mexico over tomatoes in 1996, but had repeatedly suspended it-and the tariffs that come with it-under a series of deals.

President Donald Trump's administration said in March the two sides had failed to renew the deal and that the tariffs would come into force.

Mexico exported around $2 billion of tomatoes to the United States last year-its third-largest agricultural export to the United States, after beer and avocados.

Trade tension is rising again between the two countries as their legislatures prepare to open debate on ratifying the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the updated version of the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Trump, who regularly criticized NAFTA as the worst deal ever signed by the United States, faces a battle with opposition Democrats in the House, who have criticized the deal for not doing enough to protect US jobs by improving labor conditions and wages in Mexico. Mexico, which sends more than 80 percent of its exports to the United States, is for its part unhappy with Trump's tariffs on its steel and aluminum exports, and his threat to impose 25-percent tariffs on its auto exports over what he sees as a "crisis" of illegal immigrants and drugs crossing the border. —AFP



Tomatoes are Mexico's third biggest agricultural export to the US after beer and avocados. —AFP

Turkey's economic rebound will be 'gradual': EBRD

LONDON: Turkey's troubled economy will contract one percent this year before a "gradual" rebound, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development forecast yesterday.

"Turkey's recovery from an expected 1.0 percent economic contraction in 2019 is likely to be gradual," the London-based EBRD said in a report at the opening of its annual conference in Sarajevo.

"The lira's depreciation and (Turkey's) high interest rates will continue to dampen consumption and investment, although net exports should make a positive contribution to growth," said the bank founded in 1991 to help former Soviet bloc countries switch to free-market economies.

"Growth of around 2.5 percent is expected in 2020" for Turkey, added the EBRD, which now invests also in countries including Turkey, Jordan and Morocco. The EBRD added that economic growth across all of its regions "of investment is broadly expected to track the global economy lower in 2019, before a likely upturn in 2020, when Turkey should return to positive territory".

The bank's latest economic outlook revised down predictions for 2019 — the EBRD now expecting average growth of 2.3 percent from a November forecast of 2.6-percent expansion.

The "downward revision to overall growth forecasts primarily reflects the expected slowdown in Turkey" it said, adding that overall growth across EBRD regions of investment should recover to 2.6 percent in 2020. Turkey slipped into recession for the first time in a decade last year following a sharp currency crisis that sent inflation soaring into double digits and hit Turkish households hard.

Its currency, the lira, is being hit once more by political upheaval in the country.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday welcomed an order to re-run the recent Istanbul election, a move the opposition has branded an attack on democracy. His ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost the mayorship of Turkey's biggest city by a narrow margin and has refused to accept defeat. —AFP

German industrial production lifts its head in March

FRANKFURT: Industrial production in Europe's largest economy Germany ticked up in March, official data showed yesterday, suggesting some lightening of the gloom that has fallen over Europe's largest economy. Output added 0.5 percent month-on-month, federal statistics authority Destatis said in figures adjusted for price, seasonal and calendar effects, although the measure remained 0.9 percent lower than a year before. Looking to different industrial sectors, manufacturers of capital goods reported steady performance compared with February, while producer goods makers added 0.4 percent and consumer goods firms 1.1 percent. Energy production rose 0.3 percent and construction output 1.0 percent. In a separate statement, the economy ministry in Berlin noted that industrial production had risen 0.5 percent quarter-on-quarter between January and March. —AFP

China's exports fall ahead of crucial trade talks

BEIJING: China's exports fell more than expected in April while imports rose, official data showed yesterday ahead of high-stakes talks aimed at resolving a trade war with the United States.

The world's two leading economies face a possible make-or-break moment when top negotiators meet in Washington this week following months of fraught talks. US President Donald Trump has upped the ante with plans to more than double tariffs on $200 billion in Chinese goods on Friday, the last day of a two-day visit by President Xi Jinping's point man Vice Premier Liu He.

The trade war has battered shipments between the economic giants. In April China's exports across the Pacific fell 13.2 percent from a year earlier, while imports from the US fell 25.7 percent, according to the data from China's customs administration. The politically sensitive trade surplus with the US remained large, widening to $21 billion last month from $20.5 billion in March. Last year it hit a record $323.3 billion.

Global markets have taken a beating this week as investors grow increasingly concerned that the China-US trade deal, which last week appeared all but ready to sign, could fall through.

US negotiators accused Beijing of reneging on commitments made during months of talks focusing on clamping down on theft of US technology and reducing China's massive subsidies.

"If Trump's threat becomes reality, it will be a game changer for the global economy," said Steve Cochrane, chief APAC economist at Moody's Analytics, adding the worst-case scenario would result in a US recession and a rapid reduction of growth in China. Tepid global demand for China's goods have heightened the risk for Beijing, which posted 6.4 percent economic growth in the first quarter, having decelerated every quarter last year.

'Downbeat prospects'

China's exports to the world sank 2.7 percent on-year last month while imports rose 4.0 percent, producing a trade surplus of $13.8 billion. Economists polled by Bloomberg had expected a 3.0 percent rise in exports with imports projected to fall 2.1 percent.

"Today's exports data support our view that there is real risk of double dip in growth, and Beijing cannot afford to stop easing yet," said Lu Ting, an economist at Nomura bank.

"With the rapid escalation of the trade conflict with the US, we believe Beijing will likely step up easing measures again," he wrote in a note. Beijing has moved to jumpstart its cooling economy this year with massive tax cuts and fee reductions, and a targeted reduction in the amount of cash that small and medium-sized banks must hold in reserve announced on Monday.

But the central bank has yet to cut interest rates. In March China's exports unexpectedly jumped 14.2 percent, and analysts caution it is difficult to compare trends at the start of the year owing to the Chinese New Year holiday, which fell in February. Over the first four months of the year China's exports rose only 0.2 percent on-year while imports dropped 2.5 percent, both down from the final quarter of last year.

"Even if a last-minute deal is struck this week to avoid further tariffs, the downbeat prospects for global growth will probably mean that export growth remains subdued," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics.

Data last week showed China's factory activity softened in April, with the new export orders sub-index rising from March, but remaining in contraction territory. —AFP

SHANGHAI: This general view shows the interior of a shopping mall in central Shanghai yesterday. —AFP

How US-China talks differ from any other trade deal

WASHINGTON: Chinese Vice Premier Liu He goes to Washington for trade talks today and tomorrow, setting up a last-ditch bid for progress toward a deal that would avoid a sharp increase in tariffs on Chinese goods ordered by US President Donald Trump.

US officials have accused China of reneging in the past week on substantial commitments made during months of negotiations to end their trade war, prompting Trump to set a new deadline to raise tariffs on $200 billion worth of Chinese goods to 25 percent, from 10 percent.

The higher tariffs will take effect at 12:01 a.m. EDT (0401 GMT) on Friday, a spokesman for the US Trade Representative's office said. That comes right in the middle of Liu's visit. Differences over the enforcement mechanism for a trade deal and a timeline for tariff removal have been sticking points.

Here is a breakdown of the issues unique to the two-way talks:

Will a deal end the threat of tariffs on Chinese goods?

Not likely.

The United States has not made public any offers to lift tariffs, though Washington let slide a scheduled March 2 tariff increase on $200 billion worth of Chinese goods. But after accusations of China back-pedaling on commitments, Trump on Sunday made his threat to raise tariffs again this Friday.

US officials see the continuing threat of tariffs as the "teeth" in any agreement. The United States says Chinese companies have coerced their US partners into improperly transferring proprietary technology - an accusation Beijing strongly denies.

A demand for frequent compliance reviews reflects frustration among US officials who have complained that China has failed to follow through on past commitments to implement free-market reforms.

How does that differ from a normal trade negotiation?

Traditional free trade agreements aim to lower trade barriers between the countries signing them. These trade deals are built on the assumption that the parties will adhere to the terms of the agreement, with the benefit being increased trade and export opportunities within the free trade zone.

The Trump administration imposed new tariffs on Chinese goods to try to force changes in China's trade, subsidy and intellectual property practices - similar to financial sanctions that the United States has imposed on foreign entities to increase pressure on their governments for changes in behavior or policies.

Such sanctions are typically lifted only after the desired changes are verified by the US Treasury Department.

How are traditional trade agreements enforced?

Many free trade deals have built-in dispute settlement mechanisms for state-to-state disagreements over rule compliance, disputes between private investors and governments, or allegations of unfair anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties. Arbitration panels often hear arguments from both sides, operating like a court.

Canada, for example, has brought challenges to US anti-subsidy duties on softwood lumber before panels set up under NAFTA's Chapter 19, a mechanism that would be continued if the new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) if ratified. If Mexico fails to implement effective labor reforms, the United States and Canada could seek redress through arbitration. But critics, including many Democrats in Congress, argue that this enforcement mechanism is weak and largely untested.

Can't countries seek relief at the world trade organization?

The WTO's 164 members can challenge each other over unwarranted trade restrictions, illegal subsidies and other unfair practices and seek resolution through dispute settlement panels. But this process is seen as slow, and its decisions too easy for countries to ignore.

The United States has argued that the WTO has failed to rein in China's unfair practices, so it has acted on its own to force change in China.

The WTO's appellate body also could grind to a halt this year as Washington is currently blocking the appointment of judges. Because three judges are needed to rule on appeals, the system could break down when two judges' terms expire in December 2019.

Can countries just quit trade deals they don't like?

Yes, most trade pacts have provisions for termination, but this has never been tested by the United States. President Trump frequently threatened to quit NAFTA during negotiations last year, and his administration has considered issuing a six-month withdrawal notice as a tactic to pressure Congress into approving the trade deal that would replace it.

But some US lawmakers and legal experts argue that Trump may not have authority to quit the agreement without Congress' approval because the US Constitution grants Congress explicit power to regulate commerce with foreign nations. Any move to quit NAFTA is likely to draw a court challenge. —Reuters