BRUSSELS — Demand for high-quality LCD panels remains high despite the economic crisis, especially in emerging markets such as China, but also in Europe, one of the largest overseas markets for Sharp.

To cater to market demand, the company is bringing forward the start of production in the first 10th-generation LCD panel factory in Sakai, Japan, by five months to October 2009.

Under construction in Japan in Sakai near Osaka since the end of 2007, this modern production centre will be the first of the tenth generation, capable of processing LCD motherglass panels in a size of 8.7 square metres (2,880 mm x 3,130 mm). This makes these motherglass panels 60 percent larger than those in Sharp’s current eighth-generation LCD plant, Kameyama II. Such large motherglass panels can be used to manufacture, for example six 60-inch or eight 50-inch LCD panels.

According to figures published by market research company iSuppli, global demand for display components and monitors for out-of-home use as electronic posters and billboards, adverts in stations and airports, and traffic and visitor management systems and so on will increase threefold over the next four years to more than 20 million units. Sharps extensive portfolio of e-signage displays, including the new 108-inch and 82-inch formats matching characteristic dimensions of billboards and CityLight posters positions the company well to profit substantially from this development. The G10 factory in Sakai is the key to the highly efficient production of LCDs for this growth market.

A further advantage of the G10 factory in Sakai is that the production of small- and medium-sized LCD panels can be transferred to the modern Kameyama plants. This shift in production means that displays for mobile, automotive and industrial applications can be manufactured even more efficiently with a further enhancement in quality.

"Business with LCDs and other electronic components makes up around one-third of Sharp’s sales. The construction of the G10 factory and the Shift in production are essential to remain competitive in the components' business as well", explains Maximilian Huber, President of Sharp Microelectronics Europe the significance of the new plant.

In addition to the new state-of-the-art LCD factory, the 1.27-million-square-metre Manufacturing Complex for the 21st Century in Sakai will also house suppliers for the whole production process and infrastructure. The company also claims that CO2 emissions will be avoided as far as possible, and a resource-friendly, energy-efficient production operation will be guaranteed.

For further information visit www.sharpsme.com.

Sharp advances production at first 10th-generation LCD factory

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