

Incepta becomes GP's corporate

client

Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd has signed an agreement with GrameenPhone Limited under its corporate sales package initiative, says a press release.

Abdul Muktadir, managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Mehboob Chowdhury, director of Sales and Marketing Division of GrameenPhone, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations in the

recently Intekhab Mahmud, AGM, Marketing, and Hasan Md Zahid, head of Corporate Sales, were present at the signing ceremony.

Other senior officials of both organisations were also present on the occasion.

Under the agreement, Incepta Pharmaceuticals has been provided with GP mobile phone connections. It is now using these mobiles to maintain its distribution network throughout the country. It will be provided with data services to have online facilities within their network.

Subscription to the GP Corporate package will also significantly reduce Incepta Pharmaceutical's inter-district communication cost and many of its services will become more efficient

Mergers in Japan hit record high AFP, Tokyo

The number of mergers and acquisitions in Japan jumped 25.2 per cent last year to 2.244, setting a new high for the fifth consecutive year, a research institute said Friday.

"M and As in Japan increased due to the aggressive business portfolio restructuring that Japanese companies undertook. said Financial Research Centre, a research unit of Japan's largest broker Nomura Securities.

predicted that war against Irag could Mergers and acquisitions further set back economic recovery. between Japanese companies surged 30.4 per cent to 1,881 deals, last year is expected to continue

the research centre said. throughout the first half of 2003 and There were 252 acquisitions of pick up only in the second half, with foreign companies by Japanese growth for the full year hitting 2.75 firms, a rise of 6.3 per cent, but per cent, the UN department of Economic and Social Affairs said in purchases by foreign firms of Japanese companies fell 2.6 per its latest forecast. cent to 111.

That is slightly below the 2.9 per cent annual growth rate it forecast "While some sectors, such as ITtelecommunications saw a just three months ago. The world economy grew at a tepid 1.7 per decrease in deals, other sectors such as food and construction cent rate in 2002, the department said in its latest forecast, entitled showed increases." the research

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Tea prices in local market have marked a steep rise, thanks to increase in internal demand. Tea growers are making maxisaid

mum profit in the current season as prices picked up beyond expectation, said Feroz Ahmed, chairman of Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB) "But the export flow of tea is

affected due to the unusual rise in the prices in the auction markets here. The price of Bangladeshi tea now is so high that it does not match any other international market price," TTAB chairman said, adding that as a result export inquiry for

REUTERS, United Nations

The slow pace of growth seen

tion is growing at the rate of 20 per cent a vear

The internal buyers for home AQI Chowdhury, who is also general manager of British-owned market are taking tea from the auctions at higher prices, keeping company James Finlay Ltd which the foreign buyers at bay, Feroz has 20 tea gardens, informed his company is earning much better this "Besides, less quantity of tea is

Tea soars on local demand

Bangladeshi tea has declined

price spiral," he added.

GrameenPhone

deal, Incepta Pharmaceutical has become GrameenPhone's corporate client

Chowdhury said it is really a good

sign that prices pick up these days.

should invest more money for more

development of gardens to increase

production as internal tea consump-

Chowdhury also said growers

put on auction as it is exported or time despite production fall. supplied to local market directly Brokers and traders said internal from the gardens, contributing to the consumption of tea has suddenly increased centering the upcoming union parishad elections and winter Former chairman of Bangladesh Tea Growers Association AQI season

In the last auction, which is 36th of the season, held on Tuesday, overall average price rose to Tk 77 a kg, with only one per cent withdrawal rate, out of 25,324 packages offered for sale

In the previous 35th auction, the average price was recorded at Tk 72 a kg, with withdrawal rate of over one per cent out of 27, 473 pack-

Only some three months ago, the average price was around Tk 60 per kg with an overall withdrawal rate of over 20 per cent, market sources said.

According to official reports, in the last 11 months from January to November of the year 2002, the country in its 156 gardens produced 48 million kg of tea, 5 million kg down from the corresponding period of the previous year.



PHOTO: BANGLADESH TEA ASSOCIATION

Wahidul Haque, chairman of Bangladesh Tea Association, exchanges documents with M A Motin, president of Bangladesh Tea Estate Staff Association, after signing a bilateral agreement on behalf of their two sides in the city on Tuesday. Under the deal, salaries of the Staff Association members will be increased by 6.75 per cent for the first year and 0.25 per cent for the next year. Other financial benefits will also be increased accordingly

India doubles India mulls buffer oil mutual funds ceiling in overseas firms AFP, New Delhi AFP, New Delhi

Indian Finance Minister Jaswant Singh Friday doubled the amount

"The overall cap of such fund nvestments in overseas companies is one billion dollars," Singh told an audience of non-resident Indians in New Delhi

permitted to invest in companies Abdul Muktadir, managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Mehboob Chowdhury, director of Sales and Marketing Division of GrameenPhone, sign an agreement on behalf of their respective sides in the city recently. Under the which were listed on stock exchanges abroad and which hold a stake of at least 10 per cent stake in any listed Indian company.

Singh said the government had UN cuts world growth forecast also decided to encourage overseas investments by Indian individuals

"Indians can invest in overseas companies which are listed on stock exchanges abroad and which have 10 per cent shareholding in a company listed on Indian stock exchanges," he said at the threeday Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Day).

Indian companies will also be permitted to acquire properties abroad for offices and housing staff he said.

"Indian companies can also retain their proceeds generated from American depository receipts and global depository receipts."

The reforms were aimed at boosting economic growth as the rupee rises against the dollar and foreign exchange reserves increase

Singh also said the present limits on trade-related loans and

reserves, says PM led invasion of Iraq, which has Vajpayee said it was important heightened concerns about a disthat the existing "energy resource

ruption in oil supplies as well as a rise in prices of fuel in India According to oil ministry officials, India keeps about 10-12 days of

crude stocks. India currently imports 70 per cent of its requirement of oil and petroleum products -- most of it from the Middle East and particularly Irad.

India's state-run oil firms last week were forced to increase the price of petrol and diesel by one rupee (two US cents) a litre following a rise in global oil prices.

The projected requirement in India for the year to March 2003 is 108 million tonnes of crude oil compared with production of 33 million tonnes. Consumption of natural gas is expected to be 55 million tonnes compared with production of 24 million tonnes.

age of crude oil and petroleum Vajpayee urged the domestic oil buffer for meeting unforeseen sector to increase production, without which he said "the nation would be subject to volatility in crude oil supplies and prices and oil security would be difficult to achieve."

He also urged private domestic and foreign players to cooperate with India in the hydrocarbon technology sector

BoJ to take bolder steps

news for international consumers. On Wednesday Naik said he would petition OPEC for an output hike as oil prices have leapt to 32 dollars a barrel this month from 19 dollars last February. OPEC president Abdulla Bin Hamed Al Attiyah of Qatar, in New Delhi for the petroleum meet, said

gap between the developing and

speaking at the same conference

said he hoped that a meeting of the

Organisation of Petroleum

Exporting Countries (OPEC) in

Vienna on Sunday would bring good

developed countries" be bridged. Indian Oil Minister Ram Naik,

Thursday that the organisation's meeting in Vienna this weekend would consider India's request for concessional pricing of crude oil for developing countries.

OPEC oil ministers head to Vienna this weekend to discuss proposals spearheaded by Saudi Arabia for the cartel to raise output to help calm a market roiled by a strike in Venezuela and a possible war in Iraq

will grow at a respectable 6.25 per cent rate this year after just 1.9 per With 2003 barely a week old, UN cent growth in 2002, the United forecasters Thursday revised Nations said. That is significantly downward their global economic stronger than the 5.7 per cent foregrowth forecast for the year and

cast for 2003 issued in October. While the possibility of war in Iraq has already damaged growth prospects by creating uncertainty, denting consumer confidence and driving up oil prices, "an escalation into military action would have even more profound negative economic consequences," the latest UN forecast said.

The extent of the damage would depend on how a military campaign unrolled and how long it lasted, it said

US president George W. Bush, who favors a "regime change" in has threatened to disarm Irad

The report said the US economy, the world's largest, would likely remain the locomotive of global growth for a large number of countries this year and predicted it would continue to lead the global recovery, but without decisive momentum."

Weak domestic demand in Western Europe and Japan would again leave those economies heavily reliant on external demand for growth, it said.

While Australia, Canada and New Zealand fared better than other wealthy nations last year, "some moderation in their growth is expected as well," it said.

The transitional economies of Eastern Europe will grow at a respectable 4 per cent this year while developing countries includwhich domestic mutual funds could nvest in overseas companies. He said the funds would be

centre said.

"The increase in M and A deals involving Japanese companies seemed to be slowing down from the second half of 2000 but in 2002 deals regained their momentum."

"More sectors have become involved in deals, both in strengthening businesses and in restructuring, and a wide range of schemes are being used.'

The centre forecast the number of mergers in Japan would increase again this year as the government plans to revise regulations on mergers as part of an effort to reform the troubled economy.

"Particularly in 2003, new policies, such as the introduction of the Industrial Revitalisation Law are expected to create new opportunities for M and A deals, which should help maintain the current trend," it

Aventis sales confce held

An annual sales conference of Aventis (Aventis Limited, Hoechst Marion Roussel Limited and Fisons Bangladesh Limited) was held at a city hotel on Thursday, says a press release

AKM Shamsuddin, managing director of Aventis, inaugurated the conference.

Sales and marketing executives of the company from all over Bangladesh attended the conference

In his speech, Shamsuddin appreciated the medical-marketing and sales executives for their team efforts in popularising Clexane as an initial therapy and convenient treatment option in the management of unstable Angina and MI, Taxotere as a first line therapy in cancer management, Amaryl as the third generation sulfonylurea in diabetic care and Actonel for the prevention of osteoporosis.

M Nasiruddin Ahmed, director of Primary Care Business, and Afsar Uddin Ahmed, director of Chronic Care Business, also spoke.

Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed, head of Human Resources, Md Mortoza Ali Khan, head of Supply Chain, M Shafiqul Alam, director of Finance & IT, and Abu Nayeem Saifur Rahman, director of Industrial Operations, were also present in the conference.

"World Economic Situation and Prospects 2003." World trade, on the other hand, Council resolutions

ing many in Africa will expand by by force if Baghdad does not act on 4.25 per cent, it predicted its own to comply with UN Security

advances by export earners and foreign currency account holders would be discontinued.

Russian oil boom unlikely to help curb rising price any way possible," Energy Minister

Kuwaiti and Iranian officials.

with three million bpd in 2001.

However "Russia's potential to

step in and supply more oil is lim-

ited," Stephen O'Sullivan, an ana-

lyst with the UFG investment group

A K M Shamsuddin, managing director of Aventis Limited, speaks at the annual sales confer-

after Saudi Arabia.

crude output hit 379.6 million tonnes

(7.59 million barrels a day) in 2002,

confirming the country's standing as

AFP, Moscow

Russian oil production has returned to levels not seen for a decade and crude exports last year beat all records, but Moscow's ability to contribute to a lowering of world prices remains limited, experts said ahead of a key OPEC meeting.

Some OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) members, including the world's biggest exporter Saudi Arabia, are willing to boost production in order to stabilise oil prices that have remained above the 28 dollar per barrel level for several weeks as a result of uncertainty over Iraq and

Venezuela. The oil cartel is holding a special meeting in Vienna on Sunday to discuss the situation and Russia. though not a member, has promised to do what it can to help.

said "Russia has no spare production "We are prepared to cooperate in capacity and typically uses almost

ence of the company held at a city hotel on Thursday.

all its export capacity," he noted. Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Igor Yusufov said during a visit to the Gulf where he held talks with Saudi, Khristenko announced recently that Russia planned to produce more Following a rise in production for than 415 million tonnes (8.3 million the fourth successive year, Russian bpd) of oil in 2003.

This target could however be hampered by "the inadequacy of the country's oil export infrastructure," the world's second-ranked producer Kakha Kiknavelidze of the Troika Dialog bank said.

Exports from Russia totalled "There will be no improvement 156.6 million tonnes (3.13 million until 2004, with the launch of the bpd), the highest level since the second stage of the Baltic Pipeline collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, System and the start of shipments according to provisional figures through the Adria reversed pipeline' from the energy ministry, compared to the Croatian port of Omisalj, he said

Russia has pondered numerous plans to increase export sales in recent years, but these require time to be put into effect and Russia. unlike Saudi Arabia, has no means of reacting rapidly to curb a rise in world oil prices.

Mideast set to boost oil output AFP, Cairo

> Middle Eastern oil countries came out this week in favor of an oil output hike when OPEC meets Sunday, to make up for Venezuela's lost production and to appease a tense market that also fears a US-led war on Iraq.

Top exporter Saudi Arabia said it favored an increase to bring down prices that had risen recently over 30 dollars a barrel because of worries that the Venezuelan strike might not end before war is launched against Iraq.

The two crises could deprive world oil markets of a combined five million barrels per day (bpd) of crude.

"The price has risen, and there should consequently be an increase in production," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said Tuesday

Experts expect OPEC to boost production by between one and two million bpd in order to attenuate the impact of the 40-day old strike in Venezuela, which has removed 3 million bpd from the market.

US State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday Washington had told OPEC members an increase would be "positive."

Venezuela accounts for around 13 per cent of US oil imports. The strike has caused US oil stocks to fall at a time when Washington needs them to increase as it prepares for a possible war on Iraq.

Kuwait's acting oil minister, Sheikh Ahmed Fahad al-Ahmed, said Wednesday an OPEC output increase of one million bpd would be 'reasonable and sufficient to stabilise the markets.'

The additional oil to be pumped is crucial, as producing nations that are not members of the cartel are already running at full capacity.

to prop up economy

AFP, Tokyo

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) could take more radical action to boost the ailing economy such as setting an inflation target, Financial Services and Economy Minister Heizo Takenaka said Friday.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee

said Friday India was considering

counter potential disturbances in

supplies of crude oil, particularly

"Crude oil prices may shoot up if

tensions in West Asia (the Middle

East) rise, leading to a prolonged

shortage of supplies in the world oil

market," Vajpayee told an interna-

tional petroleum conference in the

national economy. Recent develop-

ments have already affected oil

to occupy a key position in the

present policy matrix of our govern-

ment. We are examining the feasi-

bility of establishing strategic stor-

products in our country to create a

disturbances and strengthening

Vajpayee said the "security of

His remarks come against the

supplies has become one of the

most important challenges that

backdrop of the possibility of a US-

needs to be carefully addressed".

ndia's oil security.

markets and sent prices upwards.

"This may adversely affect our

"Therefore oil security has come

from the Middle East.

Indian capital

creating strategic oil reserves to

Central bank governor Masaru Hayami, who is opposed to such moves, is due to resign in March and many investors are hoping the government will replace him with someone more willing to take bold measures to ease monetary policy.

Takenaka said he expressed his

view of the need for stronger monetary easing at a meeting on Thursday with head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's tax panel, Hideyuki Aizawa, and party policy chief, Taro Aso.

"I said at the meeting that setting an inflation target would be an effective way to increase money supply, as would ETF purchases, he said, referring to exchangetraded funds that follow stock indi-

"However, the government should not interfere with the BoJ's decision-making process," he

Asked about the US economy following the announcement of a 10year, 674-billion-dollar economic plan by President George W. Bush, Takenaka said: "The US government is taking a very drastic policy. After that, it is unthinkable the US economy will decline in the shortterm."

However, he noted that he has to consider cautiously whether or not the US stimulus package would lead to an increase in the fiscal deficit there

Bid to improve corporate governance US panel for separation of chairman, CEO posts

AFP, New York

A US business panel set up to help improve corporate governance and restore trust in companies said Thursday that firms should separate the functions of chairman and chief executive

The Conference Board's blueribbon Commission on Public Trust and Private Enterprise made the recommendation as part of a series of reforms to improve corporate management, auditing and accounting practices in the wake of the Enron scandal

The panel was co-chaired by John Snow, who has been chairman and CEO of rail giant CSX Corporation and was tapped last month by President George W. Bush as his nominee for treasury secretary.

The report said several structures could be considered to maintain an independent chairman of a company's board of directors. whose role may be different than those of a chief executive officer.

"The Commission, noting that no single board structure has vet been demonstrated to be superior in

providing the oversight that leads to corporate success, recommends three alternative board structures, all of them a break from the tradition that most American corporations follow," the panel said in a statement

One possibility is to simply have two separate individuals serving as chief executive, who manages the firm, and chairman, who oversees management

The panel said that if the chairman is not "independent," a "lead independent director" should be appointed.

"It is essential that non-CEO chairmen not have any relationships with the CEO or management that compromises their ability to act independently," the report said.

Another alternative where boards do not choose to separate the chairman and CEO positions, or where they are in transition, would be to name a "presiding director' from the board.

"Regardless of which alternative is chosen, the commission recommends that the independent chairman, lead independent director or the presiding director should have

ultimate approval over the information flow that goes to the board, board meeting agendas, and board meeting schedules," the report said. "The commission encourages

frequent, regular meetings of the non-management directors.

If companies choose not to adopt any of these three approaches "they should explain their reasons and how the board structure they use achieves strong, independent

board leadership," the report said. In addition to these changes, the panel also recommended that boards be composed of a "substantial majority" of independent directors rather than from management. The group also recommended

that a committee of the board oversee ethics issues, including how to deal with "whistleblowers." In addition, the panel called for a

'strong internal audit function" and outside auditors who "confine their activities to auditing" -- a reaction to Enron's use of Arthur Andersen as both a consultant and audit firm.