

Indian political parties demand ban on foreign tobacco firms

NEW DELHI, Dec 20: Indian political parties today demanded a ban on letting foreign tobacco firms set up fully-owned companies here, arguing multinationals were trying to make inroads due to shrinking markets elsewhere, reports AFP.

K R Malkani, a member of the ruling BJP party, told the upper house of parliament that the 260-billion-dollar global tobacco industry was eyeing India after gradually losing its markets in the West.

Malkani said foreign firms were trying to attract women and young people to smoking through new brands and "hook them on to this cancer-prone addiction."

He said the companies were trying to "expand their activities" in India, Japan, Ukraine, the Philippines and South Korea.

"They are now planning to extend the market to India and China by concentrating on the vulnerable youth and women."

he said, calling for a ban on the unlimited entry of foreign tobacco companies into India.

He also demanded a ban on celebrity cigarette advertising, surrogate advertising under which tobacco companies sponsor different sports events to promote their products and called for a statutory warning on cigarette packets to be displayed prominently and in bold letters.

Malkani's demand was backed by the main opposition

Congress party and leftist groupings.

Foreign tobacco companies currently operate in India through joint ventures with local players. US-based Philip Morris Cos Inc, British American Tobacco and R J Reynolds are the only three foreign companies with a base in India.

India's cigarette market is presently worth around 70 billion rupees (1.6 billion dollars) with an annual growth rate of between eight and nine per cent.

US FDA panel for expanded use of Taxotere

Rhone-Poulenc Rorer Inc (RPR), the global pharmaceutical subsidiary of Rhone-Poulenc SA recently announced that the Oncologic Drugs Advisory Committee (ODAC) to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voted to recommend approval of Taxotere (docetaxel) for injection concentrate for the treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) after failure of prior chemotherapy, says a press release.

"Taxotere is the first chemotherapeutic agent to be considered by the FDA for the second-line treatment of advanced non-small-cell lung cancer," said Gary T Shearman, PhD, Senior Vice President, Pharmaceutical Drug Development, and deputy head of Research and Development at RPR. "The committee's favourable opinion is a major step toward making Taxotere available to an underserved lung cancer patient population in the US who have limited treatment options."

The favourable opinion of the ODAC was based on the results of two multicentre studies involving over 500 patients, the first Phase III trials ever conducted in advanced NSCLC patients in the second-line setting.

Taxotere, a drug in the taxoid class of chemotherapeutic agents, inhibits cancer cell division by essentially "freezing" the cell's internal skeleton, which comprises microtubules. Microtubules assemble and disassemble during a cell cycle. Taxotere promotes their assembly and blocks their disassembly, thereby preventing cancer cells from dividing and resulting in cancer cell death.

Toyota to create 2,000 new jobs at Indiana plant

TOKYO, Dec 20: Japan's biggest car maker Toyota Motor-Corp said today it would create 2,000 new jobs through an 800-million-dollar investment at one of its plants in the United States, says AFP.



M Saifur Rahman, former Finance Minister, speaks at the inaugural ceremony of the 16th Aptech Centre in Sylhet Saturday. Picture also shows (from left) T K Sarkar, ED, Mustafa Samsul Islam, Director, Md Nurul Islam, Chairman, and Mustafa Rafiqul Islam, MD, Flora Systems, and Tarun Mitra, MD, Aptech-Bangladesh.

Aptech photo

Blazing US IPO market draws foreign cos

NEW YORK, Dec 20: More foreign companies this year were drawn to American equity markets via initial public offerings than ever before, as equity-hungry investors grabbed overseas issues with an appetite expected to be just as voracious in 2000, reports Reuter.

The red-hot US IPO market has awarded dozens of young companies with hefty valuations, and has led foreign firms to withstand the relatively stringent regulatory demands for a US stock-market listing.

In the coming year, industry watchers expect foreign IPOs to broaden out in terms of their geographic home and type of business.

While most of the strongest performances this year were Internet service providers, said Tom Tauli, an analyst at Internet.com, he said he expects to see some e-commerce firms come through the pipeline in 2000. Asian issues also are ex-

pected to be an area of increasing activity.

"I think we will see a lot of Asian companies (coming to the market). Latin America is still coming out of its troubles, but the Asia crisis is behind us," said Reena Aggrawal, associate professor of finance at George Town University.

Nearly 500 initial public offerings have priced so far this year in the US, raising more than \$70 billion. The average first-day gain for 1999 IPOs has been more than 80 per cent, compared to 15 per cent last year, according to WorldFinanceNet.com.

IPOs from foreign firms made their presence felt decisively this year as they raised more than twice the money they did in 1998. A total of \$13.13 billion was raised in domestic proceeds by non-US companies' IPOs compared to \$5.57 billion in 1998, according to Thomson Financial Securities Data.

The bulk of the international deals were technology-related. Of the top 200 technology companies in the world, based on market capitalisation, 58 had their IPOs in calendar year 1999, according to Arnold Berman, technology strategist at SoundView Technology Group.

"With the valuations in the US it certainly makes sense for companies to raise equity capital in the US," said Jay Ritter, professor of finance at the University of Florida.

Investors are attracted to the many foreign firms offering

vehicle for an early into the development of the Internet abroad.

The US has been the first to come out of its gates and the whole world is following this trend. There is a lot of growth to be seen overseas," said Kenan Pollack, an analyst at Hoover's Online.

I think the US market is very uniquely positioned to capture technology companies that want to go public. The Internet business model is one that is built ahead of the economic model, which is not readily understood outside the US," said StarMedia's Espeulus.

Satyam, Infoway Ltd SIFY.O and China.com Inc, CHINA.O were among the hottest of the year's foreign IPOs.

The prevalence of foreign deals has also created opportunities for some underwriters to rise through the ranks of the closely watched Wall Street "league tables".

Merrill Lynch emerged as the top underwriter for foreign IPOs in terms of domestic proceeds, climbing from number 8 last year. It captured about 26 per cent of the market share with 14 deals that raised \$3.4 billion in domestic proceeds Thomson Financial Securities Data.

Morgan Stanley Dean Witter climbed up from number 5 last year to number 2 this year, leading eight deals and raising \$2.5 billion in domestic proceeds from foreign IPOs. •

Galileo travel system launched

Star Business Report

Galileo International has announced the launching of the Galileo system in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi travel agents will now have access to one of the most advanced electronic global distribution services for the travel industry, says a press release.

In partnership with Renaissance Aviation Services Limited (Renaissance), a new National Distribution Company (NDC) has been established to distribute the comprehensive and innovative range of Galileo products in Bangladesh.

Renaissance, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the MGH group, is currently the general sales agent for a number of large international airlines in Bangladesh (South African Airways, Garuda Indonesian, and Air Mauritius).

A formal distribution agreement between the two companies was signed in Hong Kong last month.

Anis Ahmed, Managing Director of NDC, said:

Bangladeshi travel agents are very excited about the introduction of Galileo because of its superior technology, high level of support and service, advanced training and new range of user-friendly products.

He said Galileo will provide the Bangladeshi travel agents with the means to keep ahead in today's extremely competitive world.

The new company operating as Galileo Bangladesh Ltd, is located at Karwan Bazar in central Dhaka.

"We are delighted to be introducing the Galileo system in Bangladesh," said Jamie Kaung, Galileo International's Vice President for the Asia Pacific Region.

Galileo International is one of the world's leading providers of electronic global distribution services for the travel industry.

The company provides travel agencies at more than 40,000 locations, as well as other subscribers, with the ability to access schedule and fare information, book reservations and issue tickets for more than 500 airlines.

Exchange Rates

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka to major currencies.

Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying T. T. Clean	Buying OD. Sight Export Bill	Buying OD Transfer
US Dollar	512300	512700	508100	505570	505560
Pound Stg	825213	825857	813112	810664	809512
Deutsche Mark	267959	268169	257839	257063	256697
Swiss Franc	324282	324535	317463	316507	316057
Japanese Yen	0.4985	0.4989	0.4893	0.4878	0.4871
Dutch Guilder	237816	238004	228836	228147	227823
Danish Krone	6.9901	6.9956	6.8352	6.8152	6.8056
Australian \$	33.3995	33.4229	32.0814	31.9848	31.9394
Belgian Franc	1.2929	1.3002	1.2501	1.2463	1.2446
Canadian \$	35.0362	35.0636	34.0276	33.9251	33.8769
French Franc	7.9986	7.9988	7.6878	7.6647	7.6538
Hong Kong \$	6.6056	6.6108	6.5254	6.5057	6.4995
Italian Lira	0.0271	0.0271	0.0260	0.0260	0.0259
Norway Krone	6.4262	6.4313	6.3220	6.3030	6.2940
Singapore \$	30.9921	31.0163	29.9941	29.9038	29.8613
Saudi Rial	13.6964	13.7071	13.5108	13.4701	13.4510
UAE Dirham	13.9869	13.9979	13.7958	13.7543	13.7347
Swedish Krone	6.0291	6.0338	5.9562	5.9372	5.9288
Qatari Riyal	14.1153	14.1263	13.9190	13.8771	13.8574
Kuwait Dinar	173.9263	174.0621	161.4297	160.9436	160.7149
Thai Baht	1.3476	1.3487	1.3320	1.3280	1.3261
Euro	52.4083	52.4452	50.4289	50.2771	50.2056

Bill buying rates

TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
50712	50.3866	49.9632	49.5398	49.1163	48.2695

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

Buying (\$)	Selling (\$)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
505860	512300	USD	6.46125	6.12	6.09125	6.19	6.30675
813112	825857	GBP	5.6225	5.57969	6.15734	6.35281	6.53781
50712	52.4452	Euro	3.55	3.45563	3.49	3.61	3.78

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
43.49/43.495	51.86/51.89	37.90/38.00	3.7995/3.8005	7075/7080	1135/1136

Amen notes on Monday's market

USD/BDT were stable in the 51.10-51.12 level. The market remains liquid in USD. The call rates have come down slightly, from 6.6-5.5 per cent to 5.75-6.25 per cent. The government had accepted T-bills worth BDT 696 crores take yesterday, while T-bills worth BDT 649 crores

matured today.

The euro found an uneasy stability in the 51.10-51.12 level. The market remains liquid with sentiment smarting from the severity of its reversal late last week. Having stretched as high as \$1.0247 in Asia on Friday the currency was sent clattering lower by speculative selling from a handful of US and European banks, ruining yet another bid for recovery. Traders said the euro had found some support today around \$1.0062, Friday's trough, but felt the currency's habit of turning tail would win it few friends. Spared by the thinness of the market, the euro was hovering at \$1.0093 at 0625 GMT compared to \$1.0082 in New York on Friday. Near-term resistance was put at \$1.0120 and \$1.0135, while support came in at \$1.0060 and last week's low around \$1.0008.

In contrast, volatility in dollar/yen was distinctly lacking as most of the banks that mattered had ceased trading on their own books and were only exercising customer orders. The dollar stood little changed on the day at 102.95 yen having strayed up to 103.40 earlier on commercial demand ahead of the fixing, before strolling back as the odd Japanese exporter offer appeared. That left it comfortably within the 102.00/103.80 range