

Glaxo-Wellcome, SmithKline Beecham merge into biggest drugmaker

LONDON, Jan 17: British pharmaceutical heavyweights Glaxo Wellcome PLC and SmithKline Beecham PLC have reached agreement to merge into the world's largest drugmaker. The Financial Times reported in its Monday edition, says AP.

The agreement creates a new industry giant, to be called Glaxo SmithKline, with a market capitalization of 115 billion pounds (\$ 184 billion), the newspaper said.

The planned merger still must be approved by the Federal Trade Commission and the European Union.

A spokeswoman for SmithKline refused to confirm the

newspaper report. No one from Glaxo returned phone calls Sunday night.

The new group would be headquartered in London, but largely run from a new operational base in the United States, possibly in New Jersey, the London-based newspaper said. The group would have a 7.5 per cent share of the global pharmaceutical market.

The planned merger demonstrates the pressure facing even the biggest names in the pharmaceutical industry to consolidate with rivals as a way to afford the rising costs of developing and selling new medicines. It is also likely to trigger a new round of takeovers and mergers

throughout the industry.

Only last week, Pfizer Inc. emerged as the likely winner in the battle for US drugmaker Warner-Lambert Co.

Bowing to pressure from its investors, Warner-Lambert management said they would negotiate a buyout from Pfizer, backing away from a previously announced merger deal with American Home Products Corp. If that deal goes forward, the combined group would have 6.5 per cent of the global market.

Talks between Glaxo and SmithKline were only disclosed on Friday. Previous discussion between the two groups collapsed two years ago over differences between their top executives.

Under the plan, the companies expect cost savings of about 1.1 billion pounds (\$ 1.76 billion) after three years, the Financial Times reported.

The group will have a worldwide work force of 105,000, the newspaper said. But over three years, about 10 per cent of those jobs will go as the new company makes cuts in middle management and administration.

The merger is expected to take at least six months to complete and will be realised by an offer of Glaxo or SmithKline shares, resulting in a 58.75 to 41.25 per cent split in Glaxo's favour, the Financial Times

said.

Glaxo's strength lies in its top anti-migraine drug, Imitrex, and in treatments for asthma and viral infections, including HIV.

SmithKline's top products include the antibiotic Augmentin, the antidepressant Paxil and a new diabetes drug, Avandia. It also has a strong vaccines business.

After news emerged that the companies were in merger talks, analysts said a consolidation would make sense. The two companies have complementary drug portfolios, and a merger would let them pool their research and development funds.

US pressure for credit easing BOJ likely to hold its monetary policy steady

TOKYO, Jan 17: The Bank of Japan (BOJ) is likely to leave monetary policy unchanged at its first Policy Board meeting of the year today, despite speculation of US pressure for a further credit easing, traders and analysts say. "Chances of an easing at this point are slim," said a senior bond trader at a Japanese city bank, reports Reuters.

There is no need to take action immediately, since the yen's strength has been subdued recently and the economy has started to recover, even though the pace is slow.

The dollar traded above 105 yen throughout this week, compared with this year's low of around 101.40 yen marked on January 4.

The central bank would most likely be a tightening, rather than a further easing of the zero-interest rate policy adopted last February.

They also said the BOJ would only take action when it is absolutely sure that Japan's economy has entered a self-sustaining recovery.

"The markets have been hoping for a tightening since the beginning of the year, but it's hard to see an actual rate rise this year, since it takes time to confirm the strength of an economic recovery," said Mamoru Yamazaki, senior economist at Paribas Capital Markets.



John Iossifidis, General Manager and Country Head of ANZ Grindlays Bank, Sri Lanka, and Muhammad A Ali, General Manager and Country Head, ANZ Grindlays Bank, Bangladesh, are seen with the prize winners of Vision 2000 campaigns. — ANZ photo

ANZ Vision 2000 award-giving ceremony held

ANZ Grindlays Bank recently held an award-giving ceremony to recognise the winners of different campaigns under their Vision 2000 project, says a press release of the bank.

All members of staff of different units of the bank actively participated in the campaigns.

The drives were designed to motivate the banks for growth of business of the bank.

John Iossifidis, General Manager and Country Head of ANZ Grindlays Bank, Sri Lanka, attended the ceremony as special guest and handed over the prizes to the winners.

Muhammad A Ali, General Manager and country Head of ANZ Grindlays Bank, Bangladesh, spoke.

The top prize winners of different campaigns were Rahel Ahmed, Shahed Ahmed and Arshia Karim of Corporate Financial Services, Atiqul Hassan of Personal Financial Services, and Abdul Halim and Gitanka Datta of Card Services.

British business calls for cutting tax burden

LONDON, Jan 17: Top British business organisation the Institute of Directors urged the government today to cut the tax burden and take no chances with public finances despite the current hefty surplus, reports Reuters.

Presenting its pitch to Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown ahead of his March 2000 budget, the IOD said the government should adopt a "third rule" for fiscal policy, committing itself to reduce the tax burden as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP).

That would be in addition to Brown's current rule of running a balanced current budget over the economic cycle and borrowing only to cover public investment.

When Labour took power the tax burden stood at 35.3 per cent of GDP for 1996/97. It then rose, according to the Treasury's own figures, to 37.4 per cent in 1998/99 but is projected to fall to 37.0 in the current year and to 36.8 in 2000/01.

Opposition Conservatives have made great play out of the fact that the burden has risen, saying Prime Minister Tony Blair has broken his promise not to raise taxes and that they will be higher at the end of the current parliament than when he took power.

The government counters that it had to take tough measures to rein in public debt but that now the tax burden is set to

fall. However the IOD pointed to the fact that the burden was forecast to pick up again in 2001/02, with the government itself projecting a rise to 37.2 per cent in that fiscal year.

"We are calling for an overall reduction of the tax burden as a proportion of GDP which if anything has pushed up since Labour came to power," she said. In his November pre-budget report, Brown presented much improved forecast for the public coffers, changing his figures for the current fiscal year alone from a three billion pound deficit to a 3.5 billion pounds (\$5.75 billion) surplus. Estimates for later years were also revised sharply upwards.



Chairman and Managing Director of Butterfly Marketing Ltd MA Mannan addresses the 12th annual conference of the company at a local hotel yesterday. On his right are Moon H Lee, Deputy Managing Director of LG Electronics, and Mustafizur Rahman Sajid, Director (Marketing) of Butterfly, and on the left Syed Asaduzzaman, Director (Finance), and M Ferdous, Manager (Admin) of Butterfly. — Butterfly photo

Tobacco duties seen leading to smuggling in Gulf

DUBAI, Jan 17: Tobacco firms in the Gulf are worried that high regional customs duties on tobacco will increase smuggling and destabilise a steady market, says Reuters.

Tobacco executives say further duty increases in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would lead to government and industry revenue losses, disruptions in trade, increased smuggling and the likely involvement of organised crime.

The six-nation GCC agreed in 1996 on the phased increase in customs duty on tobacco and related products to 100 per cent by 2000 from below 30 per cent in the 1980s.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman have already raised the duty to 100 per cent. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) raised it to 90 per cent in 1999 and Kuwait to 70 per cent in 1997.

The issue is that GCC duties are too high. I'm not sure there's an awareness of how dangerous this policy of just ratcheting up duties is. Richard Reavy, director of corporate affairs for Philip Morris Middle East Mo.N, told Reuters.

Every time they (the GCC) bump up the duty level they get more money. My worry is that

they don't realise that there's an end to that. There's going to be a point where they are going to start losing money," he said.

Industry executives warned that GCC governments, aiming to curb tobacco consumption and boost revenues through higher duties, would be hard hit by smuggling operations.

"Oman and the UAE are really suffering from smuggling. In Oman smuggling went from non-existent to 20 per cent in one year," said Zaid Nadhim, consumer and regulatory affairs manager for British American Tobacco (BAT) Middle East BATS.L.

Reavy said that while legal imports in the UAE fell 15.5 per cent to 550 million units in 1999, there was an actual two per cent growth in consumption — leading to estimated revenue losses of \$12.2 million.

He said that Oman reported average annualised market decline of 21.5 per cent in legal imports, but that real decline was only 10 per cent — leading to \$7.4 million in revenue losses.

Reavy said products sold in Kuwait were already being illegally sent to Saudi Arabia and markets as far away as Oman on the basis of a 30 per cent dif-

ference in duty rate.

The GCC is also open to illegal imports from markets in Yemen, East Africa, Iran and the subcontinent.

Reavy said GCC health ministers were now considering raising duties to 200 per cent.

"That would be catastrophic... you can kiss our business, that is legitimate business, goodbye. The business will be run by smugglers," he said.

In 1998 the GCC imported 25 billion cigarettes worth some \$500 million. Saudi Arabia, the largest tobacco market in the Gulf, imported 15 billion units.

According to BAT figures, GCC imports at the end of November 1999 reached 22.6 billion units worth \$1.38 billion in retail prices.

The GCC is a legally declining market, but an illegal growth market. This growth does not benefit tobacco companies at all," Nadhim said.

He said smokers were turning to cheaper contraband goods and lower priced tobacco alternatives such as bidis.

Bidis cost between 50 fils and one dirham (\$0.14 and \$0.27) in the UAE while a pack of cigarettes costs three dirhams. There are 100 fils per dirham.

Rate rises threaten London economic boom : LCCI

LONDON, Jan 17: London's biggest business organisation said high flying economic confidence in the UK's capital may falter on concerns over rising interest rates, says Reuters.

A survey of 316 firms by the London Chamber of Commerce

and Industry showed businessmen believed current boom times could be set back by rising rates and recruitment problems.

"Twelve months ago there was talk of a possible recession, whereas now the talk is of the capital's economy possibly overheating," LCCI Chief Executive Simon Sperry said.

The business lobby said firms operating at full capacity and London exports at two-year highs were key elements in the Bank of England's decision to raise UK interest rates this week.

The central bank raised its key rate by one quarter of a per cent to 5.75 per cent on Thursday. It was the third interest rate rise the last five months.

Three of Britain's top five mortgage lenders followed the central bank's lead by raising their lending rates.

In his speech, Lee said the marketing possibility of LG electronics in Bangladesh was bright.

The chairman and managing director of the company described the advent of the new millennium as very significant, he said. "This is the high time to start with newer dimensions and effective business strategies."

Director (Finance) of Butterfly Marketing Ltd, Syed Asaduzzaman, Director (Marketing) Mustafizur Rahman Sajid and Manager of LG Electronics Siddhartha Misra also spoke on the occasion.

The conference is being attended by about 80 Butterfly branch managers, dealers and management staff.

Danes backing euro lead opponents

COPENHAGEN, Jan 17: Danes in favour of joining Europe's single currency, the euro, led opponents by 19 percentage points in an opinion poll published on Monday by the daily newspaper Jyllands-Posten, says Reuters.

The Sonar institute's survey of 1,272 voters gave the supporters 53 per cent against 34 per cent for those against. The rest were undecided.

Employment Notice

Applications are invited from bonafide Bangladeshi nationals for appointment to the undermentioned posts in a company under an autonomous organisation:

Sl No	Name of post	Age	Pay-scale	Educational qualification and experience
1	Assistant Geologist	Maximum 30 years	4300-7740/-	First class Masters in Geology or 2nd class Masters with 2nd class in Honours.
2	Assistant Geophysicist	-do-	-do-	First class Masters in Geophysics/Physics/Applied Physics/Geology or 2nd class Masters with 2nd class in Honours. Candidates with degrees in Physics/Applied Physics/Geology should have Geo-Physics as a subject at Bachelor or Masters levels.
3	Assistant Chemist	-do-	-do-	First class Masters in Chemistry/Applied Chemistry or 2nd class Masters with 2nd class in Honours.
4	Assistant Engineer (Mechanical/Civil/Electrical/Petroleum/Chemical)	-do-	-do-	B.Sc. Engineering in relevant subject or Diploma Engineering in relevant field with 5 years experience in relevant field.
5	Assistant Medical Officer (Female)	-do-	-do-	MBBS degree with experience in medical field.
6	Assistant Manager (Administration)	-do-	-do-	First class Masters or 2nd class Masters with 2nd class in Honours/MBA.
7	Assistant Manager (Store/Purchase/C&F)	-do-	-do-	First class Masters or 2nd class Masters with 2nd class in Honours.
8	Assistant Manager (Accounts/Finance)	-do-	-do-	First class Masters in Commerce subject or 2nd class Masters with second class in Honours/CA or ICMA (Intermediate)/MBA.

- Interested candidates will have to apply in plain paper by stating in Bangla the name, father's/husband's name, present and permanent address, age (with date of birth), educational qualification (year of passing, division/class are to be mentioned), experiences, nationality, religion with nationality certificates from Union Parishad/Pourasava Chairman/Commissioner, 3 (three) copies of attested recent passport size photographs and attested copies of educational qualifications and experiences. For educational qualifications degrees, diploma from approved university/institute only will be considered.
- Candidates already in service in government/semi-government/autonomous organisations with eligibility must apply through proper channel within the stipulated period. But candidates only with requisite educational qualification and serving in the same post or in the immediate lower post can only apply through proper channel and no application in advance will be accepted.
- A candidate cannot apply for more than one post. The name of the post applied for will have to be mentioned on the envelope.
- All quotas as per government instruction will be followed in this employment.
- For educational qualification no third class/division in any examination will be considered.
- The age of the candidate should be within 18 to 30 years on 31.12.99. But for the departmental candidates serving in the company and candidates with practical experience in the relevant field the age is relaxable up to 35 years.
- Candidates selected through a preliminary scrutiny will be informed through interview cards for appearing at written test. No TA/DA will be given for appearing at written and viva-voce test.
- The maximum age limit is 32 years for freedom fighters and wards of freedom fighters. They will have to submit attested copy of certificate as freedom fighters of their father/mother and they will also have to submit certificate stating that the candidate is a freedom fighter/ward of shaheed freedom fighter from the appropriate authority as fixed by the government.
- Incomplete application or application received late will be treated as rejected. No application sent other than by mail will be accepted. The decision of the authority regarding the appointment will be regarded as final.
- Candidates will have to apply to the Advertiser, GPO Box No-2092, Dhaka-1000 with a postal order of Taka 100/- (one hundred) (non-refundable) in favour of the Advertiser. Applications will have to be sent to 'Advertiser', GPO Box No-2092, Dhaka-1000 within 21 (twenty-one) days of the publication of the advertisement.

M A Elahi Mia
General Manager (Administration)

Employment Notice

Applications are invited from bonafide Bangladeshi nationals for appointment to the posts mentioned below in a company under an autonomous organisation:

1.	Wireless Operator	-do-	2250-4735/-	Diploma in relevant technical subject/at least 2 (two) years experience in approved certificate course.
2.	Computer Operator	-do-	-do-	HSC passed with 2 (two) years experience in relevant subject or Bachelor degree holder with certificate in computer operating in both cases. With typing speed at least of 60 words per minute in English and 30 words in Bangla with experience in computer operating in MS Word/ Excel and Bijoy key-board.
3.	Laboratory Technician-3	-do-	-do-	Minimum SSC with 1 (one) year experience in relevant technical subject.
4.	Telephone Operator	-do-	-do-	HSC passed with minimum 1 (one) year experience.
5.	Electrician	-do-	1875-3605/-	Minimum class VIII passed and at least 2 (two) years experience in relevant technical subject with approved trade/certificate course. Licence issued by an approved organisation is essential.
6.	Lab Attendant	-do-	1560-2695/-	Trade/Vocational passed in relevant field.
7.	Peon	-do-	1500-2400/-	At least class VIII passed.

- Interested candidates will have to apply in plain paper in Bangla by stating name, father's/husband's name, present and permanent addresses, age (with date of birth), educational qualification (year of passing, division/class are to be mentioned), experience, nationality, religion along with nationality certificate from Chairman of Union Parishad/Pourasava/Commissioner, 3 (three) copies of recent passport size attested photographs, attested copies of certificates of educational qualifications and experience. For educational qualification the degree, diploma from approved university/institute/board will be brought under consideration.
 - Eligible candidates presently serving in any government/semi-government/autonomous establishments must apply through proper channel within the stipulated period. But a candidate can apply only if he is already serving in the similar or in the immediate lower post to be applied for along with the requisite educational qualification and no application in advance will be accepted. A candidate cannot apply for more than one post. Name of the post applied for will have to be mentioned on envelope. All quotas as per government instructions will be followed in this appointment. No third division/class will be acceptable as regard the education qualification.
 - The age of the candidate should be within 18 to 30 years on 31.12.99. But for departmental candidates already in service in company and with experience in relevant subject, the age up to 35 years is relaxable. Only the selected candidates will be informed through interview cards for appearing at the written/practical/viva voce test (as and where it is applicable). No TA/DA will be given for test/interview.
 - For the freedom fighters and the wards of shaheed freedom fighters the maximum age limit is 32 years. They will have to submit the attested copies of certificates as freedom fighter of their father/mother and certificate regarding freedom fighter/ward of shaheed freedom fighter from the appropriate authority as fixed by the government.
 - Incomplete application or application received late will be treated as rejected. No application sent other than by mail will be acceptable. The decision of the authority regarding the appointment will be treated as final and the authority reserves the right to cancel the employment notice partly or in full without assigning any reason, if necessary.
 - Candidates will have to apply with a postal order for Taka 50/- (fifty taka) (non-refundable) in favour of the Advertiser, to GPO Box No-2092, Dhaka-1000. Applications will have to be sent to 'Advertiser', GPO Box No-2092 within 21 (twenty-one) days of the publication of the notice.
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- M A Elahi Mia
General Manager (Administration)