

Cigarette banderole, stamp printing suspended

Govt decides to explore ways to cut printing cost

BSS, Dhaka

The printing of cigarette banderole and stamp has been suspended as the authorities have decided to explore the avenues to cut the present printing cost of their produc-

Official sources said a threemember probe committee comprising representatives from National Board of Revenue (NBR), Finance Ministry and Security Printing Press will probe the matter. It will submit its reports within a week recommending to the authorities whether it would be viable to change the present system of printing.

The committee has been formed The National Board of Revenue (NBR) introduced the system in two following a proposal from the board of Security Printing Press for introphases. On September 1 last year, it ducing an open tender system for introduced the tax stamps system printing cigarette banderole and and on January 1 banderole sysstamps that might reduce the cost of printing them

than Tk 1200 crore earlier.

Under the system, the govern-The introduction of banderole ment empowered the law-enforcing and stamp system on cigarette agencies to seize the unstamped or packs has so far produced a very unapproved stamped cigarette good impact on the revenue collecpackets and penalise the offenders tion, an NBR official said, adding accordingly that at present the nation earns The new tax collection system nearly 1700 to 1800 crore taka

has been actively supported and annually from the cigarette manuimplemented first in their factory by facturing sector which was not more the leading cigarette manufacturers like British American Tobacco and

Dhaka Tobacco Company

The NBR source said the gov ernment has already posted officials at the factories of the concerned cigarette manufacturers to keep the records of stamping and banderole on monthly basis

The source said the jobs of these officials are closely monitored by the higher authorities at the NBR so that the tax pavers do not evade their revenue payment.

The NBR introduced the manda tory banderole and stamp system last year after a long and arduous procurement process of security technology to check massive tax evasion by the tobacco factories.



K Aoki, representative of Kobe Steel Ltd of Japan, and Yong Ngai Chan, managing director of Lafarge Surma Cement, sign a contract in the city yesterday. Under the deal, Kobe Steel Ltd will supply equipment and construct a US\$ 100 million integrated cement plant of Lafarge Surma Cement Limited. Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman and French Ambassador in Dhaka Michel Lummaux are also seen.

EU to extend technical assistance to **BEPZA**

The European Union (EU) will extend technical assistance to Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) to promote investment and upgrade infrastructure facilities, says a press release.

This was disclosed by the Ambassador of the European Union Esko Kentrschynskyj during his visit to Chittagong Export Processing Zones on Monday.

Kentrschynskyj said since more than half of Bangladesh's exports go to the member countries of the European Union, it is the responsibility of the EU to help Bangladesh develop its different organisations concerned with manufacturing and exports

The EU envoy said he will help Bangladesh so that it get increased foreign direct investment. The EU wants to be a partner of progress of Bandladesh and is planning to invest in the industrial venture in the country, he said.

Expressing satisfaction over the working condition, the infrastractural facilities and the congenial atmosphere in the EPZs Bandladesh Kentr he will assist BEPZA in formulating plans and programmes to attaract foreign investors particularly from the member countries of the EU. ing misdeeds reached a peak last Later. Kentrschvnskyj visited two industries at the Chittagong EPZ. Among other, the First Secretary of the European Union Jong Voker Keteisen accompanied him.

Bush vows crackdown on corporate crime Longer jail time proposed

AFP, New York

US President George W. Bush proposed longer jail time for corpoaccounts rate criminals Tuesdav as he vowed created a task force, which he to root out corruption and "cooking described as a "financial crimes the books" in a speech to Wall SWAT team" overseeing major Street. fraud investigations in companies.

Under pressure to act against a slew of financial scandals and facing scrutiny over his own past as a Texas oil executive. Bush promised to restore faith in business. "We will use the full weight of the law to expose and root out corrup-

tion," he said. "My administration will do everything in our power to end the days of cooking the books, shading the truth

and breaking our laws.' Bush proposed doubling the maximum prison term for mail and wire fraud, a frequent charge in white-collar crime, to 10 years. He pressed for longer jail sentences for criminal fraud and tougher criminal laws against document shredding and obstructing justice.

The president was responding to words "The president made it clear: an avalanche of scandals that has descended since the fall of energy traud and corruption by our busi giant Enron, whose auditor Arthur ness leaders will not be tolerated," Andersen was later found guilty of Chamber of Commerce president and chief executive Thomas obstructina iustice. Outrage at the litany of account-Donohue said.

ness to adopt higher standards. month when telecommunications giant WorldCom revealed a 3.8-"The business pages of billion-dollar black hole in its American newspapers should not read like a scandal sheet." he said.

To unearth future crimes. Bush "With strict enforcement and higher ethical standards, we must usher in a new era of integrity in corporate America." he declared. But Bush himself faces resurgent

questions about his own dealings as director of Harken Energy 12 years

He is being pressed to explain an extra 100 million dollars to beef why he was eight months late in up the commission in the next fiscal filing a declaration of a stock sale to Opposition Democrats, mainthe Securities and Exchange taining the pressure ahead of Commission when he was an exec-November elections that will decide utive at Harken Energy Corp.

control of Congress, said Bush's Bush sold 848,560 dollars' worth speech was long on words but short of Harken stock in June 1990, weeks before the company "I thought the president spoke announced that it had lost 23 million loudly, but he offered a very, very dollars and the share price plunged. small stick," said Senate Majority He filed an advance notice to the SEC that he intended to sell the Leader Democrat Tom Daschle. "It is not enough to talk about accountstock on time. But Bush was eight ability; you have to act to ensure it." months late in filing a separate But big business welcomed his notice confirming the sale had gone through

During a Monday press confer-

'Bush offers very small stick' Senate Democrats move on tough accounting bill

AFP, Washington

Disappointed with President George W. Bush's speech, which some lawmakers said was short on substance despite his call for a crackdown on corporate wrongdoing, Senate Democrats moved forward Tuesday on tough account-

"I thought the president spoke loudly, but he offered a very, very small stick," said Senate Majority Leader Democrat Tom Daschle shortly after Bush's address in which the president called for tough new criminal penalties for wayward executives.

awaited speech to corporate leadrestore confidence in a scandalshaken US economy that "with strict enforcement and higher ethical standards, we must usher in a new era of integrity in corporate America.

dent's rhetoric" but thought Bush

stringent new accounting bill on the Senate floor that would restrict the consulting services that accounting firms could provide to an audit client as well as set up an accounting oversight board to establish and enforce auditing standards.

In tandem, Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Senate Judiciary has introduced legislation to criminalize securities fraud, preserving audit evidence needed to prove such fraud, and protecting victims' rights

Republican as well as Democrat said Leahy, whose legislation would senators said they expected a final create a new crime for any "scheme vote on the legislation by the end of or artifice" to defraud investors. the week. If passed, lawmakers would then have to enter into negotiavalanche of corporate scandals that began last year with the fall of ations with the House to come up with a common bill. The group's auditor Arthur Andersen

"I have concluded that the bill is going to be written in conference," where Bush's proposals would be included, said senior Republican Senator Phil Gramm, who criticized Democrats for trying to turn the question into a partisan political issue

In a speech that at times dove-

GMG introduces new flight on Dhaka-Ctg route

GMG Airlines, a leading private sector airline of the country, has introduced a new convenient flight on Dhaka-Chittagong-Dhaka route, says a press release

The new flight Z5 103 will leave Dhaka daily at 11:15 hours and reach Chittagong at 12:00 hours. The return flight Z5 104 will leave Chittagong at 12:15 hours and reach Dhaka at 1300 hours.

Ledtronics CEO in city

Mar Kok Eng, chief executive officer of Ledtronics Sales & Services Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia, arrived in the city yesterday on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, says a press release. Marketing Manager Wong Keng

oong is also visiting the country. Ledtronics is a pioneering LED signage manufacturer with worldwide installations including those in the USA and Malaysia.

Bush faces tough questions over Texan oil days AFP, Washington

US president George W. Bush, launching a crackdown on corporate crime Tuesday, faced mounting questions over his own dealings as a Texan oil executive 12 years ago. Bush is being pressed to explain

an eight-month delay in a declaration of a stock sale to the Securities and Exchange Commission when he was an executive at Harken Energy Corp.

Pressure is being stepped up just as he seeks to grapple with a slew of corporate scandals that culminated last month when WorldCom revealed a 3.8-billion-dollar black hole in its accounts.

either not specifically written for Questions center on Bush's June securities fraud, or with weaker 1990 sale of 848,560 dollars' worth of Harken stock, weeks before the company announced that it had lost 23 million dollars

Bush sold at four dollars a share. Within six months the stock's value had fallen almost 75 per cent.

Democrats have seized on Bush's awkward explanations about his late filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission of a socalled Form 4 notice advising it of his stock sale.

Asked in a news conference Monday why he had been late in filing the notice to the SEC after the stock sale. Bush said: "I still haven't figured it out completely. Ex-WorldCom

finance chief

tried to delay

internal probe

ing legislation.

Bush declared in a muchers on Wall Street aimed at helping

Chairman of the Senate Banking committee, Senator Paul Sarbanes said he was "taken with the presiSarbanes has introduced a corruption and "cooking the books." New legislation would double the maximum prison terms for those convicted of financial fraud from five to 10 years. Bush said. He also said he was creating a new corporate fraud task force by executive order. But Democrats said making securities fraud a felony was crucial

penalties.

accounts

French watchdoa checking Vivendi financial reports

AFP, Paris

The French stock market watchdog agency confirmed Tuesday it has begun investigating financial reports dating back to January 2001 by the beleaguered French media giant Vivendi Universal.

"Investigators, according to established procedures, have begun onsite verifications of documents," the Commission des operations de bourse (COB) said in a statement

A source close to the case said the inquiry was routine and there was no suggestion that the investi gators have been conducting a search of the building.

The inquiry had not been prompted by evidence of accounting irregularities. The source explained the COB was merely ensuring that, given the context of Vivendi's current problems, "nothing has been hidden from it" by the company

Vivendi Universal, whose former chairman Jean-Marie Messier was ousted last week, has been struggling to stave off a billion-dollar cash crisis

The boardroom coup was enlivened by newspaper reports alleging the company might have dressed up its accounts, which was later denied by the group

COB chairman Michel Prada later said on French television channel France 2 that the investigation had only been opened "very recently, in the last days"

A growing number of companies have come under the scrutiny of regulators and investors recently following accounting scandals at US energy trading giant Enron and US telecom operator WorldCom.

Bush said it was time for busi-

He also asked Congress to

deliver 20 million dollars to hire 100

new SEC enforcement officers and

year ending September 2003.

on action

ence, Bush prushed those ques tions aside as "recycled stuff" used by his political foes and noted that the SEC investigated him and decided "there is no case."

had not gone far enough "We need underlying substance

as well if we're really going to address this problem," he told reporters

tailed with Democrat proposal currently being debated on the Senate floor, Bush proposed tough new criminal penalties for wayward executives, vowing to root out

executive

speech to Wall Street

Watchdog group plans to sue Cheney for 'stock fraud'

AFP, Washington

PHOTO: BEPZA

Judicial Watch, a group that investigates corruption by government officials, said Wednesday it plans to file a lawsuit against US Vice President Dick Cheney and his former employer US oil services group Halliburton Co. for alleged fraudulent accounting practices. The lawsuit against Cheney and

'other involved directors of Halliburton" was being filed for "for alleged fraudulent accounting practices which resulted in the overvaluation of the company's shares, thereby deceiving investors and others," the Washington-based watchdog group said in a statement.

The Texas-based oil services giant Halliburton acknowledged in late May that it was being investifrom his and his Vice President's own alleged improper business practices.

to enforce the proposals. Currently,

prosecutors must use criminal laws

"The president's plan is a start,'

Bush's address followed an

Texas-based energy giant Enron.

was found guilty of obstruction of

Outrage against corporate

misdeeds reached a peak last

month when telecommunications

giant WorldCom revealed a 3.8-

billion-dollar black hole in its

justice for destroying documents.

"To look the other way for the Vice President would be to set a precedent that the Washington elite are above the law. This cannot be permitted if our democracy is to survive," said Judicial Watch Chairman and General Counsel

Halliburton said it believed the The legal action also comes after SEC probe was launched as a result Bush vowed on Tuesday to root out of an article in The New York Times corruption and "cooking the books", in May about the accounting treatcalling for tougher measures ment of construction job claims and against corporate criminals in a change orders.

The Times alleged that, "Ironically," Judicial Watch said Halliburton, under Cheney, altered in its statement, "it would appear its accounting policies so the comthat the President's rush to propose pany could report revenue of more more regulation of private industry is than 100 million dollars in disputed intended to deflect attention away costs on big construction projects

gated by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for its accounting practices when Chenev was its chairman from 1995 to 2000.

The lawsuit, to be filed in Dallas. Texas, comes on the heels of a slew of corporate scandals undermining investor confidence and growing scrutiny of President George W. Bush's own past as a Texas oil arry Klayman.

WorldCom former chief financial officer Scott Sullivan tried to delay an internal probe that eventually uncovered an improper shift of 3.8 billion dollars in expenses, accord-

AFP, Washington

ing to documents filed by the firm. WorldCom's disclosure came in a revised timetable of the internal investigation filed late Monday with the Securities and Exchange Commission

The revised timetable was ecessary after the SEC had said the first timetable presented by WorldCom was inadequate.

Cynthia Cooper, vice president of internal audit began her probe of the company's capital expenditures in May 2002. The audit had been scheduled for the third quarter of the year, but was advanced by Cooper.

Temporary Thai anti-dumping tariff on steel likely AFP, Bangkok

Thailand may approve a temporary anti-dumping tariff on stainless steel before the current surcharge on imported stainless steel expires on July 31, a report said Wednesday.

The proposal to impose a fourmonth anti-dumping measure will be considered by the national committee on anti-dumping on July 26. the director of the Commerce Ministry's Bureau of Trade, Interests and Remedies Sutirak Issadisai told the Nation newspaper.

The tariff, the exact rate of which has not been disclosed, would be imposed before an investigation into whether stainless steel is being dumped in the Thai market is completed. Sutirak reportedly said.

"The final decision on the tariff could be made in time (before the expiry of the surcharge), with the effective period of the temporary measure being four months," he was quoted as saving

Singapore economy rebounds with 3.2pc rise in 2nd quarter

in the two quarters before that.

Ambassador of European Union to Bangladesh Esko Kentrschynskyj at a factory in Chittagong Export Processing

AFP, Singapore

Zone on Monday

Singapore's economy grew a strong 3.2 per cent in the second quarter, performances are typically volatile. the first positive performance in 15 the ministry said. months, according to snap estimates released Wednesday. manufacturing sector.'

The year-on-year figure, at the upper end of economists' estimates, was driven by chemicals, but included a strong performance by Singapore's key manufacturing sector

Although the result was not enough for the government to lift its two-to-four per cent growth forecast for the year, the trade and industry ministry expressed confidence in reaching the upper end of the estimate

> "The substanial improvement the second guarter, with the notable

can be attributed mainly to an exception of construction which exceptional surge in activity in the remained weak due to a sluggish chemicals cluster, whose quarterly property market.

The figures are based on estimates computed largely from April "This resulted in a strong but and May data, and are subject to narrowly-based rebound in the revision when detailed figures taking in the June performance are Owing to the better than released next month.

expected manufacturing perfor-With Singapore in its worst mance, goods producing industries recession in more than 30 years, the are estimated to have expanded by 3.2 per cent rise in gross domestic 7.5 per cent, turning around a 4.4 product (GDP) compares favourper cent deficit in the previous ably against a 1.5 per cent drop in quarter and double-digit retractions the first quarter of the year and drops of 6.6 per cent, 5.4 per cent As Singapore struggles to and 0.5 per cent in the last three emerge from a year-long recession, guarters of 2001

After soaring growth of 9.9 per most sectors of the economy regiscent in 2000, the GDP shrank 2.2 tered an improved performance in per cent last year.

Indian corporate mergers, acquisitions double

AFP, New Delhi

Indian corporate mergers and acquisitions doubled in the first six months of 2002 from the same period last year, bucking a worldwide trend, off the long-awaited sale of big-ticket state-run assets, analysts said Wednesday.

India Advisory Partners, a consultancy firm tracking mergers, estimated that the value of transactions had jumped to 362 billion rupees (7.41 billion dollars) for the six months to June 30 from 168 billion rupees a vear earlier. The number of transactions in

the period soared to 433 from 57 in the first half of 2001, as companies merged units to benefit from regulatory changes

ernment policies drove consolidations by private-sector companies, which sought in bulk to face increased competition from foreign rivals such as the Royal-Dutch Shell Group with the deregulation of the 65 billion-dollar Indian oil market.

India's biggest private sector firm Reliance Industries in March announced the acquisition of its petroleum unit in a 110 billion-rupee all-stock deal to become India's biggest non-state company by profit

And ICICI Bank Ltd. absorbed its parent ICICI Ltd. in a 23.27 billion rupees deal after the central bank eased rules segmenting the type of

The consultancy firm said gov-

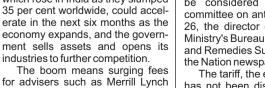
services banks could offer Analysts say that takeovers, which rose in India as they slumped 35 per cent worldwide, could accelerate in the next six months as the

ending March 2003.

than 60 billion rupees.

New Delhi set the same goal last

vear, but managed to raise no more



and Company and Morgan Stanley. The Indian government has set itself a target of raising 120 billion rupees through privatisation of state enterprises in the financial year