

# GSK leads Access to Medicine Index 2016

STAR BUSINESS DESK

GSK has recently been ranked first in the Access to Medicine Index for the fifth consecutive time, taking a leadership position in research and development, pricing, manufacturing and distribution, and product donations.

The Index, which recognises GSK for its clear access to medicines strategy and company-wide ownership, is an independent measure of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies' efforts to improve access to healthcare in developing countries.

GSK has topped the Index, which ranks individual companies on their performance across seven categories, each time since its launch in 2008.

Commenting on the 2016 Index, GSK CEO Sir Andrew Witty said: "For the last decade, our commitments to widening access to healthcare have been recognised by the Access to Medicine Index."

"This is testament to everyone at GSK, and our partners, who strive every day to research, develop and deliver innovative medicines and vaccines."

"These efforts mean that more children in the poorest countries are being immunised against deadly diseases; more patients can receive the HIV and asthma

medicines they need; and essential healthcare is reaching the remotest communities," Witty said.

"The fundamental changes we have made to our business model enable us to make our products as available and affordable as possible while generating the returns we need to sustain our business and invest in research," he said.

"But we cannot stand still. Increasing access is a complex and ongoing challenge, which is reflected in this year's Index being more demanding than ever."

"As a business, and an industry, we must push ourselves to go further and faster in strengthening access to healthcare. This is a challenge that we are ready and willing to take on," he said.

The Access to Medicine Index is a major initiative of the Access to Medicine Foundation, an international not-for-profit organisation, established in 2004 and dedicated to improving access to medicines.

The seven technical areas on which the 2016 Index ranks pharmaceutical companies are: general access to medicines management; market influence and compliance; research and development; pricing, manufacturing and distribution; patents and licensing; capacity building; product donations.

## Saudi high-speed rail link to open in 2018

AFP, Madrid

A delayed high-speed railway linking Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia will finally open in March 2018, the Spanish consortium building the project said Friday.

The railway linking Islam's holiest cities was initially scheduled to open at the end of the year but the date for its completion was moved to the end of 2017.

Now, according to a spokesman for the Al-Shoula consortium, "full operations will start in March 2018." Partial operations will begin a few months earlier, in December, he added.

Saudi Arabia in 2011 awarded the contract worth 6.7 billion euros (\$7.1 billion) to the consortium of 12 Spanish companies and two Saudi firms for the project which aims to improve transport between the two cities during the annual hajj pilgrimage.



Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia, poses with the country's 62 top young IT service exporters, at a programme to honour them, at the corporate office of the bank in Dhaka.

# Volkswagen to cut 30,000 jobs in huge post-dieselgate revamp

AFP, Frankfurt Am Main

Volkswagen on Friday announced the biggest revamp in its history, cutting 30,000 jobs in a huge savings plan to help the German auto giant recover from the dieselgate emissions cheating scandal.

The deal, agreed with workers' representatives after months of tortuous negotiations, will lead to annual savings of 3.7 billion euros (\$3.9 billion) by 2020 and will allow the group to ramp up its investment in electric vehicles, VW brand chief Herbert Diess said. "It's a major step forward, and undoubtedly one of the biggest in the history of the company," Diess told a press conference at the group's Wolfsburg headquarters in northern Germany.

The job reductions will be at VW's own-brand unit and will not affect the group's other brands such as Porsche, Audi and Skoda. Some 23,000 of the job cuts will be in Germany alone, Diess said, adding that these would be mostly through measures such as attrition and temp job losses and not through forced lay-offs. Jobs will also be lost in Brazil and Argentina, two markets where the VW brand is struggling.

"I am very sorry for those affected, but the situation of the brand at the

moment gives us little room for manoeuvre," Diess added. The so-called "Future Pact" agreed with labour leaders will also see VW create 9,000 positions in areas of new technology, as part of the group's shift to electric vehicles in the wake of dieselgate.

"We are tackling the problems at the root, even if it's painful. Many didn't think we could do it," Diess said. "Today, we have shown that Volkswagen can and will change."

VW's own-brand unit, which employs 215,000 people worldwide, had already been struggling with profitability, weighed down by high costs and low productivity. But the VW group, which owns 12 brands, was plunged into the biggest crisis in its history last year after it admitted to installing emissions cheating software in some 11 million diesel vehicles.

The so-called defeat devices could detect when a vehicle was undergoing regulatory tests and lowered emissions accordingly to make the cars seem less polluting than they were.

The crisis hurt sales and damaged the image of the proud German company, pushing it to its first loss in over two decades last year.

In response to the controversy and to burnish its environmental credentials, VW has revved up its focus on

clean energy cars, announcing plans to develop and manufacture more than 30 new electric vehicles by 2025.

As part of the shift to new technologies, Diess said VW would invest some 3.5 billion euros in Germany over the next four years in projects focussed on e-mobility, digitalisation and automation – including self-driving cars.

Top worker representative Bernd Osterloh said the radical shake-up had "positive and negative aspects", but he welcomed that German plants would be at the forefront of manufacturing VW's electric vehicles.

"These future-oriented vehicles will be made in Germany and not in other countries," he said in a statement.

Analyst Ferdinand Dudenheffer, an expert on the German auto industry, told n-tv rolling news channel that VW was on the right track with its massive restructuring plan. "It's painful but it's the right decision," he said.

The VW group has set aside some 18 billion euros to cover the fallout of the dieselgate scandal, but experts believe the final bill for the buy-backs, fixes and legal costs will be far higher.

Last month the carmaker agreed a \$14.7 billion settlement with authorities in the United States that includes compensation for nearly half a million owners of the affected cars.



Khaled Afzal Rahim, head of cards at NCC Bank, and Syed Ahsan Hossain Kazi, general manager for marketing and sales at Biman Bangladesh Airlines, sign a deal at a programme. The cardholders of the bank will enjoy up to 20 percent discounts on the tickets of the national carrier.

## Top brands honoured

FROM PAGE B1

This is the seventh time 7Up has been voted the best beverage brand in Bangladesh. Three special awards were handed over for Best Newcomer to Pran Frooto, Most Improved Brand to Super Fresh Fortified Soybean Oil and Most Consistent Brand to Horlicks.

Sharfuddin Bhuiyan Shamol, brand development coordinator of Transcom Beverages, and Md Sami-ur-Rahman, brand executive, accepted the award for 7Up from Sher Ali, general manager for business development at The Daily Star.

The brands were picked under 33 categories, based on a nationwide survey consisting of 4,800 respondents, which was carried out by Kantar Millward Brown Bangladesh. The research took a quantitative approach where face to face interviews were conducted with a structured questionnaire among randomly selected respondents.

The brands that were awarded include Lux, Lifebuoy, Sandalina Sandal Soap, Wheel, Surf Excel, Rin, Fair & Lovely, Pond's, Tibet Snow, Pepsodent Germi Check, Closeup, Colgate, Sunsilk, Dove, Clear, Parachute Advanced, Jui, Kumarika, Fresh, Teer, Pusti, ACI Pure Salt, Fresh Super Premium Salt, Molla Super Salt, Radhuni, Fresh, Dano, Pran UHT Milk, Fresh Full Cream Milk Powder, Teer Refined Soybean Oil, Maggi Noodles, Cocola Noodles, and Pran Mr Noodles.

Awardees also include Coca-Cola, Sprite, Pran Frooto, Frutica, Mangolee, Horlicks, Maltova, Pran Milk Candy, Center Fruit, Pran Mr Mango, Polar, Igloo, Kwality, MUM, Super Fresh Drinking Water, Jibon, Harpic, Clean Master, Vanish Toilet Cleaner, Ispahani Mirzapore, Taaza, Finlay, Olympic Energy Plus, Olympic Nutty and Nabisco.

BBF also named the top 10 local brands -- Radhuni Masala, Ispahani Mirzapore Tea, Super Fresh Fortified Soybean Oil, Symphony, Walton Refrigerator, Teer Refined Soybean Oil, Pran Frooto, Fresh Refined Sugar, Fresh atta/maida/suzi and Teer atta/maida/suzi.

The overall top 10 brands are: Gramenphone, Horlicks, Radhuni Masala, Ispahani Mirzapore Tea, Fair & Lovely, Rupchanda Fortified Soybean Oil, Harpic, Parachute Advanced, Sunsilk, Lux, and Banglalink. Special recognition was given to Mustafizur Rahman for his outstanding contribution to Bangladesh cricket on the global stage.

Launched in 2008, the Best Brand Award is held every year in association with The Daily Star to honour the finest brands in the country based on a consumer survey. This year's awards are also supported by Etihad, Le Méridien Dhaka, Rakeen, MSB, GTV, Aamra Networks, Masthead PR, and WebAble Digital.

Bangladesh Brand Forum also inaugurated 'Bangladesh Youth Hub', an online platform designed to prepare the youth for the next phase of human development.

Nazia Andaleeb Preema, director of BBF and president of Women in Leadership, said the award recognised the brands which have brought changes to people's life. Khandaker Samina Afrin, country manager of Kantar Millward Brown Bangladesh, said local brands have grown at a much faster rate in recent years.

She said Bangladesh's steady economic growth offers a huge opportunity for marketers to expand their footprint in the market.

Tajdin Hassan, head of marketing at The Daily Star, also spoke.

## Thai food giant buys Bellisio for \$1.1b

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's biggest food company, owned by the kingdom's richest tycoon, has agreed to buy US frozen-food giant Bellisio for nearly \$1.1 billion.

Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF) hailed the acquisition of the US firm, which has a slew of popular frozen brands under its banner, as its first "entry into the world's largest food market". The two food titans expect to close the transaction within 180 days, CPF said in a statement released Thursday.

The firm is part of Thailand's sprawling CP Group, owned by billionaire Dhanin Chienfavanont, which has stakes in everything from chicken farms and convenience stores to telecom companies.

CPF hopes to use its new foothold in America to "bring greater variety of products, particularly Asian food products, to US consumers," chief executive Adirek Sripratak said in a statement.

Bellisio Foods produces and distributes frozen foods for well-known brands like Boston Market and Chili's.

Their new Thai owners began business as a small store in Bangkok's Chinatown in 1921.

CPF's products are now ubiquitous in Thailand and Dhanin has been on a spending spree, buying stakes in businesses in Asia and beyond as he diversifies the company's portfolio.

In January last year CP Group teamed up with Japanese trading house Itochu to invest \$10 billion in Chinese conglomerate Citic Group.

That deal was seen as a move to help smooth access into China's highly regulated business sector.

Dhanin, who Forbes says is worth \$8.9 billion, hails from Bangkok's rich and influential Thai-Chinese community.

## Solar energy a strong contender for power generation: report

FROM PAGE B1

Bangladesh's plan to double fossil fuel generation capacity to 24GW by 2021 would instil a long-term dependence on fossil fuel imports. "Fossil fuel subsidies and the electricity sector losses are a growing drag on economic growth in Bangladesh," the IEEFA said in the report.

The IEEFA offered an electricity plan that focuses on generating only 18 percent of electricity based on fuel imports, with a further 9 percent coming from electricity imports from India and Bhutan.

"Our research models an affordable, more sustainable and faster-to-implement alternative electricity plan for the coming decade," said Tim Buckley, IEEFA's director of Energy Finance Studies, Australasia, and lead author of the report. The key ingredients would enhance grid efficiency, energy efficiency and build a ten-fold increase in solar energy in all its forms, he said.

An investment programme that prioritises renewable energy, grid and energy efficiency, and increased electricity imports from India and Bhutan would best serve Bangladesh in terms of energy security in comparison to heavy reliance on fossil fuel imports. It would also deliver a significantly larger, long-term cost-competitive energy supply, said the IEEFA.

A government endorsement of a transformational \$15-20 billion investment programme in renewables, smart grid and energy efficiency by 2024-25 is likely to find strong international financial system support.

"We have huge potential to tap solar energy," said Saiful Huque, professor and director of the Institute of Energy of the

University of Dhaka, citing that it is possible to generate 5-6 MW of electricity through rooftop panels. He said days are not that far when the size of solar panels will reduce and thus condense the space requirement for installation.

The falling prices of solar have widened the scope for Bangladesh to generate increased amount of electricity through renewable sources, said Badrul Imam, professor at the Department of Geology, Dhaka University. The price at Rs 4-5 per kilowatt is cheaper than the cost of coal, he said.

"The government gives importance to the costly fuels instead of cost effective sources," he said, adding that the dependence on coal would be dangerous.

Other than solar, Bangladesh has huge potential for electricity generation from wastes, said BD Rahmatullah, former director general of power cell of the ministry of power, energy & mineral resources.

"Renewable energy has not got the amount of attention it deserves. We have to bring renewable energy in the mainstream of electricity generation," said Anu Muhammad, member-secretary of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud said the energy policies and plans taken by the government would be suicidal.

"These are taken to serve the interest of a section of bureaucrats and a section of politicians. We want energy, but we do not want any fuel or technology that harms environment," he said.

BAPA Joint Secretary Sharif Jamil moderated the discussion.

## Saarc satellite renamed South Asian satellite

FROM PAGE B1

Now, India has decided to launch it under a new moniker with its own costs. The Indian Space Research Organisation is aiming to launch the satellite by March next year.

The Bangladesh government has decided to get on board with the South Asian satellite even though it might create some interference with the country's Bangabandhu-1 satellite downlink.

In satellite telecommunication, a downlink is the link from a satellite to one or more ground stations or receivers.

"We have taken expert comments from the BTRC about the South Asian satellite," said Md Faizur Rahman

Chowdhury, secretary of the telecom division.

Subsequently, the foreign ministry has been asked to inform New Delhi about Dhaka's nod, with a preliminary agreement likely to be signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in December, he said.

The preliminary agreement has already been drafted after several meetings between the telecom division, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and the foreign ministry, the official said.

The South Asian satellite's lifetime will be 12 years, with the ability to cover the Saarc region only with its 12 transponders, according to the concept paper. One transponder is equivalent to 36 megahertz.

The Bangabandhu-1 satellite will have a capacity of 40 transponders and cover Indonesia and the Philippines as well as Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

"So the South Asian satellite will hardly be of use to us. Since we do not have to contribute toward its cost, we have decided to join the consortium," said the telecom division official.

The Bangabandhu-1 satellite will have a lifetime of 15 years and will be launched by December 2017 at a cost of Tk 2,967 crore. The project got the prestigious "Recognition of Excellence" award from the International Telecommunication Union last week.



Marcel's Brand Ambassador Amin Khan opens an exclusive distributor showroom of the company—Metee Electronics—at Ishwardi in Pabna on November 12.