

# Chinese takeover marks new chapter in history of British Steel

AFP, London

A Chinese buy-out marks a new chapter in the tumultuous history of steelmaking in the United Kingdom, which has been characterised by nationalisation, privatisations and recurring crises.

Despite having an economy dominated by the services sector, steelmaking retains a special place in British hearts, where it is an enduring symbol of a bygone golden industrial age.

That explains the huge interest in Monday's announcement of a buy-out of British Steel by China's Jingye, which made national headlines even with an election campaign in full swing.

The takeover should be a breath of fresh air for some 4,000 British Steel employees, most of whom work at the Scunthorpe site in northern England.

Professional body UK Steel called it "positive news for British Steel and its workers", assessing

it would go towards "delivering a sustainable future" for the industry.

Jingye for its part has promised to invest 1.2 billion (1.4 billion euros, \$1.5 billion) over the next decade, without elaborating on how it will turn around the loss-making firm.

"It's not a huge investment," said Jonathan Owens, director of the business and management programme at Salford University, and a former worker at British Steel.

"My worry would be that it is only a short-term investment. Are they just buying the knowledge of the high-quality steel production that goes on at Scunthorpe?" So far Jingye has only said it would keep on as many employees as possible, without committing to a figure, and said cost-cutting would be necessary.

It's difficult to say if the Chinese group will succeed where others have failed to ensure a future for British Steel, which is responsible for one-third of the country's production.

British Steel has its roots as far back as the Industrial Revolution but took shape in 1967 when the Labour government nationalised the industry, which at the time employed nearly 270,000 people.

The 1980s were painful, as global demand declined and steel plants turned loss-making. A series of strikes saw the Conservative government under the "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher privatise the firm in 1988.

That signalled the start of a long decline that involved deep cuts in the workforce, the closure of sites and the loss of the company's name before Tata Steel bought it in 2007.

In 2016, the investment fund Greybull Capital bought part of its activities for a symbolic one pound. Greybull Capital brought back the name British Steel for its long steel products business, mainly in rail and construction, hoping to make it a European leader.

But the dream did not become a reality and it went bust in May this year.

The slump again reflected difficulties in the sector, which now employs no more than about 32,000 people and has been hit by fierce competition from China and uncertainty over Brexit cutting demand from European clients.

The relaunch of British Steel, which is the second-biggest steelmaker in the country, will face as much scrutiny as the future of Tata Steel, which currently holds the top spot.

The Indian giant has revealed little of its plans for the United Kingdom since the recent failure of a tie-up between its European business and Germany's Thyssenkrupp, prompting fears for the future of Tata's Port Talbot plant in south Wales.

Port Talbot employs some 4,000 of Tata's 8,000 employees in Britain.

A third business is still trying to make its mark, the Liberty House group of the British-Indian tycoon Sanjeev Gupta.

He has quietly built up his portfolio, notably by buying out steelmaking firms in former industrial areas, and is reported to be interested in some British Steel assets.



Hasan Rahman Ratan, managing director of Datasoft Manufacturing & Assembly Inc, receives the Outstanding ICT Company Award in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

## Datasoft, eGeneration win global awards

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local tech firm Datasoft Manufacturing and Assembly (DMA) Inc won the outstanding ICT company award from the Asian-Oceania Computing Industry Organisation (ASOCIO) for its Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City plant.

The plant is a pioneer in the Internet of Things (IoT) solutions in Bangladesh. DMA has introduced its own cloud-based solution to retain private data in Bangladesh for all of its IoT projects at the plant.

Tokyo-based ASOCIO is a grouping of ICT industry associations representing the Asian-Oceania region.

Established in July 2017, DMA Inc is a dedicated technology solutions company with focus on raising productivity and efficiency by using renewable energy-based digital devices and laptops.

"This is an incredible achievement for us as well as the country," said Hasan Rahman

Ratan, managing director of DMA Inc.

"ASOCIO was impressed by seeing our portfolio as within only two years we exported IoT devices to Saudi Arabia and are working with the American school security system."

At present, 25 engineers are working at the plant, which DMA Inc plans to increase to 150 by next year, he added.

Mahboob Zaman, a pioneer ICT entrepreneur of the country, is the chairman of the board of DMA Inc.

Another Bangladeshi company eGeneration won the award in the 'outstanding user organisation' category for successfully implementing IT solutions in more than ten countries.

Its Executive Vice Chairman SM Ashrafur Islam received the award in the event held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Monday.

About the award Shameem Ahsan, chairman of eGeneration, said they are working to digitise the traditional system.



A British Steel sign is seen in Scunthorpe, northern England, Britain.

## SME loans via NGOs

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State-run PKSIF provides Tk 1 lakh to Tk 10 lakh SME loans through 250 partner NGOs in order to create entrepreneurs and jobs in rural areas. Currently, banks distribute farm loans through NGOs.

The governor said only 7 to 10 percent of large default loans were recovered whereas the recovery rate is 95 percent in case of small loans.

"Micro-entrepreneurs are contributing to the economy and creating jobs in rural areas. So, we need to promote the SME sector," he said.

Md Murad Hassan, state minister for information, said the government is emphasising the SME sector to promote businesses.

He gave credits to the PKSIF and its partner NGOs for impressive economic growth and also appreciated the micro-entrepreneurs for their innovative ideas and entrepreneurship.

"There is a great potential to develop the economy through these entrepreneurs."

Prof MA Sattar Mandal, a former vice-chancellor of the Bangladesh Agricultural University, suggested running massive productive activities instead of traditional development programmes in order to

create entrepreneurs and jobs which would contribute to the development of the economy.

He called for introducing modern technologies among micro-entrepreneurs to change the gear for more production and expand the market, instead of focusing only on the local market.

While moderating the seminar, Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, chairman of the PKSIF, said they are giving attention to micro-entrepreneurs to achieve sustainable economic development. The PKSIF provides micro-finance to the poor as part of its poverty alleviation efforts.

Md Fazlul Kader, a deputy managing director of the state-run agency, in his keynote speech, said the growth of microenterprises has significant impact on reducing poverty and hunger, ensuring good health and well-being, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, and laying the foundation for sustainable industrialisation.

"We should go for nourishing our small entrepreneurs to grow big to compete with large companies and multinational companies. The micro-entrepreneurs should be linked with the big companies in a commercially sustainable way," he added.

## Food wastage alarming

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"Wastage of food is not good as many people remain hungry," said SM Munjurul Hannan Khan, additional secretary to the ministry of environment, forests and climate change.

He also touched upon generation of waste from food packaging in plastic. The ministry plans to frame a law to come out of the practice of single-use plastic.

"But the law alone will not help stop use of polythene and plastic. A mass movement is necessary," he added.

AAB Country Director Farah Kabir moderated the session at Six Seasons Hotel in Dhaka.

## Unilever appoints Andersen as new chairman

REUTERS

Unilever on Wednesday named non-executive director Nils Andersen as its new chairman, appointing an executive with deep experience across consumer goods and logistics industries to help the Dove soap maker navigate a dip in emerging market sales growth and fix its foods business.

Andersen will replace Marijn Dekkers, who is standing down after more than three years as chairman to focus on his responsibilities as founder and chairman of investment and advisory firm Novalis LifeSciences, the company said in a statement.

Dekkers will remain on the board as non-executive director.

Andersen, who was appointed non-executive director of Unilever in 2015, comes in to support chief executive Alan Jope at a time when India and China, two of the company's biggest markets, are showing signs of slowdown.

The Sino-US trade war and sluggish



Nils Andersen

domestic consumption are weighing on China's economy and irregular monsoons have curbed rural spending in India, contributing to a sharp slowdown in emerging market sales in its most recent quarter.

At the same time, Jope is struggling to boost market share growth in its Foods business, as the rump of it resides in low-growth, center-store categories like tea, bouillon, mayo

and condiments.

The company has changed internal leadership of the category twice in the last two years, but sales in the business that makes Hellmann's mayonnaise and Magnum ice-cream still remain muted in contrast to Unilever's other two units Beauty and Personal care and Home Care.

Andersen, 61, joined Unilever after heading some of Europe's biggest companies during his career, including shipping giant AP Moller Maersk A/S and brewer Carlsberg A/S. At Maersk, where he served as CEO between 2007 and 2016, he was credited with bringing customer centricity and exceeding international growth targets, but was ousted after a 34 percent decline in the stock since his appointment and as the board wanted to steer the old conglomerate in a new direction.

But at Carlsberg, where he ran the company since 2001, he managed to double its share price in the two years before he moved to Maersk.

## Kamal plays down default loan worries

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The finance minister said some default loans were created due to problems in the system.

He also said the bank interest rate is high due to the applying the compound interest rate formula instead of simple rate.

The financial institutions division of the finance ministry has asked all banks to form a cell to ensure close monitoring on classified loans of Tk 100 crore and above.

The minister said the Bangladesh Bank is also monitoring the savings and loan interest rates every month while it also putting pressure on the banks to reduce their loan interest rates.

In response to a question from the main opposition Jatiya Party MP Kazi Firoz Rashid, the finance minister said the tax payment process would be made totally hassle-free from this fiscal year as the system would be made automated soon.



Firoz Alam, managing director of Bengal Cement, receives an ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System certification from Md Samsul Alam, head of AJA Bangladesh Ltd, at Bengal House in Dhaka on Monday.

## 115 taxpayers awarded in Ctg, Khulna

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One crore people are liable to pay taxes but they do not feel it to be their duty, said the minister, adding, "Our GDP has increased fourfold but the number of taxpayers has not increased at the expected rate."

Chattogram Tax Circle-2 Commissioner Abul Kalam Kaikobad chaired the programme.

Meanwhile, Khulna Income Tax Zone awarded 77 people from Khulna City Corporation, 10 districts and five pourasavas, reports a correspondent.

Addressing as chief guest at the programme at a city hotel, Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque said there was no alternative to paying taxes on time for the development and prosperity of the country.

It is not acceptable that only 2.5 million people pay tax in a country of 160 million, he said. Khulna Tax Commissioner Proshanta Kumar Roy presided over the event.

## Regulators begin probe into Google-Ascension cloud computing deal

REUTERS

A US federal regulator has initiated an investigation into a cloud computing deal between Alphabet Inc's Google and Ascension Health which would give Google access to detailed health information of millions of patients, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

"We are happy to cooperate with any questions about the project," Google said in a blog post later on Tuesday, regarding

the federal inquiry.

The Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services will look into the data collection to ensure the partnership is in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which safeguards medical information, the Journal said.

On Monday, Google said patient data "cannot and will not be combined with any Google consumer data."

## MI Cement segregates shipping business

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The cement maker yesterday informed stock investors through the Dhaka Stock Exchange that it has approved the transfer of the three mother vessels to its three fully-owned subsidiaries.

The company's core business is cement production and sales, whereas shipping is a specialised business and it requires

separate knowledge and skills that are quite different from the current business.

So, a separate company will ensure transparency, accountability and responsibility to the related officials with separate financials. It will also ensure that operating and financial performances are gauged separately with separate key performance indicators.

### IMPACTING LIVES BEYOND CONNECTIVITY

Channeling excess energy from edotco sites to improve the quality of life for over 3,500 people.

edotco Group Sdn Bhd ("edotco"), the region's end-to-end integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company, is improving the lives of over 3,500 people in the rural areas of Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Malaysia through its Tower to Community (T2C) programme.

Going beyond its core purpose of enabling connectivity, edotco channels excess electricity from its towers to power up homes and services for communities living in nearby areas. This surplus energy is derived from a combination of renewable energy sources and diesel generators equipped at each site.

"edotco believes that it has a purpose beyond being a telecommunications provider. We seek to also improve the lives of communities living close to our towers. We work hand-in-hand with a wide-range of stakeholders as partners in a number of initiatives.

The considerable impact from our T2C initiatives are a testament of our commitment to deliver excellence even in areas outside our business priorities. Whether it is to power homes, medical facilities, schools or pockets of worship, we strive to improve the quality of lives for those living nearby our towers," said edotco Group's Chief Executive Officer, Suresh Sidhu.

While access to electricity for the larger population in Bangladesh and Myanmar has been rising with electrification rates at 88% and 70% respectively in 2017, there are still pockets of communities that are not connected to the national grid. These segments struggle to meet basic needs and comfort as reliable and affordable access to electricity continues to be a challenge.

Against this backdrop, edotco's T2C programme was launched in 2016 as one of its key initiatives to address the unmet needs of people living nearby its towers. Today, there are a total of 32 sites across Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Malaysia that are bringing a positive impact in communities.

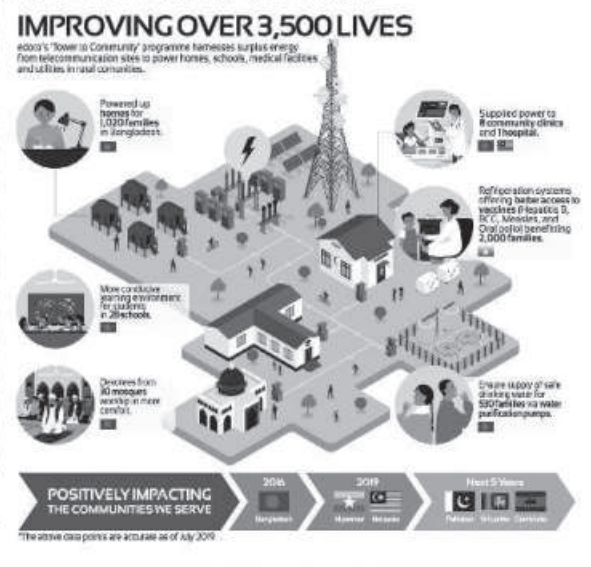
Since its inception, this initiative has enhanced the lives at home for school children and their families by generating electricity to power 1,020

houses in over 26 locations in Bangladesh. To improve the living conditions of these communities, edotco has also extended its initiative by installing solar-powered water pumps to ensure over 30 families in villages located in Jadur Haat and Nilphamari have access to

clean and safe drinking water. The initiative also powers up one hospital, 30 mosques and 28 schools in Bangladesh.

Addressing a different need in Myanmar, the T2C initiative tends to the limited healthcare access in remote communities by powering up refrigeration systems to maintain the cold chain to store Hepatitis B, BCG, Measles, and Oral polio vaccination for over 2,000 families in rural hard to reach areas. Similarly, in Malaysia, the T2C project provides a reliable source of energy to power the refrigeration system and bi-monthly operation of an Orang Asli community clinic in the remote areas of Cameron Highlands.

"We place great emphasis



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