Wholesale traders in the capital's Sadarghat have started to stock up on dates for upcoming Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims, with varieties ranging from Tk 120 per kilogramme to some which are even Tk 2,000 per kilogramme. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Pandemic and war rattle globalisation

AFP, *Paris*

Globalisation, which has both fans and detractors alike, is being tested like never before after the one-two punch of Covid and war.

The pandemic had already raised questions about the world's reliance on an economic model that has broken trade barriers, but made countries heavily reliant on each other as production was delocalised over the decades.

Companies have been struggling to cope with major bottlenecks in the global supply chain.

Russia's war in Ukraine has raised fears about further disruptions, with everything from energy supplies to auto parts to exports of wheat and raw materials under threat.

Larry Fink, the head of financial giant BlackRock, put it bluntly: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the globalisation we have experienced over the last three decades."

"We had already seen connectivity between nations, companies and even people strained by two years of the pandemic," Fink wrote in a letter to shareholders on Thursday.

But US Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, disagrees.

"I really have to push back on that," she told CNBC in an interview.

"We're deeply involved in the global economy. I expect that to remain, it is something that has brought benefits to the United States, and many countries around the world."

Shortages of surgical masks at the outset of the pandemic in 2020 became a symbol of the world's dependence on Chinese factories for all sorts of goods.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has raised concerns about food shortages around the globe as the two agricultural powerhouses are among the major breadbaskets of the world.

It has also put a spotlight on Europe's -- and especially Germany's -- heavy dependence on gas supplies from Russia, now a state under crippling sanctions.

"A number of vulnerabilities" have emerged that show the limits of having supply chains spread out in different locations, the former director general of the World Trade Organisation, Pascal Lamy, told AFP.

The global trade tensions have prompted the European Union, for instance, to seek "strategic autonomy" in critical sectors.

The production of semiconductors -- microchips that are vital to industries ranging from video games to cars -- is now a priority for Europe and the United States.

"The pandemic did not bring radical changes in terms of reshoring (bringing back business from overseas)," said Ferdi De Ville, professor at Ghent Institute for International & European Studies.

"But this time it might be different because (the conflict) will have an impact on how businesses think about their investment decisions, their supply chains," he said.

"They have realised that what was maybe unthinkable before the past month has now become realistic, in terms of far-reaching sanctions," said de Ville, author of an article on "The end of globalisation as we know it".

The goal now is to redirect strategic dependence towards allies, what he coined as "friend-shoring" instead of "off-shoring".

A US-EU agreement Friday to create a task force to wean Europe off its reliance on Russian fossil fuels is the most recent example of friend-shoring.

For Lamy, this shows "there is no de-globalisation". Globalisation, he said, is "an animal that evolves a lot".

Globalisation had already faced an existential crisis when former US president Donald Trump launched a trade war with China in 2018, triggering a tit-for-tat exchange of punitive tariffs.

His successor, Joe Biden, invoked the need to "buy American" in his sweeping investment plan to "rebuild America".

"We will buy American to make sure everything from the deck of an aircraft carrier to the steel on highway guardrails are made in America," he said in his State of the Union speech.

Maddhapara granite extraction resumes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Granite extraction from mines at Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur resumed yesterday following a 15-day suspension for a lack of explosives.

Maddhapara Granite Mining Company, under state-owned Petrobangla which manages the country's oil, gas and mineral resources, engaged Germania Trest Consortium (GTC) in a contract to develop and maintain its mines.

Under the contract, the Maddhapara company is supposed to supply the GTC with ammonium nitrate, an industrial chemical commonly used as an explosive for quarrying and mining activities.

A senior official of the Maddhapara company, seeking anonymity, confirmed that they had stopped supplying the GTC with the explosives required for which extraction activities were suspended on March 12.

Officials of the Maddhapara company said the situation had stemmed from a global supply shortage of explosives and so mining activities would resume as soon as possible.

A general manager of the company said they have been working to procure explosives for the last six months but have so far failed for various reasons. For example, a tender was floated thrice in the last six months but they did not receive any response from potential bidders.

The Maddhapara company finally procured the explosives from sellers in Thailand and it arrived at the Chattogram port a couple of days ago before reaching the mine site on Saturday.

There is high demand for the rock extracted at Parbatipur among local construction companies as they are of a higher quality yet cheaper than those available in countries such as India and Bhutan. The Maddhapara company extracts around 1 million tonnes of rock each year from three mines.

City Bank DMD promoted

STAR BUSINESS DESK

City Bank recently witnessed the promotion of its deputy managing director and chief financial officer to the post of additional managing director.

Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman had been serving in the preceding capacities since 2018, said a press release.

He joined the bank as an executive vice-president and chief financial officer in 2011.

Rahman is a director of IDLC, City Brokerage and City Bank Capital Resources.

He was a financial management specialist for South Asia at World Bank, chief financial officer of Leads Corporation and in various capacities at Grameenphone.

What can banks and financial

FROM PAGE B4

Banking Alliance (NZBA) to unite the banking sector to reduce GHG emission through setting intermediary SMART targets and thus reaching the net zero emission or carbon neutral by 2050.

In Bangladesh, IDLC Finance Ltd is the only financial institution that has been a signatory member of the UNEP FI since 2010 and signed the CCCA and NZBA agreements in 2019 and 2021, respectively, to reach the net-zero emission by 2050 through its internal operation and loan portfolio.

It is high time that other banks and FIs came forward to combat climate change and address GHG emission through their operation and loan portfolio. By setting SMART targets and developing a sustainable portfolio, banks and FIs can achieve net zero emission, which would ultimately help in decreasing the global temperature and increasing environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Bangladesh, as a member of the UN and a signatory of the Paris Agreement, has a responsibility of integrating imminent constructive strategies to mitigate carbon emission and thus alleviate the drastic climate change.

Banks and FIs are responsible for infusing development in the economy and thus can play an active role in mitigating climate change. In this regard, being the regulatory body, the Bangladesh Bank has been playing a vigorous role in guiding the banks and FIs to decrease the global temperature and GHG emission.

Introducing the Sustainable Finance Policy in 2020, compelling banks and FIs to set annual targets in green and sustainable finance, rolling out various refinancing/pre-financing schemes for green and sustainable finance, and increasing awareness among the stakeholders are some commendable measures undertaken by the BB.

We believe the central bank will also come up with pragmatic targets for the banks and FIs for reducing carbon emission to attain sustainability in line with the global banking sector.

If we do not take imminent actions, we will fail to conserve nature and this will drastically hit us where our own existence would become questionable. So, along with various other sectors, banks and FIs must also contribute to this effect vigilantly.

The author is head of corporate at IDLC Finance Ltd. He can be reached at mahmed@idlc.com.

China industrial profit up

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"We expect the Covid outbreak in multiple provinces to weigh on industrial profits in the near term."

Given the coronavirus flare-ups, policies to further ease monetary and fiscal measures can be expected, they said.

Global upheavals such as the war in Ukraine have also created uncertainty over international supply chains and the potential for even higher commodity and energy prices, ultimately weighing on the bottom line of Chinese firms.

Vice Premier Liu He said recently that Beijing will take measures to boost the economy in the first quarter and that monetary policy would be set to support growth.

To ease financial burdens for smaller firms, China has pledged around 1.5 trillion yuan ($240 billion) in value-added tax (VAT) rebates.

The finance ministry said on Thursday China will exempt the 3 per cent VAT levied on some small firms, the country's main source of jobs.

The statistics bureau's industrial profits data cover large firms with annual revenues above 20 million yuan from their main operations.

Samsung chief's mother sells stakes

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two days after her two daughters -- Lee Boo-jin, Hotel Shilla president, and Lee Seo-hyun, director of the Samsung Welfare Foundation -- sold their combined 3.9 per cent shares in Samsung SDS, the IT solutions unit, to secure 400 billion won in cash.

Last year, the Samsung family announced plans to pay the whopping 12 trillion won in heritance taxes for the next five years following the death of the Samsung patriarch in 2020.

Taxes for inherited shares make up most of the total amount: 3.1 trillion won for Hong, 2.9 trillion won for Lee Jae-yong, the only son, 2.6 trillion won for Boo-jin, the elder daughter, and 2.4 trillion won for the youngest Seo-hyun.

Because they own stakes in key affiliates, their stake sales are closely watched as they are directly linked to the family's control over the nation's largest conglomerate.

"Given more than 50 per cent favorable shares owned by Samsung affiliates and the owner family, the impact seems limited in their governance structure," said Choi Kwan-soon, an analyst at SK Securities.

Due to an increase in supply, share prices usually fall after a big sell-off. But he predicted a limited impact over the long term, saying the stake sale has nothing to do with the business fundamentals of Samsung companies.

On Thursday, Samsung Electronics shares closed at 69,800 won, down 0.99 per cent from the previous trading day.

Rwanda's infrastructure

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said that the existing trade relation with Bangladesh is very friendly and it would continue in future as well.

Rwanda is the second-fastest growing economy in Africa and fifth in the east African region in terms of creating network readiness.

"In Rwanda, an entrepreneur can avail company registration in less than six hours," she said.

Jacqueline invited Bangladesh's investors to invest in Rwanda with a view to capturing the large African market and called for stronger collaboration between the businessmen of both countries.

She urged the Dhaka Chamber to sign a memorandum of understanding with its counterpart in Rwanda and requested a frequent exchange of business delegations of both parties.

Monowar Hossain, vice-president of the DCCI, and Irakoze Prosper, second counsellor of the High Commission of Rwanda, were also present during the meeting.

Russian sanctions could be lifted with Ukraine withdrawal: UK

REUTERS, *London*

British foreign minister Liz Truss says sanctions imposed on Russian individuals and companies could be lifted if Russia withdraws from Ukraine and commits to end aggression, the Telegraph newspaper reported on Saturday.

Britain and other Western nations are using economic sanctions to cripple the Russian economy and punish President Vladimir Putin for invading Ukraine, seeking to press him to abandon what he calls a special military operation to demilitarise and "denazify" Ukraine.

In an interview with the Telegraph, Truss held out the possibility the measures could end if Moscow changed course. "What we know is that Russia signed up to multiple agreements they simply don't comply with. So there needs to be hard levers. Of course, sanctions are a hard lever," she said.

"Those sanctions should only come off with a full ceasefire and withdrawal, but also commitments that there will be no further aggression. And also, there is the opportunity to have snapback sanctions if there is further aggression in future. That is a real lever that I think can be used."

The British government says it has so far imposed sanctions on banks with total assets of 500 billion pounds ($658.65 billion) and oligarchs and family members with a net worth of more than 150 billion pounds.

Truss also suggested that the crisis had brought Britain and the European Union closer after the relationship became badly strained in the wake of Brexit.

"One of the points I would make about this crisis is we have worked very, very closely with the European Union," she said.

Kuwait-Saudi deal to develop gas field illegal: Iran

AFP, *Tehran*

Iran on Saturday branded "illegal" a deal reached between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to develop a disputed gas field in the Gulf, insisting on its right to also exploit it.

The energy ministers of the Gulf Arab states signed an agreement on Monday to develop the Arash/Dorra gas field, according to an official Kuwaiti statement.

The move comes with energy prices soaring on world markets in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Iran's foreign ministry dismissed the agreement as "illegal" on Saturday, saying it was "contrary to current procedures and previously held negotiations".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its right to exploit the Arash/Dorra gas field," the ministry's spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement.

"Any action for the operation and development of this field must be done in coordination with and cooperation of all the three countries."

The dispute dates back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait each awarded an offshore concession, one to the former Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Co., which became part of BP, and one to Royal Dutch Shell.

The two concessions overlapped in the northern part of the field, whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220 billion cubic metres (seven trillion cubic feet).