

## Canada-China firm to invest \$5.74m in Bepza EZ

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A Canada-China owned company will invest \$5.74 million to set up a diversified product manufacturing plant in Bepza Economic Zone. The company will produce annually 10,000 tonnes of wooden disposable cutlery (knife, fork, spoon, and stirrer) and medical products (swab, tongue depressor) and it will create 1,990 job opportunities for Bangladeshi nationals. Ali Reza Mazid, member for investment promotion at Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), and Li Xin, project manager of Goodwood (Dhaka) Co Ltd, signed an agreement in this regard at Bepza Complex in Dhaka on April 5. Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman was also present at the signing ceremony. Including Goodwood (Dhaka) Company, Bepza has approved seven companies to set up industries in Bepza Economic Zone.

## Standard Bank's seminar on Ramadan Taqwah, banking

### STAR BUSINESS DESK

Standard Bank Ltd (SBL) virtually organised a seminar titled "Ramadan Taqwah and Banking" on the first day of the fasting month. Khondoker Rashed Maqsood, managing director of the bank, presided over the seminar, where Md Saifullah, a member of the Shariah Supervisory Committee at SBL, presented a keynote. Md Touhidul Alam Khan, additional managing director, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, M Latif Hasan, deputy managing directors, and Md Mohon Miah, head of SBL Shariah Secretariat, also joined the event.



Mounds of watermelon are seen at the Shah Ali wholesale market in Dhaka's Mirpur-1. With the first week of Ramadan nearing to a close, it comes as no surprise that many people prefer to break their day of fasting with fresh fruits such as these. Big-sized watermelons were selling for between Tk 300 and Tk 350 at the market on Wednesday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# War, energy crisis force UK into fossil fuels rethink

AFP, London

Given the climate emergency, the UN chief says that investing now in fossil fuels is "moral and economic madness". But given the energy shock from the war in Ukraine, Britain is set to do just that. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government will on Thursday release a much-delayed energy strategy that will call for more renewable power from nuclear, offshore wind and solar. But it will also invite new licences to drill for North Sea oil and gas and help alleviate price pressures "in the nearer term", according to an outline of the plan released in advance by the government. The strategy "will reduce our dependence on power sources exposed to volatile international prices we cannot control, so we can enjoy greater energy self-sufficiency with cheaper bills", Johnson said in a statement. When Britain hosted the COP26 climate summit in November, the prime minister sounded as ominous as any environmentalist in warning governments

about the dangers of inaction. But the government says the market shock from sanctions on Russia requires a temporary reappraisal of fossil fuels, as rocketing energy prices leave Britons facing the worst cost-of-living crisis since the 1950s. "Scaling up cheap renewables and new nuclear, while maximising North Sea production, is the best and only way to ensure our energy independence over the coming years," Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said. But for UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, there is lunacy in backing fossil fuels at all, as he spelt out Monday at the release of the latest UN report on climate change. The 3,000-page report warned that countries risk ending up with trillions in worthless assets such as offshore platforms and pipelines when demand for fossil fuels wanes in coming decades. For the UK government, however, political pressure to tackle the energy crisis is heating up ahead of nationwide local elections on May 5. The new strategy envisions enough offshore wind production to power every

UK home by 2030, and one-quarter of all electricity coming from both large and smaller "modular" nuclear reactors. It also projects a five-fold increase in solar power and a doubling in energy derived from "low-carbon" hydrogen. If all the bets come off, according to the statement, Britain could derive 95 percent of its electricity from low-carbon sources by 2030. No costings were given, but the government said it was underpinned by 100 billion (\$130 billion, 120 billion euros) of private-sector investment in "clean energy" leading to 480,000 new jobs by 2030. Up to eight large-scale reactors could begin to be built this decade under the plan. Modular reactors power the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines but are untested at scale, and their part in the energy strategy is "subject to technology readiness from industry", the statement said. Since the invasion of Ukraine, the government is also reviewing a long-stalled plan to harness the enormous tidal power of the Severn Estuary between Wales and southwest England.

## BAY TERMINAL South Korean JV appointed as consultant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) has appointed a South Korean joint venture company as the international consultant for the construction of the much-awaited Bay Terminal which would enable the country's premier sea port to accommodate bigger vessels. The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved the appointment of the joint venture of the Kunhwa Engineering and Consulting Company and DaeYoung Engineering Company for Tk 126.50 crore. The terminal is being constructed on around 2,500 acres of land. It will have a length of 6.15 kilometres, stretching from the back of Chattogram Export Processing Zone to Rasmonighat on the Halishahar coast of the Bay of Bengal. It was initially decided that one single firm would build the whole terminal under a public-private partnership model. Vessel movement to and from the port through the Karnaphuli channel is reliant on high tide. Once the proposed Bay Terminal is constructed, vessel operation at the terminal would be possible round the clock. Bigger vessels with a draft of up to 12 metres would also be able to berth. Currently the port jetties can accommodate vessels of up to 9.5 metres of draft.

## EU's full ban on Russian coal to be pushed back

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union envoys are set to approve on Thursday a ban on Russian coal that would take full effect from mid-August, a month later than initially proposed, an EU source told Reuters, following pressure from Germany to delay the measure. The phase-out of EU imports of Russian coal is the cornerstone measure in a fifth package of sanctions against Russia that the EU Commission proposed this week, as a reaction to atrocities in the Ukrainian town of Bucha. Once approved, it will be the EU's first ban on any import of energy from Russia since the start of what the Kremlin calls a "special operation" in Ukraine on February 24. Oil and gas, which represent far bigger imports from Moscow, are still untouched. Much of Europe's buying of Russian coal is in the spot market, rather than long-term contracts. Those spot purchases would be halted immediately after sanctions are imposed. The EU Commission had initially proposed a wind-down period of three months for existing contracts, meaning that Russia could effectively still export coal to the EU for 90 days after sanctions were imposed, according to a document seen by Reuters.

## Lankan president asks experts

FROM PAGE B4 Abeywardana warned Wednesday that the economic crisis could lead to starvation unless addressed within the week. Meetings with the IMF are set to begin by next week but Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa – the president's brother – resigned on Sunday night along with nearly the entire cabinet. The country is still without a replacement, with his successor quitting after just one day in office. Public anger is at fever pitch, with crowds attempting to storm the homes of several government figures and demanding President

Rajapaksa's resignation. Security forces have dispersed protests with tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets, and dozens have been arrested – many saying they were tortured in police custody. Opposition parties have rejected the president's overture to form a unity administration and joined calls for him to step down. But chief government whip Johnston Fernando reiterated Thursday that Rajapaksa would stay in office to lead the country out of the crisis. The government has lost its majority in parliament but there has so far been no clear signal that opposition legislators will attempt a

no-confidence motion to topple the administration. A critical foreign currency shortage has left Sri Lanka struggling to import essential goods, with the pandemic torpedoing vital revenue from tourism and remittances. Rating agencies have warned of a potential default on Sri Lanka's \$51 billion foreign debt, and authorities are unable to raise more commercial loans because of credit downgrades. Economists say the crisis has been exacerbated by government mismanagement, years of accumulated borrowing and ill-advised tax cuts.



Sheikh Rakibul Karim, chief executive officer (current charge) of Guardian Life Insurance Ltd, and Mujibul Hasan, country director of Swisscontact Bangladesh, exchanged signed documents of a group insurance agreement in Dhaka recently. Employees of Swisscontact Bangladesh will enjoy life coverage and medical benefits under the deal. Mahmud Afsar, executive vice-president of the insurer, and Anika Parvez, human resource specialist of Swisscontact Bangladesh, were present.

PHOTO: GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE

## Stocks fall

FROM PAGE B4 JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing topped the gainers' list with a rise of about 10 per cent. Imam Button Industries, Saffo Spinning Mills, Anwar Galvanizing, and Fareast Finance and Investment also saw major gains. Uttara Bank shed the most, suffering a 13.8 per cent drop. Brac Bank,

Shahjalal Islami Bank, Mercantile Bank and Bangladesh National Insurance were among those incurring heavy losses. Beximco became the stock to be traded the most, with shares worth Tk 42 crore changing hands, followed by Sonali Paper and Board Mills, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, GBB Power

and Bangladesh Building Systems. Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) also fell yesterday. The CASPI, the main index of the CSE, edged down 65 points, or 0.33 per cent, to close the day at 19,501. Of the 265 stocks to undergo trade, 56 rose, 170 fell and 39 did not see any price movement.

## LafargeHolcim

FROM PAGE B4 In September last year, the industries ministry directed LafargeHolcim to stop producing aggregates by crushing the same raw material and marketing them locally as it had no legal layout plan and approval, according to a letter of the ministry. LafargeHolcim then filed a writ petition, challenging the ministry's instruction. In January this year the multinational cement manufacturer the final nod from the High Court to resume its aggregate business. The industries ministry then filed a petition challenging the judgment. The Appellate Division recently disposed of the petition, said a Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website post of the company yesterday.

It took into consideration a recent industries ministry letter allowing temporary permission to continue the business until the government formed a policy. The letter also stipulated that once a policy was published, the company had to apply again for the permission. Stocks of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, however, dropped 1.87 per cent to Tk 78.90 at the DSE yesterday. Built with an investment of Tk 40.1 crore, the company's plant has a capacity to produce 12 lakh tonnes of aggregate per annum. The annual demand is around 1.5 crore tonnes, for which Bangladesh relies on imports from the countries such as India, Bhutan, Vietnam, Oman and the UAE for supply.

## Dollar holds near 2-year highs

REUTERS, London

The dollar hovered near two-year highs against a basket of major currencies on Thursday after meeting minutes showed the Federal Reserve preparing to move aggressively to fight inflation, while commodity currencies fell further from recent peaks. The euro bucked the trend but was near a one-month low below \$1.09 as investors await European Central Bank minutes due later. Minutes from the March Fed meeting published on Wednesday showed "many" participants were prepared to raise interest rates in 50-basis-point increments in coming months. They also prepared markets for a reduction in the Fed's balance sheet after the May meeting at a rate of \$95 billion per month, the beginning of the reversal of the massive stimulus in

pumped into the economy after the Covid-19 pandemic struck. "That's nearly twice as quick as was seen during the last balance sheet run down during the 2017-19 cycle," ING analysts said. "All of the above points to the Fed applying a heavy foot to the brakes, which should be positive for the dollar." By 0745 GMT, the US dollar index traded at 99.581, near a 2-year high of 99.778. The Australian and New Zealand dollars fell between 0.3 per cent-0.2 per cent to sit around 2 per cent beneath highs struck on Tuesday as the Fed's tone has offset a hawkish shift from Australia's central bank, and a pullback in commodity prices whacked them. Minutes from the ECB's March meeting, due later in the day, will be watched for insight into policymakers' delicate balancing act to manage soaring inflation and slowing growth.

## Ctg customs seize export

FROM PAGE B4 against the company soon," said Md Ahasan Ullah, deputy commissioner of Custom House Chattogram. Customs officials suspect that if the consignment had gone on to be shipped yesterday,

the company would have claimed Tk 76 lakh in incentives. According to a Bangladesh Bank circular, a total of 42 products and sectors get up to 20 per cent of the export value of the goods from the government as an incentive, with jute items enjoying the highest amount. "Now we are collecting detailed lists of the company's previous exports to find out whether the company engaged in similar irregularities in the past," said Ahasan Ullah.