

Oil prices firmer in Asian trade

AFP, Singapore

Oil prices were slightly firmer in Asian trade Thursday on persistent concerns over real and potential supply problems in key producers Iran and Nigeria, dealers said.

At 11:11 am (0311 GMT), New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in February, was up seven cents at 65.80 dollars a barrel from its close of 65.73 dollars in the United States Wednesday, where it had earlier struck 66.93 dollars -- the highest level since September 22.

Iran, the second biggest crude exporter in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), is facing possible United Nations sanctions over its nuclear programme, triggering concerns over supply from the Middle East producer, dealers said.

In defiance of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran last week broke the seals on a nuclear facility to resume research on uranium enrichment after a voluntary suspension.

Iran's move has intensified fears

that the regime is seeking to make an atomic bomb. The country insists it only wants to make reactor fuel to generate electricity.

Diplomats say Iran is almost certain to be referred to the UN Security Council when the IAEA board of governors meets in Vienna on February 2.

There are also concerns about supplies from Africa's biggest producer, Nigeria, where separatists blamed for a string of attacks on oil installations have called on foreign energy companies to leave.

Pubali Bank opens broker house

In a bid to perform securities trading business successfully, Pubali Bank Ltd recently opened securities trading (broker house).

Mirza Azizul Islam, chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission, inaugurated the broker house of the bank, says a press release.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank, and Mohammad Shahaq Khan, president of Dhaka Stock Exchange, among others, were present at the inauguration.



Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd, speaks at the inauguration of securities trading (broker house) of the bank recently. Mirza Azizul Islam, chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission, and Mohammad Shahaq Khan, president of Dhaka Stock Exchange, among others, were present.

Malaysia, Chile to explore FTA

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia and Chile on Thursday announced moves towards a free trade agreement in what could be the first such deal for Malaysia with a Latin American country.

Malaysia's trade minister Rafidah Aziz and Chile's foreign minister Ignacio Walker said both countries would begin studying the feasibility of a free trade deal after a meeting here.

"We are very pleased to have moved this step forward," Walker told reporters after the meeting.

"Today we have 230 million dollars of trade between our two countries, and we plan to sell the idea of Chile becoming a springboard, a gateway, a platform to Latin America because of the political and economic stability of our country," said the minister, who is on a one-day visit to Malaysia.

Both countries agreed to look into a free trade agreement (FTA) after a bilateral leaders' meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November, said Malaysia's trade ministry.

Officials are expected to start discussions in February, with the study to be completed by the end of 2006, said Walker.

Chile is Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner among Latin American countries, with bilateral trade shooting up in 2004 by 77.7 percent to 232.4 million dollars, said the ministry.



Niaz Habib, managing director (current charge) of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL), speaks at the inaugural session of a 'Foundation Course on General Banking' in Dhaka recently. Other senior officials are also seen.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's (Jan 19, 2006) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

| Sell | BC | Currency | TT Clean | Buy | OD Sight Doc | OD Transfer |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| 68.5700 | 68.6000 | USD | 67.4500 | 67.4275 | 67.3826 | |
| 83.8337 | 83.8704 | EUR | 80.5555 | 80.5287 | 80.4750 | |
| 121.4580 | 121.5112 | GBP | 117.5519 | 117.5127 | 117.4343 | |
| 52.2023 | 52.2252 | AUD | 49.4948 | 49.4783 | 49.4453 | |
| 0.6025 | 0.6028 | JPY | 0.5812 | 0.5810 | 0.5806 | |
| 54.1072 | 54.1308 | CHF | 52.1252 | 52.1078 | 52.0731 | |
| 9.2591 | 9.2631 | SEK | 8.4263 | 8.4235 | 8.4179 | |
| 59.2295 | 59.2554 | CAD | 57.1029 | 57.0839 | 57.0458 | |
| 8.8620 | 8.8659 | HKD | 8.6803 | 8.6774 | 8.6716 | |
| 42.9475 | 42.9663 | SGD | 41.2261 | 41.2123 | 41.1849 | |
| 18.8208 | 18.8291 | AED | 18.2155 | 18.2094 | 18.1972 | |
| 18.4303 | 18.4384 | SAR | 17.8439 | 17.8380 | 17.8261 | |
| 11.5783 | 11.5833 | DKK | 10.5087 | 10.5052 | 10.4982 | |
| 231.3668 | 231.4702 | KWD | 229.6073 | 229.5331 | 229.3847 | |

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

| Indian rupee | Pak rupee | Lankan rupee | Thai baht | Nor kroner | NZ dollar | Malaysian ringgit |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 44.3 | 59.875 | 102.165 | 39.465 | 6.7411 | 0.6824 | 3.75 |

Local Interbank FX Trading
Local interbank FX market was active on Thursday. Demand for USD remained high in the market.

Local Money Market
Money market was active. Call money rate eased and remained between 9.00 and 10.00 percent compared with 12.00 and 15.00 percent previously.

International Market
The dollar shuffled in a tight range against the yen on Thursday as dealers tried to fathom the effect on currencies from huge swings in the Japanese stock market. After losing more than 5 percent in the previous two days, the benchmark Nikkei stock average was up 2.3 percent by the end of Tokyo trade on Thursday.



Ahmad Bin Ismail, managing director of mobile phone operator AKTEL, poses for photographs with the winners of the third 'Club Magnate SMS Contest' and officials of the company at an award giving ceremony on Tuesday in Dhaka. Club Magnate is a premium service for the post-paid users of the operator.



Tomohiko Yanagi, senior manager of Sony Singapore, inaugurates a sales and service centre of Rangs Electronics Ltd at Stadium Market in Dhaka recently. Aktar Hussain, chairman and managing director of Rangs Group of Companies, among others, was present at the inauguration.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 19/1/2006

| Berth No. | Name of vessels | Cargo | L. Port call | Local agent | Dt of arrival | Leaving | Import disch |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|---------------|---------|--------------|
| J/1 | Ocean Venture | Sugar | Tuti | Mutual | 10/1 | 22/1 | 1328 |
| J/2 | Eastern Sea | Cont | Col | Seacon | 16/1 | 21/1 | -- |
| J/4 | Full Rich | Wheat(P) | Kawkaj | Mutual | 8/1 | 25/1 | 2786 |
| J/5 | Spring Trader | Gl | Yang | Everett | 17/1 | 21/1 | 227 |
| J/6 | African Jaguar | Sl. Scrap | Aust | Everett | 12/1 | 20/1 | 3458 |
| J/7 | Kota Cahaya | Cont | Sint | PII(Bd) | 14/1 | 21/1 | 310 |
| J/8 | Germana | Cont | Sing | QCSL | 15/1 | 22/1 | -- |

Vessels due at outer anchorage

| Name of vessels | Date of arrival | L. Port call | Local agent | Type of cargo | Loading ports |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Alaska Dream | 19/1 | Yang | PML | Gl(Log) | -- |
| Tai Kang Hai | 20/1 | Haid | RSA | Ms. Billets | -- |
| Banga Lanka | 19/1 | Col | Baridhi | Cont | Col |
| Eastern Star | 19/1 | Sing | PML | Cont | Sing |
| Maria Green | 19/1 | P.Kel | Everbest | Cont | Sing |
| Straits Express | 20/1 | Sing | Nyk | Vehi | -- |
| Emely-C | 20/1 | Col | Seacon | Cont | Col |
| New Success | 20/1 | Kako | Saraf | G. Slag | -- |
| Maritime Songkhla | 21/1 | Indo | BSL | C. Clink | Hchl |

Tanker due

| | | | | | |
|----------------|------|-------|---------|----------------|----|
| Al Barakat-1 | 19/1 | Dumai | MTCL | Cpo(RM/8) | -- |
| Al Kuwailiah | 20/1 | Kuwa | MSTPL | HSD/JP-1 | -- |
| Salamat-3 | 24/1 | Haid | Nishat | Bitumen (Rm/3) | -- |
| Tank Oil | 22/1 | -- | Rainbow | CPO(RM/3) | -- |
| Onozo | 23/1 | Jebe | OWSL | Crude Oil | -- |
| Gaz Millennium | 23/1 | Kaki | MBL | Ammonia | -- |

Vessels at Kutubdia

| Name of vessels | Cargo | Last Port call | Local agent | Date of arrival |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|

Outside port limit

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------|------|--------|-----------|
| Ionikos | C. Oil | Rast | OWSL | 9/1 |
| Asia Atlas | Ballast | -- | Barwil | 8/1 |
| Wirra Keris | -- | -- | IBSA | R/A(12/1) |

Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels ready

| | | | | |
|-------------|------|--------|---------|------|
| Kota Ratna | Cont | Sing | PII(Bd) | 17/1 |
| Oc Teal | Cont | P. Kel | QCSL | 17/1 |
| Kota Ratu | Cont | Sing | PII(Bd) | 16/1 |
| Oel Freedom | Cont | Sing | PSSL | 17/1 |
| Banga Bonik | Cont | Col | Baridhi | 17/1 |

The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels at Chittagong Port as Per Berthing Sheet of CPA supplied by Family, Dhaka.

STOCK