

Tokyo likely to resume aid to Myanmar

TOKYO, Jan 28: Japan is considering resuming economic aid to Myanmar pending "tangible developments" in its moves to restore democracy and improve its human rights situation, the Kyodo news agency said yesterday, reports AFP.

Kyodo quoted Foreign Ministry sources as saying that Japan welcomed the national convention held earlier this month by the military junta in Yangon to draw up a new constitution.

But the sources pointed out the timetable for completion of a constitution and a transfer of power to a new democratic government remained unclear, Kyodo said.

They also said although some political prisoners had been released by the junta, it was still not known if Nobel Peace Prize winner and pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi would be set free from house arrest.

"In principle, our bilateral assistance remains suspended, except for humanitarian and emergency assistance rendered on a case-by-case basis", one source was quoted by Kyodo as saying.

Uganda will privatise post, electricity corp

KAMPALA, Jan 28: The Ugandan government is to privatise its loss-making Post Office and Electricity corporation in an attempt to make them viable and improve their efficiency. President Yoweri Museveni said yesterday, reports AFP.

The Uganda posts and telecommunications and electricity generating services will soon be sold to private entrepreneurs because they have been run by corrupt officials and had become a burden to the government, the president said.

"These operations are like a burning fire, you have to keep putting firewood so that they can continue giving fire," Museveni who was speaking during celebrations to mark the eighth anniversary of his coming to power, said.

Japanese team in UAE for trade talks

ABU DHABI, Jan 28: A Japanese trade delegation arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) yesterday to discuss investment in the oil-rich Gulf country, UAE officials said, reports AFP.

The mission from the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been invited by the state-run Dubai Commerce and Tourism Promotion Board (DCTPB) and will spend several days for talks on trade and investment cooperation.

The mission represent the culmination of long and close contacts between the board and the Osaka Chamber, DCTPB Chief Executive, Khaled Ibn Sulayem, said in a statement.

We have always believed that Japan's importance to Dubai, extend beyond trade and I hope this visit will pave the way for more Japanese investment.

More than 55 Japanese firms, including such giants as Honda, Alwa, Sony, Mitsui and Sanyo have opened bases in Dubai, the Gulf's main commercial centre and a major transhipment base in the Middle-East.

Most of the Japanese companies are based in Dubai's Jebel Al free zone.

US budget deficit may shrink to \$171b in '95

WASHINGTON, Jan 28: Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen said Thursday the US budget deficit was expected to shrink to 171 billion dollars in fiscal year 1995, according to a congressional estimate, reports AFP.

If the Congressional budget office forecasts on target, the gap would be the smallest since 1989.

The deficit was 255 billion dollars in fiscal year 1993, which began October 1, 1992.

The White House forecasts the deficit will end fiscal 1994 at 235 billion dollars, deeper in the red than the budget office estimate of 223 billion dollars.

When President Bill Clinton took office a year ago, the estimate for the 1995 budget deficit — based on the preceding administration's outlook — was 302 billion dollars.

"We are getting the deficit down faster than we thought possible," Bentsen said, noting the deficit reduction plan approved by Congress last August.

Budget Director Leon Panetta said the figures for 1994 and 1995 should send a very positive signal to the federal reserve.

Delhi confident of \$ 22.1 b export earning in '93-'94

BOMBAY, Jan 28: India's central bank Governor Chakravarty Rangarajan voiced confidence yesterday that exports would earn a targeted 22.1 billion dollars in the current fiscal year, reports AFP.

Rangarajan told the Engineering Export Promotion Council that overseas sales were set to rise about 20 per cent over earnings in the 1992-93 financial year.

Exports grew to 13.8 billion dollars in April-November, a 19.4 per cent increase over the corresponding period of the previous year.

There had been concern about a fall in the monthly export growth rate in August and September but October and November showed an upturn.

Turkey devalues currency, backtracks on interest rate

ANKARA, Jan 28: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller has devalued the lira and backtracked on interest rates, but her frail six-month-old coalition government seems unlikely to start drastic economic reform before local polls on March 27, reports Reuter.

"Structural reforms? they are afraid of it," said one Western diplomat. "They can't do what they need to do because they are too worried about losing elections."

A poor coalition showing at the municipal elections could

wreck Ciller's credibility and hamstring her government.

Ciller, a US-trained economist who became Turkey's first woman Prime Minister in June, allowed the central bank to devalue the lira effectively by 12 per cent on Wednesday night.

The bank and treasury had already cranked interest rates sky high in feverish efforts to halt a run on the lira, reversing Ciller's policy of curbing rates to cut the government's huge borrowing costs to fight inflation, now at 71.1 per cent a year.

He said Britain would receive 2.142 billion ECU (2.36 billion dollars) 31 per cent of the total allocation of 6.977 billion ECU (7.67 billion dollars) for the so-called "objective 2" areas.

India's share of global exports is estimated at half a per cent, down from 1.91 per cent in 1990, Rangarajan said.

"While world trade grew and several developing countries pushed up their exports, India was unable to maintain let alone improve its share," the central bank chief said.

The government attitude has changed since 1991 when New Delhi launched a wide-ranging economic reform programme encouraging Indian industry to look outwards, Rangarajan said.

He hoped for a 15-per cent annual export growth rate in the coming years for India to maintain a comfortable balance of payments positions.

Britain gets biggest share of EC aid

BRUSSELS, Jan 28: Britain has been given the biggest share of European Community aid for areas in industrial decline between 1994 and 1996. EC Regional Policy Commissioner Bruce Millan announced here yesterday, reports AFP.

He said Britain would receive 2.142 billion ECU (2.36 billion dollars) 31 per cent of the total allocation of 6.977 billion ECU (7.67 billion dollars) for the so-called "objective 2" areas.



Anis ud Dowla (C), Managing Director of ICI Bangladesh Ltd, speaking at a seminar on 'Future trends in textile dyeing' at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday. Salim Akbar (L), Marketing Manager of ICI, and PC Sharma of Atic Industries Ltd, India, also seen in the picture. — Star photo

Russia seeks new level of economic ties with China

BEIJING, Jan 28: Russia wants to further improve its once-chilly political and economic ties with China. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said Friday, reports AFP.

Following three days of talks with Chinese leaders in Beijing, Kozyrev said Moscow hopes to raise bilateral ties "to a new level ... and establish concrete cooperation."

At the same time Kozyrev expressed impatience with Western pressure to establish market economies, reflecting Russian disillusionment with Western capitalism after two years of painful reforms.

Kozyrev declined to say if a date has been set, but the visit is expected late in the year.

Kozyrev did not say how China's leaders responded to Moscow's desire for closer ties. China split with the former Soviet Union in the 1960s over ideological differences, and the two sides normalized ties only in 1989.

Concrete partnership suggests a long-term cooperation (and) consultations in the political area," he said at a news conference. He noted that he

and his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, signed a protocol on Thursday for consultations between their two ministries, but did not go into specifics.

Russia has established several similar "free economic zones," the most famous near the port city of Vladivostok. However, their successes have been questionable, and changes may be under consideration.

I want to underline that we, of course, aren't setting out to copy the experience of any one country, be it the West or in the East," he said. "But just (to) learn from it, in terms of the whole reform."

Kozyrev sidestepped questions about Russia's military cooperation with China and whether arms sales were discussed in his talks.

He acknowledged that the two countries have military and technological cooperation. He characterized the cooperation as being conducted "in the framework of good neighbourly relations, and said he was in favour of developing such ties."

However, he declined to give any specifics.

Israel to get sophisticated weapons from US corp

WASHINGTON, Jan 28: Officials at the St. Louis, Missouri-based aircraft manufacturer did not comment on the contract, but representative Jim Talent, a Missouri Republican, said he was ecstatic.

Defence Secretary Les Aspin and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had signed off on the deal at their meeting in November.

Pentagon officials said some "fairly minor" changes would be made to the aircraft's software package to maintain American superiority of the weapon.

Israel has 51 older-model F-15 fighters, but the new planes have some of the most sophisticated weapons in the US arsenal and would enable Israel to reach potential adversaries such as Iran and Iraq.

The sale would be the first transfer of such advanced equipment to an ally. Congress must be notified about such a sale and could pass legislation to block it.

Unemployment rate in Japan climbs 2.9 pc in Dec

TOKYO, Jan 28: Reflecting a lingering recession, Japan's unemployment rate climbed 0.1 percentage point to 2.9 per cent in December, the highest level in six and a half years, the government said Friday, reports AFP.

The estimated two-billion-dollar contract includes an option for Israel to buy five more F-15Es at a later date, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The timetable for the future purchases was not immediately known.

The F-15s sold to Israel would include sophisticated radar and other systems, unlike the more stripped-down version already sold to Saudi Arabia, defence department officials have said.

The F-15 Eagle is America's premier fighter-bomber capable of handling opponents in the air and targets on the ground, at night and in adverse weather conditions.

Stocks, dollar remain lower in Tokyo

TOKYO, Jan 28: Share prices on the Tokyo Stock Exchange were lower Friday morning, as Japan's political turmoil continued to dampen investor sentiment. The US dollar slipped against the yen, reports AP.

The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average was down 22.20 points, or 0.12 per cent, at 18,751.98 points at the end of the morning session. On Thursday, the average shed 24.42 points, or 1.29 per cent, to close at 18,891.79.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was down 3.30 points, or 0.21 per cent, to 1,533.47. The TOPIX fell 13.82 points, or 0.89 per cent, to close at 1,536.50 the day before.

The Nikkei had been down 1 per cent earlier in the day on political confusion, but narrowed its losses later when foreign investors picked up underpriced issues, said Masayoshi Yano, a trader with Nikko Securities Co.

Dealers had been down

Many investors avoided major moves as they waited to see whether a key political reform package on which Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa has staked his political career would pass.

Hosokawa's reformist coalition government has two days left to salvage the reform bills that have been holding up government measures to boost the economy, as well as trade talks with the United States. The current Parliamentary session ends Saturday.

In currency trading, the dollar was changing hands at 108.71 yen at around 11.30 am (0230 GMT). The currency opened at 108.62 yen, down 0.93 yen from Thursday's close and below its overnight New York finish at 108.55 yen.

Dealers had been down 1 per cent earlier in the day on political confusion, but narrowed its losses later when foreign investors picked up underpriced issues, said Masayoshi Yano, a trader with Nikko Securities Co.

Exchange Rates

The following are the Sonali Bank's dealing rates to public for some selected foreign currencies effective as on Jan 26. (Figures in Taka)

Currency	Selling		Buying	
	TT & OD	EC	TT	OD
US Dollar	40.1305	40.1605	39.9190	39.8335
Pound Sterling	60.0232	60.0681	59.1123	58.9313
DM	23.0926	23.1098	22.7293	22.6111
F Franc	6.8035	6.8086	6.6980	6.6632
C Dollar	30.7285	30.7515	30.2933	30.1746
S Franc	27.5110	27.5316	27.0752	27.0172
Yen	0.3669	0.3672	0.3575	0.3567
Indian Rupee (AMU)	1.2825	1.2863	1.2722	1.2564
Pak Rupee (AMU)	1.3262	1.3303	1.3155	1.2993
Iranian Rial (AMU)	0.0230	0.0231	0.0228	0.0226

AI T. T.(DOC) US Dollar Spot Buying Tk 39.8762
By Usance Rates:
30 Days DA 60 Days DA 90 Days DA 120 Days DA 180 Days DA
39.5703 39.2875 39.0047 38.7220 38.1565
CI US Dollar sight export bill 3 months forward purchase: Tk. 39.8335
DI US Dollar 3 months forward sale: Tk. 40.5605

Indicative Rates		
Currency	Selling	Buying
	TT & O.D.	O. D. Transfer
S Riyal	10.7020	10.5889
UAE Dirham	10.9264	10.8114
Kuwaiti Dinar	134.6661	132.9255
Singapore Dollar	25.0534	24.7763
D Guilder	20.4393	20.2207
S Krone	4.9769	4.9218

Note: AMU—Asian Monetary Union.