

DHL to expand HK operations

DHL Worldwide Express in Hong Kong plans to expand its operations in the territory with the construction of an additional logistics facility adjacent to its operations centre, which will provide warehousing, inventory control, packing and distribution services, says a press release.

According to DHL's area manager for Hong Kong and China, Andy Tseng, the new centre located in Tokwawan, will require an investment of HK \$15 million (1.9 million US dollars) and will meet demand from customers for one-stop air express services.

Tseng said DHL expects its local document express business to grow by 10 to 15 per cent this year, while express packages in Hong Kong will increase by 30 to 40 per cent this year.

In a related development, Pat Lupo, the Brussels-based DHL chairman and chief executive officer last month said the company would invest more than \$2 million US dollars in expanding its infrastructure and operations in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand to meet increased demand for its express services in the region.

France destroys 124 cows

AP reports from Brest (France): Authorities slaughtered a small herd of 124 cows near this western France city Monday after one was found to have "mad cow disease" late last year.

It was the second herd killed off in France as a precaution. Last week, a herd of 150 cows was destroyed after one animal was confirmed to be infected.

"No other cases have been detected up to now," said Thomas Berthe, who heads the Brittany region's animal control program. "But our network of veterinary inspectors remains very vigilant."

Like other European nations, France has taken a hard line against the disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, which eats sponge-like holes in cows brains.

A similar illness in humans known as Creutzfeld-Jakob has killed at least eight people in Britain, where some scientists have linked the two diseases. The controversy has reached crisis proportions in Britain, now anguishing over whether to kill off part or all of its herd of 11 million.

Officials on Monday slaughtered the beef and dairy herd at a farm in the tiny town of Plourach, just inland from France's western Atlantic coastline.

The infected cow was discovered and killed in December. On Monday, police sealed off the area as veterinarians gave the remaining animals lethal injections that killed them instantly.

Trucks hauled off the carcasses for incineration in the nearby city of Nantes.

On Friday, militant French farmers said they stopped and destroyed a shipment of British beef, and they vowed more action to reassure consumers and stop beef prices from plummeting.

Dhaka to get Tk 80cr EU grant for coastal embankment project

Bangladesh and European Commission signed an agreement recently under which Bangladesh will receive 15 million ECO — about Taka 80 crore — for the Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project (CERP), reports BSS.

The money will be given under the European Union's all-grant cooperation programme with Asian developing countries.

The agreement was signed by S Hasen Ahmad, Bangladesh Ambassador in Brussels, and Manuel Marin Gonzales, Vice-President of the European Commission.

The purpose of CERP is to help create a safer and more productive environment for

the people living in cyclone-prone coastal areas and islands of Bangladesh.

The immediate objective is to improve protection against cyclonic flooding for about 2 lakh families (1.2 million people), their homes, livestock and infrastructure in 21 existing polders.

This end, the project will rebuild and strengthen sea-facing embankments, provide allied structures for drainage etc. and increase the effectiveness and lifespan of the defences by planting trees on the embankments and along the seashore in front of them.

The Bangladesh Water Development Board and the Department of Forests will implement the project through project implementation units.

alleviate poverty through income generation and employment. Many of these activities will be carried out with the help of NGOs working among the beneficiary community.

The principal financing for the project is a loan from the international development agency of the World Bank.

The EU grant will go towards leasing land and afforesting it, mobilising a JETRO press release said here yesterday.

JETRO, a non-profit organisation under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) supports trade between Japan and other countries, particularly developing countries with the aim of achieving balance global trade.

New representative of JETRO takes over

Yuchi Bamba has taken over as representative of Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), Dhaka office, says BSS.

Prior to his new overseas assignment, Bamba was Director of JETRO Yamagata office in Japan. Since joining JETRO in 1992, he had worked in its headquarters in Tokyo and regional office in Yamagata.

Bamba graduated from Ritsumeikan University, Japan, a JETRO press release said here yesterday.

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Japan's foreign reserves hit new record

TOKYO, April 2: Japan's foreign reserves rose 4.07 billion dollars from February to a record 203.95 billion dollars at the end of March, the finance ministry said yesterday, reports AFP.

The total, including convertible foreign currencies, gold and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Drawing Rights, has grown for the 29th straight month, the ministry said.

Japan's foreign reserves have in the past been swollen by dollar-buying intervention by the Bank of Japan to prop up the value of the US currency against the yen.

But the March increase was largely attributable to gains from regular fund operations as the central bank did not actively intervene in foreign exchange markets in March because the dollar-yen rate was stable, press reports said.

The dollar started at 105.20 yen and ended at 106.35 yen in Tokyo in March, trading in a range between 107.20 yen and 105.10 yen.

El-Hegailan new Secy-Gen of GCC

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Gamil El-Hegailan, new Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), assumed office on Monday, reports Xinhua.

El-Hegailan, a Saudi Arabian, is the third secretary general of the GCC, which was established in May 1981.

On Sunday night, the GCC general secretariat held a ceremony in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh to bid farewell to former GCC Secretary General Sheikh Fahem Ben Sultan El-Qassem.

Camdessus emphasized that the money, offered to Russia last week, could be halted on short notice.

Fund programmes customarily contain quarterly performance targets, which, when satisfactorily met, trigger quarterly disbursements," he said.

"I would note ... that the Russian programme is the only fund-supported programme that is subject to monthly monitoring."

Camdessus told a news conference last Wednesday that if any new Russian government failed to reach an agreement

Iraq's reentry into oil market may not be auspicious for OPEC

LONDON, April 2: OPEC faces a rough time if Iraq gets back into the oil market right after the others have sold enough crude to replenish supplies that fell sharply during the cold winter, experts said Monday, reports AP.

Prices are strong now, last week briefly touching OPEC's target of 21 dollars a barrel for the first time in years.

But this is no more than a temporary bit of good fortune for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, said former Saudi oil minister Ahmed Zaki Yamani.

"It reminds me of the calm that precedes a thunderstorm," Yamani told top oil industry figures at an annual conference held by his

London-based research organization, the Centre for Global Energy Studies.

I have a growing sense of unease, both about the organization and where it is heading in the near future and in the longer term," Yamani said.

Indeed, he entitled the conference "Can OPEC Survive in the Face of Mounting Competition?"

The recent rise in crude price has been attributed to a colder than normal winter, which caused oil-consuming nations including the United States to sharply deplete their stockpiles of oil.

Traders are now buying oil to rebuild the stocks, lifting prices to their highest level in several years. OPEC's average price per barrel last week was

20.24 dollars. Consumers have had to pay a few pennies more for gasoline.

Unfortunately for OPEC, the oil market may soon be confronted with a return of Iraqi oil that has been out of the market since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Iraq and the United Nations begin a third round of talks next Monday on a limited sale of oil to provide food and medicine for the suffering Iraqi people — and some analysts predict Iraqi oil could be back in the market this year.

OPEC Secretary-General Rilwanu Lukman acknowledged the cartel could be facing the prospect of Iraqi oil soon after the current rise in prices has run its course — not an optimal time.

Archbishop of Sicily accused of taking kickback

PALERMO, Sicily, April 2: A powerful Sicilian archbishop was indicted Monday on charges of taking a kickback for work on his cathedral and of defrauding the European Community, Italian news reports said, reports AP.

Monsignor Salvatore Cassisa, 75, was accused of extortion, fraud and false statements, the ANSA and AGI news agencies said. Trial was set for July 18.

Cassisa's archdiocese of Monreale, just outside Palermo, is the island's largest in terms of area and has a population of 200,000 people.

Palermo prosecutors allege Cassisa took a 4 million lire (\$2,700 dollars) payoff from a building contractor to twin a contract for work on the Monreale cathedral.

The church is considered an architectural marvel of the Middle Ages and one of Sicily's most important Norman churches. It went under restoration in 1979 after termites undermined its interior wooden structure. More than 6.2 million dollars has been spent and work continues.

Prosecutors also alleged Cassisa inflated the size of vineyards on Church property in receiving a 750 million lire (\$480,000 dollars) improvement subsidy from the European Community.

Prosecutors have said they also are investigating whether Cassisa had ties to the Mafia. The probe began after police discovered a fugitive Mafia boss had used the cellular phone of the bishop's secretary.

The secretary has said the cell phone number was intercepted, and Cassisa has denied having ties with the Mafia. He also has denied the fraud and kickback charges.

Judge Salvatore Puglisi in Palermo also indicted four other people in the case: a brother and sister who oversaw work at the cathedral and two provincial agriculture inspectors.

World's biggest bank makes debut

TOKYO, April 2: The world's biggest bank began operations Monday, combining the expertise and assets of two of Japan's most profitable banks, reports AP.

Changes are occurring worldwide with banks such as Chemical Banking Corp. and Chase Manhattan Corp. of the United States merging. We have to do our best to respond to these changes," said Tasaku Takagi, president of the new Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi.

Takagi was formerly president of the Bank of Tokyo, which specialized in foreign exchange transactions. Its partner in the merger, Mitsubishi Bank, had an extensive domestic business.

Tsuneo Wakai, the former head of Mitsubishi Bank, has become chairman of the new bank.

"I think the merger comes

from a position of strength for both banks," said banking analyst Betsy Daniels of Morgan Stanley. "It forces other Japanese banks to consider their competitive positions and what their strengths and weaknesses are."

The new bank is the world's biggest in terms of assets, holding more than 77 trillion yen (\$20 billion dollars). The new Chase bank will have about 300 billion dollars in assets.

The merged bank's partners both were relatively unscathed by the bad-loan debacle still weighing heavily on many Japanese banks.

Of the top 21 Japanese banks, Tokyo and Mitsubishi are expected to be among only four that will report profits for the fiscal year that ended Sunday.

China slashes tariff on 4994 items to win entry into WTO

BEIJING, April 2: China on Monday slashed tariffs on 4,994 products as part of its campaign to win entry into the World Trade Organisation, reports AP.

The cuts are intended to prove China's intention to liberalise its still heavily controlled economy. But they were designed to have a limited impact on local industries.

Duties on things China needs most, such as raw materials and high technology items, were reduced more than those on consumer and luxury goods, which remained mostly intact.

Certain key areas, such as the auto industry, remain well guarded. The prohibitively high tariff on large cars was reduced from 150 per cent and that on compact and small cars to 100 per cent from 110 per cent.

China has announced it plans to develop a world class auto industry and has defended measures to protect its fledgling industry.

The cuts, as well as the lifting of quotas on imports of 176 frequently traded items, were announced earlier but took effect April 1.

China says it has already made enough concessions to bring its economy in line with international trade rules. But the United States and European nations argue that it must do more to join the WTO.

Negotiations in Geneva on China's membership bid have snagged on widespread Chinese piracy of video tapes, compact discs and computer software. They also have been stalled by demands from industrialised countries that China enter the trade watchdog body as a developed coun-

try — not a developing one — because of its huge economy.

The government said the tariff cuts that took effect Monday, averaging 35.9 per cent, would bring China's nom-

Brittan urges breakthrough on China's WTO entry talks

GENEVA, April 2: The European Union's top trade official urged the members of the World Trade Organisation on Monday to break the "political logjam" over China, says AP.

Sir Leon Brittan, the European Commission's vice president, described the debate over China's bid for membership in the world trade body as a "politically driven minutiae."

Overall, since 1992, China has reduced tariffs on 6,000 items by an average 17 per cent, the report said.

The tariff cuts coincide with a decline in exports and a sharp rise in imports that may leave China with a trade deficit this year, the newspaper's Business Weekly said Sunday.

China recorded a 1.7 billion dollars trade surplus in 1995. But since export growth peaked in January 1995, the rate of increase has slowed each month. It declined by 0.1 per cent in January 1996 from a year earlier, and by 2.6 per cent in February. It quoted Beijing-based economist Qiu Xichun as saying.

Higher production costs and rising interest rates have cut the profit margins on exports, encouraging manufacturers to concentrate more on the domestic market, he said.

This year, enterprises are expected to generally shrink their export volume while transferring attention to the domestic market and investment projects to secure better business turnover, Qiu said.

The report said that some Chinese economists disagree with Qiu's assessment. The government has forecast a 10 per cent increase in exports this year from the year earlier, when exports climbed 22.9 per cent.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাচী প্রক্রিয়ার কার্যালয়

চাকা জোন, ১৭, আটকার সার্কুলার রোড, রাজাবাবুগঠ, চাকা জোন, নির্বাচী প্রক্রিয়ার কার্যালয়

পুনঃ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

(দ্বিতীয় আব্দান)

BOMBAY, April 2: India's central bank reveals its monetary policy for the first half of fiscal 1996-97 here Wednesday against a backdrop of upcoming general elections and a severe cash crunch, reports AFP.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Chakravarthy Ranganathan is expected to leave the present tight money policy undisturbed until a new government is in place following the April-May polls, analysts said.

The main issue before the RBI is to inject liquidity into the system to bring down interest rates and push up industrial production," said stock broker Madangopal Damani, a Director of the Bombay Stock Exchange.

Interest rates have been rising during the past six months and range from 21 to a prohibitive 40 per cent as gov-

ernment and industry compete for funds.

Damani said the cash crunch was the most severe in recent times but he did not expect any relief from the RBI for the first six months of the financial year which began April 1.

"This is dangerous, no industry can survive by borrowing at such high rates," he said.

"But with elections just weeks away, we do not expect any bold steps from the RBI."

Analysts said the monetary policy put in place at the beginning of 1995-96 to slash double-digit inflation in the runup to the elections had severely hit industry.

Inflation, which New Delhi measures through the wholesale price index, is around 15 per cent but consumer price related inflation is above 10 per cent.

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