

# Japanese current account surplus up by 40pc

TOKYO, Feb 15: Plummeting imports drove Japan's current account surplus up nearly 40 per cent last year to a record high, the government said Monday, reports AP.

The current account surplus — Japan's broadest measure of trade — surged 38.7 per cent to an unprecedented 15.86 trillion yen (\$139.18 billion) in 1998, the Finance Ministry announced.

The figures — which measure trade in merchandise, services, tourism and investment — are calculated by determining the difference between Japan's income from foreign sources against payments on foreign obligations. It excludes net capital investment.

Imports tumbled 11.7 per cent to \$2.87 trillion yen (288.43 billion) while exports fell only 1.3 per cent to \$8.87 trillion yen (\$428.81 billion) for the year.

The sharp increase in the

surplus comes amid growing pressure on Japan to revive its sluggish economy and import more goods to shrink the imbalance.

The previous record was a surplus of 14.67 trillion yen (\$128.72 billion) for 1993.

Japan's current account surplus also rose for the month of December, gaining 13.3 per cent from the same month a year earlier to 1.46 trillion yen (\$12.79 billion), the ministry said.

Both imports and exports fell in December but the surplus grew because imports fell faster, the ministry said.

Exports from Japan fell 12.9 per cent to 3.98 trillion yen (\$34.90 billion), while imports dropped 23.3 per cent to 2.42 trillion yen (\$21.20 billion).

Many analysts say Japan's trade surplus may fall as the Asian economic crisis is expected to hurt Japan's exporters.

## ECB forex reserves down \$2.2b

FRANKFURT, Feb 15: The European Central Bank (ECB) yesterday said that its net foreign currency reserves decreased by 1.9 billion euros (2.2 billion dollars) to 226.8 billion euros (257 billion dollars) in the week to February 5, reports AFP.

The change "was mainly due to a decrease of 2.1 billion euros in receivables from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), relating to a quota review of the IMF," the ECB explained in a statement.

The holdings by the European System of Central banks (ESCB or euro system) of marketable securities issued by euro area residents and denominated in euros increased by 500 million euros to 22.5 billion euros.

Bank notes in circulation increased by 1.7 billion euros compared with the previous week and the ESCB's stock of gold remained unchanged at 99,589 billion euros, the ECB said.

The Liberation newspaper reported last month that it had managed to get hold of some of the bonds, marked with the word "Jewish" and bearing a 1940s slip saying "contentious titles" during a nationwide six-month registration of the bonds.

Bankers and stockbrokers have had thousands of bonds registered — including 23,000 in Bordeaux — which did not belong to them," Liberation wrote.

The Economy Ministry said that it had received 255 claims for bonds seized in Russia during the First World War and in territory annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II.

A special commission is currently considering how to share out the money paid over by Russia among the bondholders and from Wednesday will hear the views of Bondholders' Associations and people who say their bonds were seized.

The commission will put recommendations to the prime minister and the final proposal for a share-out will be voted on by parliament.

### Japanese investors flee to foreign markets in 1998

TOKYO, Feb 15: Japanese investors fled to foreign markets in 1998 as the Tokyo stock market slumped. While foreign investors cut back Japanese equity purchases, the finance ministry said yesterday.

Japanese investors bought a net 11.3 trillion yen (100 billion dollars) worth of foreign shares and bonds in 1998, sharply up from 3.7 trillion yen in 1997, the ministry said.

Net purchases of foreign bonds by Japanese investors surged from 2.0 trillion yen to 9.5 trillion yen while net buying of foreign stocks rose from 1.6 trillion yen to 1.8 trillion yen, it said.

Foreign investors purchases of Japanese equities dropped from 6.1 trillion yen to 2.8 trillion yen, the ministry said.

Net purchase of Japanese bonds in 1998 fell by about 70 per cent to \$82.6 billion yen, from 2.7 trillion yen the year before, it said.

## Yen stabilises against dollar in London

LONDON, Feb 15: The yen stabilised against the dollar here early today after last week's surprise cut in Japanese interest rates, while the euro fell amid predictions of a cut in European borrowing costs, reports AFP.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.08 yen in Tokyo and 114.27 yen here late on Friday.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

### Asian currencies range-bound against dollar

SINGAPORE, Feb 15: Asian units were range-bound against the US dollar today as most currency players remained sidelined ahead of the Lunar New Year holidays, reports AFP.

This week is likely to be another quiet one, with Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and China closed for the Lunar New Year," ABN Amro's Asian economic research said in a report.

"We expect more range-trading in the near-term, with interest rates hovering around current levels," it said.

The trade in Asian currencies ended mid-day, with the Singapore dollar up at 1.6890 from its close last Friday of 1.6940, while the Indonesian rupiah was down slightly at 8,700 from 8,650.

The Thai baht was unchanged from its close last week of 36.85, as well as the South Korean won at 1,175.50.

"We haven't seen much activity at all today," said a dealer with a European bank.

The Japanese yen ended at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The yen was being traded at 114.05 against the US dollar in shortened trading hours here. It was up from its Friday close here of 115 and unchanged from its finish in New York of 114.05.

The yen swung between a high of 113.76 and a low of 114.35 in Manila, the Philippines, finished at 38.645, down from last Friday's rate of 38.58, markets in Taiwan were closed.

The Bank of England cut its base rate for the fifth time in as

many months in early February to 5.5 per cent.

The euro was being traded at 1.1276 dollars from 1.1284, 128.79 yen from 128.96, 0.6913 pound from 0.6925 and 1.5959 Swiss francs from 1.5965.

The dollar was being traded at 114.22 yen from 114.27 and was unchanged at 1.4155 Swiss francs.

Sterling was being traded at 1.6313 dollar (1.6292), 186.50 yen (186.28) and 2.3098 Swiss francs.

The gold spot price rose to 290.10 dollars an ounce (289.55 dollars).

The