

Thai opposition urges Supachai to quit WTO leadership race

BANGKOK, May 10: Thailand's opposition, seeing an opportunity to embarrass the government, is urging Deputy Prime Minister Supachai Panitchpakdi to withdraw from the race to lead the World Trade Organisation, reports Reuters.

But Supachai reaffirmed on Monday his determination to fight on to the bitter end, saying he wanted to expose the lack of transparency and fairness of the WTO process.

However, he declined to answer when asked by reporters if he would eventually have to withdraw from the race.

Dubbing Supachai's campaign for the post of WTO director-general "hopeless," a leading opposition politician was quoted in Thai newspapers on Monday as saying Supachai should instead focus on the country's internal economic problems.

He said the global free trade body was heavily influenced by the United States, which has given its support to rival WTO contender Michael Moore, a former New Zealand prime minister.

Veera Musigapong, a deputy leader of the opposition New Aspiration Party (NAP), was quoted as saying Supachai had little chance of winning because the United States is a major financial contributor to the WTO.

He said the time Supachai spent campaigning should be used to try to boost rice prices and find new export markets.

"The WTO is dominated by the US," Veera told the Nation newspaper, adding, "Supachai must urgently try to solve the problem of falling rice prices."

Supachai, who returned home on Saturday from Geneva, shrugged off the com-

ment, saying he decided to fight on not because he was stubborn but because he and his supporters believed it was the right thing to do.

"This is not a race between individuals or countries as some media have portrayed it, but it is a battle for principles and fairness in one of the world's most important organisations," Supachai told reporters on Monday.

"If the WTO lacks credibility, how can it handle world trade issues. My supporters believe world trade policy should not be dictated or manipulated only by some powerful players."

Supachai also denied the opposition's charge he had been neglecting his job while lobbying in Geneva, saying he had not given up his domestic work while campaigning.

WTO members decided last

week to take a few more days for reflection after failing to pick a successor to Renato Ruggiero, who retired as WTO director-general at the end of April.

The head of the WTO's council, Ali Mchumo of Tanzania, told envoys to take "time to pause and reflect" and diplomats said they doubted they would meet until the middle of this week.

The WTO makes its important decisions by consensus.

Supachai, who led the race in early soundings of the WTO's 134 members, has fought a high-profile campaign which has stimulated a chorus of patriotic noises from the Thai press.

A Thai foreign ministry official said on Monday Thailand wanted countries backing Supachai to reiterate their support for him and urge a transparent selection process at the WTO.

Emerging market debt rally seen slowing

NEW YORK, May 10: The three-month upswing in emerging market debt should continue, albeit with less momentum this week, underpinned by the turnaround in Brazil's prospects, analysts said, reports Reuters.

However, traders will still keep an eye on a senate probe of forex insider trading that has moved in fits and starts.

"The market still has a lot of support because the recovery in Brazil is sustainable," said Siobhan Manning, Latin American debt strategist at PaineWebber.

"The political volatility there has not been damaging enough to unravel the gains that have been made," she added.

Traders will continue to be alert to any new developments in the senate panel investigation, which has lost some steam in the last weeks.

Opposition lawmakers in Brazil accuse the Central Bank of warning some banks in advance of its decision to allow the local currency to float in January, allowing them to make big profits.

Although the country remains in recession, the scorching inflation expected has not materialised. Brazil packed in overseas investors at its global bond offering two weeks ago, and even the fall in the economy appears shallower than expected.

And the currency is also on the mend. Since the mid-January devaluation, the real has bounced back from a 2.22 low against the dollar to 1.66 per dollar, still 27 per cent below its pre-float value.

The swap is positive for Argentina's credit profile because it furthers their goal of extending the duration of their liabilities, one emerging debt analyst said.

Sources said a market-friendly appointment coupled with a standby loan agreement

with the International Monetary Fund would improve the economic outlook for the troubled Andean country. Finance Minister Ana Lucia Armijos has said she expects a standby pact by the end of this month.

"There is the potential for a small upside trade on a good appointment," said Paul Dickson, an emerging market sovereign strategist at Lehman Brothers.

The head of Ecuador's central bank and three other board directors resigned on March 12 in disagreement with Mahuad's handling of the nation's worst financial crisis in decades.

The country was plunged into financial and civil turmoil after its sucre currency was floated in February and took a tumble of nearly 30 per cent.

Aptech's first quarter revenue up 35pc

Aptech has reported an excellent growth for the first quarter of 1999, says a press release of the company issued yesterday.

The Company's revenue has grown by 35.2 per cent from Rs 37.51 crores to Rs 50.70 crores. Its software revenue stood at Rs 11.21 crores, showing a phenomenal growth of 94 per cent, whilst the Training Division grew by 24.3 per cent, posting a revenue of Rs 38.85 crores.

Aptech has its presence in 21 countries. It started its first software education centre in Dhaka in September 1997 and has been growing rapidly since then.

Aptech is presently running eight software education centres in Bangladesh and plans to spread all over the country. It recently established a wholly-owned subsidiary company in Bangladesh to monitor the quality of its centres and oversee the expansion.

Reform drive proves pretty successful IMF to ease monitoring of its Thai rescue plan

BANGKOK, May 10: Thailand's economic reform drive has been so successful that the IMF is to ease quarterly monitoring of its huge rescue plan, reports Reuters.

Tarrin Nimmannahaeminda said today, reports AFP.

Tarrin was quoted as saying in an interview with the Nation daily newspaper that Thailand would not be asked to sign an eighth letter of intent with the International Monetary Fund.

IMF officials would instead produce a report and send it to the IMF's executive board, he said.

"Beyond that Thailand will be subject to a review once every six months until the end of the support programme."

Thailand has so far been required to send seven quarterly letters of intent with the IMF to secure tranches of the 17.2 billion dollar bailout granted after the economy plunged into crisis in 1997.

An official of Thailand's finance ministry said: "The funds may now be drawn next month without any review."

Tarrin hailed efforts to reform the economy, which have

met with stiff resistance by political opponents at home but have been generally supported by foreign governments and analysts.

"We have come a long way in bringing stability back to the macro economic conditions," he was quoted as saying.

"Most people don't understand our stabilisation work. Thailand has collapsed — and it is some accomplishment that we've been able to restore it to this present stable condition," Tarrin said.

Tarrin said his attention would now turn to medium-term restructuring as the crisis had stabilised.

Under the IMF rescue plan Thailand agreed to make sweeping changes to its economic infrastructure including dealing with mountainous bad debts, overhauling the crippled financial structure and launching a privatisation programme.

Legislation on bankruptcy and foreign investment has run into stiff opposition from opposition politicians who charge it will hand economic sovereignty to foreigners.

Exchange Rates

Following are yesterday's Standard Chartered Bank rates of major currencies against Taka.									
Central Bank USD/BDT Rate: Buying - BDT 48.35/Selling - BDT 48.65									
TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD SIGHT	DOC	TRANSFER			
48.730	48.770	USD	48.320	48.199	48.078				
0.4132	0.4136	JPY	0.3898	0.3885	0.3879				
32.9435	32.9705	CHF	31.7957	31.6904	31.5727				
29.025	29.0293	SGD	28.0734	27.9604	27.8515				
33.8779	33.9057	CAD	32.6619	32.5536	32.4310				
5.5653	5.5611	SEK	5.7737	5.7546	5.7424				
33.5652	33.5928	AUD	31.3259	31.2220	31.1233				
12.9436	12.9542	MYR	12.5994	12.5577	12.5259				
6.3038	6.3090	HKD	6.2178	6.1972	6.1840				
13.0647	13.0754	SAR	12.8139	12.7715	12.7390				
13.3415	13.3525	AED	13.0839	13.0405	13.0072				
0.0406	0.0406	KRW	0.0402	0.0401	0.0400				
80.3753	80.4412	CNR	77.7324	77.4748	77.1952				
53.2034	53.2471	EUR	50.0075	50.0000	50.0000				

Usance Export Bills									
TT/DOC	30 days	60 days	90 days	120 days	180 days				
48.2204	47.9228	47.5257	47.0390	46.5725	46.4005				

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollar									
Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	THAI BAHT	Malay Ringgit	Indo. Rupee	Sing. Dollar				
42.36/42.46	50.18/50.26	37.42/37.52	3.799/3.801	885.0/892.5	1.723/1.724				

US dollar									
Libor									
Cash notes	Buying	Selling	USD	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months		
T.C.	48.15	48.75		5.62875	5.28063	5.15813	5.15009		
	48.1	48.7	GBP	65	6.34813	6	5.67531		

On Monday, the activity in the interbank was a little slow and the demand for dollar was sluggish. Trading of the greenback in narrow range of BDT 48.60 to BDT 48.6558 ensued the sluggish demand. In the call money market, call rate reached a new plateau due to a large gap between Treasury Bill maturity and acceptance. The call money rate fluctuated in a elevated range of 10 to 11 per cent.

In the interbank market, cash US dollar notes traded between BDT 49.60 and BDT 49.70.

In the international markets, the euro held steady after losing some ground on NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by mistake, which might jeopardise the possibilities of a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis. The recent increase in the premium US ten-year Treasury notes over the German notes also cast a shadow on the euro. The difference between the two rates have augmented to a level of 160-basis points in recent days, marking the highest difference in a decade.

The markets expectation that Japan will not produce any supplementary budget was reinforced by comments made by Japan's Keidanren — the business lobby group of Japan. Sterling remained the centre of market attention after the Bank of England's governor said that sterling was too strong for Britain to join the euro.

At 0420 hours local time, USD traded at 120.86/91 JPY, GBP at 1.627777 USD and euro at 1.0738/43 against USD.

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port									
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 10-5-99									
Berth No	Name of Vessels	Cargo	L Port	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving			
J/1	Golden High	Rice(P)	Sing	CCNL	19/4	13/5			
J/2	Prodios	Rice(P)	Kand	AMBL	18/4	18/5			
J/3	Ever Cheer (48)	CI	Sing	RML	9/5	12/5			
J/4	Shun An	CI	Sing	RML	24/4	12/5			
J/5	Santa Suria	CI	Yang	AMBL	23/4	12/5			
J/6	Pacific Seles	GI(Peas)	Kona	Seagroy	12/4	12/5			
J/7	You Yue	Rice(G)	Kand	USTC	28/2	13/5			
J/8	Tiastels	Rice(G)	Kand	USTC	20/4	15/5			
J/9	General Mojika	Rice(G)	Sing	Rainbow	22/4	16/5			
J/10	Mokran	Rice(P)	Kara	Cosmos	12/4	14/5			
J/11	Kota Berjaya	Cont	Sing	PHI(BD)	4/5	13/5			
J/12	Qe Millard	Cont	Sing	QCSL	4/5	12/5			
J/13	Van Dyck	Wheat(P)	Cont	MSA	6/4	14/5			
CCT/1	Bunga Mas Lapan	Cont	P.Kel	EOSL	4/5	11/5			
CCT/2	Ultima	Cont	Sing	QCSL	4/5	12/5			
CCT/3	Hari Bhumi	Cont	Sing	RSL	8/5	13/5			
RM/14	Humber	Cement	Jaka	ABLE	7/4	16/5			
RM/15	Banglar Shourabh	Repair	Cont	BSC	14/4	15/5			
CGJ	Odin-1	C.Clink	Sing	PSAL	4/5	16/5			
CGJ	Morning Star	Cement	Pada	USTC	13/4	13/5			
TSP	Meghna	RPhos	Jedd	USTC	26/4	13/5			
RM/3	Ping An Hat	Bitumen	Lilac	Atlantic	8/5	11/5			
RM/4	Kyong Song	Cement	Jaka	USTC	5/5	18/5			
RM/5	Ras Al Zour	Hsd/Jet	Mina	MSTPL	7/5	11/5			
DDJ	Lestari Utama-II	C.Clink	Indo	PSAL	4/5	18/5			
DDJ/1	Tanary Star	Idle	Para	PSAL	-	-			
RM/8	AA Venture	Repair	Kaka	CLA	11/3	13/5			
CUFLJ	Mary Nour	Cement	Lank	BSL	28/4	11/5			

Vessels due at outer anchorage					
Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Eliza (Cont)	11/5	-	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Banglar Doot	11/5	Pak	BSC	Rice(P)	-
Karunia Lestari-II	12/5	-	PSAL	Rice(P)	-
Ocean Wave	11/5	-	PSAL	Cement	-
Royal Clipper	10/5	Sing	HASL	-	-
Meghna (Cont) 25/4	10/5	-	Bdshp	Cont	Sing
Sin Hai (Cont)	10/5	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Bux Moon (Cont)	11/5	P.Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Bunga Mas Enam	12/5	P.Kel	EOSL	Cont	Sing
Agios Gerassimos	12/5	Sing	PSAL	Cement	-
Peles-K	12/5	-	PSAL	Cement	-
Bangi Birol (Cont)	15/5	-	Bdshp	Cont	Sing
Kota Naga(Cont)3/5	13/5	Sing	PHI(BD)	Cont	Sing
Everise Glory	15/5	-	USTC	Cement	-
Nadel Horn	15/5	-	Able	Cement	-
Bunga Mas Lima(Cont)	8/5	P. Kel	EOSL	Cont	Sing
Arti	12/5	Dunk	LAMS	Wheat(G)	-
Dragon Kalimantan	15/5	Sing	NOL	Cont	Sing
Wind Fall	15/5	Sing	NOL	Cont	Sing
Arti	16/5	-	LAMS	Wheat(G)	-
Banglar Robi (Cont)6/5	16/5	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Qe Teal	16/5	-	QCSL	Cont	Mong
San Mateo (Roro)24/4/5	17/5	Sing	JF	Vehi	-
Bright Vega	18/5	-	BBA	Vehi	-
Kota Cahaya	18/5	Sing	PHI(BD)	Cont	Mong
Chieffer (Cont)5/5	19/5	Sing	RSL	Cont	-
Maethon	20/5	Sing	OWSL	Sugar(G)	-
Bunga Nagara	20/5	-	PROG	Qi	-
San Pablo(Roro)24/4/5	23/5	Col	JF	Vehi	-