

# Lankan dockers spread lunch break to woo S Asian cargo

COLOMBO, Aug 8: Sri Lanka's dockers have shed their centuries-old tradition of taking lunch together in a bid to increase productivity and make Colombo South Asia's key hub port, reports AFP.

The plan is simple but effective, says an official from the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) who negotiated with workers to end the practice of taking their lunch break together — thereby creating valuable extra man hours every day. Put in place just last week, the new lunch deal has brought an immediate improvement in efficiency in a port which boasts the best facilities in the region but needed a little push on the productivity front.

"Now a days, shippers are not so worried about cost (of the handling), they are more worried about productivity," says SLPA Operations Manager U Bopitiya. "They want quick turnaround time and we can now give that."

Bopitiya said that staggering the lunch break alone has had a tremendous improvement, pointing out that dockers handled 74 containers in an hour

on board an Evergreen carrier and 78 on a Hanjin vessel three days ago.

In terms of time, Hanjin saved four hours and Evergreen saved six hours.

At the port, time is really money. A big ship costs around 40,000 dollars a day, an hour saved is about 1,500 dollars earned.

"We pay more in overtime to workers but actually save money for the port and also get telegrams from shippers thanking us for the good service," Bopitiya said.

"Earlier all gantry operators took their lunch break together and work came to a standstill, but in the past three days we have changed all that. Everyone benefits from the new arrangement."

They hope to extend the scheme to tea breaks in the evening too.

Port officials say that Colombo is trying to make up for the loss suffered by the withdrawal of Sea Land and Maersk Lines three months ago which resulted in much lost transshipment business going to

Salalah in Oman.

Official figures show that the projected loss of business to Colombo could be about 350,000 TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) containers a year with the pullout of the two lines.

The Colombo Port handled about 1.7 million TEU containers last year, up from 1.3 million in 1997. This year, the figure is expected to be about 1.8 million although the port can handle over two million TEUs.

About 70 per cent of the containers handled in Colombo contain transshipment cargo mainly from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan also use Colombo as a gateway to catch large ships that carry 4,000 to 6,000 containers which call in at the port.

Sri Lanka is pleased with the development of Indian ports that will help Sri Lanka to get more transshipment cargo, but Singapore remains the fiercest competitor.

At one point Sri Lanka was worried that about 40 per cent of Indian export cargo was going via Singapore while Colombo was getting only 20 per cent.

# Taiwan cuts import of labour

TAIPEI, Aug 8: Taiwan is cutting back on foreign labour in a bid to stem rising unemployment, but economists fear the move could dampen the island's free market drive and lead to future labour shortages, reports AFP.

Beginning August 1, the Council of Labour Affairs (CLA) lowered the maximum share of alien workers for investment projects valued at over 200 million Taiwan dollars (6.23 million US) in the manufacturing and construction sectors from 24 per cent to 20 per cent of its workforce.

In addition, the total number of foreign workers hired by the same employer for different projects must not exceed 30 per cent of the number of its domestic workers.

The move is expected to reduce the current number of foreign workers in the manufacturing and construction sectors by 10 per cent a year, CLA Chairman Chan Hou-sheung told AFP.

Foreign workers were introduced in 1991 to cover heavy-duty manual labour usually shunned by local people, but they have since penetrated fur-

ther into the labour market, Chan said.

Taiwan's unemployment rate in June climbed to 2.92 per cent, or 282,000 people — the highest jobless rate in June for 21 years.

"So by cutting foreign labour imports, we hope to save more jobs for domestic workers," he added.

As of the end of June, there were 278,872 foreign workers in Taiwan with the majority coming from Thailand, 45 per cent, and the Philippines, 41 per cent.

Some 216,000 foreigners were employed by the manufacturing and construction sectors while the rest worked as maids and caretakers.

CLA recently opened up labour imports to Vietnam and the first Vietnamese workers are due here in September.

Ma Kal, researcher at the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research, criticised the CLA for backtracking on the principle of the free market and warned that tighter control of foreign labour would lead to higher unemployment.

"Industries need low-cost labour to stay competitive in the global market," Ma said.

## Exchange Rates

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka to major currencies

Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying TT Clean	Buying OD Sight	Buying Export Bill	Buying O/D Transfer
US Dollar	49.7300	49.7000	49.3200	49.1570	49.0850	
Pound Sig	80.5377	80.6205	78.8380	78.5775	78.4624	
Deutsche Mark	27.9880	27.6202	26.6125	26.5084	26.4869	
Swiss Franc	33.6127	33.6397	32.8690	32.7804	32.7124	
Japanese Yen	0.4366	0.4370	0.4252	0.4238	0.4231	
Dutch Guilder	24.4937	24.5134	23.6190	23.5266	23.4922	
Danish Krona	7.2330	7.2389	7.0685	7.0452	7.0349	
Australian \$	32.9859	33.0124	31.7029	31.5981	31.5518	
Belgian Franc	1.3381	1.3391	1.2903	1.2852	1.2833	
Canadian \$	33.4207	33.4476	32.4687	32.3614	32.3140	
French Franc	8.2287	8.2354	7.9349	7.9031	7.8912	
Hong Kong \$	6.4198	6.4240	6.3412	6.3202	6.3110	
Italian Lira	0.0278	0.0279	0.0269	0.0268	0.0267	
Norway Kroner	6.4583	6.4715	6.3617	6.3406	6.3313	
Singapore \$	30.1688	30.1911	29.1921	29.0956	29.0530	
Saudi Rial	13.2981	13.3088	13.1153	13.0719	13.0528	
UAE Dirham	13.5770	13.5980	13.3909	13.3466	13.3271	
Swedish Krona	6.0824	6.0873	6.0029	5.9831	5.9743	
Qatar Riyal	13.6983	13.7073	13.5064	13.4618	13.4421	
Kuwait Dinar	168.0562	168.9409	156.7307	156.2027	155.9789	
Thai Baht	1.3249	1.3260	1.3122	1.3070	1.3060	
Euro	53.9709	54.0204	52.0494	51.8459	51.7699	

Bill buying rates:

TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
49.2112	48.9050	48.4990	48.0870	47.6760	46.8540

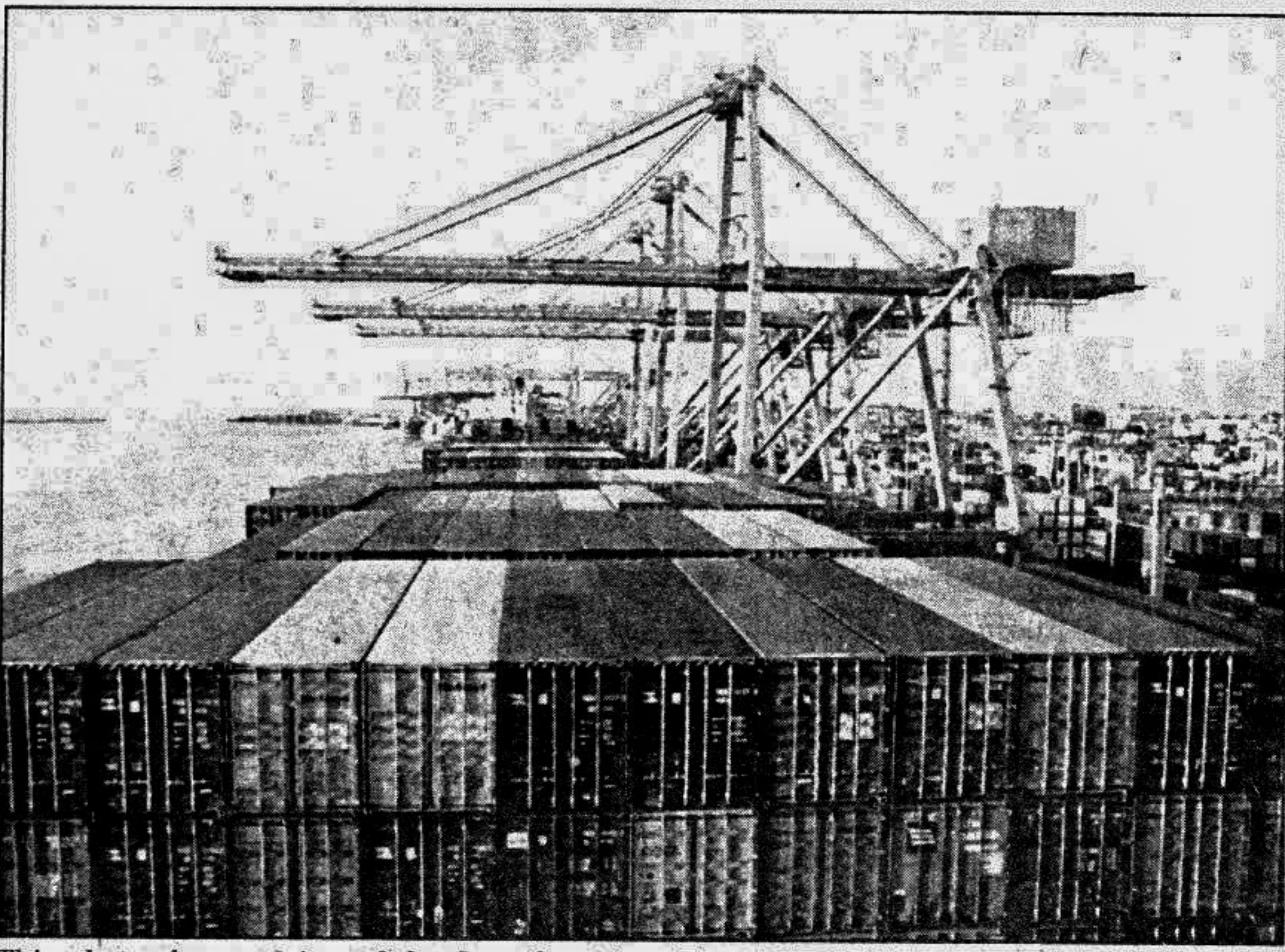
US Dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

Buying (\$)	Selling (\$)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
49.0850	48.7300	USD	5.2875	5.3700	5.7675	5.7000	5.9200
78.4624	80.5377	GBP	5.25125	5.31156	5.63678	5.7297	5.94369
Cash/TC	Cash/TC	Euro	2.82000	2.85100	3.04125	3.12688	3.24000

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US Dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
43.400/43.60	51.400/51.50	37.55/37.57	3.800/3.8001	7020/7070	1199/1200



This photo shows a view of the Jaye Container Terminal of Colombo's main sea port from the bridge of a Japanese ship, the MV Kitano, on Saturday. Sri Lankan dockers are hoping that new changes to improve efficiency, with a large investment to improve capacity and productivity, will help Sri Lanka's plans to become South Asia's hub port. —AFP photo

# 'Global economic upswing stronger than expected'

LONDON, Aug 8: The world economy is on an upward swing after the turmoil of 1997 and 1998, helped by a speedy recovery in recession-hit Asian economies, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said today, reports AFP.

"The pace of recovery is stronger than expected three months ago. By 2002, global growth will be approaching pre-crisis levels," said the London-based research group's chief economist, Paul Bew.

The global economy is now forecast to expand an average 2.9 per cent in 1999, accelerating to 3.3 per cent in 2000 and to 3.8 per cent by 2002, according to the EIU.

In South East Asia, there has been a surprisingly rapid bounce back from the sharp recessions of 1998, as loose fiscal and monetary policies and weak currencies spur growth, said the research group.

"It now seems likely that even the worst affected countries will grow in 1999, in some cases at an impressive pace," it predicted, although adding that regional economies would avoid a return to the boom excesses of the past.

For the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, growth of 2.3 per cent was predicted for 1999, accelerating gradually to 3.7 per cent by 2002.

In Japan, the world's second largest economy, the deep recession of 1998 is almost certainly over as the government's fiscal injections kickstart the economy, which posted an annualised rate of growth of 7.9 per cent in the first quarter of 1999.

However the EIU forecast a weak resumption of growth over the next five years as government spending eases.

The powerhouse US economy remains "very strong", with buoyant domestic demand accompanied by a spurt in manufacturing activity on the back of recovering export markets, according to the EIU.

As long-term US interest rates rise to contain inflation, the pace of growth in North America will slow down in 2001 to 1.8 per cent, but will then bounce back to hit 2.6 per cent in 2003, it predicted.

Nonetheless, an outside risk remains that the United States' economy could overheat and experience a bust in 2000 and 2001, dragging the global economy down with it, the EIU warned.

In China, the government has offset a domestically-driven slowdown in growth by slowing reforms of state-owned enterprises to reduce the level of redundancies and a huge programme of public investment.

Still, unless private sector demand recovers soon and China is able to tap into accelerating demand in its regional neighbours, more drastic measures could be necessary, such as devaluation, signalled the EIU.

Among the 11 European nations in the euro-zone, growth weakened sharply late last year and remains lacklustre, with a worrying divergence in economic performance as Germany and Italy fare worse than the rest.

The weakness of the European single currency, the recovery in Asia, and rising employment should allow a gradual recovery in the second half of this year and into 2000, but a dramatic pick-up remains unlikely, said the EIU.

Eastern Europe is a global black spot, with a contraction in growth of two per cent expected in 1999.

Latin America though has escaped the threat of a tail-off from the Brazilian devaluation crisis in January this year, with the largest regional economy itself likely to suffer only a mild recession.

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# S African central bank pledges no major policy changes

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 8: No "earth-shattering" policy changes should be expected when Tito Mboweni becomes the first black head of South Africa's central bank today, he said hours before he was due to be sworn in to the post, reports AFP.

Mboweni, who has been in training for the position of governor for a year, also shrugged off any possible market jitters about the new role he will accept at a glittering banquet late Saturday.

About 1,200 guests, including President Thabo Mbeki and representatives from over 50 international central banks and financial institutions, were due at the inauguration.

Mboweni was tight-lipped about his plans for the South African Reserve Bank saying: "Central banks... may follow different models, but they do the same things, so don't expect any earth-shattering things to come at all."

The 40-year-old former stalwart of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) said on August 24 he would give the "detailed meat" of his objectives for his five-year term.

The former labour minister conceded, however, that he would eventually bring in changes.

"I think the way in which we run the policy process in the Bank will be different and the whole set of decision-making systems in the Bank will be different," he said.

The Bank could not introduce far-reaching policy changes to speed up social transformation in apartheid-ridden South Africa, he said.

"That's the government's side. Our role is to ensure that there is a stable financial environment in South Africa which contributes to the achievement of a whole set of other objectives being pursued," he said.

Mboweni takes over from the respected Chris Stals, who has been with the Reserve Bank for 44 years, starting as a clerk and holding the position of governor for 10 years.

Mboweni shrugged off concerns that speculators could hurt the already battered rand, trading at above 6.10 to the dollar, because of jitters about the changeover.

Speculation after his appointment by former president Nelson Mandela in July last year caused the rand to plummet to a low of 6.80 to the dollar from a level of around 6.00.

"People are not quite used to these barefoot darkies running the Reserve Bank, so they have to get used to that," Mboweni joked.

"It is a bit of a shock... maybe there will be those sorts of concerns, but give them time to settle down," he said.

He added: "I think it will be very unfortunate indeed if we say a change of leadership in a particular institution is an imminent danger."

Analysts have said that one of Mboweni's main challenges will be to prepare a new system of inflation-targeting, under which the finance department will set goals for the central bank.

Mboweni was disconcerted that Finance Minister Trevor Manuel indicated this week, without consulting the Reserve Bank, that inflation-targeting could be introduced early next year.

"I am not annoyed, but I thought maybe we could discuss some of these things," he said.

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# General meeting of Agrani Bank executive forum held in city

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The Managing Director of Agrani Bank, Mohammad Enamul Haq Choudhury, inaugurated the meeting as chief guest.

The convenor of the forum, MF Karim, presided over the meeting.

After general discussions and exchange of views among the executives, the first executive committee of the forum was declared.

Deputy General Managers MF Karim and AKM Khabir Uddin Choudhury were selected President and General Secretary respectively.

A twenty-five-member committee was also selected for two years.

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Managing Director of Agrani Bank, Mohammad Enamul Haq Choudhury, speaks at the general meeting of Agrani Bank Executive Forum in city Saturday. —Agrani Bank photo

Amex notes on Sunday's market

The USD/BDT interbank market has remained sluggish over last one week. The USD/BDT rates stayed in the 49.6200-49.6500 level as market is still liquid in USD. Also, on Sunday the interbank foreign exchange market was very slow due to weekend in the international market.

The call rates have remained below 6 per cent because of excess BDT liquidity. The rates stayed in the 4.75-5.25 per cent level.

The dollar clawed higher against the yen on Friday, fighting back from a brief hit after a strong July employment report sparked fears of an imminent rate hike by the Federal Reserve as early as this month and slammed asset markets.

Market makers said the dollar was boosted as market players covered short dollar positions taken on during the week when the dollar had tumbled to near six-month lows against the yen and three-month lows against the euro.

The employment report which showed non-farm payrolls rose by 310,000 last month and hourly earnings jumped 0.5 per cent. Economists said the report showed tightness in the labour market is pushing up wages and threatening to fuel inflation.

A brighter outlook for Europe and Japan may lure investors away from US assets and that prospect was weighing on the dollar in recent weeks. Despite the dollar's recovery on Friday, there may be more weakness in store for the greenback. More positive economic data from Europe could further tip the scales in favour of the euro.

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## Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 8.8.99

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Date of Leaving
J/1	Eleftheria	Sugar(G)	Sant	Fortune	19/7	12/8
J/2	Leonicos-III	CI	Mumb	UMTL	4/8	12/8
J/3	Nopron Naree	R'Sect	Laura	Rainbow	13/7	11/8
J/7	Banglar Mookh	Rice(P)/GI	Kaki	BSC	6/8	12/8
J/8	Minerva-F	Wheat(P)	Sugarc	Rainbow	23/7	11/8
J/9	Osterisland	Sugar(G)	Hout	Litmond	10/7	11/8
J/10	Silver Star	C.Clink	(Cont'd)	Gress	MBL	2/8 12/8
J/11	Xpress Makalu	Cont	Sing	Baridhi	6/8	9/8
J/12	Jurong Balsam	Cont	Sing	NOL	2/8	10/8
J/13	Achiever	Cont	Sing	RSL	3/8	10/8
CCT/1	Eliza	Cont	Col	Baridhi	7/8	10/8
CCT/2	Banglar Robi	Cont	Sing	BSC	8/8	10/8
CCT/3	Kota Cahaya	Cont	Sing	PH(BD)	6/8	10/8
CCJ	Youngilly	C.Clink	PSAL	R/A(20/7)	9/8	
CSJ	Borobuder	Cement	Zaka	USTC	R/A(11/7)	14/8
RM/6	Kemilau	C.Clink	(Diamond)	Tanj	PSAL	13/7 9/8
DDJ	Berita Glory	Repair	Repair	PSAL	17/8	17/8
SM/8	Ssa World	Repair	Repair	PSAL	R/A	11/8
CUFLJ	Phaethon	IDLE	Durb	OWSL	10/8	
KAFC(U)	Shun Yi	Urea	Cal	MBL	30/7	9/8

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Sam	12/8	Mong	Viking		Scrapping
Athenian Horizon	8/8	Sing	OTBL		
Banglar Doot	8/8	Sing	BSC		Cont Sing
Martina	10/8	Mong	SMSL	Survey Purpose	
Karunia Pacific	11/8	Fada	SMSL	Cement	
QC Mallard(Cont)29/7	8/8	Sing	QCSC		Cont Sing
Da Fa (Cont) 4/8	8/8	Sing	RSL		Cont Sing
Banglar Mamata	20/8	Sing	BSC		Cont Sing
Yong Jiang	8/8	Sing	Bdshp		Cont Sing
General Mojica	9/8	Sing	Seaglor	GH(D.Pea)	
Pernass Protom(48)/1/8	9/8	Sing	RML	GH(ST.Coil)	
Banga Biral(Cont)25/7	9/8	Sing	Bdshp		Cont Sing
QC Teal(Cont)29/7	9/8	Sing	QCSC		Cont Sing
Flag Investor	1/8	Sing	BSC		Cont Sing
Xpress Resolve(Cont)4/7	10/8	Sing	RSL		Cont Sing
Sun Bright	10/8	Sing	MSA	GH(Maize)	
Joy World(48)/5/7	12/8	Tanj	SSIL	GH(ST.Coil)	
Tiger River(Cont)1/8	11/8	Sing	NOL		Cont Sing
Jaya Venus(Cont)25/7	12/8	Sing	RSL		Cont Sing
Kota Berjaya(Cont)3/8	12/8	Sing	PH(BD)		Cont Sing
Banglar Moni(Cont)1/8	13/8	Sing	BSC		Cont Sing
Banga Biral(Cont)1/8	14/8	Sing	Bdshp		Cont Sing
Bunga Mas Enam(Cont)5/8/14/8	14/8	P Kei	EOSL		Cont Sing
Jaya Mars (Cont)5/8	14/8	Sing	Baridhi		Cont Sing
Kota Singa(Cont)5/8	15/8	Sing	PH(BD)		Cont Sing
Banglar Gourab	15/8	Kochi	BSC	Rice(P)/GI	
QC Pintall(Cont)3/8	15/8	Sing	QCSC		Cont Sing
Star Glory	15/8	Sing	PSAL	Cement	
Ocean Mist	15/8	Jedd	Cross	Carcases	
Ocean Blue (Roro)24/4/8	15/8	P.Kei	BBSL	Vehi	
San Mateo(Roro)24/3/8	21/8	P.Kei	JF	Vehi	

Tanker due

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	Local agent	Local agent	Date of arrival
Pacific Glory	14/8	Seacom	RBD	
Atlantic	9/8	Sing	ECSL	HSD/JET
Danat Qatar	11/8	Jebo	USS	Crude Oil

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Energy Explorer-IV			BBAL	5/4
Seabulk Command			IBS	R/A(5/7)
Seabulk Eagle				R/A(7/8)

Vessels at outer anchorage

Ready on

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Bunga Mas Lima(Cont)	Cont	P Kei	EOSL	7/8
Ocean Merit	C Clink	Sing	OTL	8/8
Seven Sea	GI	Mad	Prog	8/8

Vessels awaiting instruction

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Karya Sentosa	Rice(G)		USTC	R/A(10/9)
RITZ	Rice(P)	Kaki	Cross	R/A(24/9)
Xing Yue	Rice(G)		MHCSL	R/A(20/8)
Delta Star			BSA	R/A(17/7)
Palau Mawar		Bank	OLM	8/1
Humber			ABLE	R/A(10/7)
Tasnia	</			