## Market-opening pact seen tough this yr

## China's WTO bid nearing 'midnight' hour: US

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: A senior Clinton administration official warned China yesterday that its bid to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was approaching the "midnight" hour and that it would be very difficult to salvage a marketopening pact this year, reports

"It's getting close to midnight now," US under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade David Aaron told reporters, underscoring growing pessimism within the administration and the business community that a pact could be reached ahead of the WTO ministerial meeting November 30 to December 3 in Seattle.

To join the WTO, which sets global trading rules, China must reach market-opening agreements with the United States, the European Union and other WTO members.

The Seattle meeting of WTO leaders and trade ministers was widely seen as the key deadline for China's accession. 'Any delay could leave Beijing shut out of the next WTO negotiating round, which could last for three years or more.

Aaron brushed aside any suggestion that China would be granted special status if an agreement is not reached before the Seattle meeting.

"I don't see that it (China)

YANGON, Oct 20: Only 21

foreign bank representative of-

fices are still in operation out of

the 39 stationed in Myanmar

the October issue of the Today

magazine reported, reports

those from Bangladesh, France,

China's Hong Kong, Japan,

South Korea, Malaysia and Sin-

drawn for various reasons, in-

cluding the impact of the Asian

were set up in the country after

it reformed its financial man-

agement system in line with the

market-oriented economic policy

nancial reform. Myanmar al-

lowed the establishment of for-

eign bank representative offices

in the country as well as local

the second phase in the last two

years with the signing of memo-

randums of understanding on

setting up joint-venture banks

between six Myanmar private

banks and six foreign banks

which had already opened of-

The reform process entered

As the first phase of its fi-

introduced in late 1988.

The 18 others have with-

These foreign bank offices

The 21 bank offices include

Xinhua.

gapore.

financial crisis.

private banks.

fices in Myanmar.

will play any role," beyond its current status as an observer, Aaron said in Washington where he was attending a business conference on the upcoming WTO talks.

The United States and China resumed talks in September on Beijing's bid to join the trade group after a five-month pause prompted by NATO's bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade.

The European Union and China plan to resume their negotiations in Geneva from October 26 to 28. But so far, the United States

and the EU have been hardpressed to settle their differences with Beijing over access to the vast Chinese market, potentially the world's largest with 1.2 billion consumers.

marred by a dispute over market-opening concessions proposed by Premier Zhu Rongji during a state visit to Washington in April.

The United States wants China to recommit to that package, which included unprecedented tariff cuts and increased access in agriculture, telecommunications and financial services.

wring additional concessions out of Beijing to open China's financial and banking sectors. and to improve safeguards

21 foreign banks still have

their offices in Myanmar

Meanwhile, the number of

Of the local private banks in

local private banks has fallen to

17 from 19, the magazine said.

Myanmar, the Asia Wealth

Bank, the Yoma Bank and the

Myanmar Mayflower Bank are

leading in business and have

opened 32, 28 and 12 branches

trade between Mynamar and

Japan was 149.9 million US

dollars in the first half of this

year, down 0.3 per cent from

the same period of last year

which registered 150.49 million

tors said in its latest issue that

Myanmar's import from Japan

was valued at 122 million dol-

lars, 10.29 per cent less than

the 136 million dollars in the

corresponding period of last

port to Japan in the period

stood at 27.9 million dollars, in-

creasing by 92.54 per cent over

the same period of last year

which recorded 14.49 million

has strengthened its economic

cooperation with japan. In the

past five years, Myanmar ab-

In recent years, Myanmar

Meanwhile, Myanmar's ex-

The official Economic Indica-

Meanwhile, the bilateral

respectively.

Washington also hoped to

against surges in Chinese exports of steel and textiles.

The EU shares many of the United States' concerns about market access in China, and has special interests, such as the level of tariffs on cars, the banking, life assurance and telecommunications markets, and distribution.

So far Beijing has balked at both US and EU demands.

Trade sources said US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and her Chinese counterpart, Shi Guangsheng, could hold face-to-face talks following this month's meetings between Chinese and EU nego-

But that would give US and Chinese officials only a few weeks to strike a deal before US-China talks have been 'WTO ministers gathered in Seattle on November 30.

It also would leave Clinton little time to persuade a sceptical Congress to go along.
"I think it's very, very diffi-

cult," Aaron said. To finalise any trade agreement, the Republican-controlled Congress must grant China permanent most-favoured nation trade status, which the United States now refers to as Normal Trade Relations (NTR) That would guarantee Chinese goods the same low tariff access to US markets as nearly every other nation.

sorbed investment amounting to

in 16 projects, which accounted

for 2.18 per cent of the total

foreign investment of 5.6415

billion dollars flowing into

value of the bilateral trade be-

tween Myanmar and Singapore

fell by 7.4 per cent to 419.96

million US dollars in the first

half of this year from 453.72

million dollars in the same pe-

mar's imports from Singapore

amounted to 367.42 million

dollars, dropping by 8.9 per

cent from 403.55 million dollars

in the corresponding period of

Meanwhile. Myanmar's ex-

ports to Singapore stood at

52.54 million dollars, increasing

by 4.7 per cent over the same

period of last year which

in 1998, Myanmar-Singapore

bilateral trade was as high as

992.33 million dollars, with

Myanmar's imports from Sin-

gapore amounting to 879.81

million dollars while exports to

Singapore standing at only

112.52 million dollars.

The indicators also show that

recorded 50.17 million dollars.

During the first half, Myan-

riod of last year

last year.

Another reports says: The

Myanmar during the period.

123 million dollars from Japan

# 정보통

A personal computer shop manager displays a new "Internet PC" on Wednesday on the first day of a three-year cyber project launched by the government to propel the country into a new era of high-speed information transmission through the Internet. The project aims to create household demand for nine million new low-cost and efficient PCs with multimedia functions. The price was set at between 731 dollars and 830 dollars.

## KL scraps bank merger plan

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 20: Bucking to strong objections, Malaysia's central bank scrapped on Wednesday an ambitious blueprint to merge all of the country's financial institutions into six banking groups, reports AP.

Instead, banks will be allowed to choose their own partners in mergers to be completed by December 2000, Bank Negara announced late Wednesday.

"All banking institutions ... will now be given the flexibility to form their own merger groups and to choose their own leader in each group to lead the merger process," central bank governor Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman said.

The reversal came just a week after Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad acknowledged that many banks lodged strong objections to the plan to reduce

Shipping Intelligence

the nation's 58 financial institutions to six large groups by April 2000.

Malaysia's biggest bank employees union has warned that mergers could leave some

15,000 workers jobless. The central bank didn't specify the number of groups expected to survive the merger exercise, but it stressed that the new guidelines place the onus firmly on shareholders to ini-

tiate and drive the process. All 21 commercial banks, 25 finance companies and 12 merchant banks which signed preliminary agreements last month to merge into six groups can terminate those agreements with the approval of Bank Ne-

The central bank didn't provide details on the criteria for such approval.

Local Date of Leaving

Cont L/Sing

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12/10

13/10

1/10

6/10

Shift ing

# Pak coup worries US wheat growers

SPOKANE, Washington, Oct 20: For the second time in two years, wheat growers in the Pacific Northwest of the United States are worried about losing one of their top export markets, Pakistan, reports AP.

Last year, India and Pakistan conducted nuclear bomb tests, and the United States responded with trade sanctions. Wheat exports eventually were allowed, however, when Congress exempted sales of agricultural products from the sanctions.

Now, there are renewed fears about possible new sanctions that would bar wheat exports to Pakistan following last week's military coup by Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf, whose troops brought down the elected government.

The Northwest's wheat industry already is suffering from a two-year price slump. The Pakistan situation "could

be a really big problem," said Glen Squires, an analyst for the Spokane-based Washington Wheat Commission. "Everybody's just kind of in a

wait-and-see mode to see what

happens in Pakistan, and how the US responds," Squires said Musharraf announced Sunday that he will reduce the

number of troops at the Indian border and establish a ruling council to govern the nation. He said Pakistan would return to civilian rule eventually, but did not say when. The White House, which

wants Musharraf to restore civilian and democratic rule, announced earlier that it would impose new sanctions as an expression of displeasure at the

However, US official have acknowledged they have little

SINGAPORE, Oct 20: China

will carry out financial sector

reform regardless of the out-

come of its bid to join the World

Trade Organisation, a senior

central banker said today, re-

nancial sector will absolutely

not be affected (by the WTO out-

come). Reform polices outlined since 1998 will materialise step

by step," Cai Esheng, Assistant

Governor of the People's Bank

of China, told Reuters Televi-

retary of Commerce for Inter-

national Trade, said on Tuesday

China's WTO bid was ap-

proaching the "midnight" hour,

and that it would become very

difficult to salvage a market-

bank reforms Beijing would ex-

pand the number of cities where

foreign banks were permitted

to conduct Chinese yuan busi-

continue to be opened to foreign

Caj said that as part of its

"The financial sector will

opening pact this year.

David Aaron, US Under Sec-

"China's reform of the fi-

ports Reuters.

leverage over the new regime because heavy sanctions already were imposed following last year's nuclear testing.

Squires said the waiver that exempted agricultural products from the current sanctions expires Thursday.

US officials could decide not

### Pak ad campaign begins to recover bank loans

ISLAMABAD, Oct 20: Newspaper advertisements Wednesday urged Pakistanis with unpaid bank loans to pay up "before the hand of the law forces you to do so with penalty," reports AP.

The advertising blitz follows a promise by Pakistan's new military regime to recover unpaid bank loans, pursue the corrupt in Pakistan and recover illicit

Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf, the man who overthrew Pakistan's elected government one week ago, offered amnesty to loan defaulters if they act quickly to repay their loans.

It wasn't immediately clear whether new more severe penalties will be imposed for those who ignored his offer of amnesty. The law currently provides for a jail sentence and fine. In the case of politicians the law also provides for their disqualification from politics for

Pakistan's industrialists and businessmen, many of whom also are politicians, have defaulted on the repayment of bank loans totalling about 276 billion rupees or \$5 billion.

Chinese financial sector

reforms to continue

investors, only the renminbi

business will be opened gradu-

ally. Two or three (more) cities

will be opened for renminbi

business in addition to Shen-

Foreign banks must

comply with

monitoring system

Foreign banks are currently permitted to provide financial

services in renminbi, but only

to foreign-funded enterprises in

Shanghai and Shenzhen, not to

whether China is ready to allow

foreign banks to conduct ren-

minbi business - especially de-

posits - but rather the adapt-

ability of foreign banks to the

have to fully comply with the

government monitoring system

applied to Chinese banks and

disclose whatever was the nec-

Cai said restructuring of

"They (foreign banks) would

Chinese system," said Cai.

"It is not purely an issue of

zhen and Shanghai."

individual Chinese.

essary information."

to extend the waiver — thus baring wheat exports to Pakistan - in an attempt to persuade Musharraf to restore democracy, Squires said.

The coup's effects already have been felt in the Northwest. On the day news of the coup broke, the price of a bushel of soft white wheat sold at Portland, Ore, grain terminals dropped by 10 cents. Squires said. The price was dlrs 3.18 a bushel on Friday.

Pakistan blends US soft white wheat with its own domestic wheat to make chapati, a flat, thin bread that is a staple in the South Asian nation. Last year, Pakistan bought 1.2 million metric tons of

Northwest wheat, making it the No. 2 buyer of the region's wheat behind Egypt, Squires said. Sales to Pakistan totaled about \$137 million. In 1997, Pakistan was the Northwest's top wheat cus-

tomer, buying about 37 per cent of the region's crop. Tom Wahl, an associate professor of agricultural economics at Washington State University, noted Friday that Australia's wheat industry has been trying

States domination of the Pakistani market in recent years. Australia likely would step in to take the United States"place if the White House bars wheat exports, Wahl said.

to make inroads on the United

Pakistan has got money. and it's going to get wheat somewhere," Wahl said. Australia has generally been

reluctant to impose sanctions against rogue nations.

The potential loss of the Pakistani wheat market would add fuel to the debate in Washington over whether trade sanctions are an effective foreign policy tool, he said.

China's heavily leveraged In-

ternational Trust & Investment

Corporations (ITICs) was well

under way through domestic

mergers and acquisitions, but

Buyouts or refinancing by for-

eign investors had not been

happy (with the arrangement) ...

We do hope that their debts can

be cleared through restructur-

ing is whether there will be in-

terested buyers (of the debt)."

their work," Cai said.

"The key to ITIC restructur-

"So long as the creditors are

ruled out.

ing," Cai said.

#### Osaka 8/10 24/10 Mira Wheat(p) Aust 2/10 27/10 Panglima GI(Bitumen) B. Abb 29/09 26/10 Ever Amply TSP/R.Phos Zhan Bdship 12/10 26/10 Thor Star Wheat(p) S Daya Angelic 26/09 23/10 Xiang Cheng Zing BdShip 6/10 21/10 Banglar Urmi Wheat(G) R/A 24/10 Elizabeth R Seed Hamb Rainbow 23/10 J/10 Thrident GI(Peas) P Said 23/09 25/10 J/11 Jurong Baisam Sing 17/10 21/10 Kota Naga Cont Sing Pil(Bd) 16/10 20/10 J/13 Delos-1 Wheat(G) K.Dia 4/10 20/10 CCT/1 Eliza Mong Baridhi 15/10 19/10 Banglar Shika (Flag) Cont 18/10 20/10 CCT/3 QC pintail 20/10 Ocean Pride C Clin Lumet 30/09 24/10 Ken Koku C Clin Pak Delmure 29/09 24/10 Santa Rosa(Neaped)Wheat(G) Rouen 25/10 **Bold Alliance** Cement Tani Uniship 4/10 23/10 Banglar Maya 20/10 Al Marzan Repair 6/10 23/10 Banga Birol Repair 13/09 19/10

Chittagong port

Cargo Last Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 19.10.1999

DD Sea Bulk Command DDJ/2 Banglar Mookh 24/10 RM/9 Phaethon OWSL 10/06 25/10 Vessels due at outer anchorage Name of vessels Date of Last Port Local Cargo Loading arrival Arcadia 19/10 Mong P/Lighter of C Mana Lams Coastel Manatee 18/10 Houst Lams Wheat(g) MFB Devi Matha BBALSarva Managala MFB Sona BBALBhavahi Matha 19/10 MFB Lakshmi 19/10 **BBALFor Survey Purpose** San Pablo (Roro/24)4/10 19/10 Vehi(40 Kgs) May Nour 20/10 BSLCement (CUFLJ) P.Kel Bunga mas Lapan (Cont) 10/10 20/10P Kel ROSL Cont L/Sing Express Maklu (Cont) 10/1020/10 Cont L/Sing Mehmet Emin 21/10 Panj Angelic C Yallow Maize Kota Cahaya (Cont) 10/1020/10 Sing Pil(Bd) Cont L/Sing Pacadream 26/10 TampaLitmond Dap in Bulk Jaya Mars (Cont)11/10 21/10 Col Baridhi Cont Tiger River (Cont) 12/10 22/10 Sing Cont L/Sing Liberty Spirit Houst Wheat(G) Board Gate BSL Cement (Cuff) QC Mallard (Cont)12/10 22/10 Cont L/sing Proteus Illyc Litmond Fert Shun An St.Coil Bright Vega (Roro/24)5/1025/10 P Kel BBA Yong Jiang S hai BdShip Areti 24/10 Mumb Umtl Gi(st.coil) Eriman Thia 24/10 Prog Tiger Hope (48) GI (S cotl). Prog Triumph Hong Kong (48) 18/.10 25/10 Sing RMLGI(St.Coil) Banglar Robi (Cont)17/1025/10 Cont L/Sing Xpress resolve (Cont)17/1025/10 Cont L/Sing Dafa (Cont)17/10 25/10 Cont L/Sing Brisa Azul Everett Vega SS 27/10 ShekoLitmond Kota Berjaya (Cont)17/1027/10 - Pil(BD) Cont L/Sing Bhavabhuti (48)7/10 - SSLL

Kota Sing (Cont) 18/10 29/10 Pil (BD) Cont L/Sing Hickory Karna Banglar Moni (Cont)17/1031/10 BSC Cont L/Sing Achiever (Cont) 17/10 Cont L/Sing Tanker due Koo Yong Sing ECSL Acushnet 23/10 Aljuba HSD Vessels at Kutubdia Name of vessels Cargo Local agent Date of arrival Energy Explorer-IV BBAL De Champion BBAL Seabulk Eagle BBAL 6/10 Mearsk Arizona Wheat(G) 16/10 Lams Ken Zui Wheat(G) Spiros 16/10 Banglar Jyoti C Oil

29/1-0

- BdShip

Pkl EOSL

Yan Everett

Sing QCSL

Confidence (Cont)27/10 28/10

Banga Biraj (Cont)17/10 28/10

Bunga Mas Enam (Cont) 18/10 28/10

Socol (48) 18/10

Qc Teal (Cont)18/10

R/A Banglar Shourabh C.Oil Vessels at outer anchorage Med Riva **DPRS** Rouen Seaglory Petchg Rada C Clin Pada 17/10 Sing Seaglory 15/10 Cont 18/10 Vessels not ready Wheat(g) Espe Ancient 11/10 Grsp/Dap OWSL 12/10 Durb Adel Wheat(p) 13/10 Angelic GTSP(p) Sing 13/10 Prog C Clin (Dimo) Sing 14/10 Apex 14/10 Litmond OWSL 16/10 Wheat(p) Cement 17,'10 SSST Wheat(G) 'Houst 19/10

Vessels awaiting employement/instruction Rice (P) Cross MHCSL Rice(G) RSA Nishan Sunshine Globe Manda BBAL 17/9 Fert Sing SSTL R/A

#### EU, ACP nations advocate changes in WTO rules NASSAU, Oct 20: Fears are for undifferentiated rules," said come to an end in February countries. "ACP countries crucially need

- AFP photo

growing that former European colonies from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) will have to agree on reciprocal trade preferences to replace the non-reciprocal ones they have enjoyed for the last 25 years, reports IPS.

The preferences are part of a soon-to-expire trade and aid pact between the ACP block and the European Union (EU), thus endangering badly-needed ACP customs revenues.

Politicians from 86 countries in the ACP and the EU, meeting at their Joint Assembly in the Bahamas last week (Oct 11-15). warned that the proposed timing of the future agreement is too short for ACP countries to prepare for integration in the world economy

The new pact must comply with World Trade Organisation (WTO) free-trade rules.

"We expect the EU to understand that the vagaries of under-development make the global playing field too unequal

here ACP delegate Shridath Rampal, former secretary general of the commonwealth.

A customs officer stands guard Wednesday over equipment used to produce pirated optical

discs seized Tuesday in a raid on an underground CD factory and 3 storage facilities.

During the anti-piracy operation, customs officers seized more than 600,000 pirated discs

and impounded two production lines valued at 20 million HK dollars (2.6 million USD).

Delegates also called EU negotiators "to reinforce the partnership with the ACP in order to change WTO rules and put an end to the restrictive supranational rules which guarantee respect for a hierarchy of values where trade liberalisation takes precedence over poverty alleviation and sustainable develop-

"Personally I see great difficulties in the timing initially envisaged by the EU," said the Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly, John Corrie.

"There is renewed concern about the seriousness of Europe's commitment to development as the touchstone of fu-'ture relations," said in turn

Rampal The negotiations for a successor to the preferential agreement linking the 71 ACP. countries to the 15-member EU, the Lome Convention, will

2000, when the pact expires. It is mainly because of divergent views on trade-related issues that the latest ACP-EU ministerial negotiating session held last July ended in dead-

In order for current preferences to be prolonged, a waiver must be requested from the WTO, but EU negotiators say they are prepared to request such a waiver only until 2005.

ACP countries have repeatedly stated that they do no think it is possible to make progress towards a new arrangement within the timetable proposed by the EU.

Philip Lowe, chief negotiator for the EU's executive European Commission (EC), said here that he advocates the progressive development of free trade over 15 or 20 years.

The EU negotiating mandate provides the current convention to be replaced by Reciprocal Economic Partnership Agreements (REPAs) among ACP

The REPAs would comprise six regions (the Caribbean, the Pacific and four in Africa) and should bring about separate free trade agreements with the

The EC, in charge of negotiations on behalf of the EU, proposes a five-years transition period (during which current trade preferences will be maintained under a WTO waiver), to be followed by a period of 10 to 15 years supposedly needed to

set up REPAs. Under those terms the 39 ACP nations included in the United Nations list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will retain their special preferential treatment, while non-LDCs will have to abide by the regional blocks system.

Most ACP nations are not opposed to the principle of market opening and their gradual integration into the world economy, but they say they need more than the five years proposed by the EU.

the continuation of the non-reciprocal regime for as long as possible," echoed Cuban Deputy minister for foreign affairs AD Farnandez.

During the Joint Assembly here, delegates adopted a set of resolutions put forward by European parliament-member Glenys Kinnock who, among others, called an the FILL others, called on the EU states "to provide the ACP with genuine options for future trade relations with the EU."

According to Rampal, "Europe must abandon a state of mind in which it seeks to dictate rather than negotiate the nature of future ACP-EU rela-

Carl Greenidge, Secretary General of the ACP group, said recently that ACPs have nothing against the idea to regional integration among themselves. Speaking to MEPs in Brus-

bears no resemblance at all to

sels last month, Greenidge said "it is easy to come up with a fad, such as free trade, that

the problems the countries themselves face; but the reality is that the EU has obligations under both the Lome Convention and the WTO. Non-government organisa-

tions in Europe and the ACP have often criticised the risks associated with WTO policies. "In the past five years the

WTO regime has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich few; increasing poverty and indebtedness for the majority of the world's population; and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption," an African coalition of NGOs, trade unions, and citizens and social groups stressed.

The coalition, the African Trade Network (ATN), said in a statement released in Accra (Ghana) in September that it is opposed to any attempt to expand the powers of the WTO through a new comprehensive round of trade liberalisation which is due to start in Novem-

#### When asked about the progress of disposal of non-per-Altair SS forming loans at China's four Ultima (Cont) state-run commercial banks, Cai said numbers were expected Unity Nassau paradise "We will have a clear figure Pan dynamic sometime by the end of the year Bay Bonanza or early next year, as the four Hua Yang asset management firms unfold Dina Th Agia philothei "Currently, the official data Sibrisk (shows) seven to eight per cent Oriente Noble considered unrecoverable and that needs to be written off." Xing Ye Delta Star Revenge Younglly Tug: Magarita Ever Cheer Banglar Grouab Vessels not entering Mariana Uniship Capt Peleas-K Pada Cement Uniship Ince-B GTSP SFAS SSST Suthathip naree GTSP SFAX SSST Movement of vessels for 20.10.1999, 21.10.99 & 22.10.99 Outgoing Incoming 20.10.99 K.Naga-7.0 Sun Pablo-6.5 Delos-1-5.5 B.Lapan-7.3 K.Cahaya-7.4 CCt/2 B.Shikha-7.0 RM/5B.Maya-5.0 M.Noor-8.5 H. Yang-8.5 B.Jyoti-7.2 21, 10, 99 Xiang Cheng-5.8 B.Shourabh-7.2 J/11 J.Balsam -7.0 Med Riva-8.5 CCT/1 Ultima-6.0 H.Yang-8.5 GSJ/RM-4 Sunpablo-5.0 B.Jyoti-7.2

DDJ/1 B.Birol-5.5 J/13 Doj 0730 GSJ-S.Rosa-8.4 TO, V12 22.10.99 B.Birol-7.0 CCT/1 J/3 Mira-7.2 Jaya mars-6.2 B.shourabh-4.0 B.Jyoti-7.2 H.Yang-6.8 T.River-6.7 Al Tair SS-8.4

The above are shipping position and performance of vessels of Chittagong port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group. Dhaka.