

China, EU resume WTO talks

New Delhi officials say they strike deal with Beijing

BEIJING, Feb 22: Chinese and European Union trade officials went into a second day of market-opening talks today in a bid to surmount the biggest remaining obstacle to China's membership in the World Trade Organisation, reports Reuters.

As EU negotiators, led by European Commission trade official Hans-Friedrich Bessler, met again with a Chinese team headed by Vice Foreign Trade Minister Long Yongtu, Indian officials announced they had struck a deal with China.

India's Commerce and Industry Minister Murali Manan was to sign the deal with China's Minister of Foreign Trade Shi Guangsheng on Tuesday afternoon, a commercial counsellor at the Indian embassy told Reuters.

Although only a minor trading partner, India was among key emerging economies that needed to complete a bilateral trade accord with China. The Indian official said the deal would help double bilateral trade in the next three years.

EU officials have refused all comment on their talks since they opened on Monday - reflecting the delicate task of negotiators representing the diverse interests of 15 member states.

EU sources say a third day of negotiations would be arranged if all goes well and EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy has said he is ready to jump on a plane to Beijing later in the week.

The EU is the most important WTO member yet to conclude a trade deal with China and there are hopeful signs that this round could break a deadlock that has lasted for more than 13 years.

Washington clinched a historic market-opening agreement with China last November, and US officials are anxious for China to wrap up agreements with the EU and several other countries so they can quickly send the deal to Congress for a vote before anti-China sentiment sinks its prospects.

US labour unions have launched a major campaign in a presidential year to shoot down China's entry.

China must reach agreements with all WTO members before it can join the body that sets rules for global trade.

Premier Zhu Rongji told visiting WTO chief Mike Moore last week he hoped a deal would emerge from the Beijing talks.

Zhu and President Jiang Zemin have personal stakes in ensuring China's early membership, having pushed for it in the face of bitter opposition from government conservatives.

The Europeans were expected to press China to top some of the concessions made to the Americans in telecommunications and financial services, according to sources close to the talks.

In particular, the EU wants more operating licences for European insurers.

China has granted business licences to just 14 foreign insurers, including five US firms and five European ones, but some US firms hold more than one licence.

They also have specific European issues to negotiate, for instance access for British gin and Scotch whisky, French cosmetics and Italian leather goods.

Although EU officials have said the US-China market-opening pact had met 80 per cent of European concerns, Brussels' message to Beijing is that the EU will not be a pushover now that China has a deal with the United States, its biggest trading partner.

In addition to the United States, Japan, Australia and Canada reached separate agreements with Beijing last year. Key emerging economies like Argentina, Thailand, Mexico, and Malaysia have still to complete their own accords with China.

Another report says: The European Union is likely to reach a swift agreement on China's WTO entry this week, with only minor variations from Beijing's November deal with the United States, a senior British investment banker said.

The Chinese have designed with the Americans a nice suit, but if it's to be worn by a European, the arms may need to be lengthened slightly and the legs stretched," said Adam Williams, general manager of China business for Jardine Fleming.

"We've seen already from negotiations with the Americans how sensitive various aspects of financial services are, particularly banking and insurance," said Williams.

The Chinese have plainly drawn a line in the sand allowing opening up, but on a phased basis with various proportions allowed for foreign ownership after so many years.

Under the US-China deal, Beijing committed itself to full market access for foreign banks in five years. Minority foreign owned joint ventures will be able to engage in fund management, with the limit of foreign ownership of joint ventures rising to 49 per cent over three years.

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Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Murali Manan (L) shakes hands with Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Shi Guangsheng after they signed a bilateral trade agreement on China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO), during a ceremony in Beijing yesterday. China now must conclude trade deals with 12 other countries and the European Union to seal its 14-year bid to join the WTO.

— AFP photo

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Exchange Rates

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka for major currencies					
Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying T.T. Clean	Buying OD Sight Export Bill	Buying OD Transfer
US Dollar	51.2300	51.2700	50.8100	50.6570	50.5850
Pound Stg	82.4393	82.5037	81.2045	80.9600	80.8449
Deutsche Mark	26.3899	26.4105	25.3812	25.2048	25.2688
Swiss Franc	31.9170	31.9419	31.2465	31.2465	31.1525
Japanese Yen	0.4612	0.4618	0.4532	0.4519	0.4512
Dutch Guilder	23.4215	23.4398	22.5263	22.4584	22.4255
Danish Krona	6.8737	6.8791	6.7235	6.7032	6.6937
Australian \$	32.6130	32.6385	31.2939	31.1998	31.1553
Belgian Franc	1.2705	1.2805	1.2306	1.2269	1.2251
Canadian \$	35.5295	35.5573	34.5083	34.4044	34.3555
French Franc	7.8685	7.8747	7.5678	7.5450	7.5343
Hong Kong \$	6.5963	6.6014	6.5162	6.4966	6.4873
Italian Lira	0.0267	0.0267	0.0256	0.0256	0.0255
Norway Krona	6.2460	6.2509	6.1446	6.1261	6.1174
Singapore \$	30.3819	30.4058	29.416	29.3290	29.2873
Saudi Rial	13.6968	13.7075	13.5111	13.4705	13.4513
UAE Dirham	13.9869	13.9978	13.7958	13.7543	13.7347
Swedish Krona	5.9383	5.9430	5.8659	5.8487	5.8399
Qatari Riyal	14.1141	14.1251	13.9179	13.760	13.8562
Kuwaiti Dinar	172.8699	173.094	15.525	15.0750	15.615
Thai Baht	1.3434	1.3444	1.3296	1.3256	1.3237
Euro	51.6142	51.6545	49.6414	49.4919	49.4215

Bill buying rates					
TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
50.7112	50.3866	49.9532	49.5398	49.1163	48.2695

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)					
Buying (\$)	Selling (\$)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months
50.580	51.200	USD	5.8800	6.1100	6.3375
80.849	82.439	GBP	6.1218	6.2400	6.4316
Cash/TC	Cash/TC	Euro	3.4300	3.6133	3.8075

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars					
Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
43.61243.617	51.8951.90	38.2238.28	3.7952.8005	7425/7455	1134/1134

Amex notes on Tuesday's market
The Interbank USD/BDT market was moderately active on Tuesday. Average USD/BDT traded between 51.0950-51.1050.

Interbank call money market was active. Payments for T-bills were made today worth BDT 7.995 billion against maturities of BDT 4.139 billion. Mismatch in payments and maturities created a gap and pressured the call rates to go up. Average call rates played between 6.50 and 7.50 per cent today.

The euro rose above the key one-to-one rate against the dollar for the first time in four weeks on Tuesday, bolstered by gains it made against the yen and speculation of further rises in euro zone interest rates. It hit a high of \$1.0022 - up 3.7 per cent from the lifetime lows it had set on February 1 - before slipping back a little to be quoted at \$0.9998/1.0000 at 0912 GMT.

Meanwhile, the yen was struggling near multi-month lows against the dollar as starkly different reports by two major credit ratings agencies highlighted a split in views on Japan's economic prospects. News US rating agency Standard & Poor's had affirmed Japan's triple-A long-term credit and senior unsecured ratings on Monday failed to rescue the yen from its slide. Currency dealers were still focusing on Moody's decision last week to place Japan's yen-denominated government debt rating on review for a possible downgrade. The dollar was bobbing within half yen of a six-month high of 111.78 yen it hit in Asia. Expectations of wider interest rate differentials between Japan and the United States and between Japan and Europe were resulting in an increase in yen carry trades by hedge funds.

At around 0940 GMT the exchange rates of major currencies against USD were GBP/USD 1.6089/6094, USD/CHF 1.6078/6088, USD/JPY 111.22/111.32, EUR/USD 0.9985/09990.

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 22.2.2000

Berth no	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leave
J/1	Gang PU	C Clink	Sing	PSAL	18/2	2/3
J/2	Sea Bliss	C.Clink	Kanj	MBL	18/2	3/3
J/3	Martina	C	Kanj	SMSL	10/2	15/2
J/8	Pacific Challenge	C.Clin	Fada	NWSL	10/2	22/2
J/9	OSG Argosy	Cont	Col	Baridhi	20/2	22/2
J/11	Al Pinia	Wheat(F)	Ros	Seaglor	12/2	1/3
J/12	Xpress Nilgiri	Cont	P Kel	RSL	21/2	25/3
J/13	Kota Cahaya	Cont	Sing	PH(BD)	16/2	22/2
CCT/1	Ever Brisk	Cont	Sing	QCSL	17/2	23/2
CCT/2	Tiger River	Cont	Sing	Nol	17/2	22/2
CCT/3	DIFA	Cont	Sing	RSL	19/2	23/2
RM/14	Ocean Pride	urea(G)	Sing	PSAL	11/2	24/2
CCJ	Al Shams	C Clink	Karab	RML	14/2	24/3
GSJ	Sea Bird-1	Wheat(G)/Idle	Mong	Benam	17/1	25/2
TSP	Clover Trust	R.Phos	Jedd	Seacom	11/2	27/2
RM/4	Ventura	Oslo	Durb	Rainbow	14/2	23/2
DOJ	Banglar Shourab	C.Oil	BSC	R/A	23/2	23/2
RM/8	Banglar Urm	Repair	BSC	R/A	25/2	25/2
RM/9	Banglar Robi	Repair	Mong	BSC	11/2	22/2

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Kota Singa (Cont) 13/2	22/2	Sing	PH(BD)	Cont	Sing
Spress Resolves (Cont) 16/2	22/2	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Orient Star	24/2	Yang	Angelic	Tce (P) /GI	-
Sun Ocean	22/2	Rawa	SMSL	Urea(G)	-
Makmur Perkasa	22/2	Don't	BNSC	Urea(G)	-
Dan Yang	23/2	Sing	BNSC	Urea(G)	-
Banga Biro (Cont) 13/2	22/2	P Kel	BD Ship	Cont	Sing
Tug Ocean echo	23/2	Sing	OL	Cont	Sing
QC Teal (Cont) 13/2	23/2	P Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Delos-1	26/2	-	PSAL	Cement	-
Mu Du Bong	25/2	-	PSAL	Cement	-
Jaami	21/2	Yang	Cross GI(Pulse & Log)	-	-
Power	23/2	-	PSAL	C Link	-
OSG Alpha (Cont) 14/2	24/2	P Kel	RSL	Cont	Sing
Thang God	24/2	-	PSALC Clink (Diamond)	-	-
Maryoun	25/2	Lang	ESL	Cement	-
Kota Berjaya (Cont) 14/2	24/2	Sing	PH (BD)	Cont	Sing
Jaya Mars (Cont) 16/2	24/2	CEO	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Oreita Line	25/2	Sing	Everett	GI(St. Coil)	-
QC Pintail (Cont) 11/2	21/2	Sing	BNSC	Cont	Sing
Triumphitkong	25/2	Sing	RML GI(St. Coil)	-	-
Teresa Everit (48) 14/2	27/2	-	Everett(GI St. Coil)	-	-
Achiever (Cont) 20/2	27/2	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Paraskevi MY	28/2	-	Total	Wheat(P)	-
Xpress Shikha (Cont) 18/2	28/2	Sing	ESL	Cont	Sing
Nagras Makalu (Cont) 16/2	7/3	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Radwan	22/2	BAHA	Atlantic	Sko/JP
Palmtree	23/2	Batma	Seacom	-
Al Deerah	23/2	Kuwa	ECSL	HSD
Nol Aries	25/2	Baha	ECSL	HSD
Hellas Progress	24/2	Juba	Atlantic	Sko/ESD

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Energy explorer-IV	-	-	BBAL	5/4
Ismaya	-	-	BBAL	17/8
MFB Devi Matha	-	-	BBAL	24/10
MFB Lakshmi	For-survey	Purpose		