

Stock market officially opens in Dubai

DUBAI, Mar 27: A long-awaited stock market was officially opened Sunday in Dubai, one of the seven emirates in the United Arab Emirates, paving the way for a full-fledged bourse in the country, reports AP.

The Dubai Financial Market, which was opened by Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, will initially be open to UAF citizens only.

"The base of clients will be expanded in a later stage to include citizens from the Gulf as well as other nationals," said Issa Kazem, director of the market.

Equipped with online monitors and state-of-the-art trading facilities, the bourse will have eight listed companies, forming a base of trading for 100,000 investors.

Only stocks will be initially traded and futures and options will be included later, Kazem said.

To familiarise citizens, who make up only about one-third of the 2.9 million population, with trading practices, the market will hold daily tutorial seminars.

According to officials, the market aims at luring investors to put funds into the national economy through stock trading. The new bourse is expected to ensure better transparency and boost investor confidence.

Oil palm planters in Malaysia to receive \$ 26m

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 27: Malaysia has allocated 100 million ringgit (26 million dollars) for oil palm cultivators to boost output and income, a report said today, reports AFP.

Primary Industries Minister Lim Keng Yaik said the money would be given as soft loans to oil palm smallholders for replanting purposes.

"The assistance is a manifestation of our commitment to help smallholders so they can enjoy bountiful harvests and higher incomes," he was quoted as saying by the Sunday Star newspaper.

Lim said the funds, requested by the smallholders, were approved at Wednesday's weekly Cabinet meeting.

The loans, through Bank Pertanian (Agriculture Bank), would attract an interest rate of four per cent per annum, he said.

San Miguel eyes stake in Dole Food

MANILA, Philippines, Mar 27: San Miguel Corp, a leading Philippine food and beverage conglomerate, said Monday it is seeking to acquire a stake in Dole Food Co, reports AP.

"As of the moment we are interested in acquiring a stake in Dole Food Co but there are no definitive matters to disclose," San Miguel told the stock exchange.

San Miguel did not disclose how much of the US fruit company it plans to purchase, but sources said the Philippine conglomerate is seeking a 24 per cent shareholding in Dole.

San Miguel has been actively seeking a food or beverage company to invest part of the \$1 billion still remaining from its divestment two years ago of its stakes in Nestle Philippines and in the European subsidiary of Coca-Cola Amatil Ltd of Australia.

Last month, San Miguel said it was in talks to acquire local canned tuna manufacturer First Dominion.

EU trade chief due in China today for WTO talks

Beijing optimistic about deal during this round

BEIJING, Mar 27: European Union Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy will fly into Beijing on Tuesday for a new round of World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks that may end China's 14-year quest to join the trade body, reports AFP.

The EU is by far the largest remaining trading partner with which China has to work out a WTO deal.

Apart from the EU, China still has to agree to bilateral trade deals with Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico and Switzerland.

Chinese officials have signalled that optimism for a deal during this round of talks after inkling agreements with Thailand, India, Argentina, Colombia, Poland and Kyrgyzstan in recent weeks.

After signing a deal in Thailand earlier this month, China's Foreign Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng talked confidently about the EU.

"Now the differences are narrowing through negotiations and I am full of confidence that when Mr Lamy comes to Beijing we can find a way that both sides can accept," Shi said.

However, officials at the European Commission have remained tight-lipped since February's negotiations ended in stalemate.

Lamy's presence will fuel

hopes for a China-EU deal, but EU negotiators are likely to fight hard for concessions in a wide variety of areas.

The last round of talks ground to a halt before Lamy, whose presence is needed to sign and seal an agreement, got on a plane for the Chinese capital.

Lamy holds the same status in the EU as Trade Representative Charlene Barshevsky does in the United States.

EU negotiators have said that the Sino-US agreement on China's WTO entry signed in Beijing in November covered 80 per cent of their concerns, but have pledged to bargain hard for the remaining 20 per cent.

Among the thorny issues that must be resolved are market access to the telecommunications sector — especially the mobile telephone industry — insurance and the financial sector.

In the telecommunications sector, EU concerns revolve around protecting foreign manufacturer access to China's burgeoning mobile phone market as domestic telecoms firms gain ground.

There are worries that the implicit or explicit use of quotas will block foreign firms' access to the growing telecoms service sector.

The EU is probably looking to remove the increasingly preferential treatment domestic manufacturers are given of

procurement of telecoms infrastructure," said Ross O'Brien, research director at Pyramid Research, a telecoms consultancy affiliated with the Economist Group.

They want a more realistic timetable for access to the service market and to make sure they are not squeezed out of the market once China Inc gets going," he added.

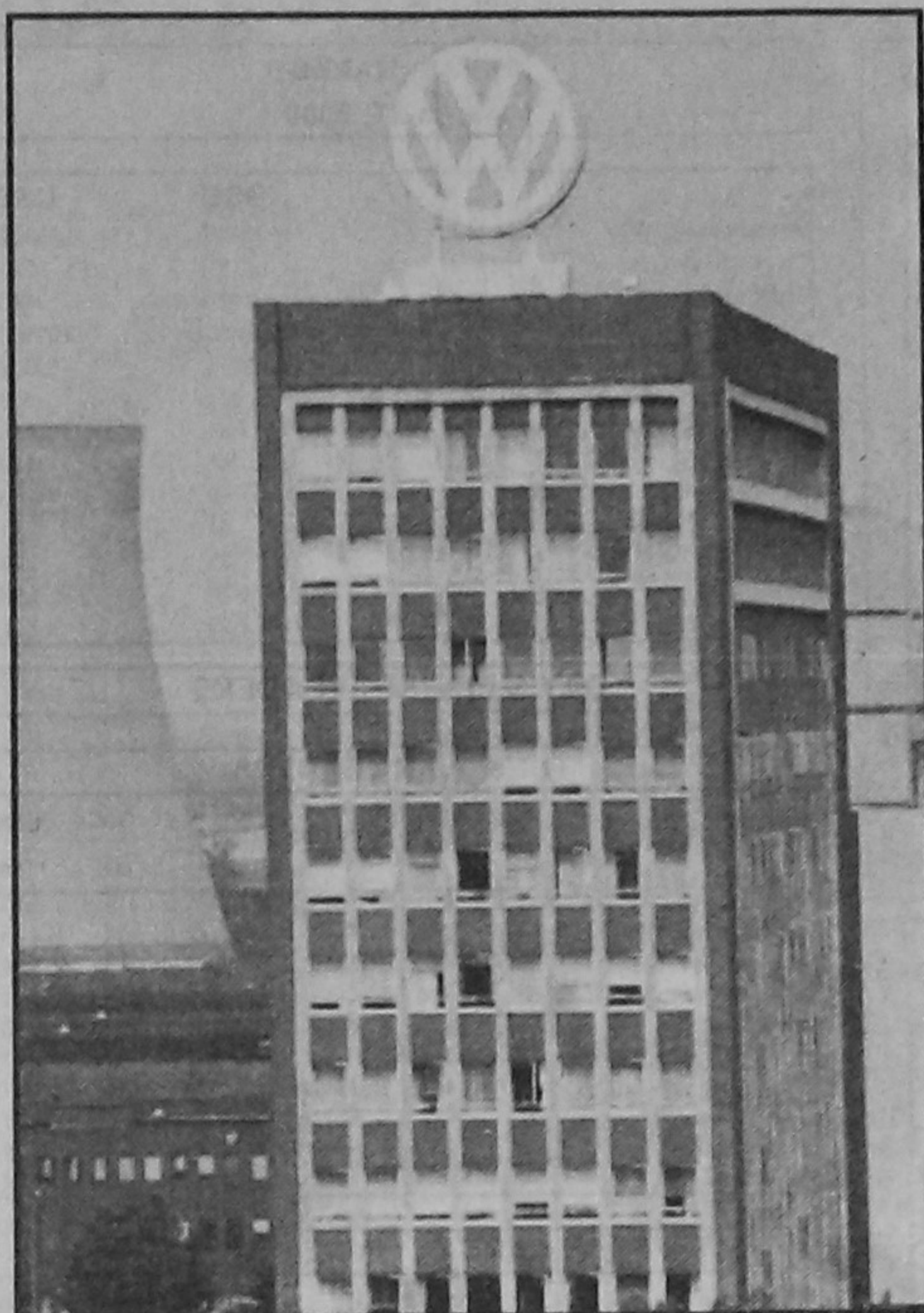
The European side has also been pushing for more than 51 per cent foreign ownership rights for European telecom companies in joint ventures.

In the landmark Sino-US trade deal agreed to in November, US telecoms companies were only given the right to gradually take 50 per cent stakes.

Meanwhile, EU insurers are hoping to win permission to take 51 per cent stakes in mainland life insurance joint ventures, while insurance brokers are also clamouring for a slice of the Chinese market.

The Allianz deal with Shanghai Dazhong Insurance formally went into operation a year ago, before Chinese regulators began lowering the ceiling on foreign participation.

Sources also remain to be seen over up to 100 tariff reductions on goods such as food, wine, glass, ceramics and pharmaceuticals.



Picture dated August 4, 1993 of the administration building of German auto group Volkswagen (VW) in Wolfsburg. VW has acquired 18.7 per cent of the capital and 34 per cent of the votes in Scania trucks of Sweden for 13.8 billion kroner (1.642 billion USD), the Investor holding company said in Stockholm on Monday.

—AFP photo

3rd largest automaker born

DaimlerChrysler to buy 34 pc of Mitsubishi

FRANKFURT, Mar 27: DaimlerChrysler AG, seeking a foothold in Asia, said Monday it would acquire 34 per cent of Japan's Mitsubishi Motors Corp for an alliance that would create the world's third largest automaker, says AP.

In a statement issued before the stock market opening in Frankfurt, DaimlerChrysler said its chairman, Juergen Schrempp, and Mitsubishi president Katsuhiko Kawasoe had signed a letter of intent in Stuttgart to form an alliance regarding the design, development, production and distribution of passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. The final contracts will be signed within the next few months.

DaimlerChrysler said it would pay 2.1 billion euros (\$2 billion) for the stake through a capital increase, and that DaimlerChrysler would take regular seats on Mitsubishi's board "in line with the equity participation to be part of the decision making process at Mitsubishi."

The deal will help the German-American automaker to ward one of its goals: increasing group sales in the fast-growing Asian market.

"It lays the groundwork for them to develop a much more competitive position," said Howard Smith, auto analyst with ING Barings Securities (Japan) Ltd in Tokyo. "Asia is going to be the goose that lays the golden egg... at some point."

It also apparently gives DaimlerChrysler control over Japan's fourth biggest automaker, which is deeply in debt and needs a cash infusion. The Detroit news reported Monday that the deal gives DaimlerChrysler veto rights over management decisions and as many as three seats on Mitsubishi's board.

Mitsubishi has a crippling 1.75 trillion yen (\$16.4 billion)

debt, and the highest debt-to-equity ratio in the Japanese car industry.

Japan's auto industry has been one of the hardest hit by the country's prolonged economic downturn, and several carmakers have sought foreign partners. In the biggest deal, Renault SA of France bought a 36.8 per cent stake in Japan's debt-ridden Nissan Motor Co in May 1999.

And DaimlerChrysler itself is a creation of the trend in the global auto industry toward consolidation. The Stuttgart-based Daimler-Benz bought out American automaker Chrysler Corp in 1998.

But the company has been relatively late in the race to Asia.

Ford bought a controlling stake in Japanese automaker Mazda in 1996. General Motors owns stakes in Isuzu Motors Ltd Suzuki Motor Corp and has plans to take a 20 per cent chunk of Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd, the maker and Subaru cars.

Despite its crumbling finances, Mitsubishi is an attractive catch for several reasons. One is its strength in smaller cars. The Germany news-magazine Der Spiegel reported over the weekend that DaimlerChrysler planned to use Mitsubishi Motor Corp's Dutch plant to expand its struggling mini-car line.

That was expected to help strengthen the company's position in the fast-growing Asian market as well as help the Mercedes manufacturer meet fleet fuel-efficiency targets with the European Union.

Mitsubishi also has become a pioneer in gasoline direct injection technology, but has failed to exploit its leadership. DaimlerChrysler, with its vast resources, could put that know-how to use, Smith said.

Exchange Rates

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka to 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 Sg	818758	819397	80.6456	80.4028	80.2885
Deutsche Mark	26.0232	26.0435	25.0045	24.9292	24.8938
Swiss Franc	31.7410	31.7358	31.0765	30.9829	30.9398
Japanese Yen	0.4814	0.4818	0.4729	0.4714	0.4708
Dutch Guilder	23.0961	23.1141	22.1820	22.1251	22.0937
Danish Krona	6.7655	6.7647	6.6142	6.5942	6.5849
Australian \$	31.8497	31.8746	30.5470	30.4550	30.4117
Belgian Franc	1.2617	1.2627	1.2123	1.2087	1.2069
Canadian \$	35.4263	35.4540	34.3965	34.2949	34.2462
French Franc	7.7592	7.7653	7.556	7.4330	7.4224
Hong Kong \$	6.5906	6.5987	6.5135	6.4939	6.4847
Italian Lira	0.0263	0.0263	0.0253	0.0252	0.0251
Norway Krone	6.1993	6.2042	6.0999	6.0786	6.0699
Singapore \$	30.1619	30.1855	29.2095	29.1216	29.0892
Saudi Rial	13.6979	13.7086	13.5122	13.4715	13.4524
UAE Dirham	13.9969	13.9979	13.7954	13.7539	13.7344
Swedish Krona	6.0205	6.0252	5.9432	5.9253	5.9169
Qatari Riyal	14.1188	14.1298	13.9205	13.8786	13.8589
Kuwaiti Dinar	172.7533	172.8662	160.4104	159.9274	159.7001
Thai Baht	1.3555	1.3565	1.3415	1.3375	1.3356
Euro	50.8970	50.9367	48.9046	48.7574	48.6881

Bill buying rates					
TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
50.7112	50.3866	49.9632	49.5308	49.1163	48.2655

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)					
Buying (\$)	Selling (\$)	Curre ncy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months
50.5850	51.2300	USD	6.13125	6.29000	6.5025
80.2885	81.8758	GBP	5.99000	6.21813	6.4306

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars					
Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
43.60/43.605	51.895/51.90	37.75/37.78	3.7999/3.8001	7475/7490	1112/1122

Amex notes on Monday's market
The interbank USD/BDT market was active on Monday. Demand for US Dollar was high in the interbank market compared to low supply. Major USD suppliers refrained from selling USD into the market. Average USD/BDT rate traded between 51.1500 and 51.1550. Interbank call money market was moderately active on Monday. Payment for T-bills worth BDT 10.50 billion took place today against maturities of T-bills worth BDT 7.245 billion in 28-days category. The interbank market was highly liquid from earlier week. As a result, average call rates mostly range between 6.00 and 6.75 per cent.

The euro hit three-and-a-half week highs against the dollar on Monday inspired by the Swiss Franc's rally following last week's Swiss monetary tightening, but analysts were not convinced that Euro recovery was sustainable. With little fresh news to change the economic outlook for the European single currency, euro dollar was not out of the woods yet. The Euro had risen to \$0.9785, its highest since March 2, up 2.25 per cent from Thursday's \$0.9573 two-week low. The Swiss Franc set a one-month high against the dollar at 1.6222 in Asia, having rallied more than three per cent since Thursday when the Swiss National Bank caught the market by surprise with a bigger-than-expected 75 basis point interest rate hike. Analysts commented that the market would watch carefully Monday's meeting of oil ministers of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna. The ECB meets to discuss euro zone monetary policy on Thursday. While there was some speculation of further tightening in the 3.50 per cent refinancing target after last week's sharp hike from the SNB, lower oil prices could prompt the ECB to hold off hiking rates just yet.

Meanwhile, dollar/yen was broadly steady below 107.00. Solid gains in Japanese share prices failed to boost the Japanese currency, as the market was wary ahead of the release next Monday of the Bank of Japan's quarterly "tankan" survey of corporate sentiment. At around 1008 GMT the exchange rates of major currencies against USD were GBP/USD 1.5979/1.5981, USD/CHF 1.6310/1.6320, USD/JPY 107.04/107.06, EUR/USD 0.9744/0.9749.

Shipping Intelligence

CHITTAGONG PORT
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 27.3.2000

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port agent	Local agent	Date of arrival	Date of leaving
J/1	Eco Ekram	GL(Birt)	Babb	MSA	11/3	27/3
J/2	Ocean Line-2	Rice(P)	Kara	OWSL	16/3	30/3
J/3	Al Muztuba	GL(BIT)	B Abb	CLA	21/3	1/4
J/4	Hual Yang	G	Chin	Prog	18/3	3/4
J/5	Ocean Pride	GL(Malzee)	Yang	PSAL	15/3	30/3
J/6	Daebo Gemma	GL(Peas)	Sing	Seaglo	3/3	28/3
J/7	Deyan-1	Urea (G)	Juba	AMBL	12/3	30/3
J/10	Freedom-K	C Clink	Koshi	NWSL	23/3	3/4
J/11	Lima-1	R Seed	Lapa	Seaglo	20/3	3/4
J/12	Jaya Mars	Cont	Col	Baridhi	22/3	28/3
J/13	Chu Hong	Cont	Sing	QCSL	25/3	29/3
CCT/1	Orient	Cont	P Kel	BD Ship	23/3	27/3
CCT/2	Independence	Cont	Sing	NOL	21/3	29/3
CCT/3	Achiever	Cont	Sing	RSL	20/3	28/3
RM/14	Thank God	C Clink	Pada	PSAL	24/2	30/3
CCJ	Allegro	C Clink	Karabi	RML	22/3	3/4
RM/3	Kithira	CDOS	Darb	Rainbow	9/3	28/3
DD	Banglar Mookh	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	29/3
DDJ/1	Banglar Kallol	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	29/3
RM/8	Sarah-1	-	-	SMSL	R/A	29/3
RM/9	Banglar Robi	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	2/4
CUFLJ	Mary Nour Cement (Scan)	Lang	BSC	RSL	18/3	30/3

Vessels due at outer anchorage					
Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
QC Mallard(Cont)12/3	27/3	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
QC Teal(Cont)19/3	29/3	P Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
OSG Alpha(Cont)20/3	28/3	-	RSL	Cont	Sing
Da Fa(Cont)20/3	28/3	-	RSL	Cont	Sing
Xpress Resolve(Cont)20/3	28/3	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Shun An (48) 22/3	28/3	Mong	RML	GL(CR Coil & P Equip)	-
Young Jiang	28/3	Sing	BD Ship	GL	-
Alpine	4/4	Yang	SMSL	Rice&GL	-
Mactia	30/3	Yang	SMSL	Cont	Sing
QC Pintail(Cont)20/3	2/4	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Triumph Hong Kong (48) 22/3	30/3	Yang	Everett	GL(ST Coil)	-
Kengtung (48) 15/3	31/3	-	Everett	GL(ST Coil)	-
Banga Birol (Cont) 21/3	31/3	-	BD Ship	Cont	Sing
Kota Naga (Cont) 21/3	30/3	Sing	Pil(BD)	Cont	Sing
OSG Argey (Cont) 24/3	30/3	CCJ	Baridhi	Cont	Sing
Banglar Shikha (Cont) 26/3	31/3	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Kota Berjaya (Cont) 20/3	1/4	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
Ocean Prayer	3/4	-	SBS	GL(Bit in Drum)	-
Banga Bjoy (Cont) 24/3	5/4	-	BD Ship	Cont	-

Tanker due:			
Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port agent	Local agent
Prosperitas	27/3	-	Rainbow
NOL Arles	30/3	KUWA	ECSL
Ocean Dragon	29/3	-	-

Vessels at Kutubdia			
Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port agent	Local agent
Energy Explorer-IV	-	-	BBAL
Ismaia	-	-	BBAL
MBF Devi Matha	-	-	BBAL
MBF Sona	-	-	BBAL
MBF Lakshmi	-	-	BBAL
Smil Lloyd-74	-	-	BBAL
Barge CSK-6	-	-	BBAL
Tug Magarita	-	-	BBAL
Tug Dharmasakti-108	-	-	BBAL
Seabulk Command	-	-	IBS
Dea Champion	-	-	Arafcan

Vessels at outer anchorage			
Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port agent	Local agent
Australia-II	CDOS	Toama	Seacom
ASEAN Express	GL	Sing	Prog
Kota Naga (Cont)	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)
Al Shams	C Clink	Krabi	RML
Banga Biraj (Cont)	Cont	Sing	BD Ship
Hyok Sin	R Phos	Shen	Atlantic
Asia Manan	R Phos	Shen	Seacom
Asia Lion	HSD	Rawa	ECSL

Vessels not ready:			
Century	GL(Wt Ce)	Bang	Rainbow
20/3	-	-	-

Vessels awaiting instruction			
Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port agent	Local agent
Xing Ye	Rice(G)	-	MHCSL
Revenge	-	-	Sunshine
Eanglar Gourab	-	-	BSC
Banglar Kakoli	-	-	BSC
Banglar Shourabh	-	-	BSC
Banglar Jyoti	-	-	BSC
Banglar Moni	Ballast	Mong	BSC

Vessels not entering:			
Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port agent	Local agent
Ja Gang	Cement	DPKR	SBS
Peelas-K	Cement	Kanj	SBS
Jon Jin	Cement	Jaka	SBS
Ispta	-	-	Uniship
Visitor	Scraping	Sing	-
Karaya Sentosa	Rice(G)	-	USC

Vessels awaiting instruction
