

# G7 to warn OPEC over prices

## Finance ministers meet in Prague next weekend

LONDON, Sept 17: Finance Ministers from the Group of Seven industrial nations will warn the oil exporters' cartel OPEC about the dangers of high oil prices, a British newspaper said today, reports AFP.

The Sunday Times newspaper quoted sources in Britain's Treasury as saying the warning will be issued when G7 leaders meet in the Czech capital, Prague, next weekend.

Chancellor Gordon Brown will push his fellow G7 finance ministers to send a tough message to oil producing nations at the meeting, according to the Sunday Times.

The newspaper added that the warning may also include a threat by the United States to release some of its strategic petroleum reserve onto the market to drive down prices.

The oil price reached a 10-year high of 36 dollars per barrel in New York on Friday.

Surging prices at the petrol pumps have provoked angry

protests across Europe over the past week.

In Britain, hauliers and farmers prevented tankers from leaving oil refineries and depots, causing petrol stations to run dry.

Truckers in Belgium have blocked roads in Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp, while there have been similar protests in Norway, Sweden and Germany.

Protesters want their governments to cut fuel tax, but most finance ministers have stood their ground and instead blamed OPEC for the high prices.

OPEC last week agreed to release an extra 800,000 barrels of crude a day onto the market to calm the oil markets, but this has so far failed to check prices.

Meanwhile Reuters from Sydney says, oil giant BP Amoco Plc said today it was surprised by the rapid spread of the fuel price protests which paralysed Britain, but noted the impact on its revenue or profits would be minimal.

"It's had a very small impact in

terms of profit, because of course we make a very small proportion of our profit in the UK," Sir John Browne, BP's group chief executive told Reuters at a news conference in Sydney.

"It's had a very big impact in terms of us having to help manage the situation forward, making sure we got deliveries out as fast as possible. I think BP was the first company to reach maximum capacity again after the protesters had disbanded," he said.

BP said yesterday around half its 1,500 petrol stations in Britain were operating after the week-long series of blockades at oil depots and refineries which saw filling stations run dry.

The crisis hit services across Britain. Supermarkets limited food sales, over 130 schools in England shut down and health services were put on red alert as the sick struggled to get to and from hospitals.

At around 80 pence (\$1.13) a litre, petrol prices in Britain are the highest in Europe, and about

three-quarters of the price goes to the government in tax.

"I was struck by how rapidly things turned and supplies were shut off. It really happened within a day. There were limited number of protests, then suddenly it seemed almost every terminal was closed down," Browne said.

Browne earlier told Australia's Nine Network Business today programme he expected crude oil prices to moderate going into the northern hemisphere winter as increased supply begins to flow.

But he said British fuel taxes were "very high indeed," estimating his firm's profit per litre of petrol at around a penny.

BP was talking to the British government about taxes on fuel and securing petrol supplies, said Browne, who noted the strength of the popular protest should be taken into consideration.

"This is to do with emotion and belief, and that's a very much a political issue. It's the leadership of a nation not so much the leadership of a company," Browne

# UNDP seeks political support for its new policy objectives

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 17: The UN Development Programme (UNDP), which has suffered heavy cuts in donor contributions, is seeking broader political support for its new policy objectives, says IPS.

Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP, said the decline in resources primarily on the lack of "real political support" for the work of the organisation over the last few years. He told IPS.

Last week, the UNDP hosted its first ever, one-day ministerial meeting, described as an "interactive discussion" between donors and recipients.

The meeting was held at a time when UNDP's core resources have plummeted: from about 1.2 billion dollars in 1992 to a low of 680 million dollars in 2000. The proposed funding for 2000 represents a 120-million-dollar shortfall from the targets set by governments 12 months earlier.

The shortfall in contributions is also partly blamed on the

strength of the US dollar. Since European donors make pledges in their national currencies, their contributions have declined in terms of the US dollar, the currency used in the UN system.

According to UNDP figures, the organisation lost about 60 million dollars last year as a result of the depreciation of national currencies against the US dollar.

In a new report titled "Rebuilding Support for UN Development Cooperation", UNDP points out that in 30 countries, financial constraints have become so severe that project approval authority has been suspended altogether.

"A large number of country offices will not be in a position to finance new initiatives. Lack of resources will make it impossible to translate reform commitments into reality," it says.

As part of a reform process, UNDP's staff at headquarters is being reduced by about 26 per cent, with a reduction in 303 posts in New York. Of these pos-

sitions, 106 are being reallocated to the field primarily to strengthen direct policy support to country operations.

According to UNDP, the allocations have been made and the process initiated. The result will be a net cut of 138 posts. Currently, there are about 1,000 staffers at headquarters and about 4,999 in field offices worldwide.

Malloch Brown admits there has been "a lot of pain" resulting from staff cuts. But these cuts are part of the ongoing reform process.

With regard to human resources, measures have been implemented to monitor performance in critical areas. A management scorecard has been designed and is ready to be implemented. Managers are also being held accountable for performance.

Malloch Brown thinks that there has been a very positive response from donors to the reforms he has already initiated.

# China to develop helicopter industry

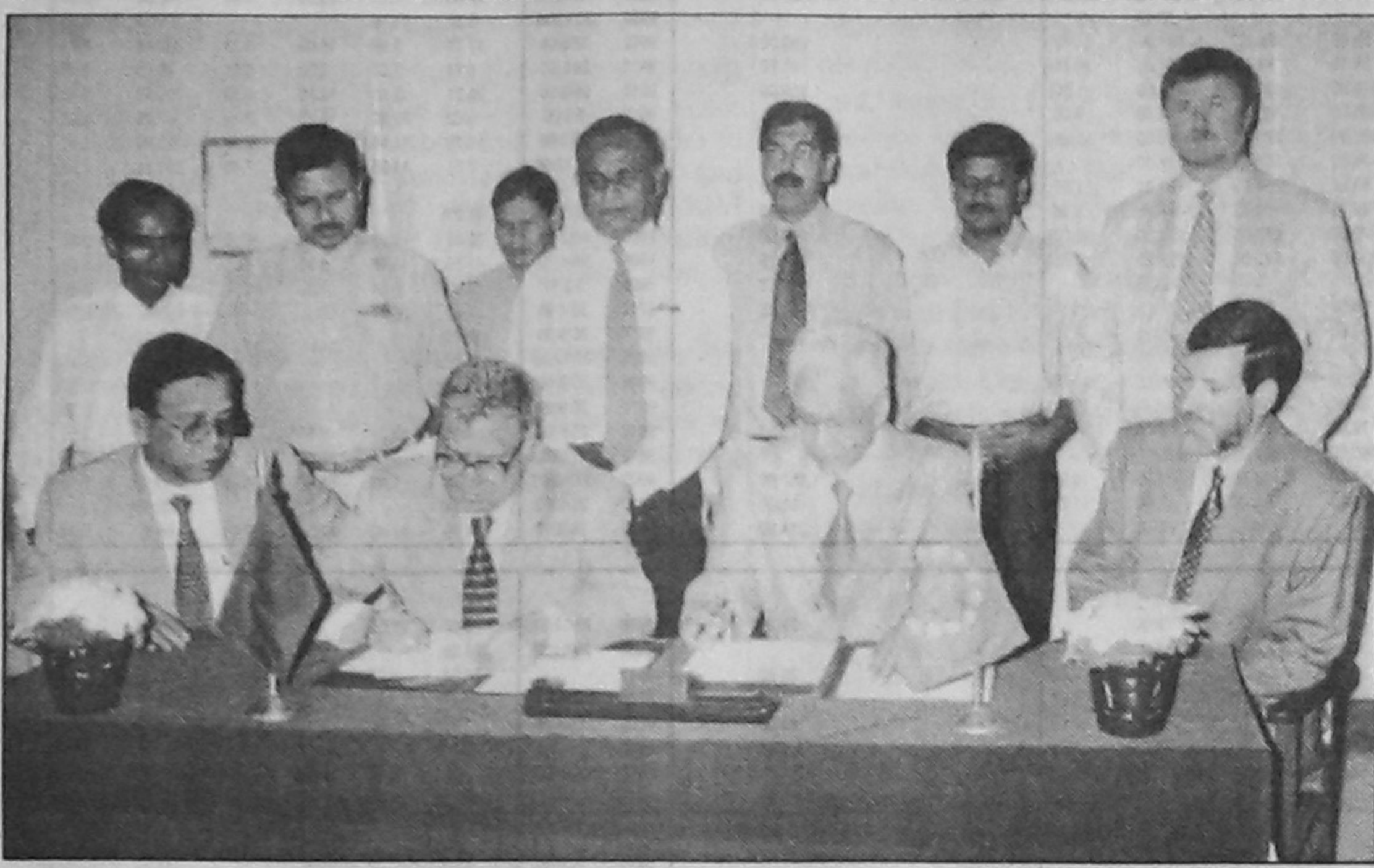
BEIJING, Sept 17: China has set a goal to turn itself into one of the world's major general-use helicopter producers by 2030, according to today's China Daily Business Weekly, says Xinhua.

Liang Zhenhe, deputy general manager of the China Aviation Industry Corporation II, said that China's general aviation market was almost closed to the use of helicopters, and China needs to map out a long-term and stable plan for the development of the country's helicopter industry.

China at present has less than 80 general-use helicopters in operation, which means every one million people owns about 0.06 helicopters, far less than the worldwide figure 3.9, said Liang.

Industry experts noted that development of a helicopter industry is an important measure to increase the production capacity of China's military products, and will help create a new growth factor for the economy.

Experts predicted that China would need about 1,800 helicopters worth some 4.9 billion US dollars by 2013.



Dr Mashiur Rahman, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Ambassador Antonio de Souza Menezes, Head of the delegation of European Commission, sign official letters on food aid programme in Bangladesh in the city yesterday. Abdur Razzaq, Joint Secretary of ERD, Robert Hindrick, EU Food Security Coordinator, and Bjorn Carlsson, Senior Economist of EU Food Security Unit in Dhaka, were present.

## Dhaka to receive 50,000 tons of wheat, 17m euros from EU

The European Union has allocated 50,000 tons of wheat and 17 million euros (about Tk 82 crore) as part of its food aid programme in Bangladesh, a press release of the European Commission said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Dr Mashiur Rahman and Head of the delegation of European Commission in Bangladesh Ambassador Antonio de Souza Menezes exchanged official letters.

Senior officials of the ERD and European Commission were also present on the occasion.

The food aid will be distributed to assetless women through the VGD programme in the districts of Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Naogaon and Rajshahi.

The financial support will be used for development of the same VGD programme, employment generation programme and NGO programmes.

# General Electric asks India to invest in power sector

NEW DELHI, Sept 17: John Welch, chief of US-based General Electric Co (GE), on Saturday said India must invest heavily in the domestic power industry to fuel the ongoing revolution in its information technology sector, reports AFP.

Welch, who is on a three-day trip to seek new business opportunities in India, said the country of one billion people held "huge potentials" provided New Delhi invested in infrastructure.

"When you think of digitising India there will be a massive amount of power required and I pray to this government that you have to push, and push and push to invest in infrastructure."

"Countries that do not invest in... will get left behind," Welch told reporters at the start of his official schedule.

"You don't have a chance to place yourself in the 21st century without lots of power. The requirement is beyond belief. We can talk of computers and information technology but

unless you have the power to do it you will miss the next revolution," the GE CEO warned.

"In order to capitalise on the billion people here you have to give them the tools. In order to win, you need to capitalise on tomorrow's technology," said Welch, who last visited India in 1995.

India estimates it needs a staggering capital of 252 billion dollars in the next decade to generate an additional 100,000 megawatts to meet its shortfall in the power sector.

Of India's total generation capacity of 90,142 megawatts, nearly a fifth is lost in transmission, distribution and theft. The country has a shortfall of more than 20,000 megawatts.

The agriculture sector consumes 30 per cent of power and a meagre three to four per cent of income is generated as most of the states are either offering power free or are subsidised. The hand-out accounted for six billion dollars in the fiscal year ended March 2000.



A five-member Kuwaiti Parliamentary delegation led by Dr Abdul Muhsen M Al Medej MP attended a luncheon hosted in their honour by FBCCI at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel recently. Director of Public Relations of the hotel, Rashida Muhiuddin, greeted the distinguished guests. Minister for Fisheries and Livestock A Rab is also seen with the delegation. --FBCCI photo

## Bid for ailing Daewoo Motor

# Ford's withdrawal opens new global auto battle

SEOUL, Sept 17: General Motors Corp and DaimlerChrysler are back in the battle to become Asia's number one car maker following Ford Motor Co's withdrawal from a deal to buy ailing Daewoo Motor, says AFP.

Both will be looking to see what the South Korean firm's creditor banks decide Monday after Ford dropped its 6.9-billion-dollar bid to buy Daewoo Motor Co following three months pouring over the troubled company's finances.

Ford had been named the winning bidder for Daewoo in June, beating DaimlerChrysler. South Korea's top auto maker Hyundai Motor Co and a joint bid by General Motors (GM) and Fiat of Italy.

Ford's withdrawal put the auction in disarray. However, South Korean officials promised to find new bidders.

Foreign auto companies have been seeking to gain a toehold in South Korea, the second largest car market in Asia after Japan.

Daewoo also offers the potential to make small cars around the world with an annual production capacity of two million vehicles and 11 overseas plants in Poland and India among other countries.

In September, France's Renault jumped into the South Korean market by acquiring

Samsung Motors Inc. DaimlerChrysler had also secured a nine-per cent stake in Hyundai.

GM was quick to say it would like to resume talks with Daewoo. The GM-Fiat consortium is now considered the front runner.

DaimlerChrysler, however, looked less interested in making a new bid. "We are not interested in taking over Daewoo," DaimlerChrysler spokesman Michael Pfister said last week.

But its partner, Hyundai Motor, said it was ready to make the second bid, although its chances of success are slim.

Anti-trust watchdogs had opposed Daewoo's sale to Hyundai, which acquired Kia Motors Corp. last year, gaining control of a 70 per cent share in the domestic market.

Thus Daewoo's fate depends on whether GM resurrects its bid. The US company had made a five-billion-dollar bid for Daewoo but South Korean officials believed its final offer would be lower.

Some analysts did not rule out the possibility of Ford coming back to the auction, saying the US company might have pulled out as a ploy to lower the price.

There have been few clues as to why Ford withdrew from the bidding but US analysts say Daewoo's huge debt could have been a big factor.

# E-commerce poses new challenge to Chinese family firms

BANGKOK, Sept 17: Globalisation and e-commerce pose new challenges to Chinese family businesses which traditionally thrived on the basis that "who you know" was more important than "what you know," says AFP.

With its free-flow of information, lack of hierarchy and direct relationship between retailer and customer, the Internet revolution strikes at the very foundations on which many Chinese family firms which dominate Asian economies were built, says a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) titled "Beyond the bamboo network."

"Many of the CFBs operating in this region represent some of the most aggressive and agile businesses that have managed to thrive over the last decade," says Andersen Consulting partner Joseph Lobbato who helped research the report.

"However, the Asian crisis has rocked the foundation on which these organisations were built and many are soon realising that

familiar marketplaces are becoming increasingly complex.

Business operated by ethnic Chinese control Asian economic activity to a degree totally out of proportion to their numbers.

Ethnic Chinese account for less than four per cent of Indonesia's population yet control a massive 73 per cent share of the economy. In Thailand, the 14 per cent ethnic Chinese population control 81 per cent of the economy while in the Philippines the respective figures are two per cent and 50-60 per cent. Malaysia's 30 per cent ethnic Chinese population controls 69 per cent of the economy.

Chinese family businesses (CFBs) traditionally exploited family and ethnic ties across the region to build trading empires. When these traders diversified into manufacturing, finance, property and other sectors they continued to rely on these networks of personal ties, the report says.

Whether these firms can parlay their domination of the old Asian

economy into success in a new one remains their greatest challenge.

"Overall, CFBs in Asia will need to discard rigid, traditional ways and learn to live with the idea of developing more flexible and agile organisations in order to cope with the challenges brought about by the new economy," Lobbato says.

E-commerce is often at odds with the way CFBs typically go about their business.

"Where the typical Chinese company is closed, hierarchical and rigid, successful e-commerce requires structures that are open, non-hierarchical and flexible," the report says.

While CFBs built success on a tight network of relationships with other key players, "guanxi," e-commerce has a global reach which breaks traditional relationships between retailer and customer, the very middleman niche beloved of CFBs.

Playing catch up over the past year, many CFBs have quickly launched online operations.

In Hong Kong Li Ka-shing's Cheung Kong raised 100 million US dollars to set up a China Internet portal.

Thailand's Charoen Pokphand, Indonesia's Soeryadaya family and Taiwan's Koo Group/China Trust Commercial Bank have also jumped on the Internet bandwagon with ventures ranging from high-speed Internet services to online banking and share trading.

However, for most CFBs, Internet-related businesses are far removed from their core businesses, the EIU report says.

In short, they are moving into areas in which they are not competent and lack know-how," it says.

CFBs can have the flexibility and rapid decision-making vital to e-business, as demonstrated by Hong Kong's Richard Li and his Pacific Century CyberWorks, it says. However, the lack of global branding will hinder online business ventures in a market dominated by strong names.

## Weekly Currency Roundup

# Yen weakens, peso hits record low

HONG KONG, Sept 17: The yen weakened as the release of consumer spending data dented investor confidence, whilst the peso fell to a record low before recovering following central bank intervention, says AFP.

Japanese Yen: The yen slipped against the dollar as investors sold the unit following Monday's release of gross domestic product (GDP) data for April-June.

Japan's GDP rose 1.0 per cent in the three months from the previous quarter and 4.2 per cent on an annualised basis. But a rise in all-important consumer spending of only 1.1 per cent, which accounts for two-thirds of the nation's GDP, discouraged investors.

The yen stood at 107.07 to the dollar late Thursday down from 105.80 yen a week earlier. The Tokyo market was closed for a public holiday Friday.

European and US investors mainly are selling the yen but there is no particular lead, said Fuji Bank dealer Hideki Tsukamoto.

Investors were unfazed by the Bank of Japan's decision in a board meeting Thursday to retain its overnight all interest rate of 0.25 per cent, dealers said.

Investors will look for fresh leads to move the market, they said.

Australian Dollar: Olympic fever is expected to become another headache for the Australia-

lian dollar after the currency suffered a nightmare week where it sank below 55 US cents for the first time since floating in 1983.

The local dollar closed at 55.25 US cents Friday, down from 55.86 US cents a week ago.

Prime Minister John Howard tried to talk up the currency after it breached the 55 US cents mark, saying it had only fallen in relation to the greenback, and not the pound or yen.

His argument that it was under-valued for the medium term failed to help and although the currency clawed back from its all-time low of 54.92 US cents its third in as many days it still looked shaky.

Reserve Bank governor Ian Macfarlane's upbeat assessment of the economy and robust economic growth data for the June quarter were also ignored.

With the opening of the Olympic Games over the weekend, slack trading is expected during the week as many Sydney-based brokers desert the city early to head for Stadium Australia.

Despite finding the slimmest of toeholds to halt its freefall, economists now say Australia's central bank is the dollar's only hope for a lifeline.

"The Reserve Bank has an Olympic-sized headache in the shape of the Australian dollar," Commonwealth Securities chief economist Craig James said.

The low level of the currency

adds to inflationary risks through potential upside for import prices."

New Zealand Dollar: The dollar closed Friday worth 41.99 US cents after dipping and diving around the 42 cent mark all week.

One dealer, who did not wish to be named, said the Kiwi Friday had a day of consolidation after a spike up to 42.53 cents overnight in quiet trading.

"After some early selling interest at 42.10-15 cents... it trickled off. It's been a very quiet, typical Friday after a reasonably hectic week," he said.

Singapore Dollar: The US dollar rose to 1.7394 Singapore dollars from 1.7325 a week ago.

Hong Kong Dollar: The dollar traded slightly lower at 7.7984-7.7986 to the greenback compared with the previous week's 7.7981-7.7991.

Indonesian Rupiah: The rupiah weakened to close the week Friday at 8,530 to the dollar, as compared to 8,375 to the greenback the previous Friday.

The rupiah had plunged earlier in the week in reaction to the Jakarta Stock Exchange bombing, but recovered, aided by gains in regional currencies.

Philippine Peso: The Philippine currency fell to 45.590 pesos to the dollar on Friday from 45.495 to the dollar on September 8.

The unit fell to a record closing

low of 45.69 to the dollar on September 13 before recovering due to central bank intervention.

South Korean Won: The won weakened to 1,119.90 won per dollar Friday, compared with 1,108.50 won to the greenback a week ago as Ford Motor's withdrawal from talks to acquire Daewoo Motor added downward pressure on the currency.

A dealer at Kookmin Bank said the rate would move between 1,118 won and 1,125 won per dollar on Monday.

Taiwan Dollar: The Taiwan dollar declined 0.6 per cent against the greenback over the week to close at 31.268 on Saturday, the lowest level this year, in line with weakness in the stock market, dealers said.

The unit ended at 31.095 on Monday and 31.112 on Wednesday. The foreign exchange market closed on Tuesday for the Moon Festival holiday. The currency finished at 31.125 on Thursday and closed at 31.151 on Friday.

Thai Baht: The baht fell to its lowest point in 25 months against the dollar due to weakness in regional currencies over most of the week, especially the rupiah and the peso, coupled with low domestic interest rates, dealers said.

The unit traded at 41.90-95 baht to the greenback on Friday compared with last week's close of 41.54-57.

## Shipping Intelligence

### CHITTAGONG PORT

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 17.9.2000

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of Leaving arrival
J/1	Fua Kavanga	Gl(Copra)	Sant	Mutual	11/9 23/9
J/2	Mana	C.Clink	Jaka	NWSL	14/9 27/9
J/3	Puya	Rice(P)	Yang	MTA	6/9 20/9
J/4	Bago	Rice(P)	Yang	CLA	27/8 20/9
J/5	Pacific Hero	Wheat(P)	Vanc	CLA	27/8 19/9
J/6	Insan Kamil	Gl(St.C)	Sing	Everett	19/9 19/9
J/7	Allegro	C.Clink/Gyp	Krabi	RML	15/9 --
J/8	Jim Cheng	Gl	Jan	Bdship	16/9 22/9
J/9	Maritime Friendship	Wheat(P)	Kulu	Mutual	31/8 22/9
J/10	Osg Alpha	C.Clink	Set	RSL	12/9 18/9
J/12	Xpress Makalu	Cont	Sing	RSL	11/9 17/9
J/13	Kota Singa	Cont	Sing	Pil(BD)	12/9 18/9
CCT/1	Jaya Mars	Cont	Col	Everest	11/9 17/9
CCT/2	Banga Birol	Cont	P.Kel	Bdship	12/9 20/9
CCT/3	Dragon Kalimantan	Cont	Sing	Nol	13/9 19/9
RM/14	Samara	C.Clink	Pada	SMSL	25/8 19/9
RM/15	North Star-II	Cement	--	SBS	R/A 20/9
CCJ	St.Aubin	C.Clink	Jaka	Everett	13/9 20/9
TSP	Handy Zahid	R.Phos	Xing	Seacost	15/9 18/9
DOJ	Sannam Symphony	HSD	Sika	ECSL	15/9 18/9
DD	Dredger Gemini	Repair	Chand	Karna	R/A 22/9
RM/9	Banglar Gourabh	Idle	--	BSC	R/A 18/9
CUFLJ	Mary Nour	Cement	Lank	BSL	4/9 17/9

### VESSELS DUE AT OUTER ANCHORAGE

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Banga Biraj (Cont)3/9	17/9	Sing	--	Cont	Sing
DEA Captain	17/9	Sing	Arafeen	Projam	Sing
Freedom	17/9	--	Atlantic	Gl(Projam)	--
Banglar Shikha(Cont)6/9	20/9	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Bay Fortune	18/9	Yang	SMSL	Rice(P)+Gl	--
Banglar Maya	20/9	Momb	--	Gl	--
Banglar Robi(Cont)10/9	20/9	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Baxter Capt Cook(Cont)10/9	19/9	--	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Darya Shubh	18/9	Viza	Mbl	urea	--
Chiu Hong(Cont)11/9	19/9	Sing	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Arabella(Cont)11/9	19/9	--	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Eltanin	22/9	Pada	Smsl	C.Clink	--
Banga Bjoy(Cont)10/9	20/9	--	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Ocean Reyna(22)10/9	20/9	Kaoh	Asa	Gl(St.Coll)	--