

## China okays new rules to develop private sector

BEIJING, Oct 8: China has approved new rules for small enterprises which aim to develop the long-neglected private economy, an official and state media said, reports Reuters.

The guidelines, approved by the cabinet this week, offer more government support to millions of small companies and make it easier for them to raise funds, they said.

Policymakers have been ambivalent towards private firms in the overwhelmingly state-run economy but attitudes are slowly changing as the government seeks more drivers for growth, analysts said.

China is trying to reform its ailing state sector and millions of jobs are under threat as firms try to improve efficiency.

The new rules encourage banks to lend more to small companies and allow firms meeting requirements to list stock and issue bonds, the Economic Information Daily reported.

"China's nearly 10 million small and medium enterprises will enjoy national treatment together with their 'older brother' - state enterprises," the newspaper said.

Some 85 per cent of China's small and medium enterprises are "non state", including private and collective firms. China has 1.28 million registered private companies.

But banks have been reluctant to lend to private firms since they do not have state backing in case of defaults.

Under the new guidelines, interest rates for loans to small companies will be allowed to float in an even wider band to compensate for banks' higher risk, the newspaper said.

Loans to small companies are already allowed to float up to 30 per cent above or below the base level set by the central bank. For other larger companies, the limit is 10 per cent.

A spokesman for the People's Bank of China said the central bank had yet to set fresh bank limits under the new guidelines.

Central bank chief Dai Xianglong said in July that China's rigid interest rate regime would be relaxed over the next three years by allowing the market to set most deposit and lending rates.

Under the new rules, China will, "at an appropriate time" allow small companies - especially high-technology ones - to list stock or issue bonds, the newspaper said.

## Chinese govt urged to cut stamp tax on share trading

BEIJING, Oct 8: Chinese tax experts and economists are urging the government to cut the stamp tax on securities transactions to boost local stock markets, state media reported, says AFP.

Lower stamp tax rates would also make the stock markets more attractive to foreign investors, who are likely to arrive in greater numbers after China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), the China Daily business Weekly said.

"China will have to gradually drop the stamp duty rate," Liu Zuo, a researcher at the State Administration of Taxation, told the paper. "The country's economy will develop further and more foreign investors will join in China's stock markets after our accession to the WTO."

Chinese stocks were the world's best performers in the first half of the year, rising 47 per cent, spurred by government moves including a cut in the stamp tax last year.

In June 1999, China's securities authorities slashed the stamp tax on transactions in B shares, which are nominally reserved for foreigners, to 0.3 per cent from 0.4 per cent.

Despite the lower rates, the bull market has caused stamp tax revenues to flood into state coffers.

Tax authorities collected 14 billion yuan (1.7 billion dollars) in stamp tax revenues in the first quarter, five times more than in the same period last year.

The Chinese government is in greater need than ever of money like that, since it is fighting a battle against soaring expenditure on items ranging from welfare to military hardware.

This year, the public deficit is expected to hit an all-time high of 230 billion yuan (28 billion dollars).

Rising deficits are one reason why the Chinese government might be reluctant to cut the stamp tax further, but local economists do not buy that argument, because lower tax rates are likely to boost transactions.

"A drop in the stamp duty rate will certainly not result in a decline in stamp duty income," said Yang Siqun, an economist with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the country's top government think tank.

Yang pointed out that value-added tax is a major source of revenue for many western governments.

A greater emphasis on value-added taxes - a taxation of consumption rather than production - is one of the ways for China to increase its revenues after WTO entry, the paper said.

Tax officials are preparing new rules that will tax a wider range of goods and services, according to the paper.

# New US trade act may generate controversy at African summit

WINDHOEK, Oct 8: The United States' recent enactment of the African Growth and Opportunities Act is expected to generate some controversy at a southern African economic summit in Windhoek next week, says AFP.

Many of the countries in the region have been excluded by the terms of the new law, say the organisers of the Southern Africa Trade and Investment Summit, which will take place from Monday to Wednesday.

US Deputy Trade Representative Susan Esserman will deliver a keynote speech on the expected impact and importance of the act at the summit, which will also be attended by financiers and captains of industry.

Leaders of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) expected to attend, apart from host President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, include presidents Festus Mogae of Botswana and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, deputy presidents Jacob Zuma of

South Africa and Justin Malewezi of Malawi, and prime ministers Pascoal Mocumbi of Mozambique, Bethuel Mosisili of Lesotho and Barnabas Dlamini of Swaziland.

But at least three of the countries whose top leaders have been invited have been disqualified from the terms of the act, which President Bill Clinton signed on May 18 and which Washington has touted as a means of halting Africa's growing economic marginalisation in the trend towards globalisation.

Lesotho and Swaziland have been disqualified for unfair labour practices, while Zimbabwe is currently facing a barrage of sanctions from the United States for its perceived lack of respect for the rule of law.

Other regional countries that have been barred from benefiting from the act include Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola.

Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola are currently involved in the two-year old civil war in

DRC against rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda.

The conference, organised by the Paris-based International Herald Tribune, hopes to draw foreign investment into the SADC countries, seen as one of the most stable and organised trading blocks in Africa.

But although a recent World Economic Forum competitiveness report on Africa rated Botswana, South Africa and Namibia relatively highly in terms of investor-friendly environments, this has had little impact on direct foreign investment in their economies.

The 2000 UN World Investment Report, released earlier this week, showed that Angola topped the list for direct foreign investment, with a total of 1.8 billion dollars invested largely in its energy sector.

Egypt attracted the second-highest direct foreign investment with a total of 1.5 billion dollars, also largely in its energy sector.

Nigeria, South Africa, Gabon, Mozambique, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Tunisia and Morocco top

off the list, in that order, of the total 10.3 billion dollars direct foreign investment in Africa.

Executive director of the Namibia Investment Centre David Nuyoma said the investment flows into Africa as outlined by the UN report simply defied logic.

Namibia and Botswana, rated respectively as the third and fourth most competitive countries in Africa, failed to attract the kind of foreign investment that war-torn Angola and Sudan did, he pointed out.

This showed that foreign investors still looked at Africa simply as a source of cheap raw material, such as oil and diamonds, he said.

"Whether there is war in the country, investment will still flow due to the need for raw materials," he said in remarks quoted the local media.

The summit will address topics such as the potential for growth in telecommunications, water supply, tourism, transport infrastructure, energy and mining.

# China's Internet start-ups need capital to survive

BEIJING, Oct 8: Beijing's so-called "Silicon Valley of China" is facing severe funding shortages and needs an injection of capital to survive, state media quoted a senior state financial expert as saying Saturday, says AFP.

The Zhongguancun Science Park, home to China's many Internet start-ups, needs a capital inflow of about 200 billion yuan (24.15 billion US dollars) in the next 10 years to become successful, the China Daily quoted Lu Kegun, chairman of the Beijing Securities Co. Ltd., as saying.

Lu said more of the companies should go public in coming years to generate the 20 billion yuan (2.42 billion dollars) needed by the firms each year.

He predicted about 80 companies would go public by 2005, with 20 to 30 to be listed on domestic stock exchanges, and another 20 to 30 listed in

China's board for high-tech companies and start-ups and five to 10 to be listed in Hong Kong.

The remainder should go public via acquisitions and mergers with already listed companies, Lu said.

Only 11 firms located in the development district northwest of downtown Beijing have been listed on domestic exchanges so far while two have gone public in Hong Kong.

Lu said the government should also encourage companies to list on overseas stock markets.

But industry sources said Lu's recommendations overlook a fundamental problem - the government's policy restricting foreign investment in the Internet sector.

Relying on domestic stock market investors for funding is unrealistic as those investors have limited resources and are not familiar with high-risk investments, industry officials said.

They said China's Internet industry would not be able to grow without foreign investment.

"China's Internet market

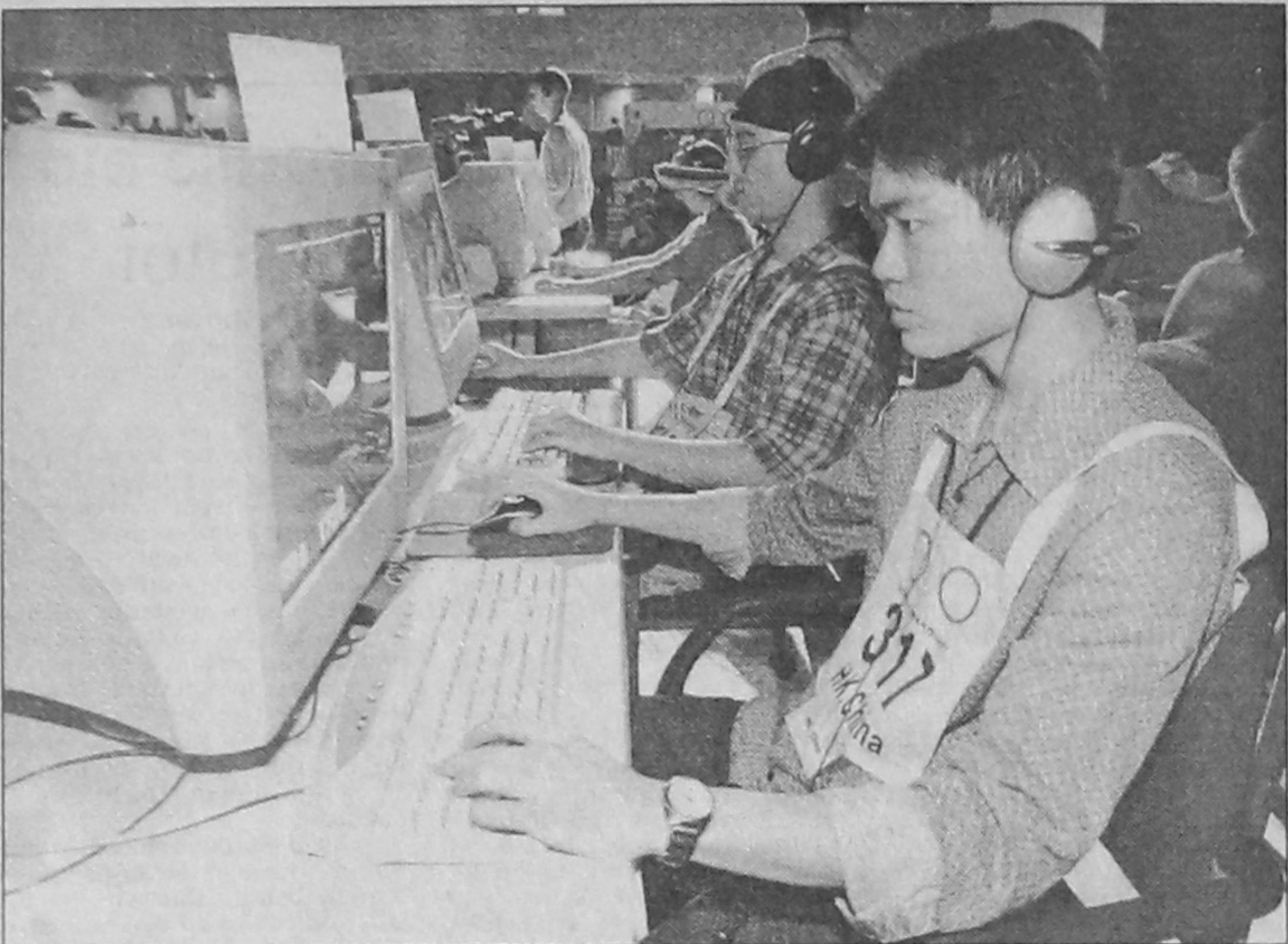
will face a very grim period in the next year. Many companies will collapse," said Roland Shi, chairman of Elawchina Network Technology Co. Ltd., which runs a low resources website.

"If foreign investment is allowed, it will be a great opportunity for these companies, not only because of funding but the experience these foreign companies will bring."

China in theory forbids foreign investment in the Internet sector but has turned a blind eye to hundreds of millions of dollars poured into Chinese Internet firms by foreign investors.

As part of its effort to join the World Trade Organization, China has agreed to allow up to 50 per cent foreign participation in its Internet companies.

Foreign buyers were barred from the country's first auction of dotcoms held last week to raise funds for cash-strapped companies. The auction fizzled with only one company able to find a buyer.



Hong Kong contestant Yip Shing Chi, 22, plays Quake III Cyber game during the first round in the Everland amusement park in Yongin, south of Seoul, yesterday. Some 170 game fanatics from 17 countries are playing the World Cyber Game Challenge which will continue till October 15.

## Philippines looks to overseas workers to save peso

MANILA, Oct 8: With Christmas fast approaching, the Philippines is looking forward to a special present - a bounty of foreign exchange remittances from the millions of Filipinos working overseas to pull up its battered peso, reports AFP.

The peso had been hitting record closing lows for over a week before it finally struck a historic low of 46.61 to the dollar in early trade Wednesday.

It recovered only after intervention by the central bank, a sizable hike in the reserve requirement of banks and an announcement of a "currency risk protection program" to help corporates in need of dollars.

But few believe the peso's fall has ended.

"There is a continuing perception that the peso will not stay where it is. It will continue to depreciate until we see a fundamental change in the horizon," said Villamor Vital, chief economist of All Asia Securities.

"We have no fundamental reason why we should strengthen," a trader for a local bank said. "The parallel market is even going 46.700 (to the dollar)," he said, referring to unofficial rates.

The peso's weakness has been blamed on the strength of the US dollar and the depreciation of currencies worldwide. Economic officials persistently point out that other currencies have fallen even faster than the peso.

While depreciation should help Philippine exports, many local industries including the export leader, the electronics sector, rely on imported raw materials. The weak peso has already sparked fuel price increases as well.

Still, the Philippines has always had an ace in the hole for foreign exchange problems: the 5.5 million Filipinos who work overseas and who remit huge amounts to their families.

Such workers remitted over 2 billion dollars in 1999. In con-

## Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port  
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 5.10.2000.

Berth	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving
1	Sun Ching	GI (SASH)	Lian	Concord	22/0	7/10
2	Anje Jiang	GI	Hinch	Shiping	23/9	7/10
3	Topaz	GI	Sing	Proy	23/9	8/10
4	Bay Pride	Ricp(p)/Gi	Yang	SMSL	16/9	8/10
5	Bao Yun Sian (48)	GI(Sic)	Yang	RML	26/9	5/10
6	Argus	R Seed	Royal	Royal	11/9	7/10
7	World Amber	Wheat(p)	Sing	ELIC	24/8	15/10
8	Eridos	Sugar(p)	Sant	Fortune	16/9	7/10
9	Bay Fortune	Gi(Ricp)	Yang	SMSL	20/9	19/10
10	Al Bauraq	Gypsum	Peng	Seacom	4/9	7/10
11	Banglar Baril	Cont	Piel	Shiping	4/10	8/10
12	Banglar Moni	Cont	Sing	BSC	4/10	6/10
13	Xpress Padma	Cont	Sing	RSL	3/10	8/10
14	Express Resolve	Cont	Sing	RSL	3/10	7/10
15	Kota Singa	Cont	Sing	Pi(BD)	29/9	15/10
16	Chai Hong	Cont	Sing	OCSL	3/10	7/10
17	North Star II	Cement	SBS	R/A	6/10	
18	Natcha Naree	R/Sulp	B. Abz	Seacom	1/10	15/10
19	Nagayev	CPO	Bela	Tal	4/10	6/10
20	Clipper Venture	CDGO	Bahi	RSSA	28/9	7/10
21	Banglar Sikha	Repair	Sing	BSC	20/9	10/10
22	Banglar Jyoti	Repair	Sing	BSC	4/10	7/10
23	Seabird Command	RIA	Itb	R/A		
24	Dea Conqueror	Cement	Andren	R/A		
25	Banglar Shourabh	Repair	BSC	R/A	5/10	
26	Mary Nour	Cement	BSI	27/9	10/10	

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of Vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Banglar Probi (cont) 24/9	5/10	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Banglar Biraj (Cont) 21/9	5/10	Pkel	Shiping	Cont	Sing
usan Saffron	7/10	Yang	Everett	GI(Sicoll)	-
Janda Saina	7/10	Indo	Delmar	TSP	-
ota Chahay (cont) 26/9	7/10	Sing	Pi(BD)	Cont	Sing
urong Balsam (cont) 1/10	7/10	Sing	Nel	Cont	Sing
isopadi	7/10	SBS	C. Cink(Hyundai)	sing	
admirable Barge-Zhong Ren-18/10	8/10	S. Ha	CWSL	Cont	Sing
honer Suni	8/10	Nikola	Litmond	Cont	Sing
Velozinos	8/10	Morib	Jf	Scraping	-
landung Ace(72)3/10	9/10	Everett	Steel-gi	-	-
ny Miracle(72)3/10	9/10	Jaka	SSLL	GI(Prod)	-
vabell(Cont) 28/9	9/10	Jaka	OCSL	Cont	Sing
them Independence (cont) 1/10/10	9/10	Shiping	Cont	Sing	
Trinidad Queen	9/10	SBS	Cement	-	-
Bangla Bijo (Cont) 1/10	10/10	Shiping	GI	-	-
ipcan	10/10	Yang	Mta	Ric(p)	-
tanin Houston	11/10	Vano	Mutual	D. Peas&Wheat	-
victoria (Cont) 4/10	12/10	Sing	OCSL	Cont	Sing
icfeal (cont) 2/10	14/10	Sing	OCSL	Cont	Sing
ika Borjaya (cont) 1/10	13/10	Yang	Mta	Ric(p)	-
ismina	15/10	Otha	SMSL	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
V. Badhyah	5/10	Kara	ECL	-	-
honer Spirit	5/10	Sing	ECSS	LBO	-
gmenoz	8/10	Juba	ECSS	HSO	-
ortune Sea	6/10	Jebe	Unique	-	-

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
Energy Explorer-IV	-	-	BBAL	5/4
Imaya	-	-	BBAL	17/8
Dea Conqueror	-	Sing	Araken	18/9
Real Eastern	-	Sing	BBAL	28/9
Dea Bulk Danah	-	Sing	Araken	3/10
Dea Captain	-	Sing	Araken	3/10

Vessels at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
CEAN-1	GI(Log)	Yang	SMSL	28/9
Bright Sea	Colink	Krab	MBL	30/9
Alais (13)	GI(spro)	Hal	HASL	2/10
Jsg Argosy (Cont)	Cont	Hsd	Everest	1/10
Min Jiang	GI	Sikka	ECSS	3/10
lower capt Cook (cont)	Cont	Pkel	Shiping	4/10
ucky Emblem	GI(S. Coll)	Yang	Everett	5/10

Vessels awaiting instruction

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
Banglar Urm	-	-	BSC	RIA (20/9)
Banglar Gourab	-	-	BSC	RIA (2/10)

Vessels not entering

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
ingha-18	GI (Maize)	Durt	BSL	21/9
Aliska Naree	Tsp(P)	Ying	BSL	17/9
Dea destiny	Mop(p)	Ikoi	Litmond	25/9

Vessels at outer anchorage

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Energy Explorer-IV	-	-	BBAL	5/4
Imaya	-	-	BBAL	17/8
Dea Conqueror	-	Sing	Araken	18/9
Real Eastern	-	Sing	BBAL	28/9
Dea Bulk Danah	-	Sing	Araken	3/10
Dea Captain	-	Sing	Araken	3/10

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Alais (13)	GI(spro)	Hal	HASL	2/10
Chs Argosy (Cont)	Cont	Col	Everest	1/10
Tomilly	Hsd	Sikka	ECSS	3/10
Min Jiang	GI	S. Ha	Shiping	4/10
Boxer capt Cook (cont)	Cont	Pkel	Shiping	5/10
Lucky Emblem	GI(S. Coll)	Yang	Everett	5/10

Movement of Vessels for 6.10.2000

Outgoing	Incoming	Shifting
J3 Topaz	J3 Ocean-1	RM4 C Venture to RM3
J4 Bay Pride	P Emerad	GSJ Hyderabad to J4
J12 B. Moni	HU Aspiration	
RM3 Nagayev	J4 Hyderabad	
RM9 B Shourabh	J12 B. Biraj	
	RM5 Pioneer Sun	
	RM4 Nwager	
	OCU Lucky Emblem	
	RM9 B Gourab	

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

## Indonesian economic czar says bank sale delay technical

SINGAPORE, Oct 8: Indonesia's chief economics minister Rizal Ramli said on Sunday that the delay in the sales of stakes in two banks was due to a technicality, adding they should be completed in the first quarter next year, says Reuters.

The International Monetary Fund, which is helping prop up Indonesia's broken economy, on Friday slammed the delay, saying it breached a major policy commitment.

"It is just a question of technicality because we are ready to dispose of assets in BCA and Bank Niaga," Ramli told a news conference on the second day of a two-day official visit.

"The need to process, the issue of technicality, I think it can only be done in the first quarter next year."

The government, under heavy parliamentary pressure, agreed on Thursday to postpone the stake sales in Bank Central Asia (BCA), BBA, JK and Bank Niaga (BNGA). JK only hours after announcing the fourth quarter sale targets to finance its precarious budget.

Under an agreement with the IMF, the government had pledged to sell off shares in the two major commercial banks before the end of 2000. The money is vital to help cut a substantial budget deficit, currently partly financed by foreign aid.

Ramli said he did not see the postponement of bank asset sales having an impact on future loan disbursements from the IMF.

"I hope not...the bottom line

is that we meet the targets and we intend to sell the assets at the appropriate time."

Previous delays on IMF reforms have unsettled the country's financial markets.

In order to meet the agreed targets, Ramli said Indonesia planned to sell some loans held by the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA) instead.

Asked about IMF disappointment over the delay - which officials said was partly prompted by an unresolved controversy over how to deal with debt repayments by former bank owners - Ramli brushed off the objections.

The IMF should focus on policy targets and not implementation, Ramli said.

## Weekly Asian Currency Roundup Most units fall against US dollar

HONG KONG, Oct 8: Both the Australian and New Zealand dollars are expected to test new lows this week as funds continue to flow into the US dollar, reports AFP.

The Japanese yen meanwhile fell against the euro after the European Central Bank (ECB) tightened interest rates by 25 basis points and market players braced themselves for further intervention to prop up the single European currency.

Most Asian currencies followed the Aussie and kiwi dollar lower against the greenback but the South Korean Won bucked the trend, firming on receding concern about the country's economic reform programme.

Japanese yen: The yen fell against the euro during the week as investors bet the European Central Bank (ECB) would intervene to prop up the single European currency, dealers said.

The Japanese currency was traded at 95.12 against the euro late Friday, down from 94.82 a week earlier.

On Thursday, the ECB raised its regular refinancing ("refi") rate by 25 basis points to 3.75 per cent and 5.75 per cent respectively.

The yen-euro rate was little affected by the ECB decision on Friday but the yen fell sharply against the euro in late trading on rumors that the ECB was holding an emergency meeting to discuss euro-buying intervention, dealers said.

New Zealand dollar: The New Zealand dollar closed Friday worth 40.23 US cents, against the closing a week earlier of 40.68.

Australian dollar: The Australian dollar is expected to reach new all-time lows this week after crashing through the 53 US cent barrier for the first time Friday.