

Albright slips on Iraqi oil exports to US

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, whose job it is to oversee US foreign policy, is apparently unaware how important Iraq's crude oil is to the United States, says Reuters.

Albright said yesterday that the United States did not purchase oil from Iraq, "I do not believe so. I don't think so," she said on the ABC news programme "This Week" when asked if the US market used Iraqi oil.

She was off by 124.6 million barrels.

That is how much oil the United States imported from Iraq during the first seven months of this year, according to the latest data from the Energy Department.

Iraq was the sixth-biggest supplier of oil to the United States during the period, shipping an average of 585,000 barrels per day. A barrel holds 42 gallons (160 litres) of oil.

Iraq shipped more oil than Kuwait, which a US-led international military force liberated from an invading Iraqi army a decade ago.

Kuwait exported 217,000 bpd of crude to the United States during the seven-month period.

Saudi Arabia was the biggest US oil supplier, shipping 1.442 million bpd.

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush has criticised the Clinton administration's energy policy as a threat to US national security. He points out that the United States depends on foreign countries for more than half its oil supplies.

While Iraq is bound by strict UN economic sanctions imposed after the Gulf War, it is allowed to sell oil under a special UN-run programme to get money for buying food, medicine and other humanitarian goods.

Oil down by more than a dollar on more Saudi crude offer

SINGAPORE, Oct 16: Oil prices dropped more than a dollar today but stayed near 10-year highs after Saudi Arabia's offer of more crude supplies soothed a market tense over Palestinian and Israeli fighting, says Reuters.

US President Bill Clinton and Middle East leaders were expected to try to forge a ceasefire at a summit later on Monday following the worst Israeli-Palestinian violence for decades.

Benchmark US light sweet crude futures were down \$1.25 per barrel at \$33.74 a barrel at 0620 GMT, just a few dollars below the 10-year peak of \$37.80.

"Right now it's coming off on Clinton going over for the peace talks, plus Saudi Arabia came out stating that if the market doesn't do any better

they are going to ... increase production," a New York-based broker said.

Prices were buoyed last week by the escalation in violence between Israel and the Palestinians with oil markets fearing the conflict would widen to other parts of the crucial oil producing region.

Perilously thin fuel stocks in the United States, the world's largest energy consumer, have raised worries of shortages this winter and left prices sensitive to any hint of supply disruptions.

Prices fell more than a dollar in trading on Friday after sources familiar with Saudi thinking said the kingdom would not consider suspending oil exports to punish US support for Israel.

At the weekend, Saudi Arabia's oil minister, Ali al-Naimi

dismissed such suggestions.

Oil prices quadrupled in the 1970s when various oil exporters deployed a mix of output cuts and export bans to punish Western support for Israel.

"Let us not talk about this subject. I don't see any use in such talk," Naimi said at an energy conference in the United Arab Emirates.

Kuwaiti Oil Minister Sheikh Saud Nasser al-Sabah also dismissed the embargo concerns.

Naimi also said the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was concerned about the strength of prices and might act soon to stabilise the market.

He said OPEC could increase supply before an OPEC ministers meeting scheduled for November 12.

"Everything is possible, even

before the meeting. This depends on the price," he said on the sidelines of an oil conference in the United Arab Emirates.

"Our aim is to get an average price of \$25 a barrel."

OPEC controls two-thirds of world crude exports and implemented an 800,000 barrel-per-day (bpd) production hike from October, its third rise in output this year.

But despite the increase in supplies, prices have remained stubbornly above \$30 a barrel for much of the year.

With the memory of 1998's \$10 per barrel oil still fresh, other OPEC members were worried an increase in supply now could spark a slump in prices early next year if demand declined.



Showkat Alam, Director of Central Insurance Company Ltd, hands over a cheque to Ashraf Siddiq Chowdhury, Managing Director of M/s. Prestige Import and M/s Prestige Feed, for settlement of a marine claim for Tk 10.34 lakh recently.

M Manzur Alam, Director of the insurer, KS Zaman, Managing Director (Current Charge), Md Ezhar Hossain, Deputy Managing Director (A/c), and Anwar Hossain, Incharge of the Kawran Bazar branch, are also seen in the picture.

- Central Ins photo

Japan's bankruptcy debt hits record \$101 b

TOKYO, Oct 16: Total debt held by bankrupt Japanese firms jumped nearly 50 per cent to a post-war high of \$101 billion in the April to September period, a private research firm said today, reports Reuters.

Teikoku Databank said that total debts held by firms that went bust during the April to September period rose above the key 10-trillion-yen mark for the first time ever, growing 48.1 per cent year-on-year to 10.91 trillion yen (\$101.2 billion).

The previous record was marked in the latter half of the fiscal 1997/98 year, when debts totalled 9.19 trillion yen.

The number of corporate bankruptcies also jumped 19.6 per cent year-on-year to 9,473 cases in the six-month period the fourth highest level for the first-half period.

In September, bankruptcies grew for the 11th straight month on a year-on-year basis, rising 9.5 per cent to 1,502 cases. Total debt held by bankrupt

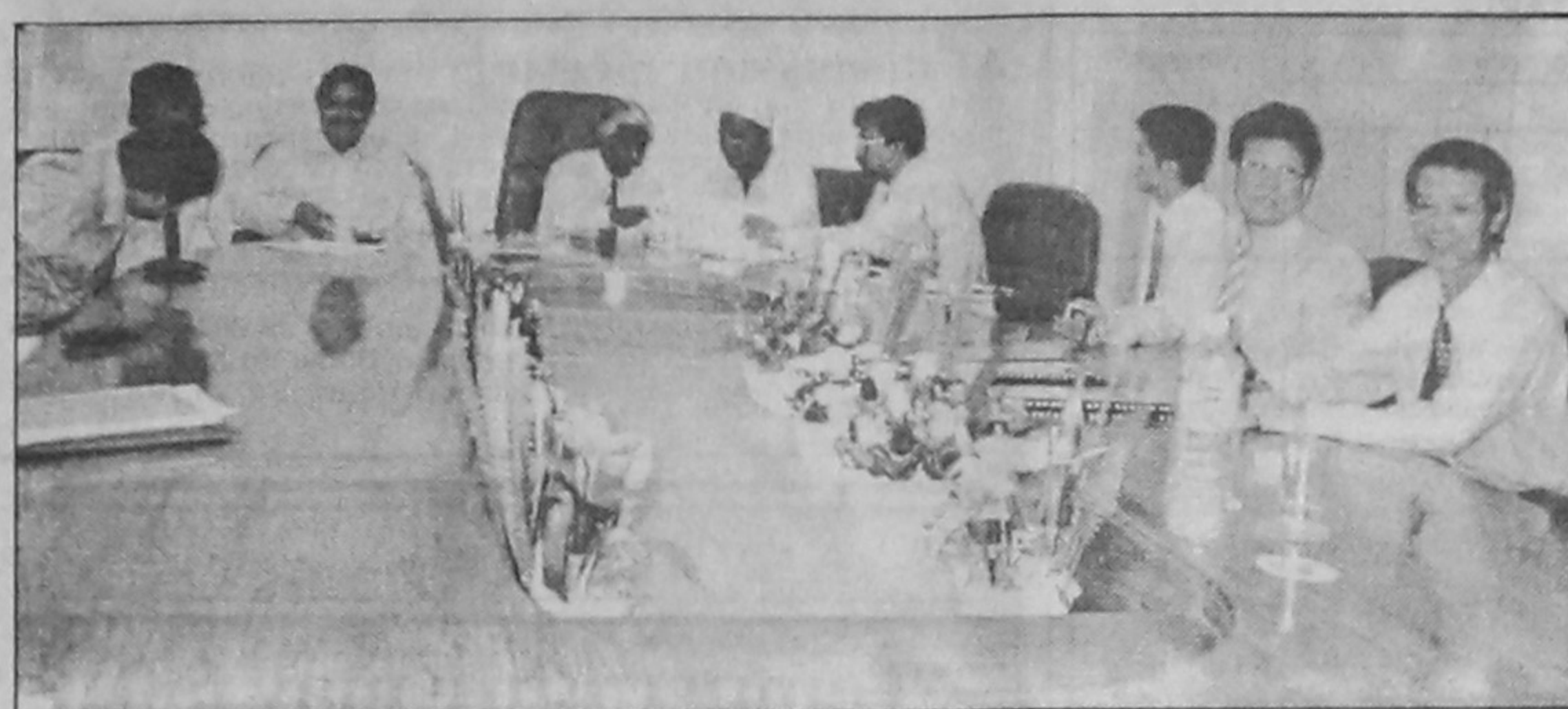
firms in the month jumped 17.6 per cent to 774.19 billion yen.

Teikoku Databank said the end of the Bank of Japan's (BOJ) 18 months of virtually zero interest rates in August led to a rise in bank short-term prime lending rates that made it difficult for companies to raise necessary funds.

Japanese banks have become more selective in making fresh lending, dealing an added blow to already troubled medium- to small-sized firms.

"Fears are growing that more firms would fall into financial trouble under possible further business downturns from October through the end of this year," Teikoku Databank said in a report.

The number of bankruptcies this year may surpass 19,000 cases, similar to the level in 1998, when the number rose to the second highest level ever, it said.



Picture shows the signing ceremony of a MOU between Salaudin Rony Food Industry Ltd and Fenco SPA of Italy.

- Deshdosh photo

Taiwan stocks hit 20-month low amid profit-taking

TAIPEI, Oct 16: Taiwan shares hit a new 20-month low Monday as profit-takers took advantage of an early rally and dumped shares late in the session, analysts said, reports AP.

The benchmark Weighted Price Index ended down 245.16 points, or 4.2 per cent, at 5630.95 in dealings valued at \$4.68 billion Taiwan dollars (US \$2.96 billion).

Monday's finish was the lowest level since Feb 5, 1999, when the market ended at 5474.79. Decliners outnumbered advancers 394 to 150, while 80 issues ended the day unchanged.

The market opened up 4.6 per cent at the intraday high of 6161.16, led by gains in the financial sector following a government announcement that the revenue tax rate on local financial institutions will be cut, analysts said.

However, profit-taking dragged down the index to the intraday low of 5602.72 a few minutes before the market closed.

On Saturday, the government announced a broad set of economic measures to prop up the flagging stock market, which has fallen by about 40 per cent since early April.

The measures include cutting the revenue tax on financial institutions to zero from its current 2 per cent.

Michael Yu, deputy sales manager at Taiwan International Securities, said the new measures should help the market but that investors are still worried about bad loan problems at Taiwanese banks.

Jessica Huang, a senior analyst at Jih Sun Securities Corp, said scrapping the revenue tax rate could help boost banks' competitiveness.

But she said problems will remain for the stock market because concerns over the slowdown in the global computer industry will continue to weigh on the local bourse.

On Monday, the technology sector slid 5.4 per cent, the financial sector dropped 1.6 per cent, steel stocks were off 3.2 per cent, construction shares lost 0.5 per cent, the textile sector declined 4.4 per cent and plastics stocks fell 4.1 per cent.

Among the most active shares, chipmaker Mosel Vitelic Inc, fell 1.8 Taiwan dollars, or the daily 7 per cent limit, to 25.2 Taiwan dollars. Winbond Electronics Corp, shed 2.5 Taiwan dollars, or the daily 7 per cent limit, to 33.3 Taiwan dollars and United Microelectronics Corp, lost 4 Taiwan dollars, also the daily limit, to 55.5 Taiwan dollars.

Rony Food, Italian co sign MOU to set up potato flakes industry

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed between Salaudin Rony Food Industry Ltd of Dhaka and Fenco SPA of Italy to set up a potato flakes industry in Bangladesh under the management of reputed local consultant company Deshdosh Group, says a press release.

As per the agreement, Fenco SPA will supply full set of machinery on a 5-year deferred payment, all necessary technical knowhow and purchase all the products of the industry at international market price for 5 years under a buy-back agreement.

M Ismail Hossain, Managing Director of Salaudin Rony Food Industry Ltd, and Huaning Lee, Chairman of Fenco SPA signed the MOU on behalf of their respective companies.

Present in the agreement signing ceremony, among others, were eminent banker and Managing Director of First Security Bank Sarwaruzzaman Khan, reputed businessman MG Haider, politician and businessman Nuruzzaman, Chairman of Deshdosh Group, Harun Ur Rashid, Fenco South Asia representative, Hsieh Hsiang-Fu and Fenco representative in China region Zhou Xinbo.

The industry will create employment opportunities for about 300 persons.

Islami Insurance signs MOU with Takaful Malaysia

A memorandum of understanding was signed recently in Kuala Lumpur between Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Berhad, an Islamic Insurance Company of Malaysia, and Islami Insurance Bangladesh Limited, says a press release of the local insurance company.

The MOU was signed by ABM Nurul Haq, Managing Director of IIBL and Dato Mohd. Fadzli Yusof, Director/CEO of Syarikat Takaful Malaysia BHD, sign a memorandum of understanding on behalf of their respective organisations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, recently.

- IIBL photo

Under the MOU, technical business, product development, re-insurance and investment collaboration would be established between the two companies.

Islamic Insurance Bangladesh Limited is conducting its business based on Islamic Shariah and has been following the model of Takaful Malaysia since its inception.

The MOU will usher in a new era in establishing future growth of Takaful Business in Bangladesh by sharing the experience of Takaful Malaysia, the release said.

Mahathir predicts surplus budget for 2001

KUALALUMPUR, Oct 16: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Monday predicted that his government's annual budget for the next year would have a slight surplus, says AP.

"It's a good budget ... we always think about the people," he was quoted as saying by the official Bernama news agency. He was talking to reporters on the opening day of Parliament's budget session. The annual budget is scheduled to be presented on Oct. 27.

Malaysia's fiscal deficit for 2000 stood at 4.4 per cent of gross national product. The country had run budget surpluses from 1993 to 1997, the year that the Asian economic crisis sank the region into recession.

Although Mahathir did not indicate what other provisions the budget might contain, he said it would be people-friendly.

Malaysia rebounded from the Asian financial crisis quickly, but it has had difficulty in attracting new investments and its local stock market has languished recently amid low trading volumes and the absence of foreign funds and fresh leads.

The new budget is expected to focus on efforts to attract foreign direct investment.

Exchange Rates

Following are yesterday's Standard Chartered Bank foreign exchange rates of major currencies against Taka.

Central Bank Buying and Selling Rate of USD: BDT 53.85/BDT 54.15.

Selling		Currency		Buying	
TT/OD	BC	TT Clean	OD	Sight Doc	Transfer
54.2500	54.2800	USD	53.8150	53.6464	53.5779
46.9517	47.0386	EUR	45.1794	44.9960	44.9194
79.4240	79.4660	GBP	77.6197	77.3532	77.2986
29.7179	29.7424	AUD	26.6197	26.6287	26.5486
0.5103	0.5104	JPY	0.4921	0.4919	0.4909
30.9275	30.9520	CHF	30.2445	30.1500	30.0655
5.4737	5.4788	SEK	5.3801	5.3625	5.3465
36.2781	36.3027	CAD	35.4171	35.3235	35.2403
6.9933	6.9946	HKD	6.8694	6.8517	6.8343
31.415	31.4362	SGD	30.2781	30.2343	30.1197
14.8919	14.9095	AED	14.5023	14.5242	14.4838
14.5795	14.5979	SAR	14.2399	14.2032	14.1850

Usance export bills		30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
TT/DOC	53.7041	53.3727	52.9304	52.4217	51.8688	50.6303

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollar

Indian Rupee	Thai Baht	Mal Ringgit	Indo Rupiah	NZ Dollar
46.30/46.40	58.53/58.58	43.27/43.33	3.7995/3.8005	8880/8885
				0.4045/0.4052

US Dollar		Buying	Selling
Cash note	53.8150	54.2800	
TC	53.5650	54.2800	

Local foreign exchange market was steady with dollar trade remaining dull. The trading range of dollar has plummeted a little. In the money market scenario, demand for call money was steady and traded between 6 to 7 per cent.

In the international markets, euro was at a cent away from its lifetime lows while dollar basked in not far from decade highs in trade-weighted terms. Euro was affected by European Central Bank President Wim Duisenberg's comments who ruled out Group of Seven intervention if the single currency is beleaguered by an external event like Middle East war.

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port performance of vessels as on 16/10/2000.

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving
J/2	Sea Baito	Gr(Y/C)	Darb	Rainbow	4/10	17/10
J/3	Hyderabad	Rice(P)	Para	BSC	30/9	20/10
J/5	Hans	Salt(TCB)	P.Kel	SBS	26/9	22/10
J/6	Pu Aspiration	Rice(P)	Yang	Sunshine	3/10	20/10
J/7	Pacific Emerald	Gr(Copra)	Sing	Allseas	21/9	18/10
J/8	Bangladesh 721	Gr	Yang	Everett	12/10	16/10
J/9	Banglar Shikha	Continue	Sing	BSC	20/9	17/10
J/10	Bright Sea	C.Clink	Krab	MBL	30/9	17/10
J/11	Acturia	Continue	Sing	QCSL	13/10	19/10
J/13	Orient Independence	Continue	P.Kel	Bdship	10/10	16/10
CCT/1	Kota Berjaya	Continue	Sing	Pil(BD)	13/10	18/10
CCT/3	Jaya Mars	Continue	Col	Everest	13/10	16/10
RM/14	Ganda Satria	Tsp(P)	Indo	Delmure	8/10	19/10
RM/15	North Star-II	Cement	SBS	R/A	19/10	
GSJ	Hpaan	Rice(P)	Yang	Mta	10/10	
Tsp	Natcha Naree	R.Sulp	B.Abb	SeaCom	1/10	16/10
RM/5	ElTamin	C.Clink	Sing	PSAL	3/10	22/10
Doy	Banglar Jyoti	C.Oil		BSC	R/A	
DDJ/1	Seabulk Command		K.Dia	IBS	R/A	
DDJ/2	Sea Bulk Danah			IBS	R/A	
RM/8	Novo Vagor	CDSO	Darb	Rainbow	4/10	18/10
RM/9	Banglar Groub	Repair	BSC	R/A	20/10	
Kafco(U) Diler-4	Urcia	Vis	MBI	14/10	20/10	
Kafco(A) Gaz Kandil	Ammonia	Para	MBI	13/10	16/10	

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port	Local agent	Cargo	Loading
Every Wealthy	16/10	Sing	Everett	H.R/C.R.Coil	
Triumph Kaoshing (7219/10)	16/10	Yang	Rnl	St. Coll	
Jaani (Cont) 15/10	16/10	Sing	Cross	Continue	Sing
Kota Singa (Cont) 15/10	16/10	Sing	Pil(BD)	Continue	Sing
Tug Britoil-35	12/10	Indo	OTBL		
Sally-II 16/10	16/10	Indo	OTBL	Scraping	
Martina Prima	16/10	Sing	OTBL		
Sea Denasty	16/10	Jaya	OTBL	Ballast	
Snit Lloyd-110	16/10	Sing	Arafeen	Proj Mat	
Alex 16/10	16/10	Sing	Alz	Scraping	
Ibn Outabali	18/10	Tampa	Litmond	Tsp(Bul.K)	
Banglar Kallol	17/10	BSC	Steel+Ash		
Amrta Jaya (24) 11/10	17/10	Yang	ASIA	Continue	Sing
Qe Teal (Cont) 2/10	17/10	Sing	QCSL	Continue	Sing
Kota petant (cont) 9/10	17/10	Sing	Pil(BD)	Continue	Sing
Xpress Resolve (cont) 10/10	18/10	Sing	RSL	Continue	Sing
Yasmina 18/10	18/10	SMSL	Continue	Sing	
Banga Birol (cont) 9/10	20/10	Sing	Bdship	Continue	Sing
Banglar Robi (Cont) 9/10	18/10	Sing	BSC	Continue	Sing
Joy Miracle (7217/9)	20/10	Jaka	SSLL	Gr(Sl Prod)	
Chu Hong (cont) 9/10	18/10		QCSL	Continue	Sing
Banga Lank (cont) 11/10	20/10		Bdship	Continue	Col
Tiger River (cont) 15/10	20/10	Sing	Nol	Continue	Sing
Banglar Moni (cont) 9/10	20/10	Sing	BSC	Continue	Sing
Osg Argosy (cont) 12/10	20/10	Cbo	Everest	Continue	Col
Asian Leader (Roro) 24/20/10	21/10		JF	Vehi	
Thor Eagle (480) 16/10	21/10		Tsl	Proj mat	
Boxer Capt Cook (cont) 12/10	22/10		Bdship	Continue	Sing
Qc Pintail (cont) 12/10	23/10		QCSL	Continue	Sing
Enos 19/10	24/10	Basu	SMSL	Urea/bag	
Jurong Balsam (cont) 16/10	25/10	Sing	Nol	Continue	Sing
Xpress Makalu (cont) 7/10	25/10		Everest	Continue	Col

Tanker due

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
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Vessels of Kutubdia		Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
Energy Explorer			BBAAL		5/4
Ismaoya			BBAAL		17/8
Dea champion			Arafeen	(R/A) 24/9	
Dea conqueror			Arafeen	R/A 15/10	
De Xiang	P Mat	Sing	Arafeen		11/10
Marine Express	Wt/Ms/Y/pe	Sing	Rainbow		11/10

Vessels at outer anchorage

Ready on		CPO	Pen	Rainbow	14/10
Alpha-2		C Oil	BSC	R/A	
Banglar Shourabh		continue	Sing	Bdship	14/10
Banga Bonik (cont)		C Clink	Krab	Everett	14/10
St Aubin		continue	P.Kel	RSL	16/10
Osg Alpha (cont)					

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