

# ASEAN leaders brush aside troubles to win investors

SINGAPORE, Nov 26: South-east Asian leaders brushed aside troubles ranging from beleaguered presidencies to violent street battles and announced ambitious plans to entice wary foreign investors back to the region, reports AP.

During their two-day summit that ended Saturday, the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations proposed an expanded Asian trade alliance, endorsed a plan to build a huge railroad from Singapore to China and signed a pact to catapult their region into the digital age.

With many of their economies still smarting from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis and with crucial foreign investment flowing to other regions, the ASEAN leaders presented a unified front.

"We were huddling and cuddling," said Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, referring to the camaraderie that characterized the meetings at a plush Singapore hotel.

Joining the ASEAN leaders in Singapore were their counterparts from Japan, China and South Korea. Those leaders expressed cautious support for the idea of including their countries in an expanded ASEAN.

Yet putting a happy face on the Singapore summit couldn't hide the problems back home: Joseph Estrada's presidency in the Philippines is hanging by a thread, as is Yoshiro Mori's prime ministership in Japan. Gunmen attacked government buildings in Cambodia this week, and Indonesia is riddled with violent separatist movements.

A week currency, high oil prices and bad bank loans in Thailand are dealing serious

blows to the economy.

Despite the group's claims of a new openness and willingness to discuss "sensitive" issues, ASEAN held steadfast to its controversial doctrine of non-interference in members' domestic affairs.

The group on Saturday defended military-ruled Myanmar against criticism from the European Union, saying the EU is free to call off its dialogue with the region if it wants.

EU and ASEAN ministers are scheduled to meet in Laos next month, but some EU ministers have said they won't attend because ASEAN is perceived as coddling Myanmar.

"If EU wants to exclude Myanmar and the dialogue is going to be called off, then let it be called off," Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said Saturday.

Pulling ASEAN down as an economic powerhouse are the ailing economies of Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. ASEAN leaders on Saturday pledged to raise the standards of schools, workers and infrastructure for the grouping's poorest members.

The summit's ambitious scope, which included the signing of an e-commerce accord to boost regional technology exchanges, reflected an attempt by ASEAN to regain its former economic glory, devastated by the 1997/98 financial crisis.

While many Northeast Asian nations responded to the crisis by reforming their economies and opening up key sectors, Southeast Asia was widely criticized for its response. Malaysia imposed capital controls and Indonesia came under fire for the botched reforms of its distressed banking sector.



Deen Mohammad, Chairman of The City Bank Limited, delivers his inaugural speech at the 17th annual general meeting of the bank on Saturday. Vice-chairman of the bank Manwar Hossain, Directors Anwar Hossain, Fahmida Begum, Azizul Haque Chowdhury, Hossain Khaled Saifullah, Feroza Akhter, Monowar Ali, ABM Feroz, Ahmed Rajeeb Samdani, Mohammad Shoaib, Ashraf Aziz, Managing Director Abbas Uddin Ahmed and Consultant Mohammad Faiz are seen in the picture.

## Chinese steel makers deny US dumping charges

BEIJING, Nov 26: Baoshan Iron and Steel Corp (Baosteel), Wuhuan Tron and Steel Corp and other large Chinese steel producers denied accusations they had been dumping their products in the US market, state media said today, reports AFP.

In a bid to avoid paying heavy punitive duties, the companies met in Beijing on Friday to determine ways to prove their innocence to the US International Trade Commission (ITC), which is currently looking into the charges, the China Daily Business Weekly reported.

"The procedure of investigation will stop when the investigated is able to prove that dumping does not take place," said Shi Jun, an executive at Wuhuan Tron and Steel. "To act sooner is better than later as it saves time, energy and money."

China is one of 11 steel ex-

porting countries that were targeted in a complaint filed by nine US companies and the Independent Steelworkers Union earlier this month.

They charged that hot-rolled steel from these countries had either been dumped - sold at less than fair market value - or had benefited from unfair government subsidies.

The ITC, a quasi-judicial agency which investigates allegations of unfair trade practices, is expected to make a preliminary determination on the complaint by December 28 and has asked six Chinese steel producers to respond to the charges.

At least two of the companies - Anyang Tron and Steel - are likely to get off the hook, as customs records show they did not sell hot-rolled steel products in the United States during

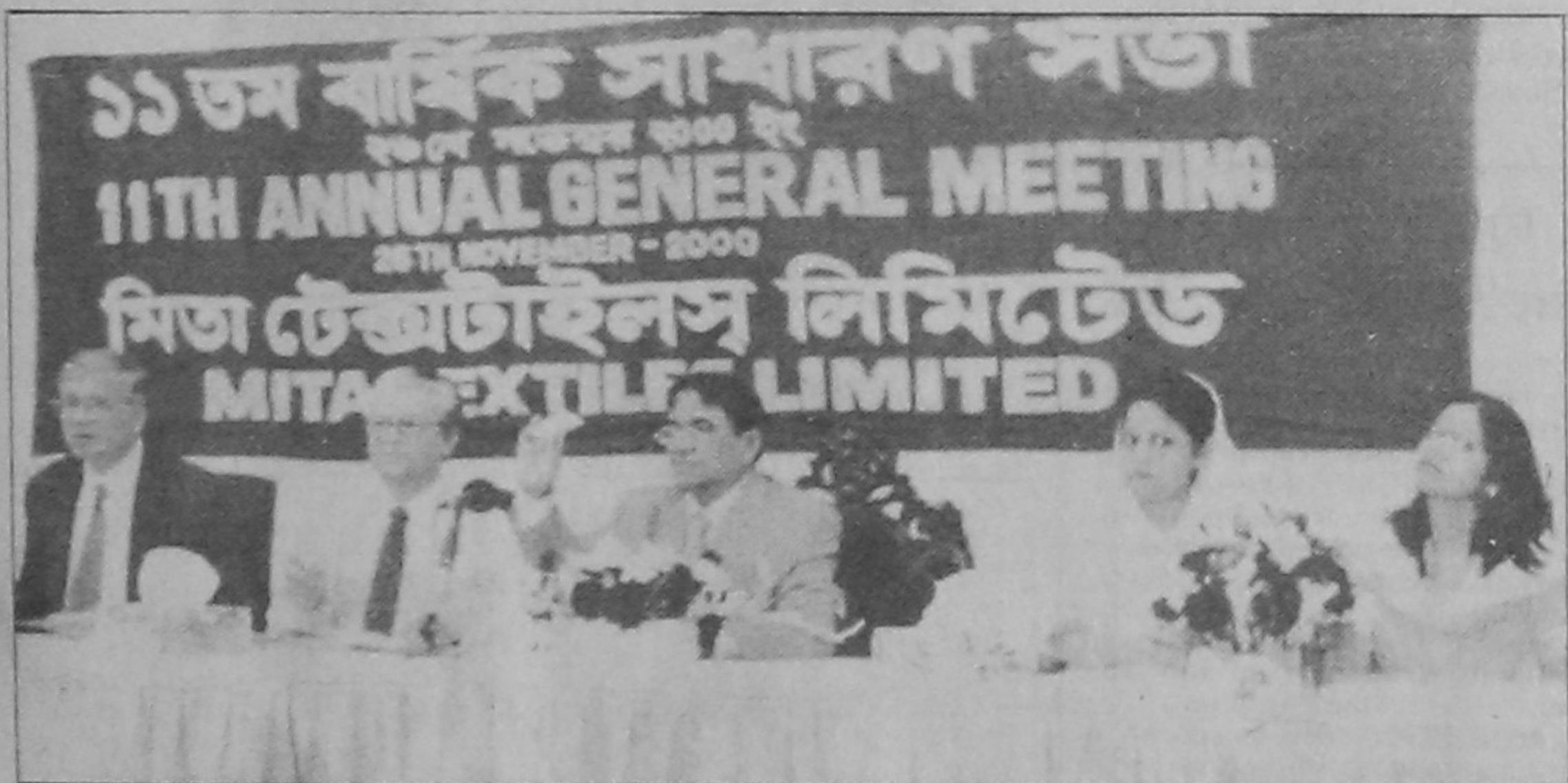
the investigated period, the paper said.

But the four other companies could be at a disadvantage if they want to prove they do not sell their steel products at unreasonably low prices compared with production costs.

This is because anti-dumping investigators frequently treat China as a non-market economy and therefore do not take Chinese production cost figures at face value.

The problem is that investigators often arrive at production cost figures that are higher than the real Chinese production costs, making the country come across as a dumper, the paper said.

Baosteel, whose exports of hot-rolled steel products make up about two per cent of its total sales, told the paper it does not really need to sell its products abroad.



The 11th annual general meeting of Mita Textiles Limited was held on its factory premises at Sreepur in Gazipur yesterday with Mustafizur Rahman, Managing Director of the company, in the chair.

## Workforce upgradation key to HK prosperity in knowledge economy

HONG KONG, Nov 26: A radical overhaul to upgrade the quality of the local workforce is the key to ensuring Hong Kong's future prosperity in the burgeoning knowledge economy, the region's Chief Executive has said, reports AFP.

Speaking at a Hong Kong Management Association forum on Wednesday, Tung Chee-hwa said that if Hong Kong was to take advantage of opportunities offered by globalisation and the emergence of the knowledge economy, "it is essential that we upgrade Hong Kong's human capital."

Although the government announced on Friday that GDP economic growth in the territory had hit 10.4 per cent for the third quarter, a 13-year high, it is unlikely Hong Kong would be able to sustain such prosperity without redressing a serious shortage of skilled labour.

Hong Kong boasts a workforce of some 3.3 million,

roughly 50 per cent of its population, but it is estimated that some 37 per cent of the workforce is only educated to lower secondary level.

Leaving school at 14, this group forms the bulk of Hong Kong's unskilled or low skilled workforce.

A manpower projection study has forecast that between now and 2005 low skilled workers will encounter problems finding employment due to a reduction in demand.

"If the provision of post secondary and above education remains at the present level, come 2005, demand will vastly outstrip supply by some 117,000 people," Tung said.

The upgrading of skills was the responsibility of both the government and employers, he said, criticising local employers for not offering sufficient training opportunities.

Only eight percent of local firms provide formal training,

compared to 93 per cent in the United States, 83 per cent in the UK and 68 per cent in Australia, he said.

Tung called on the local community to "acquire the habit of life long learning" to keep pace with changes and "through continued education upgrade our skills, add value and maintain and enhance our competitiveness."

In order to provide a sustainable source of quality manpower, breaking its reliance on foreign skills, Hong Kong must encourage children to progress to secondary school level and beyond, he said.

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## FFE Group seminar on cement held in city

A seminar on improvement of cement grinding, bulk material handling, process automation and control systems with modern technology was held yesterday at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, says a press release.

Mary Ann Peters, Ambassador of USA to Bangladesh, Finn Thilstud, Ambassador of Denmark to Bangladesh, and Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, President of Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers' Association and Chairman of Bashundhara Group, were chief guest and guests of honor respectively.

The seminar was arranged by FL Smith-Fuller Engineering Group (FFE Group). The speakers emphasised the need for improvement of quality of the cement of Bangladesh through application of appropriate technology as per demand of the new millennium.

## City Bank holds its 17th AGM

The 17th annual general meeting of The City Bank Limited was held Saturday at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, says a press release.

Deen Mohammad, Chairman of the bank, presided over the meeting. Vice Chairman of the bank Manwar Hossain, Directors ZH Choudhury, Anwar Hossain, Fahmida Begum, Azizul Haque Chowdhury, Hossain Khaled Saifullah, Feroza Akhter, Monowar Ali, ABM Feroz, Ahmed Rajeeb Samdani, Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury, Hossain Ara Begum, Mohammad Shoaib, Ashraf Aziz, Managing Director Abbas Uddin Ahmed, consultant and Mohammad Faiz, senior executives and a large number of shareholders attended the meeting.

The Chairman in his address highlighted the activities of the bank during the outgoing year and gave an account of the improvements posted in different areas. He said loans and advances and profit position of the bank increased by 20 per cent, 11 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

He informed all that City Bank had undertaken the construction work of 'City Bank Tower', its corporate office. The construction work will start immediately after getting the approval from concerned authorities.

He also said the in order to extend on line banking services to the customer, the bank taken steps to bring all the branches under computer network. Meanwhile, the bank has started new programmes viz. credit card, dealing room operation etc.

The meeting declared 10 per cent interim stock dividend from the profit of year 2000 subject to the approval of Bangladesh Baqik.



US Ambassador in Bangladesh Mary Ann Peters exchanges views with Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, Chairman of Bashundhara Group, at a seminar on improvement of cement grinding, bulk material handling, process automation and control systems with modern technology arranged by FL Smith-Fuller Engineering Group at a city yesterday.

## Kuwait to sell govt shares in cos from early '01

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 26: The Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) said yesterday it hoped to begin selling off from early next year government shareholdings in 19 local firms worth an estimated 2.69 billion dollars, reports AFP.

"We have decided to sell off all our holdings in local firms," KIA managing director Saleh Mubarak al-Falah told AFP on the sidelines of a symposium on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE). "The programme is expected to begin early next year if circumstances are appropriate."

KIA, the Kuwaiti government's investment arm that manages assets worth some 60 billion dollars, mostly outside the emirate, sold stocks in local firms worth more than 3 billion dollars between 1994 and 1997.

It suspended the programme - slated as the start of the emirate's privatisation efforts - in early 1998 after share prices on the KSE crashed to less than half of their value in November 1997.

"We suspended the programme for reevaluation after supply far exceeded demand," said Saleh, former Chairman of the Bank of Kuwait and the Middle East. "We did that to help stop the slide in stock prices."

"We will evaluate the situation is KSE and see if more shares can be pumped into the market. We don't want to declare a time-frame for the process but the sale may be completed in one year," he said.

Al-Shall Economic Consultants estimated that the government has stakes ranging between 5.3 and 87.7 per cent in 19 listed Kuwaiti firms. It said the value of that is 2.69 billion dollars, or 12.9 per cent of the KSE's total market capitalisation.

Falah said KIA will use the funds to contribute to the establishment of investment funds and portfolios to provide cash for the sagging bourse, the second largest Arab stock market in terms of capitalisation.

## Japan seeks to cut contributions to UN Economic problems at home

TOKYO, Nov 26: Japan, the second largest donor to the United Nations, plans to seek for the first time to reduce its contributions because of economic problems at home, the daily Yomiuri Shimbun said today, reports Reuters.

Japan contributes about 20 per cent of the UN budget, the biggest after the United States, and larger than the total payments from Britain, China, France and Russia combined.

The government will ask the United Nations if it can lower its rate to 17 per cent of the budget, representing a \$38 million reduction from this year's \$216.4 million contribution. The Yomiuri said quoting government sources.

Officials were not available to comment.

The move follows calls from within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party that Japan, which is seeking permanent membership of the UN Security Council, to limit contributions to no more than 15 per cent given the current economic troubles.

Japan will also urge the United Nations to tighten its finances, the Yomiuri said.

Financial contributions are determined in line with each member nation's gross national product and economic situation. Japan's economy, the world's second largest, has been struggling to emerge from its worst economic downturn in half a century.

It was unclear whether Japan's move was linked to its longtime campaign to gain membership of the UN Security Council. Japan has been urging an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members on the council.

Many countries support permanent council membership for Japan and Germany, the third highest contributor to the United Nations. But Italy has organised medium-sized nations to oppose the move, which would leave Italy as the only large European nation without a permanent seat.

Japan, Germany and Italy, as Axis powers during World War Two, were excluded from membership in the United Nations for years. The five permanent council members - the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China - were considered the main war victors in 1945.

they are among the only companies in China that can absorb unemployed farmers and workers laid off from failing state enterprises.

But so far, the lack of adequate financing has made it difficult for them to expand.

China's four largest state-owned commercial banks are under political pressure to direct the vast majority of their lending towards inefficient state enterprises, even though many of those loans later turn bad.

A long with the planned specialised bank, the establishment of a second board for high-tech enterprises could help make financing easier for small companies, the paper said.

Some may also be able to obtain loans from Liberty New World China Enterprises Investment a fund earmarked for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

It received a boost last month, when the Asian Development Bank approved a plan to invest up to 25 million dollars in the fund, according to the paper.

## China plans spl bank to help SMEs

BEIJING, Nov 26: China is considering setting up a special bank charged with lending to small and medium-sized enterprises to fill a gaping hole in its financial system, state media reported today, reports AFP.

New government policies are in the works in belated recognition that the sector will not be able to thrive if left entirely to its own devices, the China Daily Business Weekly said.

"Unlike powerful large enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises are vulnerable and need help," said Bao Guoqiang, a vice director at the State Economic and Trade Commission.

The paper did not give any details about the planned bank, and did not indicate if it is one of 10 private commercial banks that China has said it intends to allow.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, many of them rural businesses operating with the support of local officials, have been credited with playing a major role in pushing forward China's economy during the past two decades of reform.

They have gained renewed importance in recent years as

## Exchange Rates

American Express Bank foreign exchange rates (indicative) against taka to clients					
Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying TT Clean	Buying OD Sight Export Bill	Buying OD Transfer
US Dollar	54.2500	54.2800	53.8150	53.6970	53.6250
Pound Stg	76.4925	76.5348	74.7598	74.5969	74.4969
Deutsche Mark	23.6796	23.6927	22.6450	22.5963	22.5650
Swiss Franc	30.2060	30.2227	29.6175	29.5526	29.5126
Japanese Yen	0.4920	0.4922	0.4790	0.4779	0.4773
Dutch Guilder	21.0160	21.0276	20.0978	20.0537	20.0269
Danish Krona	6.1481	6.1515	6.0278	6.0146	6.0065
Australian \$	28.9315	28.9475	27.5963	27.5358	27.4989
Belgian Franc	1.1481	1.1487	1.0979	1.0955	1.0940
Canadian \$	35.6018	35.6215	34.612	34.5363	34.4900
French Franc	7.0604	7.0643	6.7519	6.7371	6.7281
Hong Kong \$	6.9689	6.9727	6.8864	6.8713	6.8621
Italian Lira	0.0239	0.0239	0.0229	0.0228	0.0228
Singapore \$	31.2122	31.2295	30.2484	30.1821	30.1416
Euro	46.3132	46.3388	44.2897	44.1926	44.1334
Saudi Rial	14.5034	14.5114	14.3087	14.2773	14.2582

Bill buying rates					
TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
53.7512	53.3665	52.9181	52.4996	52.0212	51.1243

US dollar London inter bank offered rate (UBOR)					
Buying \$/£	Selling \$/£	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months
53.8250	54.2500	USD	6.61500	6.74785	6.7000
74.4959	76.4925	GBP	6.00000	6.06875	6.06884
Cash/TC	Cash/TC	EUR	4.89938	5.07000	5.10000

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars					
Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
49.8324	57.9005	43.730/43.8	3.7999/3.80	9435/9475	1187.00/1192.00
₹ 847	₹ 800	₱ 30	₱ 01		

Amex notes on Sunday's market					
There was no significant change in the USD/BDT rate after the increase on Thursday. The interbank USD/BDT rate is now 53.87188-53.8850-53.8950. The average call rates ranged between 6.50 and 7.00 per cent.					
The key finance officials warned against global economic imbalances on Saturday, saying they could lead to an abrupt reversal in currency trends that have favoured dollar versus the fledgling euro.					
Sterling rebounded on Friday after coming close to 14-year lows it had set against dollar two months ago, tracking the euro's recovery against the US currency. Amid a death of domestic British economic data on Friday, analysts attributed sterling's early weakness to dollar to the perception that a Bush election victory was becoming more likely.					
Credit spreads were widening the US market with the prolonged US presidential election saga adding to the general uncertainty. This growing US current account deficit was unsustainable and that a shift in market sentiment could lead to a sudden, damaging weakening in dollar.					
In New York on Friday, the majors closed against USD at 111.27/111.35 JPY, 1.8060/1.8070 CHF, Euro at 0.8380/0.8387 and GBP at 1.3992/1.4000.					

## Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port									
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 26.11.2000.									
Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving			
J/1	Chief of Cherokee	I.Pipes	Mong	Asa	25/11	27/11			
J/2	Hanjin Tampa	R.Seed	Lapa	Rainbow	13/11	27/11			
J/3	Banglar Doot	Tsp(Fert)	Qing	Uniqne	20/11	29/11			
J/4	Triumph Kaohsiung	Gr.St. Coil	Yang	RML	24/11	26/11			
J/5	Erodios	Sugar (TCB)	Sing	CCNL	6/11	29/11			
J/6	Princess of Lorne	Sugar(TCB)	Bang	CCNL	2/11	26/11			
J/7	Banglar Maya	Gr/GL	Okha	BSC	19/11	30/11			
J/8	Khulla	M Seed	Mari	BSL	4/11	25/11			
J/9	Bay Sisters	Peas (GI)	Sing	Mutual	20/11	27/11			
J/10	Bright Sea	C Clink	Krab	MBL	11/11	26/11			
J/11	Jaami	Cont	Sing	Cross	21/11	-			
J/12	Tiger River	Cont	Sing	Nol	21/11	26/11			
J/13	X-press Makalu	Cont	Sing	Everbest	21/11	26/11			
CCT/1	Jay Mars	Cont	Col	Everbest	25/11	28/11			
CCT/2	Xpress Resolve	Cont	Sing	RSL	23/11	27/11			
CCT/3	Qc Pintail	Cont	Sing	QCSL	24/11	27/11			
RM/14	Gati-1	HR Coil	Col	BSL	20/11	25/11			
RM/15	Ava	Idle	yang	MTA	30/10	29/11			
CC/1	Ocean Pride	C Clink (Rup)	Krab	PSAL	17/11	27/11			
GS/1	Banglar Kakoli	Repair	Edel	Seacon	6/11	26/11			
RM/3	Screeper	CDSO	Darb	Rainbow	16/11	26/11			
Rm/5	Saucon	Hsd	Sing	MSTPL	24/11	27/11			
RM/6	ACTINIA	HSD	JUBA	ECSL	22/11	26/11			
DO/1	Banglar Shourabi	C Oil	-	BSC	R/A	26/11			
RM/8	Banglar Urm	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	30/11			
CUFLJ	Mary Noir	Cement (scan)	lang	BSL	15/11	27/11			

Vessels due at outer anchorage					
Name of vessels	Date of Last Port arrival	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port	
Xpress Padma (Cont)	27/11	Sing	RSL	Cont	L Sing
Olympic Mentor	26/11	P Said	Ancient	Wheat(G)	-
Tug Salvigour	26/11	Col	Aliz	Towing	Ichael
Michael	26/11	Col	Aliz	For Deedation	-
City of Houston	26/11	Suez	ASA	S Ash+C Soda	-
Xpress Renown (Cont)	26/11	Sing	RSL	Cont	L Sing
Banga Bijoy (Cont)	26/11	P Kel	BDSHIP	Cont	L Sing
Ocean-1	27/11	Yang	SMSL	GI(log)	-
Jin Cheng	29/11	-	Bdship	GI	-
Samara	30/11	Mumb	Smsl	GI(Sol+Mach)	-
Joy World	27/11	Sura	SLL	S Coil	Newsprint
Kota Cahaya (Cont)	16/11	27/11	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont L Sing
Qena	28/11	-	SBS	Fert	-
B. Shukla (Cont)	19/11	29/11	-	Bdship	GI
Xiang Jiang	29/11	-	BdShip	GI	-
O Independence (Cont)	19/11	29/11	-	Bdship	Cont L Sing
Banga Birol (Cont)	19/11	1/12	-	Bdship	Cont L Sing
Kota Naga	29/11	Sing	Pil (Bd)	Cont	-
Arabella (Cont)	20/11	30/11	-	QCSL	Cont L Sing
Banglar Moni (cont)	22/11	30/11	-	BSC	Cont L Sing
Banga Bonik (cont)	21/11	1/12	-	BdShip	Cont L Sing
Osg Argosy (Cont)	23/11	1/12	-	Everbest	Cont L Sing
J. Balsami (Cont)	23/11	1/12	-	Nol	Cont L Sing
Qc Teal (cont)	22/11	2/12	-	QCSL	Cont L Sing
Bago	2/12	-	Everest	GI	-
Banga Lanka (Cont)	23/11	5/11	-	Baridhat	Cont L Col
Bright Vega (Roro)	24/11	15/12	-	Everett	Vehi

Tanker due					
Armour-1	27/11	Ind	MTCL	CDSO(RM/1)	
Vessels at Kutubdia					
Name of Vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival	
Vessels at outer anchorage					
vessels ready					
Thai Binh	Fert(NP)	Isha	SBS		23/11
Lady Arvettce	Fert(GTSP)	Sing	SBS		24/11
Boxer Capt Cook	Cont	P Kel	Bdship		24/11
Sea Banian	Urea	hald	Everett		25/11
Vessels not ready					
Oriental Queen	C Click	KRAB	RML		22/11
Vessels not entering					
ECO Challenge	Dia Phos	Na Ban	BSL		16/11
Leopard-1	C Click	Kohs	ANCL		17/11
Patchara Naree	Mop (Bulk)	Niko	Litmon		17/11
Orient Star	TSR(Pert)	Bank	Litmon		22/11
White Sea	Scrapping	P. Ind	Simni		24/11
Accord	Cement	Sing	Viking		5/4
Revenge	-	-	Sunshine		3.8.99
Xing Ye	Rice (G)	-	MHCSL		20.9.99
Karys Sentosa	Rice (G)	-	USTC		10.8.99