

Asian states must remove trade barriers to fight EU, US: S'pore

Asian nations must forge closer economic ties and remove market barriers to compete with the United States and Europe, Singapore's communications and information technology minister said Monday.

"We (Asia) face the disadvantage of having relatively small domestic markets," Yeo Cheow Tong told delegates at the "Asia's Technology Future" conference being held in the southern Indian city of Bangalore.

"Even large countries like India and China have relatively small domestic markets compared to Europe and the US... Other than

Japan no single country can hope to compete alone with the EU and the US," Tong said.

"But we need not stand alone. Asia can be more competitive if we collaborate more closely, encourage closer economic ties between our companies and remove regulatory and other barriers to individual markets," he said.

Tong called on the Asian countries to build an IT community to share expertise and experience.

"A strong IT community will also help project Asia's interests in the growing global debates on issues such as security of e-commerce transactions and cross-

border data flows," he said.

South Korea has already started talks with Japan and China on ways to standardise future developments in IT, mobile telephony and the Internet, while India and Singapore have signed a pact for infocom collaboration.

Tong said a pan-Asian IT grouping planned at the ASEAN Informal Summit in November 2000 was on course.

"We are in touch with various government and certain elements of this idea are already active," he said.

Tong said Asia also needed to build a cyber-marketplace, a strong capital market and grow

and retain talent to become the Silicon Valley of the East.

"The creation of an Asian cyber-marketplace will make us very attractive to infocom companies because individual country markets are difficult to break into."

"Secondly, in order to create a thriving marketplace we require strong capital market support from Asian and foreign investors. And within Asia we need to help talent move more easily between countries," he said.

"To lead and compete in the new economy, Asia must be seen as a credible thought leader for various issues in the infocom sector," Tong said.

UK, US insurers merge to form global giant

British insurance group Prudential and American General of the United States unveiled on Monday a merger totalling 30 billion pounds (47 billion euros, 45 billion dollars) to create a global insurance giant.

In one of the biggest-ever forays across the Atlantic by a British financial services group, Prudential will effectively swallow American General to create the sixth-biggest global insurance company, the groups said.

But the price of shares in Prudential slumped by 11.4 per cent on concern about the price and timing.

The British group will swap 3.6622 Prudential shares for each American General share in a move

that will leave Prudential shareholders with 50.5 per cent of the new group and American General shareholders with 49.5 per cent.

The new group, to be called Prudential plc, will have a combined market capitalisation of 30.8 billion pounds, making it the 11th-largest quoted company on the London market.

The groups expect the deal to go through in the third quarter, following shareholder and regulatory clearance.

"Our two companies are a great fit," said Prudential chief executive Jonathan Bloomer, due to retain his post in the new group. "We have highly complementary business operations and we have pursued very similar strategies by broadening out our product ranges and distribution channels."

Vajpayee seeks consensus to meet WTO challenges

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee called Monday for a political consensus to spur growth and urged industry to raise quality levels to compete in the global economy.

The prime minister's appeal in parliament came in the wake of a scathing attack by opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, who accused Vajpayee's multi-party government of sowing economic chaos and pursuing anti-poor and anti-farmer policies.

Vajpayee, rubbishing Gandhi's accusations, said his ruling coalition had brought economic and political stability, but warned that India faced problems if new strategies to revive loss-making sectors like the power industry were not put in place.

"We know there are some problems that have come up due to India's participation in the WTO (World Trade Organisation)," Vajpayee said.

"But we cannot run away from these challenges. We have to improve to establish ourselves in the international market. We have to emphasise quality," he said.

India has relentlessly opposed US and European pressure

to join in a new WTO round of trade talks, with New Delhi arguing that developed countries have yet to fulfill their market-opening obligations under the previous Uruguay Round.

India has also worked tirelessly to build a consensus among developing nations to take on the WTO economic giants over the issue of fresh trade talks.

Vajpayee said the agricultural sector must change its mindset and steer from staple rice and wheat crops towards cash crops, since India currently had more food stocks than it could store.

"Previously, we had worked with the economics of scarcity and now we must work with the economics of plenty," he said, adding the government would buy crops such as vegetables and oil seeds from farmers to insulate them against unexpected gluts or crashing prices.

The prime minister also called on Gandhi's Congress party and other opposition groups to back the government's economic policies.

"A consensus is also needed to re-build industrial growth because merely lowering excise is not sufficient and such steps of the

government also have a limit," Vajpayee said.

India's new federal budget promises to bring down peak customs duties to 20 per cent in the next three years.

The budget also tackled the sensitive issue of labour law reform and vowed to accelerate privatisation -- moves which drew an angry response from trade unions.

"The reforms will hurt some people, but that is inevitable," Vajpayee said.

Another report from Bombay says: Czech Republic Prime Minister Milos Zeman called Monday for a boost to business and trade ties with India.

"We can be in a win-win situation by increasing the trade and business ties with each other," Zeman told reporters after speaking to industrialists and business leaders.

Zeman was kicking off a five-day India visit in Bombay.

He will visit India's computer software hub Bangalore on Tuesday and then move on to New Delhi for talks with Indian leaders. He leaves India on Friday.

US industry faces recession for at least next six months: Intel

Industry in the United States is in recession and will begin to pick up only in six to 12 months' time, the US microchip producer Intel's chairman said on Monday in an interview here.

"The entire US manufacturing industry has now entered a recession. Most business have announced sequential decreases of between 15 and 25 per cent of their revenues," Craig Barrett told the business daily Les Echos.

"One thing is sure, even with the measures taken by the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates and by President Bush on taxes to restore consumer confidence, we will not see the effects before six to 12 months," he said.

Intel announced on Thursday that its sales for the first quarter of 2001 will be 25 per cent lower than in the last quarter of 2000, which reached 8.7 billion dollars (9.3 billion euros).

The computer chipmaker also plans to lay off 5,000 workers, around six per cent of its workforce, in the first nine months of this year.

Australia plans two more rate cuts

Australia's central bank is planning at least two more quarter-point interest rate cuts to counteract the ailing economy, according to a survey of the agency.

Australia has found itself in a deeper economic malaise than anyone expected, with figures last week showing that output contracted in late 2000 as the transitional effects of tax changes, high petrol prices, and previous rate rises all took their toll on growth.

Now the concern is that the temporary factors hurting growth will be overtaken by a slide in consumer sentiment, alongside already weak business conditions, as the domestic media plays on the recession scenario and the government looks panic-stricken.

And that demands dramatic action from the reserve bank to reassure consumers.

After back-to-back easings in February and March, a third cut in April is seen as a foregone conclusion, with more to follow. The bank has not cut three months in a row for at least 10 years, when it started announcing changes in policy.

"In terms of monetary policy, gradualism is dead," said SG Australia chief economist Glenn Ma-

guire.

"The RBA is conducting policy to extract the maximum leverage from business and consumer sentiment, which is increasingly the key target for policy," he said.

A Reuters survey of 22 economists found all expect another move after the April 3 board meeting, with the only debate whether it will be a quarter or half-percentage point.

That depends on the economic figures in the meantime -- there have been signs of a pick-up in January -- and whether the US Fed cuts by more than half a point at its meeting on March 20.

The Reserve Bank last week cut the cash rate to 5.5 per cent, and the median forecast is for the cash rate to bottom out at 5.0 per cent. But nine see it falling to 4.75 per cent and two to 4.5 per cent by mid-year.

The bank raised rates by a total of 150 basis points from 4.75 per cent over 1999 and 2000, so it has already taken back half of that tightening.

"The domestic economy is clearly considerably weaker than what the RBA had been looking for. So I think they will be wanting to turn that around as quickly as they can," said Kieran Davies, chief economist at ABN AMRO.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Barisal Public Works Division, Barisal

Tender Notice

No-44/2000-2001

Tenders in Form No 2911 in sealed envelopes are hereby invited separately from contractor/contractors' establishments under Public Works Department/contractors/contractors' establishments of respective natures of civil work as per financial capacity. Tenders can be submitted on 15-3-2001 till 12.00 Noon in all the offices shown in Serial No 2. Tenders will be opened on the day of submitting tender at 12.15 PM in presence of the interested tenderers and the name of the work, contractor/contractors' firm's name with address and the address to whom the tender is to be submitted will have to be mentioned.

- Name of offices to sell tender : All the divisions under Barisal Public Works Circle.
- Name of offices to receive tender : All the divisions under Barisal Public Works Circle.
- Last date of selling tender : 14-3-2001 (till office hours).
- Date of receiving tender : 15-3-2001 till 12.00 Noon.

Gr No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time limit for completion of work	Eligibility of contractors
1 (one)	Construction of 1 Police Investigation Centre at Labonshara at Banaripara thana in Barisal district out of 57 investigation centres of Police Department at various places of Bangladesh. Sub-head: Boundary wall and barbed wire fence construction.	4,99,859/-	10,000/-	120 (one hundred twenty) days	Special class-I/combined class I/class I of enlisted with Public Works Department, second class enlisted with Khulna Public Works Zone, Khulna and class III building contractor/contractor's firm of Public Works Circle, Barisal.
2 (two)	Construction of 1 Police investigation Centre at Sharshi at Bakerganj thana of Barisal district out of construction of 57 investigation centres of Police Department at various places in Bangladesh. Sub-head: Construction of boundary wall and barbed wire fence.	5,48,361/-	10,970/-	-do-	-do-

6) Ready rate schedule containing Bangladesh Form No 2911 and additional terms and conditions can be seen in all the offices as shown in Serial No 1 and each tender can be procured on payment of usual fees for Taka 400/- (four hundred) and BD 2911 No Form on payment of Taka 25/- (twenty-five) only (non-refundable in both cases). Contractor himself or the managing director of the contractors' firm himself or his/their nominated representative authorised by the managing director of the contractor's firm or contractor can purchase by producing the original book of enlistment, certificate of Value Added Tax, original copy of certificate regarding payment of income tax-TIN certificate, otherwise, no tenders will be sold. The cashier of each division will sell tender by examining properly the photo and signature of the original book of enlistment, VAT registration certificate, certificate regarding TIN personally. For any exception to this, he will be responsible personally.

7) The original money receipt for purchasing tender, attested copy of registration of Value Added Tax and attested copy of payment of certificate regarding TIN must be submitted with the tender otherwise tenders will be regarded as rejected.

8) Any attestation should be done by class I gazetted officials.

9) If more than one lowest tenderer is found in the tender then in order to select 1 (one) contractor a lottery will be held on 4-4-2001 at 11.00 am in the office chamber of the undersigned. Contractors participating in the tender or his/their nominated representative are requested to attend the lottery. If any contractor or his/their nominated representative does not attend the said lottery, then any sort of claim or excuse and objection regarding the lottery will not be acceptable later.

DFP 5607-1/3
G-453

Md Abdul Ghani
Executive Engineer
Barisal Public Works Division, Barisal

Korean Air gets first female executive

A Korean Air stewardess this month was appointed as the first female executive in South Korea's airline industry, but she will remain a chief flight attendant and will not have the power to determine company policy.

On March 1, 52-year-old Lee Taek-keum became one of Korean Air's 137 executives, which entitles her to a salary increase and puts her in charge of the national flag carrier's 3,500 stewardesses.

"The promotion signifies that doors will be opened wider to women," Chang Sung-shik, a Korean Air spokesman, said Monday.

"It's a small but hopeful start for working women," said Kimki Sun-mi, a spokeswoman at Korean Women's Associations United, a Seoul based rights group.

Lee is not on the 10-member executive board, which decides policy. Executives who are not on the board are expected to approve its decisions.

Lee, who was on a flight Monday and unavailable for comment, joined Korean Air in 1972 and has spent 22,331 hours.

Aussie govt steps up efforts to keep herds BSE-free

Farmers face tougher scrutiny as part of new efforts to keep Australian herds free of mad cow and other diseases, Agriculture Minister Warren Truss said Monday.

Truss said farmers faced more inspections and auditing of their animal feeding habits to ensure tough new laws were not being breached.

The British farming industry has been devastated by outbreaks of both diseases.

Truss was speaking ahead of a meeting Tuesday of a management group which is to advise state and federal agriculture ministers on ways of keeping both diseases out of Australia.

"The reality is even though we know there can't be an inspector over the shoulder of every farmer when they're feeding an animal, there needs to be done more at the state levels to audit the current arrangements and to ensure there are no breaches of existing law," Truss said.

"What we want to make sure is that there are no practices occurring in Australia which could endanger (the country's BSE-free) status."

Euro zone set for two years of 3pc growth

The EU Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Pedro Solbes, said: "We are working on data established in November and we continue to hold to our position which is close to (growth of) 3.0 per cent."

In November the Commission expected the euro-zone economy to grow by 3.2 per cent this year.

But since then data in the United States has tended to harden impressions that the U.S. economy has slowed down sharply, notably in the technology sectors, and US growth in the fourth quarter from the figure for the third quarter was only 0.3 per cent.

This was less than half growth of 0.7 per cent in both the EU and the euro zone in the last quarter.

The Dutch Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm said late on Sunday that he saw no reason to panic.

Asked about signs that activity in the German economy, the third biggest in the world and the biggest in Europe, was slowing down, he said that it was too soon to say.

Other economies, such as the Dutch economy, were showing firm trends, he said. The Dutch authorities might even have to take steps to cool down activity which was showing signs of overheating.

Egypt invites Jordan to set up four-way free trade zone

Egypt has invited Jordan to set up a four-way free trade zone that would also involve Tunisia and Morocco, Jordanian Trade and Industry Minister Wassef Azar said Sunday.

"We have received an invitation from Egypt to form a free trade zone between Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco," Azar said in statements published by the official Petra news agency.

He said the scheme would bolster each country's economic position and increase investments between them as well as strengthen their ties with the European Union, noting that Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco are each bound by a "partnership" agreement with Europe.

CURRENCY

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka to major clients.

Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying TT Clean	Buying OD Sight Export Bill	Buying OD Transfer
US Dollar	54.2800	54.3100	53.8150	53.6970	53.6250
Pound Sig	80.0033	80.0475	78.7529	78.5802	78.4748
Deutsche Mark	26.3098	26.3243	25.2452	25.1898	25.1560
Swiss Franc	33.0291	33.0473	32.3330	32.2621	32.2188
Japanese Yen	0.4533	0.4535	0.4453	0.4443	0.4437
Dutch Guilder	23.3505	23.3633	22.4056	22.3564	22.3264
Danish Krona	6.8277	6.8314	6.6811	6.6665	6.6575
Australian \$	28.1876	28.2032	26.8429	26.7841	26.7482
Belgian Franc	1.2756	1.2763	1.2240	1.2213	1.2197
Canadian \$	35.4586	35.4782	34.4570	34.3815	34.3354
French Franc	7.8446	7.8490	7.5272	7.5107	7.5006
Hong Kong \$	6.9734	6.9772	6.8862	6.8711	6.8619

Bill buying rates

TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
53.7512	53.3665	52.9181	52.4696	52.0212	51.1243

US dollar London Inter Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

Buying(\$)	Selling(\$)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
53.6250	54.2800	USD	5.18750	5.04000	4.91000	4.84125
78.4748	80.0033	GBP	5.62313	5.61938	5.55266	5.52391
Cash/TC	Cash/TC	EURO	4.83500	4.77750	4.66125	4.57938

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
46.345/46.555	59.90/60.90	43.67/43.72	3.7995/3.8005	10500/10800	1277.2/1278.5

Amex notes on Monday's market

USD/BDT rates in the inter-bank market ranged between the previous 54.19 and 54.22 today, as there were not much movement in the supply and demand for Dollars. The average call rate ranged between 13 and 14 per cent.

The yen sank to 20-month lows on the dollar from an early 119.50 to 120.66 yen, its lowest level since July 1999 and a fall of over three per cent in little more than a week at 2130 GMT today, because of the poor economic condition of Japan.

The Swiss franc came back from seven-week lows against the euro and made small gains against the dollar. The US currency was hit by fresh declines in share markets, with the Dow Jones down some two per cent and Nasdaq five per cent. The Swiss franc had eased against the dollar on Friday after US February employment figures showed higher-than-expected non-farm payroll numbers and unemployment remained steady at 4.2 per cent.

At around 0810 GMT the exchange rates of major currencies against USD were GBP/USD 1.4679/1.4684, USD/CHF 1.6517/1.6522, USD/JPY 120.37/120.42, EUR/USD 0.9333/0.9335.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 12.03.2001.

Berth No	Name of Vessels	Cargo	Local Call	Local Agent	Date of Arrival	Leaving
J/1	Southern Queen	GI	-	Aeka	28/11	-
J/2	Le Cheng Ling	C/Clank	Koshi	RML	3/3	18/3
J/3	Naval Gent	Wheat (P)	Tuti	Rainbow	3/3	14/3
J/4	Banglar Maya	GI	Pipa	BSC	3/3	15/3
J/5	Triumph Kaohsiung	GI	Sing	RML	11/3	14/3
J/6	Chopel-2	Sugar (TCB)	Tuti	CCNL	23/2	15/3
J/7	Eltanin	GI (Log/MA)	Yang	SMSL	5/3	18/3
J/8	Triumph Chittagong	GI	Yang	RML	8/3	15/3
J/9	Sungrisan-B	Urea (B/C)	Sing	PSAL	20/2	12/3
J/10	Storm Wind	C/Clank	Jaka	MBL	3/3	17/3
J/11	Boxer Capt Cook	Cont	P Kel	TTL	6/3	15/3
J/12	Salzach	Cont	Sing	BDSHIP	6/3	12/3
CCT/1	Banglar Shikha	Cont	Sing	BSC	7/3	14/3
CCT/3	Kota Bintang	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	8/3	13/3
RM/14	Banglar Kallol	Repair	K Dia	BSC	27/2	16/3
RM/15	Banglar Urmi	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	17/3
TSP	Patchara Naree	R Phos	Xing	Atlantic	1/3	15/3
RM/3	Realthy Falcon	CPO	Pase	MTCL	10/3	12/3
DD	Banglar Jyoti	C Oil	-	BSC	R/A	12/3
DDJ	Banglar Robi	Repair	Sing	BSC	19/2	15/3
DDJ/1	Seabulk Command	K Dia	K Dia	IBS	R/A	-
CUFF/1	Mary Nour	Cement	Lant	BSL	4/3	21/3
Kafco(U)	United Santosh	-	Urea	Hald	Everett	10/3

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of Vessels	Cargo	Last Port Call	Local Agent	Date of Arrival
Energy Explorer-IV	-	-	BRAL	5/4
Ismaya	-	-	Arafeen	11/8
Dea Conqueror	-	-	Arafeen	R/A (31/12)
Dea Champion	-	-	Arafeen	R/A (7/3)
Mystras-II	C Oil	Rast	Unique	9/3
B Shourabh	C Oil	-	BSC	R/A (11/3)

Vessels at Outer Anchorage

Vessels Ready

Bombay	R Phos	Mali	RML	14/2
Qc Teal (Cont)Flag	Cont	P Kel	QCSSL	9/3
Xpress Renown (Cont)	Cont	P Kel	RSL	9/3
Osg Alpha (Cont)	Cont	Sing	RSL	9/3
K Cahaya (Cont)	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	10/3
Java Mars (Cont)	Cont	K Dia	IBS	30/3
B Bijoy (Cont)Flag	Cont	P Kel	BDSHIP	11/3
O Independence (Cont)	Cont	P Kel	TTL	11/3

Vessels not Entering

Leopard-1	C Clank	Kushi	SBS	6/3
Agios Fanouros	C Clank <td>Kushi</td> <td>Uniship</td> <td>9/3</td>	Kushi	Uniship	9/3
AA Venture	-	-	CLA	17/2
Minoan Hill	Scraping	Sing	Simmi	25/2
Chiangmai Navee	Scraping	Kore	UML	6/3
Platinum	Scraping	Indo	IF	7/3
Dewo	Scraping	V Sha	OTBL	8/3
Med Verona	Scraping	Iran	Simmi	8/3
Kimizuru	Scraping	Chain	IF	10/3
Valchiera	Scraping	Hochi	UMTL	11/3
Radiant Star	-	-	PSAL	20/2
Al Bauraq	C Cli	-	RML	27/2
Accord (Attach:7/6/00)	Cement	Sing	Viking	5/4
Revenge (Attach:19/8/99)	-	-	Sunshine	3/8/99
Xing Yei (Attach: 24/6/99)	Rice(G)	-	MHCSL	20/2/99
Karya Sentosa	Rice(G)	-	USTC	R/A (18/9)

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

Directorate General Defence Purchase
Ministry of Defence
New Airport Road, Tejgaon
Dhaka-1215

Tender Notice

1. Sealed tenders in foreign currency are invited from all bonafide manufacturers/dealers/suppliers/indentors (enlisted firms in DGDP only) for supply of the following stores/equipment's required for the use of defence services:

Sl No	Description of stores/equipment's	Date of selling		Date of opening	Currency	Tender No
		From	To			
a.	Laboratory re-agent & chemicals (various types total-176 items) Normal tender (single envelope system)	15-3-2001	08-4-2001	09-4-2001	Foreign	214/234/LAB/P-3

2. The tender schedule with detailed specifications/conditions will be available at the fixed rate (non-refundable) on any working day between 0800 hours to 1200 hours. The tender will be opened at 1005 hours on abovementioned date in presence of all available tenders.

ISPR/Misc/2001/126
DPP-4902-4/3
G-448

Major
For Director General