

US slowdown to hit 20 export-dependent countries

Asian nations also on the list

AFP, Geneva

A fall in US import growth will directly hit 20 countries who rely heavily on exports to the US market, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) warned on Wednesday.

Canada and Mexico are particularly concerned by the US slowdown but other countries in Central America, the Caribbean and Asia will also be hit, the WTO said in its annual report for 2001.

"A slowdown in the United States reduces its import growth, which will directly affect the exports of those 20 countries for which exports to the US market account for more than one third of

their merchandise exports," the report said.

Exports from Canada and Mexico to the United States account for more than 85 per cent of their total merchandise exports.

Global merchandise trade in terms of volume is expected to grow by seven per cent this year compared to an estimated 12 per cent in 2000, it said.

But the WTO warned that uncertainty surrounds trade growth in Western Europe.

"As Western Europe accounts for about 40 per cent of world trade, a stronger resistance to the US slowdown than is projected

could mean the world trade would expand in 2001 by more than the seven per cent currently forecast," it added.

The information and telecommunications sector was last year one of the most dynamic sectors although the last quarter of 2000 saw a slackening in the new economy boom, the report said.

Global sales in mobile phones exceeded 410 million units, an increase of 46 per cent compared to 1999, while sales of personal computers rose by nearly 15 per cent to 135 million units.

An almost 60 per cent rise in crude oil prices, however, led to a dramatic increase in the value of

fuels traded internationally and dwarfed the growth of all other product categories, it added.

The annual report said the number of complaints filed by members under the WTO's dispute settlement system since 1995 when the global trade body was established topped 200 last year, most of them filed by developed countries.

Five new states became WTO members in 2000 -- Albania, Croatia, Georgia, Jordan and Oman. Lithuania and Moldova are set to become members of the currently 140-strong organisation this year.

Ford recalls Firestone tyres on safety fears

Move to cost co \$2.1b

AFP, Michigan

Ford Motor Company on Tuesday confronted yet another costly public relations nightmare, announcing it would spend 2.1 billion dollars to replace all 13 million Firestone Wilderness AT tires on its vehicles due to safety fears.

The move marked an escalation in a bitter feud between Ford and Bridgestone/Firestone, a unit of Japan's Bridgestone Corporation, with each party convinced the other is responsible for fatal tire failures on the Ford Explorer sport utility vehicle (SUV).

"Today's announcement ... reflects our deep-seated conviction that customer safety always comes first," Ford chairman William Clay Ford, great grandson of company founder Henry Ford, told a news conference.

Ford described the decision as

"painful," noting that he is also the great grandson of Firestone founder Harvey Firestone. Bridgestone/Firestone on Monday severed its near century-old business relationship with Ford, charging the automaker with a breach of trust.

Ford officials said the tires affected by the latest recall were in addition to the 6.5 million Bridgestone/Firestone tires mounted on the Explorer that were recalled last August.

While testing showed that many of the non-recalled Wilderness AT tires raised no safety concerns, "some of these tires were sending us warning signals about future problems," said Ford chief executive Jacques Nasser.

"We lack confidence in the future performance of many of the Firestone Wilderness AT tires," he said.



Mohammed Lakiotullah, Managing Director of Exim Bank Ltd, and Ziaul Hassan Siddiqui, Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank, exchange the documents of an agreement on EEF Cooperation for extending equity support from Equity and Entrepreneurship Fund (EEF) to encourage investors in the risky but promising sectors.

Exim Bank signs EEF cooperation deal with BB

Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Limited signed a cooperation agreement with Bangladesh Bank at the central bank head office in the city on Monday to use Equity and Entrepreneurship Fund (EEF) to encourage investors in the risky but promising sectors.

Mohammed Lakiotullah, Managing Director of Exim Bank, and Ziaul Hassan Siddiqui, Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank, signed the accord on behalf of their respective organisations.

Under the agreement, EXIM Bank as an agent of Bangladesh Bank will extend equity support to the projects in software, food processing and agro-based industries.

The ceremony was also attended by Exim Bank Senior Assistant Vice President Mohammad Ismail and Principal Officer A H M Zakir Hossain. Senior officials of EEF unit of Bangladesh Bank were also present on the occasion.

Matsushita, Hitachi ties up in smart appliances

AFP, Tokyo

A toilet that monitors urine and a fridge that warns when the milk supply is running low: just two products to come from a tie up between Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. and Hitachi Ltd. announced Wednesday.

The two former rival Japanese electronics firms said they were forming a joint venture in household appliances and information services that will produce a range of new smart contraptions for the home.

"The two companies have agreed to enter into a wide-ranging strategic partnership that together the strengths of both companies in information services, home appliances, and other related business areas," they said in a statement.

Hitachi president Etsuhiko Shoyama said the two companies hoped the alliance would speed up product development.

"We will share our product development, and production

know-how in order to save manpower and to speed up the time for product development," he told a press conference.

Matsushita president Kunio Nakamura said the alliance would allow the two companies to explore ways to develop energy-efficient appliances and other environmentally friendly products and services.

"Hitachi and Matsushita were able to share the same philosophy about protecting the environment, energy conservation and other issues affecting society," Nakamura said.

For now, the alliance covers integrated circuit card solutions, home network appliances and environmentally friendly white goods.

"We would like to continue our discussions to expand this alliance in other business areas," Nakamura said.

An analyst said the alliance was not a surprise and was likely to have little impact on the earnings and share prices of the two firms.



A conference of the managers and officers of The Trust Bank Ltd was held at the bank's Head Office Saturday. Photo shows Brig Gen Mohd Ishraq, Director, addressing the conference. Mohammad Ehsanul Haque, EVP and Acting Managing Director, and M Mominul Haque, SVP, are also seen.

Sonali Bank officials meet

A meeting of the heads of principal offices, regional offices of Sonali Bank was held at its head office in the city on Monday, says a press release.

Addressing the officers, the Managing Director of Sonali Bank Sirajuddin Ahmed Chowdhury said new business plan should be adopted to help create interest for new clients in investment. Efforts should also be made to reduce the cumulated overdue loan which has become a gradual burden for the bank.

Senior executives discussed problems and prospects of their own area in the meeting. It may be mentioned that Sonali Bank is running 397 branches, 9 principal offices and 10 regional offices in Dhaka division.

Nepal on alert to stop non-iodised salt smugglers

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's border guards and customs officials have been put on alert to stop the smuggling of non-iodised salt from India, officials said Wednesday.

Authorities are trying to stamp out the use of non-iodised salt which has caused goitre, deafness and mental retardation in several thousands of people in the northwestern region, a public health official said.

"The army and police guards have been asked to stop smugglers from importing non-iodised and non-edible salt to Nepal," said Parmeswar Mahaseth, general manager of the Nepal Salt Corporation, a non-government company.

He said that "unscrupulous Indian businessmen with the collaboration of Nepalese border traders are illegally exporting non-iodised salt and selling it to border rural areas where people are ignorant about the adverse effects of non-iodised salt on health."

"The district administration, police, social workers and the local council members have been watchful against the smuggling of the non-iodised and non-edible salt banned even in India," Mahaseth added.

Secretary for commerce, industry and local supply Bhanu Prasad Acharya said: "If anyone is found importing the non-iodised and non-edible salt, the business firm or persons will be heavily penalized and imprisoned under the existing law pertaining to public health."

Mahaseth said that sizeable quantities of the illegal salt had been discovered in a recent raid on warehouses in districts bordering the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Nepal and India share a 1,040-kilometre (650-mile) border.

COMESA summit begins in Cairo

African leaders for end to conflicts for development

AFP, Cairo

African leaders gathered at a regional economic summit called here Tuesday for an end to the numerous conflicts in the war-torn continent to give prosperity a chance.

"The internal conflicts, civil strife and untold suffering of our people must be brought to an end," Namibian President Sam Nujoma told the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) summit.

He said that to build on COMESA's six-month-old free trade area, regional peace and stability must be enhanced, urging all African states to apply comprehensive sanctions on Angola's UNITA rebels.

Angola's war, which broke

out in 1975 following 14 years of fighting against the country's Portuguese colonial rulers, resumed in earnest in 1998 after the collapse of a 1994 peace accord.

Nujoma also deplored the death of 2.5 million people in the conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and called for "universal compliance" with the two-year-old Lusaka peace accord.

The DRC war is Africa's most complex conflict. The armies of Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia back the Kinshasa government against the rebels supported by Rwanda and Uganda, who control much of the north and east of the country.

All the countries involved are COMESA members.

Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak meanwhile praised "pro-

gress" towards ending some of the continent's troubles, such as the truce brokered between Eritrea and Ethiopia last year and the Lusaka accords.

Mubarak said COMESA, a predominantly economic forum, should reinvestigate "joint efforts aimed at ending the existing conflicts in the region," in his speech at the summit opening.

Mauritian Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth, who is chairman of the COMESA authority, also promoted COMESA's potential for supporting peace in the continent.

"Apart from causing serious strain on scarce resources and serious damages to infrastructure, (internal and external conflicts) have seriously hampered development of the region as a whole," he said.



Sirajuddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director, Sonali Bank, had a discussion meeting on the annual business development plan of the bank branches under Dhaka Division with heads of Principal Offices, Regional Offices and Corporate Branches at the bank's Head Office Monday. Anisa Hamed, Deputy Managing Director, and general managers of the Head Office and Dhaka division were present.

Reform of int'l financial institutions Bush's priority

REUTERS, Washington

US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill Tuesday told lawmakers that reform of lending institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was a "key priority" for the Bush administration.

"I believe that the international financial institutions have an important role to play in the world economy," O'Neill told the House of Representatives Financial Services Committee in prepared testimony. "I also believe that they can do a much better job than they have done in the past. I want them to be more often associated with success than with failure," he said, adding that he supported efforts by Congress to gain better transparency at the IMF.

O'Neill, who has in the past

been critical of the IMF for not acting soon enough to forestall some financial meltdowns around the globe, reiterated that crisis prevention should be the main focus of the global lender. He lauded the creation of the fund's new international capital markets department, saying he hoped it would further the IMF's efforts to prevent crises.

The Treasury Secretary said more steps must be taken at the Washington-based IMF to increase accountability to taxpayers and shareholders, of which the United States is the largest.

He said he was opposed to bailing out investors who make risky investments.

"I'm certainly not for bailing out investors when they made a free-will decision and it turned out

to be wrong," he said adding he would not be opposed to seeing investors who push "hot money" around be forced to "take a bath."

But the Treasury official defended the US role in the large aid package that was put together for Turkey. Asked how this approach differed from that of the previous administration, O'Neill said: "I don't know."

But he stressed that, in the case of Turkey, the Bush administration decided the IMF and the World Bank were the correct vehicles for providing such aid packages and not through bilateral lending.

He said Treasury had also been insisting that Turkey carry out certain measures before receiving any aid and noted the country had made significant progress in this area.

CURRENCY

American Express Bank Ltd 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	54.3000	54.3300	53.8500	53.6070	53.6250
Pound Sig	77.8282	77.8712	76.6178	76.4001	76.2977
Deutsche Mark	24.4399	24.4534	23.3921	23.3256	23.2944
Swiss Franc	30.9278	30.9449	30.3175	30.2314	30.1909
Japanese Yen	0.4484	0.4486	0.4372	0.4360	0.4354
Dutch Guilder	21.6988	21.7026	20.7609	20.7019	20.6741
Danish Krona	6.3400	6.3435	6.2111	6.1634	6.1851
Australian \$	28.9093	28.9253	27.5550	27.4768	27.4399
Belgian Franc	1.1849	1.1856	1.1341	1.1309	1.1294
Canadian \$	35.5902	35.6099	34.5924	34.4941	34.4479
French Franc	7.2871	7.2911	6.9747	6.9549	6.9455
Hong Kong \$	6.9758	6.9796	6.8905	6.8709	6.8617
Italian Lira	0.0247	0.0247	0.0236	0.0236	0.0235
Singapore \$	30.3589	30.3757	30.4327	30.3410	29.3097
Euro	47.8003	47.8267	45.7510	45.6249	45.5598
Saudi Rial	14.5176	14.5256	14.3199	14.2792	14.2601

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 Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

TC Buying (USD)	TC Selling (USD)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
53.6250	54.4000	USD	4.09000	4.07500	4.08375	4.20750	4.34625

Cash Buying (USD)	Cash Selling (USD)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
53.8000	54.8000	EUR	4.58000	4.55063	4.47375	4.46250	4.46250

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
46.975/46.983	62.30/62.36	45.42/45.47	3.7995/3.8005	1400/1420	1285/1285.2

Amex notes on Monday's market

The high demand for US dollar persisted in the interbank USD/BDT Wednesday. They average call money rate ranged between 9.10 per cent and 10 per cent.

The euro hit six-month lows against the dollar for the second straight day and fell almost two per cent against the yen as strong German price data was coupled with signs of slowing euro zone growth. While dollar was rising against European currencies, it fell almost 1-1/2 per cent against the yen. The Swiss franc remained weak against the dollar although. Sterling tested the previous day's five-month highs against the euro as data showing weak growth and high inflation in Germany drove the single currency to fresh six-month lows against dollar.

At around 0833 GMT, the exchange rates of major currencies against USD were GBP/USD 1.4387/1.4394, USD/CHF 1.7494/1.7504, USD/JPY 122.98/123.08, EUR/USD 0.8757/0.8761.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 23.5.2001

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving
J/1	A.A. Venture	Grain (Mat)	Viz	CLA	21/5	28/5
J/3	Bright Star	Wheat (P)	Momb	MSA	20/4	27/5
J/4	Bay Fortune	Gr (Log)	Yang	SMSL	4/5	24/5
1/5	Ravadas E/L	E/L	Mong	SLL	18/5	23/5
1/6	Alam Tallang	Wheat (P)	Brav	Rainbow	3/5	23/5
1/7	K Karavelov	Gr (Msb)	B.Abb	Kaptai	8/5	28/5
1/8	Togo Charm	C.Clink	Tanj	Uniship	10/5	25/5
1/9	Chopel-2	Sugar	Bank	Seacoast	9/5	30/5
1/10	Sonali	Gypsum	Krab	RML	10/5	25/5
1/11	QC-Lark	Cont	P.Kel	QCSL	13/5	24/5
1/12	Banga Bonik	Cont	Col	Baridhi	21/5	25/5
1/13	Salzach	Cont	Sing	Bdship	17/5	25/5
CCT/1	Jurong Balsam	Cont	Sing	Nol	15/5	24/5
CCT/2	Kota Singa	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	17/5	24/5
CCT/3	Xpress Resolve	Cont	Sing	RSL	14/5	23/5
GSJ	Nongkhai Navee	Soda Feld	Sing	Mutual	14/5	28/5
TSP	Thank God	R.Phos	Hamr	Seacoast	12/4	26/5
RM/4	Olympic Flame	CPL	P.Kel	Seacom	19/5	23/5
DOI	Anawan	HSD	Juba	EGSL	13/5	23/5
DDJ/1	Banglar Jyoti	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	23/5
RM/8	Sung Ri San-9	Cement	Tuba	ANCL	28/4	30/5
RM/9	Banglar Moni	Wheat (G)	Mong	BSC	11/5	30/5

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Banglar Robi (Cont)	15/5	23/5	Sing	BSC	Cont Sing
Artemis (Cont)	13/5	23/5	P.Kel	TTL	Cont Sing
Kota Cahaya (Cont)	14/5	23/5	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont Sing
Win Star	23/5	23/5	Krab	SBS	C.Clink
Agios Fanourios	23/5	-	Seacom	C.Clink	-
Annas	24/5	Tib	Uniship	Scrap	-
Sea Bright (Cont)	8/5	24/5	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont Sing
Asian Leader (Roro)	24/10/5	24/5	Sing	JF	Vehi
Jim Cheng (Liner)	24/5	Busan	Bdship	GI	-
Ariston	24/5	-	Rainbow	GI (Dun Peas)	-
Gemini-1	25/5	Sing	Litmond	Wheat (P)	-
Khaleda (E/L)	8/5	25/5	Mong	OWSL	1 Goods
Jaya Mars (Cont)	14/5	26/5	-	RSL	Cont Sing
Da Fa (Cont)	15/5	25/5	-	Everest	Cont Col
Mary Nur	26/5	Lang	RSL	Cement	-
Triumph Kaohsiung	25/5	Viz	RML	GI/CL	-
Kota Naga (Cont)	17/6	26/5	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont Sing
Banga Biraj (Cont)	16/5	26/5	Sing	Bdship	Cont Sing
Orient Independence (Cont)	16/5	26/5	P.Kel	TTL	Cont Sing
Banglar Shikha (Cont)	2/5	27/5	-	BSC	Cont Sing
IAAMI (Cont)	20/5	28/5	Sing	Cross	Cont Sing
OSC Alpha (Cont)	20/5	28/5	-	RSL	Cont Sing
Joy World (72)	10/5	29/5	-	SLL	GI (St.C)
QC Teal (Cont)	10/5	29/5	-	QCSL	Cont Sing
Arabella (Cont)	20/5	29/5	-	QCSL	Cont Sing
Kota Berjaya (Cont)	20/5	29/5	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont Sing
Bright Eagle	30/5	30/5	Hal	Umtl Demolition	-
Bright HoPe (Liner)	30/5	30/5	-	Prog GI (St.Paper)	-
Cosmic Master (72)	20/5	31/5	Mong	Everett	GI (St.C)

Tanker due