

Argentine House passes urgent steps to battle economic crisis

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentine deputies early Sunday passed a package of measures ending the peso's parity with the dollar and giving the government emergency powers to salvage the country's shattered economy.

The Senate was expected to approve the law later Sunday, granting President Eduardo Duhalde emergency powers for the whole of his two-year term to restructure what he has called a "bankrupt" economy.

Eliminating the peso's parity with the dollar is the cornerstone of the legislation, passed by the House of Deputies four days after Congress elected Duhalde.

Ending the decade-old dollar peg is certain to trigger devaluation, which in turn could fuel renewed protests.

The government planned to float the peso, while allowing a preferential dollar rate of about 1.35 pesos for essential imports, officials said, though this was not included in the legislation.

Banks and other businesses were worried about the impact of the measures, and particularly their effect on repayments of credits.

The draft legislation includes measures to cushion the impact on Argentines already hit hard by austerity policies aimed at ending almost four years of recession.

Debts of up to 100,000 dollars owed by individuals and small companies would be

converted into pesos at a one-to-one rate.

The law would end the system that based utility rates on the value of the dollar and US inflation. It would also authorize renegotiation of contracts with providers.

The proposal has angered some business leaders, particularly Spanish companies that have had a strong presence in the country since the 1990s when the South American country privatized state-run enterprises in the 1990s.

The government could also issue bonds denominated in foreign currency and guaranteed by a tax on petroleum exports in order to compensate financial institutions affected by the recovery plan.

Majority of Britons against euro: Polls

AP, London

The majority of Britons want to keep the pound, according to two new surveys conducted days after the launch of the European single currency.

According to an ICM poll commissioned by the News of the World newspaper, only 31 per cent of the electorate would vote to scrap the pound in a referendum, compared with 56 per cent who would vote against joining the euro.

Another 12 per cent said they remain undecided about the issue, the newspaper reported Saturday. The debate over whether to join the single currency, which was launched in 12 European countries on Jan 1, continues to be Britain's hottest political topic.

Britain has delayed its entry into the new currency and Prime Minister Tony Blair's government has said it will only join when important economic factors are favorable, and if the electorate approves it in a referendum.

That position was repeated by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw Saturday, who said the British public would decide whether or not to join.

"The ultimate test will be made by individuals in the privacy of the polling booth, because there is going to be a referendum on this," he told the British Broadcasting Corp.

"When the referendum takes place in part depends on when we are satisfied, if we are, that the five economic tests are themselves satisfied," he added.

This process-economic tests followed by a referendum has been the subject of much speculation and debate in the British media.

On Friday it was reported that Gus O'Donnell, the Treasury's head of macroeconomic policy and international finance, said it would be a "political decision" whether Britain joined the euro, as economists could never be clear and unambiguous comments which he strongly denied making.



M. Mosaddeque Hossain, Managing Director of UniMed Pharma and UniHealth Pharma, inaugurated the Annual Sales Conference 2002 of the company at a city hotel.



The annual general meeting of the Bangladesh Seed Grower, Dealer & Merchants Association (BSGDMA) was held on Friday at Siddique Bazar in the city. The meeting was presided over by President of the association Md. Masum.

UniMed & UniHealth sales confce held

The annual sales conference 2002 of UniMed Pharma and UniHealth Pharma was held at a city hotel recently, says a press release.

M. Mosaddeque Hossain, Managing Director of the company, inaugurated the conference.

Representatives of the marketing and sales department of the company were present at the conference.

It may be mentioned that the company introduced more than 20 medicines in the market during the year 2001.

The marketing manager of the company, Nazmul Hossain, Sales Manager MR Chowdhury, and Product Manager Shamim Alam Khan also spoke on the occasion.

S'pore launches two tourism packages

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched tourism packages for its residents, and their friends and relatives overseas, says a press release.

The initiative is part of the S\$13 million assistance package announced earlier this month to help the tourism industry tide over the current economic downturn.

The initiative is two pronged: to stimulate interest and demand among Singapore residents, and encourage them to invite their friends and relatives overseas to visit Singapore during this festive season-beginning this month to end of February next year.

Under 'Live it up Singapore' programme Singaporeans can purchase a \$6 tour package or a hotel stay for \$90 nett per room that comes with additional discount vouchers for accommodation, tours attractions, shopping and dining.

A total of about 40 hotels in Singapore are releasing up to 15,000 packages for the resident market. These packages start from as low as \$90 nett per room. For this price, residents enjoy accommodation, a free tour or entry to an attraction and discount vouchers for shopping and dining.

The 'Singapore Reunion Package' is priced from S\$170 per person for a three day/two-night vacation, with hotel accommodation (twin share basis) and ground arrangements. This package comes with the 'Celebration Singapore Reunion Pack' containing free-admission to an attraction and discount vouchers from more than 50 establishments.

Taiwan to lift ban on China-bound petrochemical investment

AFP, Taipei

The Taiwanese government is ready to remove a decades-old ban on investment in certain petrochemical plants in China, permitting investments of up to 100 billion Taiwan dollars (2.86 billion US), it was reported Sunday.

Economic Minister Lin Hsin-i was quoted by the Commercial Times as saying: "The economic ministry does not oppose Taiwanese enterprises investing in the up-stream of China's petrochemical industry, judging from market proximity considerations."

But he said the government was concerned about the alleged "spill over effect" -- fears that local petrochemical companies will have to reduce their investment here while they funnel money to the mainland.

However, "an initial agreement on the size of China-bound investment has been reached between the economic ministry and the Petrochemical Industry Association of Taiwan," said Chen Wu-hsiung, head of the association, adding that more discussions will be held before the economic ministry gives its final nod.

The paper said the Formosa Group, the state-run Chinese Petroleum Corporation, and a consortium to be composed of the association members had drafted China-bound investment plans.

Bush promises no tax increase

REUTERS, Portland

Drawing an unmistakable election-year line in the sand, US President George W Bush on Saturday challenged Democrats in Congress to raise Americans' taxes "over my dead body."

Interrupting a 12-day vacation at his Texas ranch to visit Oregon and California, two states hit hard by the recession, Bush used the US-led war on terrorism as a political weapon, appealing for application of the same patriotism and spirit of unity to pump up the weak American economy.

In doing so, he echoed 14 years later the famous promise made by his father "Read my lips: No new taxes" a broken vow that contributed to former President George

Bush's reelection defeat.

Hitting back at Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle a day after the South Dakota Democrat and possible 2004 presidential candidate attacked his \$1.35 trillion, 10-year tax cut as the root cause of the economy's deterioration, Bush told a town hall meeting in Ontario, California: "I challenge their economics when they say raising taxes will help the country recover. Not over my dead body will they raise your taxes."

Although Daschle, the most prominent Democrat in Washington, stopped short of calling for tax increases or a repeal of Bush's tax cut, the president raised the subject only to knock it down scornfully, saying: "I don't know what textbook they're reading from."



Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, opens a City Bank booth at the on-going international trade fair in Chittagong. Abbas Uddin Ahmed, Managing Director of the bank, and other officials were present on the occasion.

2002 a better year for corporate marriages?

AFP, London

After a slack year for mergers in 2001, the corporate world will be more eager for takeover action this year, though depressed stock markets and economic downturn will prevent a resumption of the 1990s merger mania, analysts believe.

Worldwide merger activity slumped in 2001 to 1.74 trillion dollars (1.95 trillion euros) from 3.46 trillion the previous year, marking an end to eight years of burgeoning takeover activity, according to experts at Thomson Financial.

"It was a year that many people would be glad to see the back of," said Neil Sen, associate editor of merger specialist title Acquisitions Monthly. "Overall deal flow, the total value of deals announced, was down 50 per cent."

There were three chief reasons for this.

Companies hit by the global economic slump generally had less cash to buy out prey; choppy stock markets made it hard to say how much a company was worth; and sour economic conditions made it difficult to predict how profitable takeover targets would be in the future.

Hence many technology companies may have been ripe for takeover, with ever cheaper stock market valuations, but there were few buyers given the dire outlook for the sector.

"Nobody is very keen to make acquisitions when they might find out that what they are buying is about to fall off a cliff," noted Hilary Cook, an economist at Barclays Stockbrokers.

"It is very difficult in such a vola-

tile environment to agree prices or be confident that what you're buying is a strong business," she said.

But the feeling persists in financial circles at least, that many sectors need mergers, or 'consolidation' as the process is known, as an integral part of the march back to profitability.

With corporate bottom lines still under pressure as a result of the global downturn, top executives know that one way to boost profits is to cut costs, and one of the easiest ways to cut costs is to merge businesses.

Yet 2001 was the year of the broken promise. Dynegey-Enron, Bertelsmann-EMI, Abbey National-Lloyds TSB, Alcatel-Lucent... the list of jilted partners is more memorable than the scattered instances of consolidation in the energy and steel sectors.

So where will the large mergers of 2002 take place in Europe? "The expectation is that there will be fewer transformational deals and more deals to adjust companies to the new climate," said Sen. "You will see more middle-market deals, deals worth below a billion dollars."

Some of those deals could come in the utilities sector, particularly in Europe, where several big players such as Italy's ENEL, Germany's RWE and E.ON and Electricite de France have cash to burn.

Targets seen as small enough -- and attractive enough -- to digest include Spain's Union Fenosa, Iberdrola and Scottish Power.

And BG. Analysts have singled out the British gas giant as an eligible target, with a price tag some put north of 11.5 billion pounds (18.4 billion euros, 16.7 billion dollars).

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank January 6, 2002

Selling	Currency	Buying		
		TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
58.5500	58.5800 USD	57.4000	57.2314	57.1629
53.1269	53.2138 EUR	50.6595	50.4761	50.3995
85.4749	85.5169 GBP	82.3305	82.0640	82.0094
31.2062	31.2308 AUD	29.1455	29.0530	28.9729
0.4503	0.4504 JPY	0.4349	0.4347	0.4337
35.7045	35.7290 CHF	34.4782	34.3837	34.2992
5.7338	5.7389 SEK	5.5127	5.4951	5.4791
36.9144	36.9390 CAD	35.7668	35.6732	35.5900
7.5164	7.5177 HKD	7.3570	7.3393	7.3219
32.032	32.0531 SGD	31.1178	31.0740	30.9594
16.0723	16.0899 AED	15.9425	15.4706	15.4521
15.7352	15.7536 SAR	15.1905	15.1538	15.1356

TT Doc	Usance export bills				
	30 days	60 days	90 days	120 days	180 days
USD 57.2817	56.9282	56.4564	55.9139	55.3242	54.0032
EUR 50.5625	50.2505	49.8341	49.3552	48.8346	47.6686
GBP 82.1534	81.6465	80.9698	80.1917	79.3459	77.4514

The local interbank foreign exchange market was subdued. Demand for dollar was steady. Demand for BDT for overnight borrowing at call was slightly sluggish and the call rate ranged between 9 and 10 per cent. Bangladesh Bank readjusted Taka downward by 90 paisa, declaring the new trading band of BDT 57.4 to 58.4 per USD. The readjustment amounted to 1.59 in the percentage terms.

The weekly treasury bill auction was held Sunday. The international markets were closed for the weekend.

At New York closing on Friday, euro traded at 0.8947/52 against dollar, pound sterling at 1.4462/68 and yen traded at 130.87/95 against US dollar.

This memorandum is issued by Standard Chartered Bank and is based on or derived from information generally available to the public from sources believed to be reliable.



Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 6.1.2002

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import Disch
J/2	Eltanin	GI(MA/Log)	Yang	Royal	1/1	11/1	296
J/5	Altair-SS	GI(S Asjh)	Sing	AMBL	27/12	9/1	1470
J/6	Pacific Emerald	GI(Cop/Log)	Kara	Litmond	23/12	12/1	332
J/7	Gangga Nagara	GT(SL/P)	Sing	Multiport	28/12	7/1	670
J/9	Chang Ping	Urea(BCIC)	Sing	PSAL	30/12	10/1	5729
J/11	X-press Padma	Cont	P.Kel	RSL	2/1	8/1	252/225
J/12	Kota Agung	Cont	Sing	PII(BD)	1/1	6/1	22/x
J/13	QC Lark	CCNT	P.Kel	QCSSL	2/1	7/1	
CCT/1	Sinhai	Cont	Sing	BSC	3/1	7/1	333/x
CCT/2	Banga Barta(Flag)	Cont	Sing	BdShip	31/12	6/1	
CCT/3	Uni Wealth	Cont	P.Kel	RSL	4/1	8/1	133/208
RM/14	Banglar Robi	Idle	-	BSC	R/A	11/1	
RM/6	Haminea	SKO/JET-1	Sing	ECSSL	4/1	7/1	6806
DD:	Sonali	Repair	Yang	Angelic	31/10	6/1	
RM/8	Banglar Mookh	Idle	-	BSC	R/A	8/1	
C/Jetty	Tug SBM-1	Ballast	Sing	OTBL	9/12	-	
	Tug Jubilee Dua	Ballast	Sing	OTBL	9/12	-	

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading Port
Lu Jiang	6/1	Bont	Uniship	Urea(BCIC)	M.Jetty
Bonik (Cont)26/12	6/1	6/1	Col	BaridhiCont	L/Col
Biril(Cont)26/12	6/1	P.Kel	Bdship	Cont	L/Sing
Arl of Baharain	7/1	Kosh	Uniship	(C.clink)3290	Ctg M/IM
Tian	7/1	Yang	Litmond	Urea(BCIC)Bag	M/Jessy
Ang Jiang	7/1	Busa	BdShip	GI	-
Biraj(Cont)29/12	7/1	Sing	BdShip	Cont	L/Sing
T M A MU	9/1	-	PSAL	Urea(BCIC)	M.Jetty
Petan Leeleris	8/1	Sin	Rainbow	GI(D.S.Y.Peas)	-
ND Srishti	7/1	Sing	Unique	Cont	Glyptic
Ya Mars(Cont)22/12	8/1	P.Kel	RSL	Cont	L/Sing
Vonis	8/1	Bajines	PSL	Salt	S.Ash
Smos Challenger(72/29/12)	8/1	Yang	Everett	GI(ST.C)	-
Honour (Cont)30/12	9/1	PKL	QCSSL	Cont	L/Sing
Hsiung(Cont)31/12	10/1	P.Kel	QCSSL	Cont	L/Sing
Balsam(Cont)1/1	9/1	Sin	Nel	Cont	L/Col
AMI(Cont)2/1	9/1	Col	Everbest	Cont	L/Col
Azon	10/1	Bont	Uniship	Urea(BCIC)	M.J
N Cheng	10/1	Busa	BdShip	GI	-
TA Berjaya(Cont)31/12	11/1	Sing	PII(BD)	Cont	L/Sing
Shikha(Cont)3/1	10/1	Sing	BSC	Cont	L/Sing
Rginia	10/1	-	Prog	GI(St.Paper)	-
RSK	Constellation	10/1	Jaci	Lams	Wheat(G)
Moni (Cont)29/12	11/1	Sing	BSC	Cont	L/Sing
Y World (72/29/12)	11/1	Jaka	SSL	GI(ST.C)	-
NGA Bjoy (Cont)5/1	11/1	-	Baridhi	Cont	L/Col
Hock(Cont)3/12	12/1	-	RSL	Cont	L/Sing
ONA	12/1	-	Prog	GI(St.Paper)	-
Npablo (Poror)24/23/12	12/01	-	JF	Vehi	-
N Mateo (Roro) /24/23/12	12/1	-	JF	Vehi	-
Lanka(Cont)5/1	3/1	-	BdShip	Cont	L/Sing
Teal(Cont)3/1	16/1	-	QCSSL	Cont	-
Pintail (Cont)3/1	16/1	-	QCSSL	Cont	L/Sing

Tanker due

Gie Aries	6/1	Sing	MSTPL	HSD(RM/6)
Ong Hua-1	7/1	Sing	USL	RBD PS(Coko/RM/3)
Rini	8/1	Rasi	Unique	C.Oil

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of Vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
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Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels ready	Cargo	Local agent	Date of arrival
QC dignity (Cont)	Cont	P.Kel	QCSSL
Kota Naga (Cont)	Cont	Sing	PII(BD)
Ocean Sampaguita	GI(ST.C)	Yang	Everett
Artemis(Cont)	Cont	P.Kel	PSSL

Vessels awaiting instruction

Banglar Shourath	-	-	BSC	R/A (26/12)
Banglar Jyoti	-	-	BSC	R/A(5/1)

Vessels not entering

IRO	C.Clink	Kosh	Jaycee	28/12
Florealis	Urea(BCIC)	Basu	Uniship	30/12
IST	Mop(P)	Eilighi	PSL	26/12
Ban Ann	C.Clink	Kosh	BSL	1/1
Athensof the north	C.Clink	Kant	CLM	31/12
Angelina the great-N	GI(YMA)	Sing	Rainbow	18/12
Matrix	GTSP(P)	Tuni	SSST	21/11