

## Japan, Singapore ink free trade pact, seek wider ties with Asia

### Accord to remove tariffs on 98pc of goods

AFP, Singapore

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong signed a free trade accord (FTA) on Sunday and agreed to joint efforts to expand their new ties to other Asian partners.

Koizumi held talks with Goh hours after he arrived here, the last leg of his week-long Southeast Asian swing that also included the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

The two leaders shook hands with a smile after signing the accord, the first ever FTA for the world's second biggest economy, which had previously favoured multilateral pacts in bodies such as the World Trade Organisation.

"The Japan-Singapore economic partnership accord is our country's first regional trade agreement," Koizumi told a joint news conference with Goh following their meeting.

"This will provide one model of Japan's economic relations with Asia," he said.

The accord, called the Japan-Singapore Economic Agreement for a New Age Partnership, will remove import and export tariffs on 98 per cent of goods traded between Singapore and Japan.

"It will help anchor Japanese economic presence in ASEAN," Goh said, adding that the agreement "will also have a positive impact on the region."

During the meeting, Koizumi proposed his initiative to form a comprehensive economic alliance between Japan and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), based on the new Japan-Singapore FTA.

"I proposed a Japan-ASEAN comprehensive economic partnership, and I was encouraged by Prime Minister Goh's support," Koizumi said. "Both two countries can contribute to stability in the region in many ways."

Goh said: "Singapore welcomes and supports the initiative. It looks forward to early realisation."

Koizumi first unveiled the proposal to Philippine President Gloria Arroyo Wednesday last week, and later told Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Thai Premier Thaksin Shinawatra and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri about his idea.

He told the ASEAN leaders that the initiative, designed to "strengthen economic links on broad issues", may include free trade accords between Japan and the 10-member ASEAN.

The Japan-Singapore accord, covering trade and investment as well as finance, information technology and human resource development, is designed to stimulate movement of goods, people, services, capital and information between the two countries.

Koizumi and Goh first announced a deal to launch the FTA in October last year on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Shanghai.

Singapore has so far signed an FTA with New Zealand and is negotiating similar deals with the United States, Australia and Mexico.

Japan is Singapore's third largest trading partner and second largest foreign investor. It is also a major source of tourists for Singapore.

Cumulative Japanese investment in Singapore as of last year is close to 10 billion dollars -- nearly a third of foreign investment in the island.

Of the 6,000 foreign companies operating in Singapore, more than 1,600 are Japanese.

Koizumi will make a policy speech on Monday before returning to Tokyo on Tuesday. He was initially scheduled to visit Southeast Asia in September but the trip was postponed after the terrorist attacks in the United States.



PHOTO: UCBL

Muhammad Sajid-ul-Haq, Managing Director of United Commercial Bank Ltd, addresses as chief guest the inauguration of a course on branch management for would-be managers at UCBL Training Institute. Hamidul Huq, Additional Managing Director, and A H M Nurul Islam Choudhuri, Principal of the Institute, are also seen in the picture.

## Row over aid terms Argentina calls IMF 'incoherent'

AFP, Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires Saturday traded verbal blows with the IMF, accusing the Fund of being "incoherent" and rude in saying Argentina needed to adopt a viable economic plan before seeking aid.

The government of President Eduardo Duhalde angrily insisted it was working on a serious plan to restart the economy, reeling from almost four years of recession.

Argentine authorities were particularly outraged over a letter in which the International Monetary Fund ruled out talks until Argentina adopts a coherent economic plan.

The number two in the economy ministry, Jorge Toderca said that only days after Duhalde January 1 election, IMF Managing Director Anne Kruger wrote a letter "which is very incoherent ... which I consider offensive for Argentina."

Toderca said the IMF "should talk less, particularly when they have nothing interesting to say, and let us work a few days longer to balance the economic and social situation."

He said the government would soon be able to present the IMF with a plan that would enable Argentina

to recover international aid.

Argentina hopes to obtain more than 15 billion dollars in international aid, notably from the IMF, which last month halted a crucial disbursement of 1.264 billion dollars.

The IMF said at the time Argentina needed to take tougher measures to combat the crisis, and Kruger has made it clear Duhalde, the fifth president since December, had not met that goal.

"Until there is a fairly comprehensive program that gives promise for the medium run I do not think that we can enter into negotiations," Kruger said in a telephone conference Friday.

"It is too soon for that," she said.

Toderca, however, insisted the government was working "in a very coherent way on a program that is consistent and reasonable."

Duhalde's anti-crisis plan is centred on a new law that abolished the peso's 11-year-old parity with the dollar.

The measure led to devaluation of more than 40 per cent when the peso made its market debut Friday, in what Toderca said very much reflected the government's expectations.

## Foreign maids in HK protest wage cut

AFP, Hong Kong

Several thousand foreign domestic workers staged their largest protest rally so far Sunday to press the Hong Kong government not to implement a cut in their minimum wage.

Thousands of maids, mainly from the Philippines and Indonesia, marched from Victoria Garden to Chater Garden in the business district of Central chanting slogans including "no wages cuts" and waving banners which proclaimed "wage cuts are unfair, inhumane and unjust".

Amid a backdrop of rising unemployment, falling or frozen wages across many industrial sectors and the economy battling to stave off its second recession in four years, the government has been considering a proposal to cut minimum monthly salary levels for maids by up to 20 per cent.

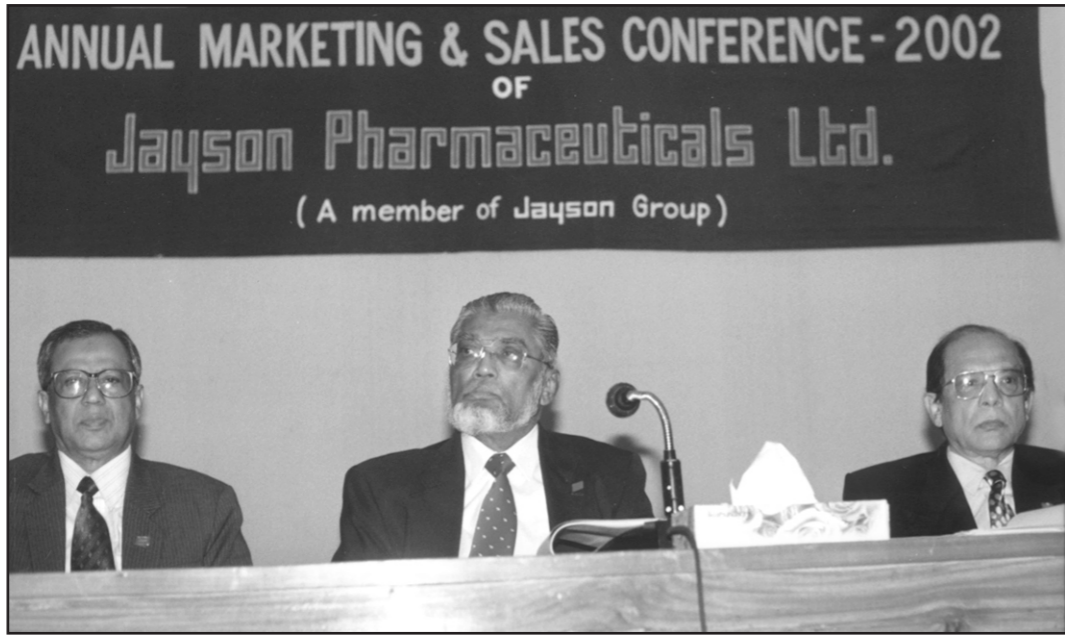


PHOTO: JAYSON PHARMA

The Annual Sales & Marketing Conference-2002 of Jayson Pharmaceuticals Ltd was held in the city recently. Md Salimullah, Managing Director of the company and Chairman of Jayson Group of Companies, presided over the conference.

## CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Selling	Currency	Buying			
		TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer	
58.5500	58.5800	USD	57.4000	57.2314	57.1629
52.9867	53.0736	EUR	50.5216	50.3382	50.2616
85.6444	85.6864	GBP	82.5028	82.2363	82.1817
31.2121	31.2366	AUD	29.1512	29.0588	28.9787
0.4461	0.4482	JPY	0.4307	0.4305	0.4295
35.6373	35.6618	CHF	34.4099	34.3154	34.2309
5.7561	5.7613	SEK	5.5391	5.5215	5.5055
36.8889	36.9134	CAD	35.7423	35.6487	35.5655
7.5153	7.5166	HKD	7.3560	7.3383	7.3209
31.941	31.9625	SGD	31.0302	30.9664	30.8718
16.0723	16.0899	AED	15.4925	15.4706	15.4521
15.7364	15.7548	SAR	15.1897	15.1530	15.1348

USance export bills

TT Doc	30 days	60 days	90 days	120 days	180 days
USD	57.2817	56.9262	56.4564	55.9139	55.3242
EUR	50.4250	50.1139	49.6986	49.2210	48.7019
GBP	82.3252	81.8172	81.1392	80.3594	79.5119

The local interbank foreign exchange market was subdued. Demand for dollar was steady. Demand for overnight borrowing at call was steady and the call rate ranged between 9 and 10 per cent. Bangladesh Bank auction for treasury bill took place on Sunday.

The international markets were closed for the weekend.

A New York closing on Friday, euro traded at 0.8923/28 against dollar, pound sterling at 1.4492/97 and yen traded at 132.15/19 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.

## SHIPPING

### Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 13.1.2002

Berth No	Name of Vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/1	Virginia (Liner)	GI	Sing	Prog	10/1	18/1	2506
J/2	Eltanin	G(Ma/Log)	Yang	Royal	1/1	-	526
J/3	Joy World	GI	Jaka	SSLL	12/1	15/1	672
J/5	Pacific Emerald (Ebb)	GI (Cop/Log)	Kara	Litmond	23/2	16/1	962
J/6	San Mateo (Roro/24)	Vehi	Sing	JF	12/1	13/1	
J/7	An Lu Jiang	Urea (BCIC)	Sing	Uniship	6/1	16/1	998
J/8	Xiang Jiang (liner)	GI	Busa	BD Ship	8/1	14/1	1717
J/9	Jin Cheng (Liner)	GI	Busa	BD Ship	10/1	18/1	2370
J/13	Kuo Hsiung	Cont	P kel	QICSL	10/1	15/1	228/288
CCT/1	Banga Biraj (Flag)	Cont	Sing	BD Ship	8/1	13/1	
CCT/2	Jaami (Flag)	Cont	BOL	Everbest	11/1	15/1	203/82
CCT/3	Banglar Moni (Flag)	Cont	Sing	BSC	11/1	14/1	132/142
GSJ	Makmur Perkasa	TSP(P)	Sing	Unique	9/1	20/1	
RM/6	AL fios	HSD	Sing	MSTPL	11/1	13/1	10124
DOJ	Banglar Shourabh	C Oil	K Dia	BSC	R/A	13/1	13200

### Vessels due at outer anchorage: 13.1.2002

Name of vessels	Date of arvl	L Port call	Local agent	Name of cargo	Loading
B. Bijoy (Cont) 5/1	13/1	Col	Baridhi	Cont	L/Col
Blue Lady	13/1	Janj	OLM C	C Clink (Royal/Nat)	-
Pioneer Sun	13/1	Sin	Rainbow	C Clink (S Cir)	-
Amazon	14/1	Bont	Uniship	Urea (BCIC) MJ	
Togo Charm	15/1	Lankamy	Seacom	C Clink (CCJ)	
BC Cook (Cont) 6/1	15/1	P kel	PSSL	Cont	L/Sing
Puma (24) 8/1	15/1	BOMB	Everett	SPL Cargo	
State of Nagaland (E/L) 6/1	17/1	NGL	SSLL	E/L	L/Ant.Dundee
QC Teal (Cont) 8/1	15/1	P Kel	QCSL	Cont	L/Sing
Triumph Mumbai	16/1	Sing	RML	GI (P/Equip)	
Xpress Resolve (Cont) 5/1	17/1	Col	Everbest	Cont	L/Col

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