

Budgetary constraints may elude EU on aid to poor nations

REUTERS, London

Calls to increase development aid to help the world's poorest nations may fall on deaf ears in the European Union due to budgetary constraints and faltering political will, according to an official from one EU government.

The issue of increasing development aid to 0.33 per cent of gross domestic product by 2006 for all EU countries is on the agenda for Tuesday's meeting of EU finance ministers, but the official said domestic budgetary constraints in donor countries mean the move may fail.

Development aid has moved onto the political agenda as protests against globalisation have highlighted the fact that many people have remained in poverty despite greater wealth in rich countries and following calls for greater cooperation in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

The EU meeting in Brussels is part of a process which had aimed to cut global poverty in half by 2015, which could cost \$50 billion, and which will be debated at a United Nations Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey in March.

The grand goals of the Monterrey conference promise to "eradicate poverty" and "advance to a fully inclusive and equitable global economic system".

Pressure from the United States and Japan has already caused the UN to drop proposals to set goals for aid spending from rich nations at the Monterrey conference.

The UN recommends rich countries allocated 0.7 per cent of GDP to aid for the world's poorest nations but only five countries - the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg and Sweden - meet the target.

Others like Britain, France, Ireland and Belgium have supported the move to 0.33 per cent as an interim measure.

But Italy, which allocates just 0.13 per cent of GDP to development aid, as well as Germany, Spain, Austria, Finland, Portugal and Greece are opposed to the move, officials said.

The United States, which has produced proposals to reduce soft loans from the World Bank, contributes just 0.1

per cent of GDP and EU governments say that unless the EU acts, the United States would be able to get away with continued low contributions.

"We want every (EU) country to draw up a schedule for how they'll reach 0.7 per cent of GDP. If the United States, which gives only 0.1 per cent in aid, would also do this, it would be good," Swedish Finance Minister Bosse Ringholm told Reuters on the sidelines of a foreign aid conference in Stockholm.

The EU government official said it was still possible a deal could be reached as the debate moves to finance minister and prime minister level.

"It is a question of political will. In reality the amount of money being required for aid budgets is quite small," he said.

"In Italy, Spain and Germany if they had the political will, they would probably find that it is not that financially inconceivable," the official said.

Bush heads into political furnace on steel imports

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush prepared Monday to step into a political furnace as he weighed the option of imposing hefty tariffs and quotas on imports of foreign steel.

Bush must navigate a political minefield in reaching the decision, to be announced Wednesday, tiptoeing between the interests of the ailing US steel industry or steel consumers such as car manufacturers.

"The president will make his decision based on the merits," Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters aboard Air Force One, comparing the complexity of the issue to a Rubik's cube puzzle.

US newspapers said the president was likely to announce a mix of quotas and tariffs on some key steel imports.

He would likely slap tariffs of 20-

30 per cent on imports such as rolled steel, a major product from Asia, Latin America and former Soviet countries, the Wall Street Journal said.

More sophisticated steel products would be subjected either to quotas or a mixture of tariffs and quotas, it said. But many other steel products would be exempted, administration officials were quoted as saying.

The import restrictions would most heavily penalize China, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, a separate report in The New York Times said. Poor nations, along with Canada and Mexico, would escape penalties.

Bush's decision is to be taken under Section 201 of the 1974 trade law, which lets the president impose punitive tariffs on imports found to have caused injury to the domestic industry.

Microsoft gears up for legal battles on antitrust settlement

AFP, Washington

Microsoft is gearing up for the start of court proceedings that will be critical to the software giant's future and its ability to conclude its four-year-old antitrust battle.

On Wednesday, the company and the Justice Department will argue in court for a judge to approve the settlement signed in November that took the federal government and nine states out of the antitrust case.

Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly must rule on whether the settlement -- in which Microsoft agrees to make some changes in business practices -- is "in the public interest," a definition that has been hotly contested.

Meanwhile, in what has become a separate case, nine other states along with the District of Columbia will ask the same judge at a trial beginning Monday to impose stiffer remedies to punish the firm for its monopoly abuse.

"It's very important for Microsoft to have this finally behind them," said Nicholas Economides, a New York University economist who has been following the case.

Justice Department officials said they will argue that their settlement -- which requires that Microsoft treat computer makers on an equal basis and not punish vendors for using competing software -- should go forward regardless of what happens in the second case.

Asian auto sales to outpace global growth five times in '10

AFP, Singapore

Asia's auto market outside Japan should grow 55 per cent, five times the expected global rate, in the next eight years with China and India posting the fastest growth, an industry consultant said Tuesday.

However, prospects across the region would be uneven with some Southeast Asian countries facing tough times, auto consulting firm Autopolis said.

Vehicle production in China is forecast to grow 95 per cent to 4.09

million units between 2000 and 2010, 12 times the the global average.

The Indian market should expand 57 per cent to 1.38 million vehicles in the same period, it said in a statement.

Production was seen to remain bleak in the short term, and in the long-term the outlook was not uniformly bright regionwide.

"Some countries in Southeast Asia are expected to find the going hard for several more years and the firm sees no chance of any recovery

in the largest market, Japan," Autopolis said.

Vehicle production in Japan is expected to fall by 4.0 per cent to 9.725 million units in 2010 from 10.145 in 2000.

"Short-term prospects are less exciting," the industry consultant said, noting that Asian vehicle demand "was almost flat last year and will remain at current levels for some time to come."

Production fell in 2001 and should decline further this year as exports decline, it said.



PHOTO: UNITREND

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury speaks at a seminar on "Privatisation of marketing of lubricant in Bangladesh and its impact on quality" organised by TOTALFINAELF and Trade Services International on Saturday in Chittagong. Among others, Syed Mahmudul Huq, Managing Director of Trade Services International, M Salman Ispahani, President of the CSE, Azharul Islam, Chairman the BPC, were present at the seminar.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's foreign exchange rate statement by American Express Bank

Currency	Selling TT & OD	Selling BC	Buying TT/Clean	Buying OD Sight Export Bill	Buying OD Transfer
US Dollar	58.5500	58.5800	57.4000	57.1970	57.1250
Pound Stg	83.7851	83.8280	81.2497	80.9624	80.8604
UAE Dirham	15.9846	15.9928	15.5839	15.5287	15.5092
Swiss Franc	34.6860	34.7038	33.5928	33.4740	33.4318
Japanese Yen	0.4453	0.4455	0.4300	0.4284	0.4279
New Zealand \$	25.8323	25.8455	23.5455	23.4622	23.4327
Danish Krona	6.8955	6.8991	6.6791	6.6555	6.6471
Australian \$	31.0901	31.1060	29.3027	29.1991	29.1623
Norway Kroner	6.6458	6.6492	6.4675	6.4447	6.4365
Canadian \$	37.1840	37.2031	35.7499	35.6234	35.5786
Kuwaiti Dinar	196.7604	196.8612	180.6679	180.0290	179.8023
Hong Kong \$	7.5220	7.5259	7.3450	7.3191	7.3098
Thai Baht	1.3446	1.3453	1.3161	1.3114	1.3098
Singapore \$	32.3606	32.3772	31.0220	30.9123	30.8734
Euro	51.5650	51.5914	49.3468	49.1723	49.1104
Saudi Rial	15.6547	15.6627	15.2639	15.2099	15.1908

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)						
TC Buying (USD)	TC Selling (USD)	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months
57.1250	58.5500	USD	1.8500	1.90125	2.0400	2.22000
		GBP	4.07625	4.06000	4.18563	4.34469
		EUR	3.33038	3.35050	3.39875	3.47875
		JPY	3.35050	3.39875	3.47875	3.59288

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars					
Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Thai baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian rupiah	Korean won
48.69/48.70	60.13/60.18	43.64/43.68	3.8000/3.8001	9975/9995	1308.2/1318.2

The inter-bank USD/BDT market was moderately active Tuesday. The average call rate remained at the previous level of 12:00-15:00 per cent.

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SHIPPING

Chittagong port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 5.3.2002.

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/1	Hilda (Liner)	GI	Sing	Prog	26/2	6/3	4303
J/2	Triumph Hongkong	GI (R Log)	Yang	RML	1/3	5/3	489
J/3	Banglar Doot	GI (St SC)	Busa	BSC	23/1	6/3	113
J/4	Banglar Mamata	Wheat (P)	Viza	BSC	13/2	6/3	1950
J/5	Triumph Chittagong	GI(P Eq)	Sing	RML	2/3	5/3	194
J/6	Jeon Jin	C Clink	Sing	OLM	25/2	12/3	1818
J/7	Jovanna	Urea (BCIC)	B Qas	Uniship	20/2	12/3	355
J/8	Kaghan	Urea (BCIC)	Juba	Atlantic	1/3	10/3	699
J/10	Konlink	Cont	Sing	Nol	4/3	8/3	186/53
J/11	Orient Freedom	Cont	P Kel	PSSL	2/3	6/3	133/X
J/13	Qc Lark	Cont	Col	QCSSL	2/3	7/3	159/29
CCT/1	Exdpress Resolve	Cont	Col	Everbest	2/3	5/3	86/X
CCT/2	Mardios	Cont	Sing	RSL	1/3	5/3	6/X
CCT/3	Perak	Cont	Sing	Pil(BD)	2/3	6/3	285/X
TSP	Eurobulker-II	IDLE	TUTI	BSL	9/2	7/3	
RM/6	Essenger Pioneer	LBO	Cila	Ecsi	3/3	5/3	
DOJ	Melodi	HSD	Juba	ECSL	25/2	5/3	
DDJ/1	Sonali	Repair	Yang	Angelic	31/10	8/3	
DDJ/2	Banglar Moni	Repair	Mong	BSC	17/1	8/3	
RM/9	Banglar Kakoti	Repair	Chitmy	BSC	24/2	10/3	

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arvl	L port	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Ever Gain	5/3	Mipi	CCNL	GI (Log)	-
Pinya	5/3	Yang	BNSSHI	GI(Log+Maize)	-
Banga Bonik (Cont) 25/2	5/3	-	BDSHIP	Cont	Sing
San-1	6/3	-	PSAL	C Clink	-
Sara Auckland	7/3	Niko	Litmond	Mop In Bulk (P)	-
Shun An (72) 26/2	8/3	Yang	RML	GI (St C)	-
QC Teal (Cont) 25/2	6/3	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Krissa	7/3	Adab	CCNL	Urea(BCIC)	-
Sara Star	6/3	Indo	Royal	Urea(BCIC)	-
Kota Naga (Cont) 25/2	7/3	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
Jaagar (24/20/2)	7/3	Mumb	Everett	Spl Cargo	-
QC Dignity (Cont) 25/2	7/3	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Triumph Mumbai	15/3	Yang	RML	GI (P Equip)	-
Ocean Pride	7/3	-	PSAL	C Clink (Conf)	-
AA Venture	8/3	Col	CLA	GI	-
Banglar Robi (Cont) 27/2	8/3	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Suisen	8/3	-	PSAL	Gypsum	-
Boxer Capt Cook (Cont) 28/2	8/3	-	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Banga Bijoy (Cont) 2/3	10/3	-	Bairdhi	Cont	Col
A She Kyae (Liner)	8/3	Yangoon	Everett	GI (St C)	-
Radant Sun	8/3	Kaki	Angeli	Wheat(P)	-
Jaami (Cont) 28/2	9/3	-	Everbest	Cont	Col
Sinha (cont) 2/3	9/3	-	BSC	Cont	Sing
QC Honour (Cont) 28/2	9/3	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Valverde	10/3	Sing	OTBL	-	-
Achiever(cont) 27/2	10/3	Sing	RSL	Cont	Col
Jim Cheng (Liner)	10/3	-	BDSHIP	GI	-
Banga Birol (Cont) 2/3	11/3	-	BDSHIP	Cont	Sing
Kota Berjaya (Cont) 28/2	11/3	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
Kuo Hsiung (Cont) 2/3	11/3	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Banga Lanka (Cont) 25/2	12/3	-	BDSHIP	Cont	Sing
Kota Singa (Cont) 3/3	13/3	Sing	Pil(BD)	Cont	Sing
Artemis (Cont) 26/1	14/3	P Kel	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Jaya Mars (Cont) 2/3	14/3	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Ja Alding Rainbow(Liner)	14/3	Sing	Everett	GI(St C)	-
Cool Star (Roro) 24/3/3	17/3	-	Everett	GI(St C)	-
Sagaing (Liner)	17/3	-	Everett	GI(St C)	-
Asian Leader (Roro) 24/ 4/3	19/3	Sing	Jf	Vehi	-

Tanker due

Tita Niaga-VII	7/3	-	Seacon	Cpol	-
Jaladoot	6/3	Ruwa	ECSL	Hsd	-
Doha Sun	7/3	P Kel	Rainbow	Cpo	-
J/4	B Mamata	DDJ	Sara Star	-	-

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

STOCK