

G7 endorses plan to ease debt crises in emerging markets

AFP, Washington

Group of Seven ministers on Saturday endorsed a plan aimed at allowing emerging market nations with debt crises to restructure their debts and possibly obtain a cooling-off period to reschedule payments.

facing default to reorganize their debts and get a "standstill" from creditors.

But the plan still would be "market oriented" and require an agreement from a super-majority of bond holders or creditors.

The plan was essentially what had been proposed by Washington in response to an IMF proposal that sovereign nations be allowed to in effect declare bankruptcy as they work out their debt problems. The

plan did allow for some elements of the IMF plan to be incorporated at some future time, however.

The G7 acted in the wake of last year's debt default by Argentina, the world's largest, three years after Russia defaulted on its debt.

"The action plan would help prevent financial crises and better resolve them when they occur, thereby creating the conditions for sustained growth of private investment in emerging markets and

helping raise living standards of the people in emerging market countries," the G7 said.

"We pledge to work together to carry out this action plan."

The plan calls for emerging market countries and their creditors "to implement a market-oriented approach to the sovereign debt restructuring process in which new contingency clauses would be incorporated into debt contracts," the G7 said.

Singapore mulls giving shipping firms stakes in port operator

AFP, Singapore

Singapore is considering allowing shipping firms to become stakeholders in its port operator to protect its status as a regional transshipment hub, the prime minister said in remarks published Sunday.

The option, if adopted, will allow shipping firms to share in the success of state-owned PSA Corp, which manages the island's ports, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said in the Sunday Times.

"When PSA prospers, the shipping lines will get a heavy rebate," Goh said.

Singapore's dominance of the regional container trade business has been gradually eroding after Malaysia's Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) wrestled away two of PSA's biggest shipping clients in less than two years.

PTP, located in the southern Johor state, offered rates sharply lower than those of PSA to lure away Danish global container line Maersk last year and Taiwan's shipping giant Evergreen Marine Corp. this month.

The young Malaysian port, which only began operations in 1999, also gave Maersk a 30 per cent equity stake offer as part of an incentive to attract the Danish giant.

Goh, speaking to the media during a working visit to Spain, said the city-state would not engage in a price war with PTP, a stance that has also been mentioned by PSA chairman Yeo Ning Hong.

"PSA correctly took the decision that while it should compete very hard to retain Evergreen, it should not do so at a rate which will result in sustained long-term loss," Goh said.

Instead, the port operator is taking a long-term view of the competition and "is alive to the fact that it can't operate like before," Goh said.

"What PSA is doing... is to sit back and study the situation and take the medium- and long-term view that competition is not just for today," he said.

The Singapore leader said the city-state was "not in danger of losing" its transshipment hub status.

"PSA has much greater connectivity than Tanjung Pelepas. And this connectivity is very important for ships calling in Singapore," Goh said.

The port operator serves more than 30 shipping lines and has 37 container berths, while PTP has six berths and two shipping lines, the newspaper report said.

PSA operates the world's largest container transshipment hub in Singapore and handled 19 million 20-foot equivalent units in 2001.

Oil price hike main threat to euro zone growth: ECB

AFP, Barcelona, Spain

Rising oil prices pose the biggest risk for the economies of the euro zone, a member of the governing board of the European Central Bank (ECB) said in an interview published here Sunday.

"It is the biggest risk for growth in the euro zone and for keeping inflation under control," Eugenio Domingo Solans told the Vanguardia newspaper.

"We do not know if it will material-

ise or not. It is an external variable outside of our control," he added.

The ECB predicts that "by the end of 2002 the European economy will reach its growth potential of between two and 2.5 per cent," Domingo Solans said.

The ECB's chief economist, Otmar Issing, said this week that, as long as the price of oil stabilised, inflation in the euro zone would probably fall back below the key level of 2.0 per cent in the second quarter.

The ECB defines price stability

as consumer price increases of no more than 2.0 per cent on a 12-month basis.

Issy also said the 12-nation euro zone is likely to be able to weather the current spike in oil prices. But he added that "any hike of such a crucial price will leave its mark, even if it is only temporary."

Domingo Solans told the Vanguardia Sunday that the ECB saw renewed growth as based "on domestic demand and saw exports as of secondary importance."

BATB marketing convention held

The annual national Marketing Convention of British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB), the country's leading cigarette-manufacturing organisation, was held at BRAC Centre for Development Management at Rajendrapur recently, says a press release.

At the two-day conference, British American Tobacco Bangladesh marketing managers assembled to share successes achieved during the last year and discussed plans and strategies for the year ahead.

The convention, inaugurated by Managing Director Stephen Daintith, was attended by Head of Trade Marketing Lutful H Chowdhury, Head of Brands Jean Jacques Walravens and Head of Human Resources Q M Shahed. Awards were distributed at the conference for business performance and other breakthrough business initiatives during the year 2001. Deputy Managing Director Golam Mainuddin presented the "Farook Zaman Achievement Awards 2002", an award launched as a tribute to late Farook Zaman, a past regional manager of BATB, to the deserving managers in marketing teams.

Best territory officers from each region were given deserved recognition. Dhaka Regional Trade Marketing Teambagged the maximum number of awards, including best National Territory Officer, best Area Manager and best Regional Manager. Benson & Hedges was declared the best performing brand.

Macedonia, Bosnia sign free trade accord

AFP, Skopje

Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed an accord here on Saturday aimed at boosting trade between the two countries formed after the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Two-way trade is currently around 20 million dollars (22 million euros), compared with 400 million dollars when they were part of Yugoslavia.

The signing of the accord was the centrepiece of a visit by top Bosnian officials to Macedonia.



PHOTO: BATB

British American Tobacco Bangladesh Managing Director Stephen Daintith speaks at the company's annual marketing convention at BRAC Centre at Rajendrapur recently.

CURRENCY

Table containing exchange rates and currency information. Includes sections for 'Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank', 'Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar', and 'The local interbank foreign exchange market was subdued on Sunday...'.

SHIPPING

Chittagong port Berth position and performance of vessels as on 21.04.2002.

Table listing vessel arrivals at Chittagong port. Columns include Berth No, Name of vessels, Cargo, L Port call, Local agent, Date of arrival, Leaving, and Imprt discp.

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Table listing vessels due at outer anchorage. Columns include Name of vessels, Date of arrival, L Port call, Local agent, Cargo, and Loading port.

Vessels at Kutubdia

Table listing vessels at Kutubdia. Columns include Name of vessels, Cargo, Last Port call, Local agent, and Date of arrival.

Vessels at outer anchorage

Table listing vessels at outer anchorage. Columns include Name of vessels, Cargo, Last Port call, Local agent, and Date of arrival.

Vessels awaiting instructions

Table listing vessels awaiting instructions. Columns include Name of vessels, Cargo, Last Port call, Local agent, and Date of arrival.

Movement of vessels for 22.04.2002

Table showing movement of vessels for 22.04.2002. Columns include Outgoing, Incoming, and Shifting.

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

STOCK