

# EU finance ministers to discuss budget strains

AFP, Brussels

EU finance ministers gather in Denmark Friday to discuss the effect of a gloomy economic outlook on the already-strained budgets of key member states.

The

economic

and

finance

ministers'

meeting

(ECOFIN)

Friday

and

Saturday

will

discuss

concerns

over

the

Union's

growth

and

stability

pact,

which

some

member

states

want

reformed.

"We

are

heading

towards

lower

growth

and

greater

uncertainty.

That

will

be

the

background,"

said

an

EU

official

ahead

of

the

regular

two-day

informal

talks

in

Copenhagen.

In

particular

the

ballooning

of

the

three

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econo-

mies, look set to breach the threshold, while Portugal last year posted a deficit of 4.1 per cent of GDP.

The fiscal plights of the four member states, coupled with lacklustre European growth prospects, are expected to prompt a wider debate on the future of the EU's stability and growth pact.

Finland has already signalled that a number of euro zone countries will fight any move to water down the pact, which sets a deficit threshold of 3 per cent of GDP.

"I have taken the view that we have to defend and protect the stability pact, I understand it's impossible to change it, but every time there is a discussion, it's always said the pact is too tight, but maybe it's too loose," Finnish Finance Minister Sauli Niinisto told AFP.

France, Germany and Italy, the three eurozone heavyweight econo-

mies, look set to breach the threshold, while Portugal last year posted a deficit of 4.1 per cent of GDP.

The financial aspects of enlargement are a key issue," said the EU official, adding that the ministers will study forecasts for candidate states until 2006, two years after they have expected to have joined.

Enlargement is on the agenda

Friday, along with energy taxation, and a euro-zone meeting to prepare for the monetary bloc's participation at the next G7 meeting of the world's richest states.

On Saturday the agenda includes an informal lunch at which the assembled ministers will be invited to chat about subjects of their choice.

"It will be a free-wheeling discussion," said the official. "My hunch is that the finance ministers think things are not working too bad."

"And as they say, why fix something if it is not necessarily broken?"



PHOTO: PQS

Managing Director of Prime Bank Limited Shah Md Nurul Alam inaugurates the second outlet of supermarket Price Quality Service (PQS) at Santinagar in the city yesterday. PQS President SMA Haroon Sohel is also in the picture. Prime Bank Limited has financed the new outlet of the store.

## New WTO chief says

# Free trade system better than official aid for poor

AFP, Johannesburg

A freer world trade system would do more to help poor countries than official aid from industrialised nations, newly installed global trade supremo Supachai Panitchpakdi said here Thursday.

Supachai, who took over as director general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on Monday from New Zealand's Mike Moore, said removal of trade barriers such as agricultural and fishery subsidies would be cheaper for rich nations than official development aid (ODA).

According to World Bank estimates, the abolition of all trade barriers could boost global income by 2.8 trillion dollars over 10 years. Developing countries stand to gain

more than half that amount, and the world would have 320 million fewer poor people by 2015.

ODA, meanwhile, has fallen to 0.22 per cent of rich nations' gross national product and the United Nations has urged donor nations to double it to 100 billion dollars a year.

"The message is clear: freer trade is more important than official aid and will bring more benefit to developing countries in the long run," Supachai told AFP in an interview after the conclusion of the UN Earth Summit here.

"Trade liberalisation is a powerful ally of sustainable development. This one action, opening up markets, will make a huge difference to the lives of millions."

Developing countries' share of

world trade currently stands at around 30 per cent and more must be done to boost market access for their products, he added.

He echoed sentiments of developing nations which besieged the world's rich at the summit to dismantle barriers and distorted trade practices, in particular agricultural subsidies of a billion dollars daily that were crippling small farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Agriculture, along with energy and fisheries, are divisive issues being negotiated in the WTO's so-called Doha Development Agenda launched in the Qatari capital last November, aimed at further removing trade barriers by end-December 2004.

With more than 50 developing

countries relying on agriculture for more than one-third of their merchandise export earnings, Supachai said a breakthrough in negotiations under the Doha round would be a "tremendous boost."

Phasing out restrictions on agriculture could increase income in developing countries by some 400 billion dollars annually by 2015 – several times more than all debt relief granted to developing countries so far, he said.

"Agricultural negotiations, in spite of the difficulty, seems to be on track with enough interest and proposals on the table to move forward but by how much, no one knows until the final agreement," he said.

Local Interbank FX Trading: The local interbank foreign exchange market was active Thursday. Demand for dollar was high. BDT remained steady against the dollar and was quoted almost unchanged at 58.30/32 against the dollar.

Local Money Market: There was moderate demand in the market for overnight borrowing. Call money rate was almost unchanged from Wednesday and was ranged between 5.90 and 6.40 per cent for the day.

International Market: Market is looking ahead for key US unemployment data due on Friday.

At 1500 hours on Thursday, euro was traded at .9975/80, yen at 117.54/59 and GBP at 1.5711/17 against the dollar.

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## STOCK

# SHIPPING

## Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 5.09.2002

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/1	AA Venture	Gl (Log)	Yang	Cla	27/8	5/9	115
J/2	Ulla(Edd)	Gl (Coppa)	Sing	Aeka	1/9	9/9	814
J/3	Camerona	C.Clink	Sing	SSA	30/8	11/9	1785
J/5	Pacific Emerald	Gl (Copra)	Sing	Allseas	24/7	10/9	X
J/7	Xuan Cheng	Rice(P)	Sing	Visa	18/8	7/9	1678
J/8	Bangler Gourab	Gl (Log)	Sing	Royal	29/8	7/9	965
J/9	Shun An	Gl (SLC)	Sing	Bela	30/8	5/9	789
J/11	Kota Berjaya	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	31/8	5/9	382/657
J/12	Orient Freedom	Cont	P Kel	PSSL	1/9	5/9	304/573
J/13	QC Dignity	Cont	P Kel	QCSL	3/9	7/9	210/X
CCT/1	Bangler Robi	Cont	Sing	BSC	2/9	6/9	147/X
CCT/2	Banga Barfa	Cont	Mad	Baridhi	2/9	6/9	68/X
CCT/3	Banga Borat	Cont	Sing	Bdship	2/9	6/9	375/X
GSJ	Zero	Wheat(G)	Aust	ASCL	1/9	8/9	-
TSP	Banga Birol	Cont	Col	Baridhi	28/8	6/9	-
DD	Al Muztoba	Repair	Kaki	Cla	8/8	8/9	-
DDJ/2	Bangler Shikha	Cont	Sing	BSC	29/8	6/9	-
RM/9	Bangler Mookh	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	6/9	-
RM/10	Bangler Jyoti'	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	10/9	-
SM/10	Dredger Gemini	Repair	-	Chand	Karna	-	-

## Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessel	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Kota Naga (Cont)	20/8	5/9	Sing	Pil(BD)	Cont
OC Pintail (Cont)	18/8	6/9	P Kel	QCSL	Cont
Chennai Poltu	5/9	Kova	OLM	C.Clink	-
Banga Lanka (Cont)	1/9	7/9	Hal	Baridhi	Cont
Banga Biraj (Cont)	24/8	6/9	Sing	Bdship	Cont
Sagaing (Liner)	7/9	Chen	Everett	GI (SLC)	-
QC Lant (Cont)	26/8	7/9	P Kel	QCSL	Cont
Xpress Resolive(Cont)	29/8	5/9	Col	Everbest	Cont
Handy Jade	6/9	Krabi	SSA	C.Clink	-
WU Chang Hai	7/9	Sing	ASCL	Wheat	-
Kota Singa(Cont)	8/9	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	
Shun Cheng (Liner)	9/9	Yang	Everett	GI (SLC)	-
Glover Star (Liner)	7/9	Sing	Prog	GI	-
Banga Bijoy (Cont)	29/8	8/9	Sing	BDship	Cont

## Tanker Due:

JMM Jackson	5/9	Bint	Rainbow	CPO





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