

EU seeks Indian economic reforms to double trade

AFP, New Delhi

India and the European Union hope to increase their annual bilateral trade from 25 billion euros to 50 billion euros by 2008 but this will depend on New Delhi's economic reforms, an EU official said Tuesday.

"We in the EU are encouraging India's economic liberalisation programme and we would like to see the disinvestment process continuing," Michael Sternberg, Denmark's ambassador to India, told AFP.

"The whole economic reform programme is a necessity to pull in further foreign direct investment," he said.

Denmark holds the rotating presidency of the 15-member EU, which is India's largest trade partner, accounting for 30 per cent of its exports and imports.

Last year the EU countries provided five billion euros of foreign direct investment into India, up from two billion euros in 2000, Michel Caillouet, the head of the EU delegation in India, told a media conference.

Due to stiff opposition from trade unions and politicians, the government has only managed to raise 50 billion rupees (one billion dollars) from privatisation in the current year against a targeted 120 billion rupees.

In September, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee postponed a plan to privatise Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corp. Ltd. after opposition by Oil Minister Ram Naik and Defence Minister George Fernandes.

Reports earlier this month said the privatisation of the state-owned National Aluminium Co. Ltd. (NALCO) located in the eastern state of Orissa, had also run into strong opposition and due diligence was unlikely to resume until February.

NALCO is considered one of India's major privatisation targets after the sale of stakes in telecoms

carrier Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. and petrochemicals company Indian Petrochemicals Corp. Ltd.

Sternberg said the EU did not expect "a reversal or flattening out" of India's reform programme, adding that it would have a negative impact on ongoing and projected ventures if the process stopped.

Referring to the third India-EU business meeting held on the sidelines of a prime ministerial summit in the Danish capital Copenhagen last month, Caillouet said there was strong participation by companies and officials from both sides.

"There is a perception that India is changing and India is the place to be," the EU envoy said.

US, Australia eye free trade pact

AFP, Sydney

Australia and the United States will open talks here this week aimed at securing a free trade pact that would slash import barriers across all industries including agriculture, officials said Wednesday.

Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile said he would meet US Trade Representative Bob Zoellick for private talks on the deal in Sydney on Thursday ahead of a World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting the following day.

Although Australia has been pushing to begin talks on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for more than two years, it has been stymied

by the opposition of the powerful US farm lobby.

But Australian hopes of securing a deal fairly quickly have risen amid reports from Washington that the farmers had relaxed their stance and Zoellick's office will advise the US Congress on Thursday of its intention to begin negotiations.

The Australian Financial Review quoted the chief lobbyist for the US farm sector, American Farm Bureau executive director Dick Newpher, as saying: "I think we are at the point where we accept the fact that negotiations are going to be opened on a possible FTA with Australia."

US back as most competitive economy

REUTERS, London

The United States regained top spot as the world's most competitive economy and had the best prospects for growth over the next five to eight years, the World Economic Forum said in a report published Tuesday.

Finland slipped into second

place in the rankings of 80 countries for both growth potential and current competitiveness in the Global Competitiveness Report 2002-2003. The United Kingdom rose to third position from seventh in 2001.

Germany, Switzerland and Sweden remained in fourth, fifth and sixth respectively, while the Netherlands slid to seventh from

third.

The Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF), which focuses on key issues in business, politics and economics, was not surprised the United States rose to first place.

"That is not very surprising," the WEF's chief economist Peter Cornelius told a press conference.

"The United States remain extremely innovative." But he said that in the current climate of global uncertainty risks remain.

"That the United States is ranked number one ... should not lead to complacency; for to maintain this leading position, the country has to resolve outstanding reform issues, especially the need to improve its governance system," Cornelius added.

Taiwan ranked third by growth competitiveness, Singapore retained fourth position, Sweden rose to fifth from ninth and Switzerland jumped to sixth from 15th in 2001.

Canada, which the WEF said suffered "weaknesses across the board," fell to eighth from third in growth potential, while the Netherlands slid to 15th from eight.

Japan, whose recession-plagued economy has shown a slight recovery this year, improved markedly in the rankings, rising to 13th from 21st.

In the 2001 report, Finland, home of the world's biggest mobile phone maker Nokia, was first and the US second in both categories.

Finland's fallback was mainly blamed on the slippage in information technology, "but they are still in a good sound position, that's no accident," said Harvard Business School's Michael Porter, who contributed to the report.



Fazle Hasan Abed, chairperson of BRAC, inaugurates the new premises of Arong Maghbaraz outlet at Aarong Plaza, Maghbaraz in the city on Tuesday. Syeda Sarwat Abed, advisor, and other officials of Aarong were also present.

CURRENCY

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

Selling	Currency	Buying	OD Sight/Doc	OD Transfer
TT/OD	BC	TT Clean	58.3000	58.0592
59.2000	59.2500	USD	58.1288	58.0592
60.5912	60.8424	EUR	58.0416	58.9721
94.6786	94.7585	GBP	91.8108	91.4316
33.7973	33.8258	AUD	32.0883	31.9558
0.5003	0.5008	JPY	0.4835	0.4815
41.2141	41.2490	CHF	40.0440	39.8786
6.6079	6.6135	SEK	6.4915	6.4647
37.7070	37.7389	CAD	36.6897	36.5382
7.5979	7.6043	HKD	7.4675	7.4366
33.7360	33.7645	SGD	32.9341	32.7981
16.2481	16.2618	AED	15.7401	15.6811
16.9101	15.9236	SAR	15.4233	15.3596

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Lankan rupee	Thai baht	Nor kroner	NZ dollar	AUD
48.271	58.625	96.3	43.155	7.2300	0.4931	3.80

Local Interbank FX Trading:

The local interbank foreign exchange market was active yesterday. BDT continued to gain further against US dollar because of increased supply of greenback in the market. Dollar ended weaker against BDT at 58.95/59.00 compared with 59.00/10 previously.

Local Money Market:

Demand for overnight borrowing at call was steady. Call money rate remained unchanged and ranged between 6.00-7.00 per cent.

International Market

Dollar held steady on Tuesday at nearly four-month lows against the Euro as dreadful German economic data dampened dealers' desire for euro but failed to provide a good excuse to buy dollars. The euro fell briefly to session lows against the dollar after the German ZEW institute's economic expectations indicators

collapsed to 4.2 in November, far below the 20.3 reading forecast by a Reuters poll. Dollar crept up against the European currencies and held its own on the yen on Wednesday. Warnings of possible Japanese intervention to stem the yen's rise helped underpin the greenback but it was still nagged by concerns over a possible war in Iraq and uncertainty over the US economy. In Japan, GDP data for July to September showed quarter-on-quarter growth of 0.7 per cent. Although the figure was slightly higher than expected but economists were not optimistic about the outlook of Japan. Sterling held steady just off this week's 2-1/2 year highs on the dollar on Wednesday but firmed against the Euro ahead of the Bank of England's inflation report.

At 1530 hours on Wednesday, Euro was traded at 1.0085/89, GBP at 1.5875/82 and yen at 119.91/98 against the dollar.

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SHIPPING

Chittagong port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 13.11.2002

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import disc
J/1	Regal Star	Sugar	Tuti	Mutual	2/11	22/11	x
J/2	Du Man Gang	Sugar	Viza	Uniship	28/10	14/11	x
J/3	Altair-SS	Sugar	Mumb	Mutual	27/10	15/11	x
J/4	Amalfi	C. Clink	Lumut	OLM	4/11	24/11	160
J/5	Adance Pescadores	Gi	Sing	H&SL	10/11	15/11	1494
J/6	Imwa	Sugar	Yang	Mutual	29/10	17/11	x
J/7	Jin Cheng	Gi	Winc	Bdship	10/11	16/11	x
J/9	Ocean Pride	Gi	Yang	PSAL	30/10	17/11	x
J/10	AA Venture	Rice	Kaki	CLA	29/10	-	-
/11	Xpress Manaslu	Cont	P.Kel	RSL	5/11	14/11	20/100
J/12	QC Honour	Cont	P.Kel	QCSL	8/11	13/11	-

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Gui Jiang	13/11	Kaki	Mutual	Rice	-
Hanjin Tamp	13/11	Vanc	Mutual	GI	-
Banga Bonik	14/11	Col	Bdship	Cont	Cbo
Nobleza	14/11	Sing	JF	Vehi	-
Banga Biraj	16/11	Sing	Bdship	cont	Sing
Asimont	15/11	P.kel	Seabome	Cont	Sing
QC Pintail	15/11	Hal	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Piran	15/11	P.kel	Prog	GI	Col
Xpress Resolve	15/11	Cbo	Everbest	Cont	Col
Slavanger Prince	10/11	Sing	OTBL	-	-
Tug Britoil-27	15/11	Sing	OTBL	-	-
Pearl Marine	15/11	Sing	OTBL	-	-
Tug Tiong Woon Ocean	15/11	Sing	OTBL	S. Maxita	-
Aft Section Maxita	15/11	Sing	OTBL	Scraping	-
Estrella Eterna	16/11	Sing	Everett	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Danat Qatar	13/11	Rast	USS	Crude	-
Hellas Fos	16/11	Yanpo	EOSL	HSD	-
Gulf Star	16/11	Al-Zuair	EOSL	HSD	-

Vessels at Kutubdia

Dea Captain	-	-	Arafent	R/A	-
Vana	C.Clink	Krabi	Litmond	11/11	-

Vessels at outer anchorage Ready on

Kota Singa	Cont	Sing	Pil(BD)	10/11
Jon Jin	Sug/Rice	Kaki	SSTL	4/11
Banglar Shikha	Cont	Sing	BSC	12/11
Eagle Strength	Cont	Sing	NOL	12/11
Orient Freedom	Cont	P.kel	PSSL	13/11
Banga Bijoy	Cont	Col	Bdship	13/11

Vessels awaiting instruction

Banglar Jyoti	-	-	BSC	R/A
Banglar Shourabth	-	-	BSC	R/A
Banglar Mamata	-	-	BSC	R/A

Vessels not entering

Bulk Diamond	GI	Rouen	Rainbow	2/11
Chip Sam	Sugar	Ind	Rainbow	4/11
Ally-Il	C.Clink	Cebu	Rsship	7/11
Almikos	GTSP/MAP	Aust	CCNL	2/6
Iran Toubra	Scraping	Fujai	OTBL	21/10
Bella	Scraping	Sing	Rsship	8/11

Movement of vessels for 14.11.2002

	Outgoing	Incoming	Shifting
J/11	Xp. Manaslu	CCT/1 B. Shikha	J/10
J/13	Jeami	J/11	O. Freedom
CCT/2	K. Cahaya	J/0 Jon Jin	A. A Venture to RM/10
	DOJ	B. Shourab	
	RM/9	B. Mamata	
	J/8	Jon Jin	
	RM/6	Dai Hung	
	RM/15 SS. Victory		

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

STOCK