

Asian currencies drop on concerns over China, US rate rise

AFP, Hong Kong

Asian currencies struggled to make gains against the dollar over the past week as troubles at home left markets grumbling despite prospects of a sunnier week ahead.

In Japan the shock resignation of a top prime ministerial aide annoyed an already stagnant stock market while a central banking statement ruling out an early interest rate rise turned the screws on the Australian dollar.

Despite ongoing violence in its southern regions, Thailand's baht managed to hold its own against the dollar while a flurry of off-loading on the South Korean market was tempered by a supply of US dollars from export earners.

Japanese Yen: The yen eased against the dollar during the week as the local stock market remained stagnant and a top aide to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi quit over

a pension scandal, dealers said. The Japanese unit stood at 110.34 to the dollar late Friday, down from 110.11 to the dollar a week earlier.

The yen plunged to an intra-day low of 110.50 yen on Friday after Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda announced his resignation following the disclosure that he had failed to pay contributions to national pension plans.

Amendments to the pension system, under discussion in parliament, are central to Koizumi's reforms and the revelation has caused public outcry.

The scandal implicating many other politicians, sent Tokyo shares lower, discouraging foreign exchange investors from holding the yen, dealers said.

The Tokyo Stock Exchange's benchmark Nikkei-225 index dropped 132.52 points or 1.15 percent to end 11,438.82 after

losing 1.62 percent the previous day.

Japanese financial markets resumed trading Thursday after being on holiday for the first three days of the week.

"Investors reacted negatively to the news, speculating that other ministers in the Koizumi cabinet could resign over the scandal," said Mitsuru Sahara, vice-president of foreign exchange division at UFJ Holdings.

"As Fukuda is set to go, the public will ask 'why not other ministers?' Investors are worried the scandal could lead to a political uncertainty," Sahara said.

Australian Dollar: The Australian dollar sank below 72.00 US cents Friday and may face continuing pressure next week following an upbeat central bank statement virtually ruling out any early interest rate rise, analysts said.

Saudi inks \$4.3b petrochemical deal with Japan's Sumitomo

AFP, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia on Sunday signed an agreement with Japan's Sumitomo Chemical Co. setting the stage for the development of a 4.3-billion-dollar refining and petrochemical complex on the Red Sea by the end of 2008.

The complex in Rabigh "will be the largest such facility ever built at a single stroke, and continues Saudi Aramco's tradition of developing... and operating massive industrial 'megaprojects'," said Abdullah Jahum, president and CEO of the state-owned Saudi oil giant.

The memorandum of understanding he signed with his Sumitomo Chemical counterpart, Hiromasa Yonekura, at Aramco headquarters in Dhahran in the oil-rich Eastern Province includes as the next step a joint feasibility study into the project to produce a total of 2.2 million tons of olefins, along with large volumes of gasoline and other refined products, the Saudi company said.

"The bedrock of this agreement is the development of our Rabigh refinery into a world-class integrated refining and petrochemical complex," Jumah said. Saudi Aramco operates the topping refinery which has a nominal crude distillation capacity of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd).



PHOTO: FEDEX EXPRESS
M Tanveer Madar, managing director of Bangladesh Express Co Ltd, licensee of FedEx in Bangladesh, recently receives GSP Sales Star Award from Hemanth, national manager of Sales, India, Bangladesh and Nepal, FedEx.



PHOTO: DHAKA BANK
ATM Hayattuzaman Khan, chairman of Dhaka Bank Limited, receives the signed audited financial statement of the bank for the year ending December 2003 from Md Yunus, partner M/s. Howladar, Yunus & Co Chartered Accountants, in Dhaka recently. Abdul Hai Sarker, director, Shahed Noman, managing director, and Arham Masudul Huq, executive vice-president and company secretary, are also seen.

US announces jobs explosion in March, April

AFP, Washington

The United States announced Friday an explosion of 600,000 new jobs in March and April, casting aside the slur of a "jobless recovery" and igniting interest rate rise speculation.

The jobs boom also brought some pre-election political relief to President George W. Bush.

The economy churned out 288,000 new jobs in April, far more than the 165,000 predicted by private analysts, the Labor Department said.

In March, employers took on an upwardly revised 337,000 -- substantially more than first thought and the biggest number since October 1990.

The unemployment rate, measured by a separate survey, eased to 5.6 percent in April from 5.7 percent in March.

Italy battles to save face over EU deficit warning

AFP, Brussels

Italy will try to stave off an official warning over its ballooning deficit at a meeting of European Union finance ministers this week, officials say.

But Portugal will be taken off Europe's list of fiscal delinquents during the talks, which will also cover long-running negotiations aimed at getting Switzerland to comply with EU rules designed to clamp down on offshore tax fraud.

Ministers from the 12-nation eurozone on Monday evening -- following by a gathering of all 25 EU nations Tuesday -- are scheduled to discuss a European Commission proposal to issue Italy with a warning over its rising deficit.

The country risks breaching the EU Stability and Growth Pact's deficit limit -- 3.0 percent of gross

domestic product -- this year, according to the EU executive.

But Portugal has got back in the commission's good books by striving hard to remedy its own finances and looks set to be officially taken off the list of deficit miscreants.

That list is headed by Germany and France, which have failed year after year to meet the 3.0 percent target. However, the rest of the EU has shown no stomach for a fight with the eurozone's two biggest economies.

Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini, citing the French and German precedents, has brushed aside the prospect of EU sanctions.

And Italian Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti will argue that his government is taking steps to avert a deficit breach and should therefore be spared an early warning, officials said.

Swiss banks welcome huge flow of foreign money

AFP, Zurich

As Switzerland's two largest commercial banks announced huge rises in quarterly profits over the past week, Swiss bankers were welcoming the return of large amounts of foreign cash to their vaults.

Nestled in the heart of Europe and sheltered from much of the world's strife, the wealthy little Alpine country has traditionally been a financial safehaven.

Its discreet bankers, backed by several generations of experience, point to Switzerland's stable economy and vaunt the merits of tax-beating banking secrecy laws.

And that decades-old sales pitch still appears to work magic.

UBS, the country's largest banking group, raked in a record 35 billion Swiss francs (23.3 billion dollars) in new funds under its management, as it doubled its first-quarter net profit this year to 2.42 billion Swiss francs.

The wealth and asset management business was "growing fast", UBS commented last Tuesday.

A day later, its slightly smaller rival Credit Suisse announced a near seven-fold increase in its first quarter net profit to 1.86 billion Swiss francs, also partly fuelled by regained deposits.



PHOTO: AKH KNITTING
AKH Knitting & Dyeing Limited was inaugurated at Savar in Dhaka on Friday. Mohammed Lakiotullah, managing director of Export-Import Bank of Bangladesh Limited, Ambassador of the Netherlands Sjeff Ijzermans, Rejaku Haider, director of Youth Group, AK Azad, president of BCI, Delwar Hussain, chairman of AKH Knitting & Dyeing Limited, Shamsul Alam, managing director, Abul Kashem, deputy managing director, and others were present.

CURRENCY

Following is Sunday's (May 9, 2004) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Sell	Buy				
	TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc
59.7500	59.8000	USD	58.8550	58.6821	58.6119
72.0585	72.1188	EUR	69.0958	68.8928	68.8104
107.6874	107.7775	GBP	104.3087	104.0023	103.8779
42.8408	42.8766	AUD	40.6688	40.5493	40.5008
0.5375	0.5380	JPY	0.5192	0.5177	0.5170
46.3035	46.3422	CHF	44.8453	44.7136	44.6601
7.8011	7.8076	SEK	7.2803	7.2589	7.2502
43.5147	43.5511	CAD	42.1869	42.0630	42.0127
7.6699	7.6763	HKD	7.5365	7.5144	7.5054
35.2715	35.3011	SGD	34.3779	34.2769	34.2359
16.4004	16.4141	AED	15.8947	15.8480	15.8291
16.0601	16.0735	SAR	15.5701	15.5244	15.5058
9.9370	9.9453	DKK	9.0381	9.0115	9.0007
203.4389	203.6091	KWD	191.8976	191.3340	191.1050

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Lankan rupee	Thai baht	Norwegian	NZ dollar	Malaysian ringgit
44.66	57.555	98.5	40.200	6.8269	0.6679	3.80

Local Interbank FX Trading:

Local interbank market was subdued as international market was closed due to weekend. Dollar remained almost unchanged against the Bangladeshi Taka.

Local Money Market:

Money market was active on Sunday. Call money rate continued to rise and ranged between 7.00 and 9.00 percent compared with 5.00 and 5.50 percent previously.

International Market:

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. While all reasonable care has been taken in its preparation no responsibility or liability is accepted for errors of fact or any opinion expressed herein.

SHIPPING

Chittagong port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 9/5/2004.

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port call	Local agent	Dt Of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/6	Xpress Manaslu	Cont	P. Kel	RSL	7/5	11/5	125
J/8	Happan	GI (log)	Yang	MTA	7/5	09/5	966
J/10	Sima Pride	Cont	Sing	Pi (Bd)	6/5	10/5	313
J/13	Banga Borak	Cont	Sing	Bdship	5/5	10/5	296
CCT/1	Orient Enterprise	Cont	P. Fkel	PSSL	6/5	9/5	123
CCT/2	Kota Singa	Cont	Sing	Pi (Bd)	5/5	9/5	150
CCT/3	Qc Dignity	Cont	P. Kel	QCSL	6/5	10/5	314
TSP:	Power	R. Phos	Egypt	Seacoast	5/5	17/5	--
RM/3	Southern Orchis	L.B. Oil	Sing	GPSS	7/5	9/5	--
RM/4	Bumik	CPO	Dumai	USL	7/5	10/5	--
RM/6	Jag Preeti	HSD	Chenn	SSLL	6/5	10/5	--
DD:	Jaami	Repair	Col	Everbest	9/4	12/5	--
DDJ/1:	Merc Sajinda	GI (St.c)	Sing	BMA	4/5	10/5	--
	Dea Captain		K. Dia	IBSA	R/A	--	--
DDJ-2:	Vandyck	Repair	Indo	BBL	24/4	10/5	--
RM/9	Taraman Bibi	R. Sulp	B. Abb	Seacoast	25/4	16/5	--
RM/10	Salamat-2	Bitumen	Hald	OLM	23/4	10/5	--

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Load port
Alexia	9/5	Para	RSA	GI(Hr.SC.)	--
Daewi (liner)	9/5	Yang	Everett	GI(SL.c)	--
Banga Bonik	9/5	Col	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Rio Negro	9/5	P. Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Ocean Pride	10/5	Yang	PSAL	GI	Mail/og
Banga Lanka	11/5	Sing	Bdship	Cont	Sing
An Lu Jiang	11/5	Qinz	RSA	TPS (fert)	--
Orient Excellence	11/5	Sing	PSSL	Cont	Col
Orient Wisdom	12/5	Sing	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Qc Star	12/5	P. Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Mardios	12/5	P. Kel	RSL	Cont	Sing
Salye	12/5	Mumb	Inthaport	Scrapping	--
Van Xuan	13/5	Sin	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Agios Nikolaos	13/5	Athen	Litmond	--	Sing
Budi Aman	14/5	Sing	Pi (Bd)	Cont	Sing
Kota Berjaya	13/5	Sing	Pi(Bd)	Cont	Cont/Sing
Xpress Resolve	13/5	--	Everbest	Cont	Col
Banga Bodor	14/5	--	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Orient Freedom	15/5	--	PSSL	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Al Badiyah	12/05	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/Up-1	--
------------	-------	------	-------	----------	----

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
-----------------	-------	----------------	-------------	-----------------

Vessels at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Qc Pintail	Cont	Tanj	QCSL	8/5
New Blessing	Cont	P. Kel	Everbest	8/5
Bahagia	CPO	Mala	MTCL	8/5
Banga Borak	Cont	Sing	Bdship	6/5
Banglar Jyoti	C. Oil	K. Dia	BSC	R/A

Vessels not ready

Safinaz	R. Phos	Egypt	Seacoast	5/5
Banglar Shourabh	C. Oil	K. Dia	BSC	R/A
Santa Barbara	Wheat (t)	Viza	Able	7/5

Vessels awaiting employment / instruction

Banga Biraj	--	--	Bdship	R/A (29/12)
-------------	----	----	--------	-------------

Vessels not entering

Jimakos-t	Gypsum	Krabi	Litmond	23/4
Excellent	C. Clink	Taiw	USL	30/4
Salor-1	C. Clink	Lumut	Move	2/5
Golden Bay	C. Clink	Kant	ASLL	2/5
Dolly	Mop (p)	Niko	Litmond	3/5
Asian Prime	C. Clink	Tanj	ASLL	4/5
Santa Barbara	C. Clink	Thai	Uniship	6/5
Afragem	Scrapping	Balk	BMA	8/5
Tug Salvage Champion	--	C. Town	Ahz	7/5
Boa Barge-28	Scrapping	C. Town	Ahz	7/5
Accord	--	Sing	Viking	5/4

Movement of vessels for: 10/05/2004

OUT GOING	IN COMING	SHIFTING	
J/13	B Borak	CCT/3	B. Bonik
CCT/3	Qc Dignity	J/13	Rio Negro
RM/4	Bhomik	J/3	Alexia
RM/6	Taj Preeti	J/4	Ocean Pride
		RM/8	Bahga

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