BUSINESS

Uneasy attempt to push global solutions crucial trade talks

Beneath their pledge to speed up global trade talks over the weekend, a core group of World Trade Organisation member states betrayed unease about troubled attempts to break down more trade barriers mainly for poor countries.

"This was the kickstart to the political process necessary to put negotiations on the right track," said Swiss Economy Minister Joseph Deiss late Saturday after a meeting of ministers from 25 countries or blocs including the European

The informal meeting of a limited number of members of the 148nation WTO on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum was aimed at mapping out the course for a full ministerial meeting at Hong Kong in December,

Ministers must enter Hong Kong with "concrete progress" on the five areas where the stuttering round of talks are meant to cut down trade barriers, if they want to help developing countries gain a more lucrative place in global trade, officials

The areas include modalities for free trade in agriculture and industrial goods, and a "critical mass" of progress on services and trade facilitation, Deiss said in a statement summarising the outcome.

"These are in my view, necessary conditions to secure a timely and balanced final result in 2006," the Swiss minister, who chaired the meeting, told journalists in the Swiss town of Dayos.

Political leaders reiterated as the forum closed Sunday that completion of a new round of trade iberalisation was a vital building block in efforts to boost aid for poor countries before the end of 2005, adding to the pressure on trade

While the ministers emerging from the WTO meeting said there was broad agreement on the need for success in Hong Kong, a spokesman for the organisation emphasised that they did not deal with substance.

The round of talks on new liberalisation -- notably in agriculture -- was launched in Doha, Qatar,

in 2001 with the avowed aim of helping poor countries compete on more equal terms on world markets.

But the talks have been riven by disagreements, notably between rich and poor countries over farming subsidies in the EU and the United States.

That culminated in the collapse of a ministerial meeting in Cancun in 2003 which had similar ambitions to the ones being displayed for Hong Kong.

Although negotiations were wrenched back on track last summer, WTO member states agreed to postpone the original deadline for completion of the Doha round at the end of 2004 and they have since edged ahead on a technical level. 'Agriculture is the theme which

has advanced least and we must work more to try to reach, I'm not saying at the same level, but at least close to the level reached in the other topics," said Brazil's foreign minister Celso Amorim.

Brazil was one of 11 members of the G20 group of developing coun-

By contrast European Union Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson insisted on a "balanced" approach to all five of the areas still up for negotiation.

Time is short, the distance is long," he said, also signalling that there were outstanding disagreements with the G20.

"We're waiting for them like everyone else. I detected that there was commitment among those here," he said.

The outcome of the Davos encounter will be discussed by representatives of the full membership at a Trade Negotiation Committee meeting at WTO headquarters in Geneva on February 14.

"It was important that we start out 2005 with some momentum," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick explained.

Other milestones include another informal mini-ministerial in Kenya in early March and a meeting of the G20 group of developing countries later that month.

"By the end of July there has to be some kind of text... which will make it crystal clear what needs to be done in the autumn," WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell told journalists.

Global economic growth must vault hurdles posed by exchange rate imbalances, US deficits and weak growth in Europe, but experts meeting here in Davos ended the week without takeaway solutions.

Americans, Europeans, Japanese and Chinese, the latter a major attraction at the World Economic Forum, agreed the situation was risky but not desperate.

The dollar's current level poses major risks for the economies of many other countries, but monetary directors and politicians are unable to calm volatile exchange rates because of divergent interests.

Given the stalemate, European Central Bank chief Jean-Claude Trichet could do little but repeat the banker's mantra that excessive swings in exchange rates were "unwelcome and undesirable".

The boss of Japanese bosses, Kakutaro Kitashiro, said "we need a stronger dollar" to support Japanese exports, but acknowledged the alternative was "to focus more on domestic demand"

A major subject of conversation among the financial members of the forum -- which also included political and social dignitaries in its five-day Swiss Alp fest -- was the fixed, some say undervalued, rate of the Chinese yuan against the

to allow the yuan to rise in value because the monetary peg allows Chinese products to be sold more cheaply around the world.

Beijing envoys, including the influential Vice Premier Huang Lu, said they were working on the issue but would not set a date and made it clear they did not intend to be pushed.

Huang said in a well-attended address: "We do not have a specific timetable for (modification of) the exchange rate regime."

Meanwhile, another threat to the global economy come from the United States' record current account deficit -- which measures trade in goods and services, investment returns and one-way financial

The deficit expanded to 164.7 billion dollars in the third quarter of

In Davos, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said President George W. Bush would deal with the issue during his second term, which began on January 20.

"The administration certainly igrees that one has to get the budget deficit down, but the question is how you do it," he explained.

"It's our view you want to do it by slowing the growth rate of spending and it's possible, I believe."

Business leaders see investment surge in 2005

Cost-cutting no longer seems the main concern of big companies. Growth and investment are replacing cost-saving on CEOs' agendas. And many firms are beginning to invest in growth again.

That was the diagnosis of the current business climate Saturday at the Annual Meeting 2005 of the World Economic Forum from HP Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Carly Fiorina.

Fiorina said she sees a growing number of corporations which had previously focused on cost-cutting now beginning to invest in growth. "Growth, for a company, takes investment," Fiorina reminded the business, government, academic and civil society leaders in Davos. "It doesn't just happen. It takes investment in competitiveness and a willingness to invest in innovation and risk-taking. When a company grows, it begins to turn its attention away from investing in businesses of the past and begins to invest in businesses of the future."

growth, Fiorina suggested, are entrepreneurship, skill and risktaking. All three are characteristic of the IT industry, she pointed out.

Fiorina's optimistic assessment follows a relatively gloomy report from the IMF last September. This predicted that world economic output is likely to decline to 4.3 percent in 2005 from 5 percent in 2004. The US is expected to grow at 3.5 percent for the year, compared to 4.3 percent in 2004. The US government reported a slowdown in growth from 4 percent in the third quarter of last year to 3.1 percent in the fourth quarter.

Despite that sombre news, a report from PriceWaterhouseCoopers citing nine corporate chief executives around the world forecast that corporate revenues would increase this year an mayeven reach a three-decade high.

growth and increasing corporat profits argues in favour of investing in growth, Fiorina said. However she cautioned that a resurgence i regulation could slow the process.

Asked about the Sarbanes-Oxle requirements on financial disclo sure, Fiorina said these are not problem for a company the size of HP. But for small and medium-size hiring additional lawyers an accountants to meet the require dramatically.

Chittagong Port

The combination of slowir

ments' demands can increase cost

Economists cry foul over HK's boast of freest economy

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong prides itself on being the refreest of the free economies, but analysts and increasingly vocal critics are beginning to question the

Fuelled by growing suspicion that the government is colluding with big business, the city's muchvaunted laissez faire economy has been attacked as a collection of cartels controlled by a very wealthy business elite.

This month another survey, by the right-wing US-based Heritage Foundation, named the Chinese territory the world's freest economy.

"I am pleased that the virtues we have been upholding to keep Hong Kong flourishing as a free market economy have once again been reaffirmed," trumpeted Financial Secretary Henry Tang of the January 4 report.

He pointed to the free flows of capital, low taxes, minimal government intervention and Hong Kong's free port status with no tariffs as reasons to invest here.

Critics pounced.

"There is a misconception that Hong Kong has the freest economy in the world -- it is called free because there are no laws to control the behaviour of businesses," said Lin Ping, head of economics at Hong Kong's Lingnan University.

Some companies are very powerful; there is no level playing field. New companies cannot come in and compete fairly, I do not see that as a free economy.

Tsang Shu-ki, economics professor at Hong Kong Baptist University

"Hong Kong is an open economy, a free trade city, and it has no capital control," Tsang said. "But that doesn't mean this economy does not have what we are worried about, and that is anti-competitive behaviour."

WB, IMF make first foray into debate at World Social Forum

EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson (L) attends a meeting with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Chief Director General Supachai Panitchpakdi (2nd

R) on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on Saturday in Davos, Switzerland. Twenty-six ministers met the WTO chief to speed up global trade talks

AFP, Porto Alegre, Brazil

amid warnings that more free trade was a crucial building block in an anti-poverty drive this year.

For the first time, World Bank and IMF representatives joined the debate at the World Social Forum anti-globalization summit, as many delegates underscored their frustrations with the conditions they must meet to get development aid.

And the future of free software to allow cheaper access to cyberspace was on the agenda, as several high profile individuals Saturday signed the Global Call to Action Against Poverty launched earlier in the

"It is important to have here (representatives) from the IMF and World Bank, but one has to know that they put conditions to their aid to countries," Novib/Oxfam Netherlands' Ted Van Rees said, at the Fifth World Social Forum.

They are imposing privatizations and forcing countries to open up when they are not ready to compete with stronger economies," he

Thomas Deve, with Mwingo, a center for reflexion and development of the NGOs from Southern Africa, slammed International Monetary Fund and World Bank conditions imposed before credit is granted as "a disaster" encouraged

"UN advice to our governments." What should be the deciding factor for these financial institutions is not a government economic policy but its transparent use of the funds it receives, he argued. "Our people are very angry with

you. We ask why do they accept the conditions you put," a Cameroonian participant warned the financial institutions' representatives.

"Cameroon is not poor. We have oil, but still the population is poor. IMF and World Bank, please do

something for development," he

We think the IMF and World Bank are making people poor. "They privatize everything, there is no education, no sanitation, and that is caused by the IMF and World Bank. ... At the same time, every day,

governments sign agreements for

aid." he stressed. Asked about the need for the IMF and World Bank to change their modus operandi and an economic policy seen by critics as too severe, John Garrison, a member of the civil society team at the World Bank, said: Our poverty agenda has already changed. In 1947, it was mainly the reconstruction of Europe, improving development with sound eco-

nomic growth. "Now we have a whole agenda, including access to education, ... (and) we allocated one billion US dollars to AIDS grants for Africa," Garrison said.

The money has also to go to NGOs and civil society," he added. 'We are putting the emphasis in policies of governments on social

Simonetta Nardin, senior external affairs officer at the IMF, said the issue of reforming financing of aid by the IMF and World Bank was already raised in Monterrey in 2001. It is true we are lagging behind, you (civil society) have more power than us, but do not underestimate your countries -- your governments are not puppets of the IMF and World

"We have changed. It is too little, too slow, but we have changed. There is now a space for civil society in the IMF," she insisted

On Saturday, ex-Danish president Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, ex-UNESCO director Francisco Mayor,

1998 Nobel Literature Prize winner ose Sarramago and Le Monde diplomatic director Ignacio Ramonet signed the Global Call to Action Against Poverty launched Thursday in front of Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva.

The WSF earlier urged people around the world to press for adherence to the UN Millennium Development Goals, which aim to cut poverty by half by 2015. Supporters of the Call are invited

to wear a white band on their wrist (see www.whiteband.org) to express solidarity at meetings such as the next G-8 summit in Britain and UN General Assembly.

Celebrities like singers Bono, and Lenny Kravitz, US former president Bill Clinton or UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, are set to popularize the campaign in television ads. Meanwhile, campaigning for

cheap computer operating systems, rather than using Bill Gates' Microsoft software, was also underway at a workshop Saturday. With only two percent of Brazilians owning a computer,

Brazil has seen tremendous success

in Sao Paulo where 120 telecenters,

used by a quarter of a million people, operate on free software. Brazil's ambition now is to move 80 percent of public jobs using Windows on to the Brazilian developed Linux operating system in the next few years, cutting costs and stimulating local industry, partici-

In an amphitheatre, intellectuals

debated the concept of utopia, to loud applause from an audience of 5,000 mostly young people, with Portuguese writer Jose Saramago and Eduardo Galeano, UNESCO's Mayor, and Ignacio Ramonet center

Merger mania muscles back into the headlines

AFP, New York

PHOTO: AFP

The merger and acquisition frenzy that started late last year in US financial circles revved up Friday with the purchase of Gillette by Procter and Gamble, as well as negotiations between AT and T and

"There's already over 100 billion dollars in announced deals in January," said Richard Peterson, and experts on mergers and acquisitions at Thompson Financial.

merger and acquisitions but not two huge deals in January alone," said David Wyss, an economist with Standard and Poor's, Telecommunications company

SBC is involved in talks on buying AT and T, however no formal agreement was reached as of the end of the But Procter and Gamble sur-

lars, a merger that will result in the

"We were expecting a rise in

prised everybody by announcing it Peterson, who projects that th was buying Gillette, the famous maker of razors, for 57 billion dolyear, the amount will reach or

consumer goods. This is the thirteenth-large merger ever negotiated in t

facturer of cosmetics and oth

creation of the world's largest manu-

United States and the biggest sin JP Morgan purchased Bank One f 58 billion dollars a year ago, accor ing to Peterson. The January deals follow merg

and acquisition activities

December, which saw 300 billi

dollars worth of agreemen designed to bind compani together. The deals include those between Sprint and Nextel valued at 36 billie dollars, the purchase of Guidant

Johnson and Johnson for 23.9 b lion, of Veritas by Symantec for 13 billion, and of PeopleSoft by Orac for 10.3 billion dollars. Overall, mergers and acquis tions valued at about 833 billion dollars were announced in the United States in 2004, according



trillion dollars.

PHOTO: RUSSELL LODGE HOLDINGS

OUT GOING

RM/3

Eastern Star

Analisa

Md Shafiqul islam, managing director of Russell Lodge Holdings Ltd, and Nuruzzaman, chief engineer of Qater General Electricity and Water Corporation, shake hands after signing a joint venture agreement on construction of apartments at Mirpur in Dhaka recently.

CURRENCY

Sell				Buy	Mange at California	
TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer	
63,6500	63,7000	USD	62,4050	62.2217	62,1472	
84.0944	84.1604	EUR	80.4525	80.2162	80.1202	
121.2342	121.3294	GBP	116.8658	116.5226	116.3831	
50.3790	50,4186	AUD	47,3966	47,2574	47,2008	
0.6237	0.6242	JPY	0,5980	0.5963	0.5958	
54.1334	54.1759	CHF	52,0997	51,9467	51.8845	
9.0994	9,1065	SEK	8.4104	8,3857	8.3756	
51.7859	51.8265	CAD	49.8801	49,7336	49,6741	
8.1709	8.1774	HKD	7.9913	7.9678	7.9583	
39.1331	39,1638	SGD	37,9477	37,8362	37.7910	
17.4733	17.4870	AED	16,8557	16,8062	16,7861	
17.1084	17,1218	SAR	16,5093	16,4608	16,4411	
11.6673	11.6765	DKK	10.4817	10.4509	10.4384	
218.8037	218.9756	KWD	205.3472	204.7440	204.4989	

Local Interbank FX Trading

Local interbank FX market was sub-dued on Sunday on hartal. Dollar was almost unchanged against BDT.

Local Money Market Money market was active. Call money rate eased and ranged between 7.00 and 8.00 per cent compared with 7.50 and 15.00

International Market International market was closed on Sunday on weekend. Before closing on Friday in New York, the dollar fell modestly against the euro, trimming earlier losses following below-consensus US growth data as markets grew cautious ahead of a plethora of economic news and events

0.7820

per cent previously. 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.

6.3136



Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 30/01/2005

No.	vessels	Cargo	call	agent	arrival	Leaving	Disch
J/1	Hpsan	GI(Y. Ma)	Yang	MTA	28/1	2/2	
1/2	Ryu Gyong	Wheat (P)	Viza	HSA	16/1	3/2	
J/3	Hanjin Calcutta	Wheat(P)	Argen	Jnship	17/1	3/2	91340
J/6	Eleana	Sugar (P)	Santo	Jf	15/1	1/2	
J/7	Kota Berjaya	Cont	Sing	PII(Bd)	27/1	1/2	138
J/8	Palwan	GI	Momb	Sunshine	29/1	30/1	256
J/9	Al Muztuba	GI(Y. Maize)	Kald	Cla	17/1	2/2	
J/10	Atol	Sugar(P)	Santo	USL	15/1	3/2	1198
J/11	Banglar Shikha	Cont	P.Kel	BSC	26/1	30/1	47377
J/12	Van Xuan	Cont	Tanj	PSSL	29/1	1/2	74
J/13	Eastern Star	Cont	Sing	BSC	25/1	31/1	385
CCT/1	Banga Borat	Cont	PKel	Bdship	28/1	1/2	90
CCT/2	Banga Bodor	Cont	P. Kel	Bdship	24/1	30/1	
CCT/3	Rio Negro	Cont	Sing	QCSL	26/1	30/1	301
RM/4	Global Ureanus	Cpol	Sand	Rainbow	28/1	31/1	
RM/6	Al Kuwaitiah	Hsd	Kuwa	MSTPL	27/1	30/1	
DOJ:	Banglar Shourabh		K.Dia	BSC	R/A	3/1	
DD:	Banglar Moni	Idle	K.Día	BSC	R/A	7/2	
RM/9	Amanat Shah	Repair	K.Dia	Cla	R/A	1/2	1715
Custom Jetty		Ballast	Sing	OTL	9/12		
DD-	Samkistanus-2	Elebina	Maha	Transiciolisi	20/1	THE STATE OF THE	

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port cail	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Magway	30/1	Yang	Everett	GI(St.C)	
Banga Biraj	30/1	Sing	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Banga Bonik	30/1	Col	Baridhi.	Cont	Col
Crystal Ace	30/1	Chin	Uniship	Tsp(P)	
Kallisto	30/1	Argen	Mutual	Wheat (P)	5665030
Content-4	30/1	Yang	CLA	GI (Log/Pt	ilse & Y.Ma)
FvZaran	30/1	Thai	SSA	Fishing Traw	lor
Kota Cahaya	30/1	Sing	Pil (Bd)	Cont	- Sin
Atlantic Sol	30/1	Sing	Intraport	Scraping	
Power	30/1		Olm	Clink	
Susan Anne	31/1	Yang	Inship	GI (Y. Ma)	
Isola Turchesa	31/1	Sing	Intraport	Scraping	
Pha Shwe Gyawyw	ra1/2	Yang	MTA	GI (Y. Ma)	
Yong Jiang	1/1	Chin	Litmond	P. Iron	TOWN OF THE
Pavonis	31/1	Yang	PML	Log/Y.M/Pul	
Maritime Songkhla	31/1	Tanj	BSL	Clink	
Banga Barta	1/2	Sing	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Karadeniz-S	1/2		Total	Wheat (P)	
Oel Esteem	1/2	P. Kel	PSSL	Cont	Hald
New Blessing	2/2		Everbest	Cont	Sing
Qc Dignity	3/2	P.Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
QcHonour	4/2	P. Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Banga Lanka	3/2		Bdship	Cont	Sing
Skyros	3/2	+	Total	Wheat (P)	1000
Xpress Resolve	4/2	-	Everbest	Cont	Col
Danga Dorak	579		Refebles	Cont	Sing/DM

Golden Dream Mmm Houston	30/1 31/1	Lumut Lumut	Rainbow SNCL	Cpol(RM/3/4) Cpol (RM/3)
Vessels at Kutu	bdia			S. U. S. Waller
Name of vessels	Cargo	LastPort call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Outside port lin	nit		AH U 25	
Rig Ocean Sove Gulfdrill-9 Dea Captain Lady Margaret Soileau Tide Wira Keris	Pr. Equip Dr. Equip Dr. Equip	Sing Sing - Sing	Beeline IBSA IBSA IBSA IBSA	18/11 27/11 R/A (8/1) R/A (10/1) R/A (27/1) 19/1
Vessels at outer vessels ready	ranchorage			
Kota Naga Mellum Mardios Kota Tampan Analisa Rio Negro Al Deerah Banglar Jyoti	Cont Cont Cont Cont Cpl Cont Hsd/Sko C. Oil	Sing P. Kal P. Kal Sing Indo Sing Kuwa K. Dia	PII (Bd) QCSL RSL PII (Bd) ESL QCSL MSTPL BSC	29/1 29/1 29/1 30/1 30/1 26/1 29/1 R/A
Vessels not rea	dy			
Anodad Naree Vessels awaitin	Wheat (P) g employment/in	Ukra	SSTL	27/1
Salamat-2 Bumi Java		Hald Visa	Olm Unicom	R/A (21/10) 10/11

Salamat-2		Hald	Olm	R/A (21/10)
Bumi Jaya	245) EN SER	Visa	Unicom	10/11
Salamat-1	(House of the		Olm	R/A (27/1)
Vessels not ent	ering		and the same of	
Ocean Lord	Dap(P)	Sing	BSL	16/1
Banglar Urmi	W. Salt	Cangla	Apex	18/1
Brave Royal	Clink	Kant	Brst	24/1
Liberty Star	Gtsp(Fert)	Jedd	SSST	25/1
Ocean Pride	Clink	Kaid	PSSL	20/1
Leonis	Salt	Kand	PSLL	21/1
New Hope-li	Clink	Lumut	USL	26/1
Ks Glory	Clink	Kant	ASLL	26/1
Manyas-1	Sugar (P)	Santo	Rainbow	20/1
Waralee Naree	Mop(P)	Jaada	Litmond	29/1
Tara	Scraping	P. Said	Rsship	26/1

DOJ: B. Shourabh Young Jiang Pavonis RM/3 Mmm Houston

B. Biral

SHIFTING

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

IN COMING