

World Bank cool on interim WTO deal's gains

REUTERS, Singapore

Far from being a landmark, a recent deal reviving free-trade talks would yield only a fraction of the potential gains that would flow from removing all barriers to global commerce, a top World Bank economist said on Tuesday.

When rich and poor nations reached a framework pact in Geneva on Aug 1 to revive the Doha round of market-opening talks, the head of the World Trade Organisation called it a historic moment. The US trade representative described it as a milestone.

Doha back on track after the September 2003 failure of WTO talks in Cancun, Mexico, World Bank analysis suggests the deal would generate global welfare gains of \$94 billion a year by 2015, just a third of the \$278 billion that would spring from completely freeing up merchandise trade.

"And that's actually a generous interpretation of the framework agreement. If you take a lower-bound estimate instead of a higher-bound estimate of what was in there, it's basically zero," Kym Anderson, lead economist in the World Bank's International Trade Unit, told Reuters.

Ministers from the WTO's 148 members will meet in Hong Kong in December to put flesh on the bones of the Geneva accord.

Anderson, an Australian academic who is an authority on the WTO, said they would have their work cut out.

"If you take the most pessimistic perspective of the framework agreement, there's nothing in it. There's a lot of hard lifting still to be done," he said.

According to the World Bank's analysis, 62 percent of the potential gains from free trade would come from agriculture, 14 percent from textiles and 24 percent from other

goods.

One of the highlights of the Geneva accord was an agreement to scrap agricultural export subsidies -- a major demand of poor countries, which argue that their use by rich states, especially the European Union, drives down prices and prevents them competing in world markets.

But Anderson, in an earlier presentation to academics and diplomats, said abolishing farm export subsidies would yield only 2 percent, of the gains that stand to be made if agricultural trade was completely freed.



PHOTO: BENCHMARK
Ambassador David A Gross, United States Coordinator for International ICT, shakes hands with an official of WorldTel Bangladesh during his recent visit to WorldTel office in Dhaka. Nayeem M Chowdhury, director of WorldTel, and Andrew G Hyde, director of International Telecommunication and Information Policy for Asia-US Department of State, were also present.



PHOTO: SQUARE
Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Consumer Products Ltd, speaks at the annual sales conference-2005 of the company on Friday in Pabna recently. (From Left) Ashraf Haque, marketing manager, SK Das, director, Mahmudul Haque, general manager (Finance), and Farhad Akhter, sales manager of the company, were also present.



PHOTO: GRAMEENPHONE
Rubaba Dowla Matin, deputy general manager (Market Research) of GrameenPhone, and Shoeb Ahmed Masud, director (Marketing) of Business Automation Ltd, recently sign an agreement on SMSPlus, an SMS-based reporting service for GrameenPhone's corporate subscribers.



PHOTO: DBBL
Md Yeasin Ali, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd, and Bernd Parting, senior investment manager (Asia) of German Investment and Development Company (DEG), sign a loan agreement in Dhaka recently. Under the deal, DBBL will get US\$ 3.75 million loan from DEG.

China budget deficit to fall in 2005

AFP, Beijing

China's 2005 budget deficit will amount to some two percent of gross domestic product or 300 billion yuan (36 billion dollars), down from a budgeted deficit of 319 billion yuan in both 2003 and 2004, state press said Wednesday.

The budget will be presented for approval by Finance Minister Jin Renqing at the upcoming annual session of the National People's Congress which is scheduled to open in Beijing on March 5, China Business News said.

The deficit is expected to remain stable over coming years as the government adjusts its expansionary fiscal policy -- in place since the 1997 Asian financial crisis -- to a more "prudent" stance as the economy grows sharply.

The finance ministry will also reduce its annual issuance of special treasury bills, used to finance infrastructure and other stimulatory spending, to 80 billion yuan from 110 billion yuan in 2004, reports said.

"With the ongoing economic boom, the ratio of the country's budget deficit to its gross domestic product (GDP) will keep dropping," Jin recently told the People's Daily.

CURRENCY

Following is Wednesday's (February 16, 2005) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Sell		Buy			
TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
63.6500	63.7000	USD	62.3550	62.1718	62.0974
83.2924	83.3578	EUR	80.0701	79.8349	79.7393
120.8459	120.9408	GBP	116.8720	116.5287	116.3892
50.6909	50.7307	AUD	48.1318	47.9904	47.9330
0.6135	0.6140	JPY	0.5881	0.5864	0.5857
53.7448	53.7870	CHF	51.5118	51.3605	51.2990
9.4962	9.5036	SEK	8.4244	8.3997	8.3896
52.0059	52.0467	CAD	49.9800	49.8332	49.7735
8.1687	8.1752	HKD	7.9663	7.9629	7.9534
38.9201	38.9507	SGD	37.7817	37.6708	37.6257
17.4733	17.4870	AED	16.8422	16.7928	16.7727
17.1084	17.1218	SAR	16.4960	16.4476	16.4279
11.5852	11.5943	DKK	10.4079	10.3774	10.3649
218.6534	218.8251	KWD	205.8600	205.2554	205.0097

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Lankan rupee	Thai baht	Nor kroner	NZ dollar	Malaysian ringgit
43.67	59.405	99.315	38.440	6.4799	0.7641	3.80

Local Interbank FX Trading
Local interbank FX market was active on Wednesday. Dollar continued to rise against Bangladeshi taka on back of demand.

Local Money Market
Money market was active. Call money rate remained unchanged and ranged between 6.00 and 8.00 percent.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 16/02/2005

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo call	L. Port agent	Local arrival	Dt Of	Leaving	Import disch
J/1	Anodad Naree	Wheat (P)	Ukra	SSTL	27/01	18/02	1424
J/2	Paulijing	GI (St. Bil)	Viza	Mutual	15/02	20/02	537
J/3	Kallisto	Wheat (P)	Argen	Mutual	30/01	19/02	2301
J/5	Genco Reliance	Candia	Sing	USL	07/02	19/02	535
J/6	Tong Shan Hai	Clink	Nant	MBL	11/02	20/02	3568
J/7	Karadeniz-S	Wheat (P)	Darb	Total	06/02	22/02	1454
J/8	Banga Borat	Cont	Sing	Bdship	13/02	18/02	146
J/9	Banga Bodor	Cont	P. Kel	Bdship	12/02	16/02	-
J/10	Mellum	Cont	Tanj	QCSL	14/02	18/02	445
J/12	Eastern Star	Cont	Sing	BSC	12/02	16/02	-

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Lady Juliet	16/02	Turk	Lams	M.S. Billhts	-
Oel Enterprise	16/02	Hald	PSSL	Cont	Col
Kota Naga	16/02	Sing	Pil (Bd)	Cont	Mong
Ocean Pride	16/02	Viza	PSAL	Potash Feldstar	-
Advance Pescadores	17/02	Yang	Everett	GI (S.C)	-
F.V. Sor Khnem Thong-7	17/02	Bang	Oil	Fishing Trawler	-
Banga Biraj	17/02	Sing	Bdship	Cont	Sing
New Blessing	18/02	P.Kel	Everbest	Cont	Sing
Straits Express	17/02	-	Nyk	Vehi	-
Jeannie-III	17/02	Cebu	ASLL	Clink	Cemex
Soo Kwang	17/02	Busan	Prog	GI	-
Al Muztaba	17/02	Yang	Cia	Rice (P)	-
Pha Shwe Gyawywa	18/02	Yang	MTA	GI (Y. Ma)	-
Honeywa	19/02	Yang	MTA	Rice (P)	-

Tanker due

Mmm Houston	15/02	Indo	USL	CPO (RM/4)
Al Badiyah	16/02	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/Sko
Padang Halapan	18/02	--	Seacom	C. Soda(LQ)(RM/4)
Atalanta	20/02	Dumai	MTCL	Cpol

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
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Outside Port Limit

Rig Ocean Sovereign	--	Sing	Beeline	18/11
Gulfdrill-9	Pr. Equip	Sing	IBSA	27/11
Dea Captain	--	--	IBSA	R/A (28/01)
Wira Keris	Dr. Equip	Sing	IBSA	R/A (14/02)
Lady Margaret	Dr. Equip	Sing	IBSA	R/A (04/02)
Ondo	Crude Oil	Rast	OWSL	16/02
Banglar Shourabg	C. Oil	--	BSC	R/A

Vessels at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Cargo	Local agent	Date of arrival
Banga Bonik	Cont	Col	Baridhi 15/02
Kota Cahaya	Cont	Sing	Pil (Bd) 16/02

Vessels ready

Crystal Ace	TSP (P)	Sing	Uniship	30/01
Shwe Zar Yar Adng	GI (Y. Ma/B)	Yang	TCL	11/02
Shwe Thara Phu	GI (Y. Ma)	Yang	TCL	11/02
Skyros	Wheat(P)	Sant	Total	11/02
Salamat-3	Bitumen	Hald	Nishat	13/02
Hpaan	GI (Y. Ma)	Yang	MTA	14/02

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

STOCK