

EU, Canada to slap new duty on US exports

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union and Canada will slap an extra 15-per cent duty on tens of millions of dollars worth of US exports in a dispute over payments to US companies that Washington says were hurt by dumping, EU and Canadian officials said Thursday.

"Retaliation is not our preferred option, but it is a necessary action. International trade rules must be respected," said Canada's Trade Minister Jim Peterson in a statement.

released in Ottawa.

Brussels and Ottawa said they opted for the duties because of Washington's failure to fix a programme known as the Byrd amendment which the World Trade Organisation has said is illegal.

The WTO gave permission to the EU, Canada, Japan and several other trading partners in November to apply an initial \$150 million in trade sanctions after Washington failed to change the Byrd amendment to comply with WTO rules.

The programme, which is named

for Democratic Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, distributes anti-dumping duties to US companies that initially sought government protection because of low priced foreign competition.

Under the amendment, the US government has doled out more than \$1 billion to US ball bearing, steel, seafood, candle and other companies over the past four years.

US officials in Washington said they were disappointed with the EU and Canada's decision to go ahead

with sanctions.

"The United States is working to comply with the WTO decision regarding the Byrd amendment," said Richard Mills, a spokesman for the US Trade Representative's office.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican whose panel has jurisdiction on trade issues, said he hoped Congress could reach "a consensus soon on the Byrd amendment that will enable us to avoid continued trade sanctions."



General Manager (Investment Promotion) of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority AZ Azizur Rahman and Sitara Shah of M/s Vextronic (Bangladesh) Ltd sign a lease agreement on behalf of their organisations in Dhaka on Wednesday to set up an industrial unit in Chittagong Export Processing Zone. The company proposed to invest \$6.5 lakh to set up the electronic industrial unit.



A delegation of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) headed by its President Md Ruhul Amin called on Khairuzaman Chowdhury, chairman of National Board of Revenue, at the latter's office recently in Dhaka.

WTO unable to inscribe generic drugs deal in stone

AFP, Geneva

World Trade Organization members were unable to make permanent a 2003 agreement on access to generic drugs for poor countries, although it was still regarded as valid on a temporary basis, a WTO official said Thursday.

The global trade body missed a deadline for amending the accord which currently gives only a temporary waiver to intellectual property rights.

Developing countries argued that the 2003 accord was too restrictive, which might explain why no country has yet used it to obtain medicines.

The African Union described the waiver as an interim solution that "can be terminated at any time" and argued that the waiver "can pose problems and obstacles to the realization of the goal of access to affordable medicines for all".

The compromise reached in late August 2003 tried to balance public health needs and the interests of the pharmaceutical industry.

Under the WTO agreement, poor countries could import cheaper generic copies of patented medicines under a so-called compulsory licensing system if they do not have the capacity to manufacture the drugs themselves.



Chris Malay, chief executive officer of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd, the owning company of CityCell, and MA Hashem, chairman and CEO of Westec Ltd, the owning company of Bay Phones, exchange documents after signing an interconnectivity deal on Tuesday in Dhaka. Other senior officials from both the sides were also present.

Tankan report shows sharp dip in Japan's business confidence

REUTERS, Tokyo

Business confidence among Japanese companies deteriorated sharply in March, a quarterly Bank of Japan survey showed Friday, dashing hopes the economy would quickly rebound after a mild recession last year.

The BOJ tankan report, which followed a run of weak economic data, showed that big manufacturers were especially downbeat following a slowdown in exports, which have driven Japan's economic recovery over the past three years.

The survey's headline diffusion index (DI) for big manufacturers fell to plus 14 from plus 22 in December, falling well short of a consensus market forecast for a rise to plus 23.

"It's very bad, I was shocked," said Asuka Kato, economist at BNP Paribas in Tokyo. "We had thought that the inventory adjustment in the electronics sector was nearly finished but perhaps conditions are worse than we expected."

The yen weakened about a quarter of a percent against the dollar to about 107.50 after the data.

Tokyo share prices also initially fell on the weak reading but recovered losses as other data in the report reassured the market that a recovery would still take hold this year.

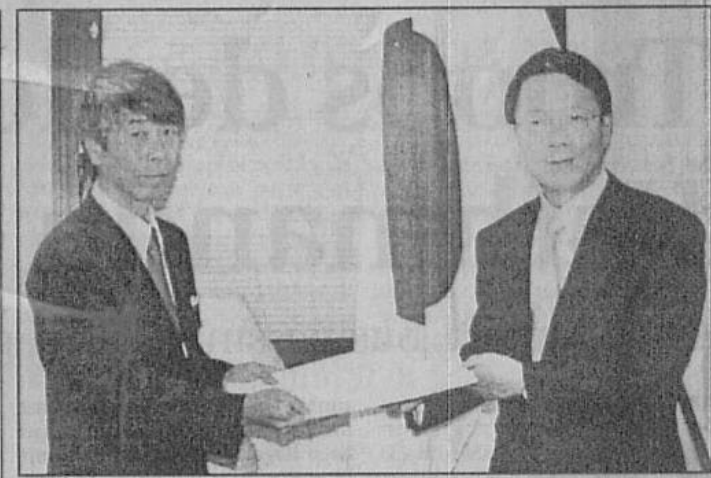
"It's likely that a fall in exports and production was reflected in the worsening DI for big manufacturers," said Takashi Miyazaki, strategist at UJF Partners Asset Management.

"But the figure for non-manufacturers came inline with expectations, and this should underpin the (stock) market here."

The DI in the tankan -- Japanese short-hand for "short-term economic outlook survey of enterprises in Japan" -- is derived by subtracting the percentage of firms reporting unfavourable conditions from those reporting favourable conditions.

A positive number implies an expansion in business activity. The government held to its view that a recovery was intact.

"The economy on the whole is in consolidation. The figures generally underscore a recovery trend," Economics Minister Heizo Takenaka told reporters.



Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Matsushiro Horiguchi and Director of OISCA-DB (Japan), Bangladesh Hideo Miyajima exchange documents after signing a grant contract of US\$ 83,000 on Thursday. OISCA-DB (Japan) receives this grant for the renovation and extension of OISCA poultry project at Zirabo in Savar.

Weekly Currency Roundup

Mar 27-Mar 31, 2005

Local FX Market
US dollar was mostly steady against Bangladeshi taka in the week.

Money Market
In the Treasury bill auction held on Sunday, bid for BDT 2,835.00 million was accepted, compared with BDT 2,464.00 million in the previous week's bid. Weighted average yield of 28-D and 91-D t-bill increased to 5.09 percent and 5.70 percent from 4.97 percent and 5.19 percent.

International FX Market
In the beginning of the week, the dollar rose to a four-and-a-half month high against the yen, buoyed by expectations that upcoming US jobs data would give the Federal Reserve another reason to raise rates more aggressively. The dollar also rallied to six-week peaks against the euro, Swiss franc and sterling. The jobs report, due on Friday, will be the highlight of a US data -- heavy week that includes the final reading of fourth-quarter gross domestic product and the February reading of the PCE price index -- an inflation gauge favoured by the Fed.

The dollar slipped from a five-month high against the yen in the middle of the week as the US currency's two-week rally stalled before a raft of upcoming economic data. Revised economic growth figures are due later in the day ahead of the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge on Thursday and key US employment data on Friday. The dollar has climbed over four percent against the euro and nearly four percent against the yen since mid-March as investors have bet on more aggressive interest rate rises in the US. A speech by Federal Reserve Board Governor Ben Bernanke at 1700 GMT will be scrutinised to clues on the likely course of the US interest rates.

By the end of the week, the dollar retreated from a five-month high against the yen and lost ground against the euro on Thursday ahead of inflation data that could give clues as to how fast US interest rates will rise. Investors were reluctant to take aggressive positions ahead of the US Federal Reserve's favoured measure of inflation due at 1330 GMT as well as Friday's US jobs report and the Bank of Japan's tankan survey of business sentiment. Trading was subdued in Asia, as Japanese companies and banks close their books for the fiscal year ending on Thursday. Sterling was on the back foot after data from nationwide building society showed that British house prices fell at their sharpest rate in nearly a decade in March.

- Standard Chartered Bank

TRADED ISSUES IN THE WEEK										Weekly Market - March 27 - 31, 2005										DSE: One Year Index Turnover Graph									
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