

GLOBAL TRADE PACT

US trade chief 'optimistic' despite WTO failure

REUTERS, Geneva

The United States is optimistic that a global trade pact can be struck in Hong Kong later this year despite the failure to meet a July target for interim accords, its top trade official said Friday.

Rob Portman who was in Geneva to take stock of talks at the world Trade organisation (WTO), said negotiations were progressing despite the lack of deals.

"I remain optimistic because I see the will to succeed... and I see

progress, slow but sure," he told journalists after attending a meeting of the WTO's executive General Council, its final session before the August holiday.

WTO states are struggling to bridge divisions on how rich nations should cut their huge agricultural subsidies and open up their farm markets, as well as on reducing barriers to trade across the global economy from industrial goods to services. The 148-state body hoped to announce a significant advance in the Doha Round of free trade

negotiations this month, but Friday's council meeting had nothing to approve.

Portman said the US administration had been encouraged by its success in narrowly winning congressional approval for its free trade deal with Central America (Cafta).

Cafta was fiercely opposed by labour unions who said its provisions on labour standards were weak. They also wanted stronger environmental conditions.

"I come here with more momentum on the American side," said Portman.

He promised new initiatives from the United States in September to try and help break the deadlock, particularly over agriculture.

"We all understand that unlocking agriculture is going to be the key to moving forward other areas of the negotiation," Portman said.

Failure in Hon Kong in December could trigger the collapse of the round, which was launched in the wake of the September 11, 2001, suicide plane attacks in the United States in a bid to give a boost to a jittery global economy.



PHOTO: ASIAN PAINTS

SR Rao, chief executive of Asian Paints (Bangladesh) Ltd, inaugurates the 14th "Asian Paints Colourworld" system at M/s Farhad Hardware & Paint Suppliers' shop at Gulshan-2, Dhaka recently. Ashutosh Banerjee, head (Sales and Marketing) of Asian Paints, and Jasim Uddin, proprietor of the shop, were also present at the inauguration.



PHOTO: PRAGATI INS

The half-yearly conference of the branch managers of Pragati Insurance Ltd was held recently at the Jamuna Resort on the eastern bank of Jamuna bridge. Chairman of the company Khalilur Rahman presided over the meeting, which was also attended by Managing Director AKM Rafiqul Islam.



PHOTO: ISLAMIC FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

M Rabiul Islam, managing director of Islamic Finance and Investment Ltd (IFIL), and Habibullah N Karim, managing director of Technohaven Co Ltd, exchanging documents after signing an accord in Dhaka recently. Under the accord, Technohaven will develop and implement a business solution software for the Shariah-based financing company.



PHOTO: BASIC BANK

BASIC Bank Ltd organised a two-day training course on 'Disputes in Foreign Trade' for its branch officials recently in Dhaka. AH Ekbal Hossain, managing director of the bank, inaugurated the training session.

Honda India agrees to rehire fired workers

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian unit of Japan's Honda Motors agreed Saturday to rehire fired and suspended workers after violent clashes between police and striking employees left more than 100 people injured, a report said.

The settlement was brokered by Bhupinder Singh Hooda, the chief minister of northern Haryana state where the Honda factory is located, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency said.

It was hammered out after the intervention of ruling Congress party president Sonia Gandhi, who visited Haryana's industrial hub of Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi on Friday after two days of bloody clashes.

All workers, including four dismissed employees and 50 who were suspended, would resume work immediately, Hooda told journalists late on Friday night, PTI said.

Hooda made the announcement in the presence of Honda's India chief Yuki Hiro Aschina, it added.

The tension between the management and the employees of Honda spilled into the public domain when Haryana police used brute force to break-up a demonstration by the striking workers earlier this week.

US, EU hold fresh talk on aircraft row

REUTERS, Geneva

Washington and Brussels have held fresh talks on their dispute over subsidies for aviation giants Boeing and Airbus, but the World Trade Organisation (WTO) case will continue, US trade chief Rob Portman said Friday.

Portman said he had discussed the row -- potentially the biggest commercial fight in history -- with the European Union this week because he wanted to keep diplomatic channels open as the WTO case unfolded.

"That is how we would like to handle it -- by keeping channels open," Portman told journalists. "My hope is that in these talks we can come up with a negotiated settle-

ment."

The US Trade Representative (USTR), who was in Geneva for talks on the WTO's troubled Doha Round of free trade negotiations, did not say when further talks might be held.

Both he and his European counterpart, European Union Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, have repeatedly said they are willing to search for a negotiated end to the battle, in which each side accuses the other of receiving billions of dollars in illegal state aid.

Portman said the major stumbling block remained launch aid, which Airbus' four state backers -- Britain, France, Germany and Spain -- have always provided when the company has wanted to introduce a new plane.

CURRENCY

Following is Saturday's (July 30, 2005) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Sell		Buy			
TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
67.0700	67.1000	USD	65.9000	65.8780	65.8341
82.8046	82.8417	EUR	78.9218	78.8955	78.8429
119.0291	119.0824	GBP	114.8439	114.8056	114.7291
51.8921	51.9153	AUD	48.8780	48.8617	48.8292
0.6033	0.6036	JPY	0.5808	0.5806	0.5802
52.4845	52.5080	CHF	50.6962	50.6793	50.6455
8.6271	8.6310	SEK	8.0373	8.0346	8.0292
55.2608	55.2855	CAD	53.3301	53.3123	53.2768
8.6376	8.6415	HKD	8.4676	8.4648	8.4591
40.7151	40.7333	SGD	39.4304	39.4172	39.3910
18.4101	18.4184	AED	17.7978	17.7919	17.7800
18.0276	18.0357	SAR	17.4339	17.4281	17.4164
11.3684	11.3735	DKK	10.3038	10.3004	10.2935
226.1961	226.2996	KWD	224.4702	224.4702	224.4702

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Lankan rupee	Thai baht	Nor kroner	NZ dollar	Malaysian ringgit
43.44	59.66	100.7	41.655	6.4830	0.7390	3.75

Local Interbank FX Trading

Local interbank FX market was subdued on Saturday. Demand for dollar continued to remain high in the market.

Local Money Market

Money market was active. Call money rate was unchanged and ranged between 4.00 and 5.00 percent.

International Market

International market was closed. The dollar strengthened modestly against most major currencies on Friday after a series of data releases showed US economic activity remains solid. US second quarter gross domestic product growth was in line with expectations and a July reading of Midwest manufacturing activity was weak above forecasts, suggesting no end anytime soon to the Federal Reserve's program of raising interest rates. But ----- measures in the GDP data were softer than expected, thereby cooling some expectations of just how high the Fed will hike rates.

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ReadyCash Raffle Draw Winners

The latest ReadyCash Raffle Draw took place at ReadyCash Bangladesh office at Dhanmondi on Saturday, says a press release.

Prizes	Name of Winners	Card No
Sentra Travels and Tours free Dhaka Cox's Bazar Dhaka Biman Ticket	Ismat Ara	5047980000010000
Kamal General Store Free Gift Box	Dr. Ujjal Kanti Dev	5047980010035057
Monorom Free Gift Box	Payel Ahmed	5047980010035104
Rainbow Chinese Free Lunch/ Dinner for two	Md. Tazul Islam	5047980010035123
You and Eye Free Eye Test and Glass		Md. Jahangir Alam

Winners can collect their prizes from the executive, Promotion of ReadyCash within 30 days of this news circulation by producing their ReadyCash card transaction vouchers. ReadyCash encourages its cardholders to read The Daily Star and the Daily Prothom Alo on every Sunday or call our Customer Service at: 8123850, 8130497, 8125294-7.

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