

Star BUSINESS

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Asian economies face new threats, warns UN

AFP, Bangkok

Asian economies face new threats that could destabilise the region, despite the current boom that resulted from success in overcoming the 1997 financial crisis, a top UN official said Monday.

Some of the risks now facing the region are similar to those that preceded the 1997 crisis, which began in Thailand and spread around Southeast and East Asia, said Kim Hak-Su, the head of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

A global liquidity bonanza, inflated asset values, and tremendous speculative pressures on regional currencies could again destabilize regional economies, Kim said.

"Globalisation, along with its many benefits, exposes economies to quick and harsh risks from the constantly shifting international environment," he said in a speech opening a conference on the 10 years since the 1997 meltdown.

Kim urged governments around the region to ensure flexibility in exchange rates, adding that central banks should also be clear about their exchange rate policies.

"Greater flexibility would help take away the 'one-way bet' that encourages even more capital inflows than would otherwise take place, since markets would quickly realize that the currency could move in either direction," he said.

Kim said countries around the region could weather future shocks by ensuring solid macroeconomic fundamentals, developing healthy financial sectors, having robust microeconomic foundations, and improving regional cooperation.

Thailand was the epicenter of the 1997 meltdown when excessive borrowings in US dollars coupled with high interest rates forced the Thai government to float the currency, which then promptly collapsed along with the economy.

The baht nosedived to 56 to the dollar from 25, took the Thai economy with it and then sent a tidal wave of debt and default sweeping across the region, which cost billions of dollars to put right.

Over late 1997, the contagion spread unchecked, hitting Southeast Asia first, with Malaysia and Indonesia the worst affected as their currencies and then economies crumpled before the onslaught.

Then it was the turn of South Korea -- an apparently strong economy whose Achilles heel of massive debt forced the government to go to the International Monetary Fund for a huge and humiliating bailout.

Nissan joins \$900m Indian car venture with Renault

AFP, Chennai

Japanese automaker Nissan on Monday tied up with French partner Renault's Indian venture to build a 902 million dollar plant, joining a race with rivals Toyota and Honda for a slice of the South Asian nation's expanding car market.

Indian partner Mahindra and Mahindra will control 50 percent of the venture, with Nissan and Renault sharing the remainder, the three companies said in a joint statement.

The southern city of Chennai, known as India's Detroit, was chosen as the site of the factory, which will have the capacity to turn out 400,000 cars a year seven years after the start of production in 2009.

Nissan and Renault are late-comers to the Indian car market, which is forecast to expand 10 percent a year to reach two million units in 2010 as an economy expanding nine percent a year boosts the buying power of consumers in the world's second-most populous nation.

"With income levels rising, upward mobility is increasing," said K.K. Mittal, a New Delhi-based fund manager at Escorts Asset Management who holds Mahindra shares in his 1.5-billion-rupee portfolio.

"New entrants will boost the auto market by giving a greater choice to the consumer," he said. "There's enough space in the market because everyone is looking for the latest car at a reasonable price."

The Indian car market expanded by 68 percent between 1998 and 2003 to reach 1.04 million vehicles in 2004, according to Renault.



Helaluddin Akbar, MD of GSA Cargo Limited, general sales and services agent of Etihad Airways, speaks at the inauguration of Etihad Crystal Cargo office at Zia airport in Dhaka recently. Khalfan Battal Ali Al Masouri, UAE ambassador, Jill R. Errington, area manager Bangladesh of Etihad, and Sayeeda Khanam, chairman of GSA Cargo, are also seen.



Niaz Uddin Mahmood, general manager of Customer Care of Holcim, speaks at the Engineers' Meet 2007 organised by the company at Uttara in Dhaka recently. Other officials were also present.



SM Shameem Iqbal, managing director of KDS Accessories, speaks at a seminar titled 'HR Management Practices in Bangladesh: Recent Trends' jointly organised by KDS Accessories and Bangladesh Society for Human Resource Management. Also presents were Sarwar Ahmed, managing director of Syngenta Bangladesh Ltd, Parveen S Huda, managing director of Renaissance Consultants Ltd, and AK Raihan, vice president of BSHRM.

CURRENCY

Following is Monday's (February 26, 2007) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank.

Major currency exchange rates			Exchange rate of some currencies	
	BC Sell	TT Buy		
US dollar	69.40	68.05		
Euro	92.95	88.27		
Pound	137.81	131.97	Indian rupee	44.06 1.56
Australian dollar	56.37	52.53	Pak rupee	60.65 1.13
Japanese yen	0.59	0.56	Lankan rupee	108.80 0.63
Swiss franc	57.35	54.23	Thai baht	35.62 1.93
Swedish kroner	10.30	9.27	Malaysian ringgit	3.49 19.69
Canadian dollar	60.93	58.13		
Hong Kong dollar	8.91	8.70		
Singapore dollar	46.45	44.37		
UAE dirham	19.04	18.38		
Saudi riyal	18.65	18.00		
Danish kroner	12.85	11.54		
Kuwaiti dinar	236.63	233.74		
* All currencies are quoted against BDT				
* Rates may vary based on nature of transaction				

USD forward rate against BDT			
	Buy	Sell	
1 M	68.15	69.52	
2 M	68.27	69.73	
3 M	68.41	69.95	
6 M	68.85	70.66	
* The forward rates are indicative only and fixed dated			

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 26/02/2007

Berth No.	Name of Vessels	Cargo	L Port Call	Local Agent	Dt of Arrival	Leaving	Import Disch
J/1	Tian Ling		C. Clink	Sing	MBL	18/02	--
J/2	Banglar Maya	Gl(S. Ash)	P. Band	BSC	21/02	01/3	2148
J/3	Shwe Thara Phu	Gl(Y. Ma)	Yang	TCL	23/02	03/3	552
J/4	Kota Raja	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	24/02	02/3	--
J/5	Asrar-a-mostafa	Gl(S.Ash)	Ohha	Ola	18/02	28/2	687
J/6	Cape Bonavista	Cont	P. Kel	Bdship	23/02	02/3	--
J/7	Fu Wen Shan	Gl(Steel)	Para	Cosco	22/02	27/2	3010
J/8	Eastern Star	Cont	--	PML	R/A	27/2	--
J/10	Oel Freedom	Cont	Ptp	PSSL	22/02	01/3	158

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L port call	Local agent	type of cargo	loading ports
Brave Royal	26/2	Thai	BrsI	C. Clink	--
Mare Hibernum	26/2	P.kel	Seacon	Cont	Sing
Kissama	26/2	P.kel	Vega	Cont	ContSing
Zhe Hai-315	26/2	Sing	PML	Cont	Sing
Kota Petani	26/2	Sing	Pil(Bd)	Cont	Mong
Maria	01/3	Viza	Royal	Feldsper	--
Gao Cheng	27/2	Sing	PML	Cont	Sing
Splendor	27/2	Sing	ASA	Gl(SL C)	--
Santa Barbara	27/2	Kant	Uniship	C. Clink	--
Hpaan	28/2	Yang	MTA	Gl(y. Ma)	--
Tina	28/2	Basu	Litmond	Urea(baic)	--
Phu Tan	28/2	Sing	PSSL	Cont	ContSing
Banga Bijoy	1/3	Cbo	Bandihi	Cont	CBO
Yong Yue-8	28/2	Haid	Seacon	Cont	CBO

Tanker due

	Date of arrival			
Chem Baltic	26/2	Dumai	SNCL	CPO (RM/3)
Al Badiyah	27/2	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/JP-1
Aurora	1/3	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/Sko

Vessels at Kutubdia

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

Sea Drill-6	Pro. Equip	--	IBSA	08/01
Gulf Drl-9	Pro. Equip	--	IBSA	03/01
Pacific Champion	--	--	IBSA	R/A(25/2)
Pacific Steel	P. Equip	--	IBSA	R/A (14/2)
Wirra Keris	--	--	IBSA	R/A(21/2)

Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels Ready

Josco View	Cont	Sing	RSL	21/2
Ja Vesta	Cont	Sing	Vega	25/2
Pacific Express	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	22/2
Mir Damad	Cont	Chenn	BSC	23/2
Kota Cahaya	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	23/2
Precious River	Cont	Sing	Vega	22/2
Banga Biraj	Cont	Sing	Bdship	25/2

The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels at Chittagong port as per berthing sheet of CPA Supplied By Family, Dhaka.

STOCK