

Star BUSINESS

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REVIVAL OF DOHA ROUND

Power brokers to meet in London, Geneva soon

AFP, Geneva

Ministers from four key power brokers in the World Trade Organisation -- Brazil, the European Union, India and the United States -- will meet in the next few days to try to unblock global trade talks, officials said on Friday.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, India's Minister of Commerce Kamal Nath and US Trade Representative Susan Schwab, are due to meet in London over the weekend, officials close to the talks said.

They will then move on to Geneva on Monday and Tuesday where they are expected to meet WTO Director General Pascal Lamy individually, a trade source said.

Lamy has been trying to relaunch the faltering round of negotiations on breaking down barriers to trade in agriculture, services and industrial goods which were launched in the Qatari capital, Doha in 2001.

An agreement between the world's two biggest trading powers, the US and EU, and the two leading developing or emerging nations Brazil and India, is widely regarded as crucial to the hopes

of brokering a compromise among the WTO's 150 members this year.

"There is some sort of a mechanism in place that can deliver a deal. Whether a deal can be achieved remains to be seen," said WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell.

EU Commission spokesman Peter Power played down hopes of a breakthrough, adding that the meetings in London would be confidential and held in secret locations.

"These meetings are part of a long series of discussions by phone or face-to-face which will continue," Power explained.

S'Asia benefit most from Saudi remittances

PTI, Dubai

Nearly 70 percent of Saudi Arabia's USD 14 billion in out bound remittances go to South Asia as Indians are the largest foreign workforce in the kingdom.

Remittances from Saudi Arabia represented more than half of the total transfers made by foreign workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC bloc witnessed outflows of some USD 25.7 billion in remittances during 2006.

Hikmat Ersak, Executive Vice President and Managing Director for Europe the Middle East, Africa and South Asia of Western Union, said, "Out of the USD 14 billion remittance industry in Saudi Arabia, 60 to 70 percent of the money going out is going to South Asia and the Philippines."

Saudi Arabia stands second in the outbound country list after the United States. "In two of the fastest growing regions of the world, India and the Gulf, remittance industry leader, Western Union, is committed to substantially increase its investment in the next two to three years," Ersak added.

Oil above \$61 in Asian trade

AFP, Singapore

Oil prices held steady above 61 dollars Friday as traders shrugged off global equities turmoil and focussed on strong oil demand, traders said.

At 2:45 pm (0645 GMT) New York's main oil futures contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April, dropped 18 cents to 61.82 dollars a barrel from 62.00 dollars a barrel.

The contract earlier hit a peak of 62.49 dollars, which was last seen on December 26.



PHOTO: IDCOL

Masihur Rahman, managing director of Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh (CRAB), and M Fouzul Kabir Khan, executive director and CEO of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL), exchange documents after signing a credit rating agreement recently. Under the deal, CRAB will rate IDCOL. Senior officials from both the sides are also seen.



PHOTO: CARROT COMMUNICATION

The inaugural ceremony of Unilever Super Value Shop was held at Gulshan in Dhaka on Tuesday. Customers will get special benefits from these selective outlets. Rakesh Mohan, chairman and managing director of Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, and Reazul Haque Chowdhury, customer development director of the company, were present at the function.

China's second-hand auto market booming

CEIS, Beijing

Sources with China Automobile Dealers Association (DACA) said that secondhand vehicles in 2006 witnessed a trading volume of 1.9059 million, a year-on-year increase of 31.5 percent, surpassing that of new cars for three years in a row.

DACA predicts that a prosperous secondhand market is emerging in China.

Though growth rate is 6.27 percentage points higher, sale of secondhand autos in 2006 in China just took up 26.4 percent of that of new

ones. However, in America, global largest auto market, sale of the secondhand in 2006 amounting to 42.50 million, was 2.57 times of that of the new ones, which arrived at 16.50 million. Also in Japan, sales of the used vehicles can reach 8 million each year while that of new ones, less than 6 million.

After China's access to WTO, China's automotive industry has seen an explosive growth in output and sales. Though new auto market ranked 2 and as 3 biggest carmakers, China's vehicle ownership per thousand people was 1/5 to 1/6 of the world's level.



PHOTO: GRAMEENPHONE

Mahmud Hasan Khan, managing director of Rising Group, an export-oriented textile and garment manufacturing company, and Khandaker Omar Farhan, head of Direct Sales of Grameenphone Ltd, pose for photographs at a corporate agreement signing ceremony recently. As per the deal, the mobile phone operator will provide complete communication facilities under its 'Business Solutions' package for the Rising Group.

Weekly Currency Roundup

February 25-March 01, 2007

Local FX Market

US dollar remained stable against the Bangladeshi taka last week on back of comfortable supply. The market remained almost unchanged against the taka.

Money Market

Overnight money market was steady throughout the week. The call money rate remained unchanged throughout the week and ranged between 6.25 and 6.75 percent.

International FX Market

The dollar weakened against the euro and yen on Friday, with German economic data boosting the case for higher European interest rates and investors cutting bets on further weakness in the Japanese currency. The dollar was down 0.4 percent against the yen, snapping the pair's first five-day advance since April. The week began as the dollar hit a two-month low against the euro on Monday, hurt by expectations that this week's US data will bolster the case for rate cuts, while a slight unwinding of carry trades lifted the yen. The euro was steady against the dollar, off an earlier two-month high. The dollar was down 0.3 percent against the yen, while the euro was, some way off Friday's record high. Traders said they yen's rise was the result of a slight unwinding of carry trades, where low-yielding currencies are used to fund purchases of higher return assets, but analysts said the move could be short-lived. The New Zealand dollar hit a two-month high after data showing business confidence rose to a two year high in February.

In the middle of the week, the yen gained around 1 percent versus major currencies on Tuesday as falling global stocks, concern about Iran's nuclear programme and jitters ahead of key US data prompted some investors to unwind carry trades. The dollar hit a two-month low against the euro, extending its grind lower ahead of figures from the US housing and consumer sectors which could fan concern about a slowdown in the world's biggest economy and a possible interest rate cut. The dollar was down 1 percent against the yen, a one-week low. The euro was down 0.8 percent against the yen. The Swiss franc hit a two-month high against the dollar and was up 0.2 percent against the euro. The euro hit a two month high against the dollar, up a third of a percent on the day. The dollar was up more than half a percent on the day against the yen, having fallen to a 10-week low on Tuesday. The euro was up 0.1 percent against the yen after touching a 3-week through on Tuesday.

The dollar slipped against the yen on Thursday, holding near a 10-week low as stock market declines across Asia made investors edgy about a further slide in risky assets despite a rebound in US shares the previous session. The dollar slipped against the yen, pulling back from a high struck early in the session. On Tuesday, the dollar fell to its weakest since Dec 15. The euro fell against the yen after hitting a high near 157.30 yen. The single European currency was down against the dollar, off the two month high struck on Tuesday.

-Standard Charter Bank

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