

Star

BUSINESS

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Asian, European stocks plunge

AP, Tokyo

Asian stocks plunged Wednesday and European shares opened sharply lower after Wall Street chalked its second-biggest point drop in four years and rattled already nervous markets worldwide.

The tumble came just as international markets were recovering in recent days from sharp declines in early March amid concerns about overvalued stock prices and slower U.S. economic growth.

But those worries resurfaced as troubles at U.S. sub-prime lenders and lackluster retail sales pushed the Dow Jones industrials down nearly 2 percent Tuesday, sparking selloffs across Asia.

Stocks in Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, India and Australia all fell more than 2 percent, while shares in Singapore and the Philippines tumbled at least 3 percent.

In Europe, London's FTSE 100 dropped 1.7 percent shortly after the open, while Germany's DAX lost 1.8 percent. France's CAC 40 was also 1.7 percent lower.

On the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Asia's biggest bourse, the benchmark Nikkei 225 index sank 501.95 points, or 2.92 percent, to finish at 16,676.89 points. Foreign investors who bought up stocks during the recent rally led the selling, traders said.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index fell 2.6 percent, Indian stocks dropped 3.1 percent, while Philippine stocks plunged 3.4 percent.

Overnight, the Dow fell 242.66, or 1.97 percent, to 12,075.96 amid concerns about problems at U.S. sub-prime lenders, who provide mortgages to people with poor credit. The U.S. Commerce Department also said sales at retailers rose a less-than-expected 0.1 percent in February, suggesting consumer spending might be waning.

"The U.S. sub-prime concern has cast a great shadow on Asia. The worry is that it could spill over and cause the U.S. economy to slow down, and this will cause a domino effect on the world economy," said Lee Cheng Hooi, technical analysis manager at EON Capital in Kuala Lumpur.

"There could be more bloodbath to come."

Still, other analysts maintained that Asia's economic fundamentals remain strong and that the recent round of declines in stock prices were more likely a correction to cool markets that had risen too far too fast over recent months.

"The sell-off is in sympathy with the sharp sell-off we saw overnight on Wall Street, and it highlights the continued nervousness out there," said David Cohen, chief of Asian economic forecasting at Action Economics in Singapore.

"In perspective you could still say that this is a correction after the strong rally that was experienced for the previous several months around the world," he said.

While the U.S. retail sales data and mortgage news that prompted the sell-off on Wall Street "are a little concerning," fundamentals such as strong U.S. jobs data released Friday were still supportive of global equities.

"The world economy seems to be remaining on an upward trajectory," Cohen said.

Indian firms eye Japanese bourses

ANN/ The Statesman

Indian companies are gradually evincing interest in getting listed on the Japanese capital markets, according to Mr Yoshihiro Hasegawa, chief representative of Daiwa Securities Co in India. He was speaking here yesterday at a seminar organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

Mr Hasegawa said that though only two companies from India, Infosys and ICICI Bank have been listed, he expects the number to rise in the coming years. Already one Indian equity fund has been launched in Japan with a fund size of \$80 million. Another such fund is to be started soon.

StanChart awaits nod for China expansion

ANN/ China Daily

Standard Chartered is expected to increase the number of its branches and sub-branches in China from the present 22 to 40 this year and upgrade its three representative offices to branches right after its incorporation upon regulatory approval, said the bank on Tuesday.

Peter Sands, group chief executive of Standard Chartered PLC, described its process of getting approval from the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) to incorporate Standard Chartered (China) Limited as "very smooth".

"We expect to be incorporated early next month and plan to start operating under the new entity next month," Sands said in Beijing.

The new entity will provide a whole range of banking services that it will be entitled to pursue under the CBRC mandate including renminbi services to local residents.



PHOTO: NATIONAL BANK

M Aminuzzaman, managing director of National Bank Ltd, and Asad Khan, managing director of Fareast Finance & Investment Ltd, exchange documents after signing a credit line agreement recently in Dhaka. The deal will help augment the fund of Fareast for lease finance. Other senior officials from both the sides were also present.

CURRENCY

Following is Wednesday's (March 14, 2007) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Major currency exchange rates			Exchange rate of some currencies	
	BC Sell	TT Buy	Per USD	BDT per Currency
US dollar	69.00	68.00	Indian rupee	44.08 1.55
Euro	92.39	88.18	Pak rupee	60.72 1.13
Pound	134.63	129.52	Lankan rupee	109.59 0.63
Australian dollar	55.32	51.77	Thai baht	35.08 1.95
Japanese yen	0.61	0.58	Malaysian ringgit	3.51 19.49
Swiss franc	57.65	54.77		
Swedish kroner	10.25	9.27		
Canadian dollar	59.69	57.26		
Hong Kong dollar	8.85	8.68		
Singapore dollar	46.06	44.25		
UAE dirham	18.95	18.37		
Saudi riyal	18.55	18.00		
Danish kroner	12.77	11.53		
Kuwaiti dinar	235.30	233.64		
* All currencies are quoted against BDT				
* Rates may vary based on nature of transaction				

Local Market

FX: Local inter-bank FX market was active on Wednesday. The demand for USD remained stable, and the volume of cross currency transactions remained steady. The USD fell slightly against Bangladeshi taka.

Money Market

Money market was active on Wednesday. Call money rate remained unchanged and ranged between 6.50 and 7.00 percent.

International Market

The yen kept most of the previous day's gains against the dollar and euro on Wednesday,

after investors unwound risky carry trades as falling stocks and turmoil in the US mortgage sector fanned risk aversion. Tuesday's US data showing that late payment on US mortgages hit a 3-1/2-year high in the fourth quarter and rising debt delinquency in 49 of 50 states fanned concerns that this might affect the broader economy. The dollar was trading slightly higher on the day against the yen having fallen more than one percent on the day on Tuesday. It hit a three-month low against the yen last week. Sterling -- one of the more popular carry trades -- was down 0.3 percent on the day against the yen. The single currency was down slightly against the dollar.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 14/3/2007.

Berth no.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port call	Local agent	Dt of arrival	Leaving	Import disch.
J/1	Banga Borat	Cont	Sing	Bdship	6/3	17/3	127
J/3	Sea Master One	Cont	Sing	PML	7/3	18/3	--
J/4	Hans Schulte	Cont	P. Kel	Everbest	3/3	16/3	264
J/5	Hpaan	Gl(y, Ma)	Yang	MTA	1/3	15/3	335
J/6	Martha Russ	Cont	P. Kel	QCSL	4/3	16/3	166
J/7	Coastal Express	Cont	Chenn	BSC	5/3	14/3	104
J/8	Csav California	Cont	Col	PSSL	5/3	16/3	212
J/9	Jin Cheng (liner)	Gl	Inch	Cosco	11/3	17/3	2531
J/10	Kota Rakayat	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	3/3	14/3	115
J/11	Cape Spencer	Cont	P. Kel	PML	2/3	14/3	37

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Maritime Chaingmai	14/3	Tarj	BSL	C. Clink	Sing
Josco View	14/3	P. kel	RSL	Cont	--
Royal Crown	14/3	Ruae	PSS	Pr. Urea(Boic)	--
Hong Yun	15/3	Basuo	Ltmond	Urea(Boic)	--
Majori	16/3	Sura	JF	Cont	--
Kota Rukun	14/3	Mgl	Pil(Bd)	Scraping	Sing
Banga Biraj	15/3	Sin	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Yongxing	15/3	P. Kel	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Ja Vesta	16/3	Sing	Vega	Cont	Sing
Christina Scan	16/3	Cal	Jardine	1000 W/ld	Pr Cargo
Grace Casablanca	17/3	Sing	H&SI	Gl(st. C)	--
Vinashin Mariner	16/3	Sing	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Phoenix	17/3	Sing	PSSL	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Al Deerah	16/3	Kuwa	MSTPL	HSD/JP-T
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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 (rig)	Pro. Equip	--	IBSA	8/1
Gulf Dnli-9 (barge)	Pro. Equip	--	IBSA	3/1
Wira Kenis	--	--	IBSA	R/A(21/2)
Pacific Champion	--	--	IBSA	R/A(5/3)

Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels ready:

Eagle Progress	Cont	P. Kel	Everbest	5/3
Banga Borak	Cont	Sing	Bdship	7/3
Qc Wisdom	Cont	Sing	QCSL	8/3
Xpress Manaslu	Cont	Col	Seacon	9/3
Banga Borti	Cont	P. Kel	Baridhi	9/3
Cs Helena	Cont	Col	PSSL	10/3
Kota Ratna	Cont	Sing	Pil(Bd)	10/3
Eagle Pride	Cont	P. Kel	CT	10/3
Eagle Pioneer	Cont	P. Kel	CT	11/3
Mardlipper	Cont	Mong	PSSL	12/3
Pac Palawan	Cont	Passer	CEL	13/3
Banga Bonik	Cont	Col	Baridhi	13/3
Xpress Resolve	Cont	P. Kel	Seacon	13/3

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



PHOTO: GRAMEENPHONE

Mobile phone operator Grameenphone Ltd organised International Conference on Information & Communication Technology 2007 in Dhaka between March 7 and March 9. Prof AMM Saifullah, vice chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BuEt), Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice chancellor of Brac University, and Kafil HS Mueyed, director (New Business Division) of Grameenphone, among others, were present at the inaugural ceremony.

STOCK