

Japan's jobless rate hits nine-year low

AFP, Tokyo

Japan got a double dose of good news on the economy Tuesday with the jobless rate hitting a nine-year low and consumer spending up for a fourth straight month.

The upbeat data will make it easier for the Japanese central bank to justify another interest rate rise as a tightening labour market looks set to spur wage growth and consumer spending, stimulating inflation, analysts said.

The surprise fall in the jobless rate to 3.8 percent in April from 4.0 percent in March reflects brisk hiring by firms at the start of the new fiscal year and a shift from part-time to full-time positions, they added.

The last time Japan's unemployment rate was so low was in March 1998, officials said.

"The tightening of the labour market implies greater pressure for wages to rise and this is the sort of news that the Bank of Japan is watching for in its vigilance over any signs of cost-push pressures," noted Macquarie Securities economist Richard Jerram.

The total number of unemployed dipped by 160,000 from a year earlier to 2.68 million in April, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said.

Household spending meanwhile rose 1.1 percent in April from

a year earlier, up for a fourth straight month, lifting Japanese shares prices and the yen.

"The mood of the consumer is improving and the economy continues to expand," said Credit Suisse Securities economist Satoru Ogasawara.

"The warm weather and the Golden Week holidays earlier this month played a key role in pushing up household consumption," he added.

Japan's labour market has been tightening as the economy recovers from its long slump and companies compete to hire skilled young graduates.

But firms have been reluctant to share more of their fast-growing profits with workers, resulting in only meagre wage rises that have meant the recovery in consumer spending has lagged behind the wider revival.

"A majority of salaried workers cannot feel the trickle down effect of (the) economic recovery," Tsuyoshi Takagi, the president of Japan's trade union confederation, or Rengo, told reporters Tuesday.

Recently there have been signs of a long-awaited pick-up in consumer spending, even as consumer prices turn lower again, falling for a third straight month in April although at a slower pace than before.

"As the labour market continues

to tighten, we expect wages to show a clearer upward trend," predicted Barclays Capital's chief economist in Tokyo, Takuji Aida.

"We believe the increase in jobs on the back of strengthening labour shortage perceptions and the accompanying increase in aggregate wages supports consumption," he added.

Reflecting sluggish wage growth, however, household income held steady in April, ending six straight months of gains.

Retail sales fell 0.6 percent in April from a year earlier, the seventh straight monthly drop, separate official figures showed, although analysts said the general trend still appeared to be upwards.

Japan, which for years was beset by stagnant growth and on-off recessions, is now in the midst of its longest sustained expansion since World War II.

But analysts say the US economic slowdown and sluggish wage growth are a concern, while future interest rate rises by the Japanese central bank may dampen consumer spending.

"Consumption is expected to slow down in the second half of the year," said Credit Suisse's Ogasawara.

"Although the Japanese economy is improving, (the recovery) is still only mild and we cannot be overly optimistic," he added.

Apec energy ministers meet in Australia

AFP, Sydney

Apec energy ministers launched a meeting in Darwin Tuesday aimed at finding a balance between the region's booming energy demands and the need to cut carbon emissions and reduce global warming.

The ministers met amid tight security in the northern Australian city a day after police destroyed a suspected pipe bomb found in a park close to the APEC venue. Police did not believe the device was linked to the meeting.

US and Australian delegates downplayed the chances of the meeting agreeing to a regional carbon trading scheme, saying such a one-size-fits-all approach was unsuitable for APEC's 21 nations.

"Different approaches will naturally suit different countries," US Deputy Energy Secretary Clay Sell told reporters.

Australian Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane said more research was needed into clean fuel technologies before regional emissions targets could be introduced.



Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd opened a Q-cash ATM booth in its Gulshan branch premises in the capital recently.



PHOTO: CITYCELL

The prize giving ceremony of 'CityCell Mother's Day Contest' was held in Dhaka on Sunday. Mobile phone operator CityCell organised the SMS based contest on the occasion of the International Mother's Day recently.

CURRENCY

Following is Tuesday's (May 29, 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	69.40	68.40				
Euro	94.22	89.76	Indian rupee	40.26	1.71	
Pound	139.00	133.95	Pak rupee	60.72	1.13	
Australian dollar	58.09	54.50	Lankan rupee	110.72	0.62	
Japanese yen	0.58	0.56	Thai baht	34.61	1.99	
Swiss franc	57.35	54.29	Malaysian ringgit	3.39	20.35	
Swedish kroner	10.58	9.58				
Canadian dollar	65.36	62.56	USD forward rate against BDT			
Hong Kong dollar	8.90	8.73		Buy	Sell	
Singapore dollar	46.47	44.63	1M	68.50	69.51	
UAE dirham	19.06	18.48	2M	68.62	69.72	
Saudi riyal	18.65	18.10	3M	68.77	69.94	
Danish kroner	13.09	11.80	6M	69.21	70.66	
Kuwaiti dinar	237.48	235.68				
* All currencies are quoted against BDT				* The forward rates are indicative only and fixed dated		
* Rates may vary based on nature of transaction						

Local Market

FX: Local inter-bank FX market was active on Tuesday, as the markets of New York and London opened after their national holidays. The demand for USD was stable, and the volume of cross currency transaction was more compared to that of Monday. The USD remained unchanged against the Bangladeshi Taka.

Money Market

Money market was active on Tuesday. Call money rate was stable and most of the deals ranged between 6.75-7.00 percent.

International Market

The dollar fell against major currencies on Tuesday, with dealers and analysts attributing the downturn to selling by emerging market central banks in routine foreign exchange reserve management.



PHOTO: EBL

Ali Reza Iftekhar, acting managing director and chief operating officer of Eastern Bank Ltd, inaugurates the first Student Service Centre of the bank at its Dhanmondi Branch in Dhaka on Sunday. Senior officials of the bank are also seen.

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 29/5/2007

Berth No.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port call	Local agent	Dt of arrival	Leaving	Import disch
J/3	Banglar Mookh	S.Ash/Wheat	Pipa	Bsc	20/5	30/5	196
J/4	An Qing Jiang	Gl	Chin	Cosco	23/5	30/5	3112
J/7	Golden Rain	Ureat(Baic)	Damm	Litmond	15/5	31/5	1530
J/8	Ss Cleveland	Wheat(G)	Toam	Lams	20/5	31/5	1137
J/9	Bi Ro Bong	Rice(P)	Kaki	Hsa	25/5	30/5	1161
J/10	Banglar Maya	Wheat(P)	Sing	Bsc	21/5	31/5	1585
J/12	Oel Freedom	Cont	Sing	Pssl	25/5	30/5	100
CCT/1	Rhone Borg	Cont	Sing	Qssl	27/5	31/5	--
NCT/1	Banga Bodor	Cont	P. Kel	Baridhi	27/5	31/5	--
TSP:	Banglar Mamata	Repair	--	Bsc	R/A	4/6	--
DOJ/5	Fatimah (Rbb)	Cpstr/Cpko	Dumai	Rainbow	25/5	--	--
DOJ/6	Bounty-7	Repair	Chani	Pml	19/5	5/6	--
DD:	Banglar Moni	Repair	--	Bsc	R/A	5/6	--

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Wisdom	29/5	Sing	Apl	Cont	Sing
Portland Castle	29/5	Braz	Usl	R. Sugar	--
Jin Cheng (Liner)	29/5	Baikuan	Cosco	Gl	--
Mir Damad	30/5	Chnn	Bsca	Cont	Viza
Banga Bijoy	27/5	Col	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Hansa London	30/5	P.Kel	Pssl	Cont	Sing
Kissama	30/5	P.Kel	Vega	Cont	Sing
Coastal Express	1/6	Chenn	Bsca	Cont	Viza
Cape Bonavista	30/5	P.Kel	Bdship	Cont	P. Kel
Banga Biraj	31/5	Sin	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Yong Yue-8	31/5	Hald	Seacon	Cont	Col
Eagle Progress	1/6	Sing	Everbest	Cont	Sing
Kota Cahaya	31/5	Sing	Pil(Bd)	Cont	Sing
Dali	30/5	Col	Seacon	Cont	Col
Hpaan	2/6	Yang	Mia	Gl(Log)	--
Pac Aquila	1/6	Sing	Seacon	Cont	Sing
Megachari	1/6	Argen	Litmond	Wheat(G)	--
Eagle Prestige	1/6	Sing	Qssl	Cont	L/Ptp

Tanker due

Banga	1/6	Kuwa	Mspl	Hsd/MS	--
Gas Columbia	29/5	Viza	Mbl	Ammonia	--
Yanee	29/5	Belwa	Mtl	Cpo(Rm/8)	--
Antares	30/5	--	Psl	Hsd(Doj/6)	--
Overseas Camar	30/5	Braz	Esl	Cdso(Rm/3)	19000 W/L
Tabtim	1/6	Indo	Jnship	Cpo(Rm/3)	--
Acoaxet Lady	31/5	Sing	Ctpl	F. Oil(Rm/3)	--
Borak	1/6	Hald	Fsa	Bitumen(Rm/3)	--
Al Sabiyah	2/6	Kuwa	Mstpl	Hsd/Up-1	--
Rich Duchess	3/6	Rast	Dsl	Crude Oil	--

Vessels at Kutubdia

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

Wira Keris	--	--	lbsa	R/A(24/5)
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Vessels not ready

Hoang Son	Field Clay	Dxua	Pml	21/5
You Xuan	Wheat(P)	Russ	Seacom	21/5
Theodor	G. Slag	Viza	Saraf	24/5

Vessels awaiting employment / instruction

Woqoof E-Mujdalefa	--	--	Intraport	R/A(22/5)
Banglar Jyoti	--	--	Bsc	R/A(28/5)

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

STOCK