

Confidence in European economic outlook soaring

AFP, Brussels

The outlook for economic growth in Europe, long the laggard of major economic powers, is running at the highest level for years, according to EU officials and a widely watched survey on Thursday.

Despite the prospect of higher interest rates, firm oil prices and the euro's current strength, confidence in the European economy was the strongest in six years in May, a European Commission survey found.

"We are optimistic that Europe will be able to sustain its recent economic revival," the head of the European Commission's economic department, Klaus Regling, told a conference in Brussels.

Backing up his optimism, the European Commission's economic sentiment indicator rose faster than expected, reaching its highest point since January 2001, due mainly to consumers' upbeat attitude.

The Commission's eurozone economic sentiment indicator increased in May to 111.9 points in the 13 countries using the euro from 111.0 in April, beating economists' forecasts for a steady 111.0 points.

The outlook also improved in the broader 27-member European Union, where the indicator was up to 114.9 points in May from 113.6 in April, the EU's executive arm said.

"Rising consumer confidence was the main driving force behind the improved" outlook, the Commission said. "It in turn was supported by improved services confidence in the EU and retail trade confidence in the euro area."

The survey highlighted a strong improvement in economic confidence in the biggest EU economies, particularly in Britain, followed by France and Germany.

It also showed that overall confidence in Europe was not dampened by broad expectations for the European Central Bank to lift its key interest rates in June.

However, a separate eurozone business climate indicator from the European Commission fell in May to 1.53 points from 1.61 in April, although it remained at a high level.

But while managers surveyed expected lower orders and a weaker production trend, expectations for export orders improved in May despite the euro's strength, which makes eurozone products more expensive on international

markets.

"Even if business activity retreated slightly the overall economic picture was brightened by stronger consumer sentiment, which confirms the gradual shift towards consumer spending as the main pillar of growth in the eurozone," said Bank of America economist Gilles Moeck.

The European Commission is currently forecasting that economic growth in the eurozone countries will reach 2.6 percent this year, outpacing both the United States and Japan.

But Regling said there was even an "upside risk" that growth would turn out stronger than expected by the Commission. "There is a risk that we underestimated growth in Europe," he said.

Economists said that the soaring economic confidence would only comfort the European Central Bank as it keeps raising interest rates in hope of keeping inflation in check.

"We expect the bank to continue to focus on the strength of confidence and activity and therefore to raise interest rates both next week and again in the following months, probably September," said economist Jonathan Loyne with consultancy Capital Economics.

Japanese wages down for fifth month

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's average monthly cash wages fell for a fifth straight month in April despite a drop in unemployment to a nine-year low, the government said Thursday.

Average monthly cash earnings per regular employee fell by 0.7 percent in April to 278,193 yen (2,287 dollars) after a 0.1 percent drop in March, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reported.

The drop reflected an increase in the number of lower-paid part-time workers and the entry of graduates into the workforce at the start of the new business year, analysts said.

The number of regular employees rose 1.6 percent, with part-timers up 3.6 percent and full-time workers up 0.8 percent.

The Japanese government reported Tuesday that unemployment fell to 3.8 percent in April, the lowest level since March 1998.

BASIC Bank declares 38.35pc dividend

The 100 percent state-owned BASIC Bank Ltd has declared a 38.35 percent dividend for the year 2006 of which 32 percent is stock dividend and 6.35 percent cash dividend, says a press release.

The dividend was okayed at the 18th annual general meeting (AGM) of the bank held yesterday in Dhaka.

Chairman of the bank and Secretary to Industries ministry Md Nurul Amin presided over the AGM, which was also attended by directors, managing director and other senior officials.

Correction

In a photo caption on a deal signing between Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh Ltd and Rupali Bank Ltd published on this page on May 21, the name of the bank's managing director was mistakenly written as Md Abdul Halim Miah instead of Md Abdul Hamid Miah.



PHOTO: WARTSILA

Hasan Mahmood, chairman of Malancha Holdings Ltd, and Goran Richardsson, area sales manager of Wartsila Finland Oy, shake hands after signing an agreement recently. Under the deal, Wartsila will supply equipment for a 40-megawatt power plant of Malancha Holdings to be set up in Chittagong Export Processing Zone. KM Ahsan Shamim, director of Malancha Holdings, and Mohammad Shameem, managing director of Wartsila Bangladesh Ltd, were also present at the signing ceremony.



PHOTO: APOLLO HOSPITALS

Apollo Hospitals Dhaka recently signed a corporate agreement with the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh. Under the deal, the hospital will provide medical services at special rates and other corporate benefits for the staff of the embassy. Atsuhiko Koshio, first secretary to the embassy, and Dr Praful B Pawar, director (Medical Services) and Interim CEO of the hospital, signed the deal while other senior officials from both the sides were present.

CURRENCY

Following is Thursday's (May 31, 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
US dollar	69.25	68.25		
Euro	94.55	90.16		
Pound	136.10	133.22	Indian rupee	40.55 1.70
Australian dollar	58.37	54.78	Pak rupee	60.75 1.13
Japanese yen	0.58	0.55	Lankan rupee	110.87 0.62
Swiss franc	57.45	54.37	Thai baht	32.70 2.10
Swedish krona	10.44	9.44	Malaysian ringgit	3.40 20.22
Canadian dollar	65.69	62.86		
Hong Kong dollar	8.85	8.72		
Singapore dollar	46.34	44.50		
UAE dirham	18.01	18.44		
Saudi riyal	18.61	18.05	1M	68.35 69.36
Danish kroner	13.07	11.78	2M	68.47 69.56
Kuwaiti dinar	236.63	234.88	3M	68.62 69.79
			6M	69.06 70.50

* All currencies are quoted against BDT
* Rates may vary based on nature of transaction
* The forward rates are indicative only and fixed dated.



PHOTO: BASIC BANK

The 18th annual general meeting (AGM) of BASIC Bank Ltd was held yesterday in Dhaka. Chairman of the bank and Secretary to Industries ministry Md Nurul Amin presided over the AGM, which was attended by directors, managing director and senior officials from other members.

STOCK

TRADED ISSUES May 31, 2007

Company	FV/MV (Tk./No.)	Price (Tk.)	Turnover (Tk.)	Share	Price (Tk.)	Turnover (Tk.)	Share	Price (Tk.)	Turnover (Tk.)	Share	Price (Tk.)	Turnover (Tk.)	Share
BANK													
AB Bank Ltd.**	10005	1116.25	0.04	1115.75	31911	1134.00	1.20	1147.75	3110	06/09/07	63.0	---	---
City Bank Ltd.**	10016	504.75	4.47	482.25	18718	501.75	3.35	484.50	5290	04/06/07	20.2	---	---
IFIC Bank Ltd.**	10001	1205.75	1.17	1220.00	3385	1209.50	0.22	1236.75	785	07/12/04	15.8	---	---
Islamic Bank BD Ltd.**	10001	4030.00	0.10	4026.00	2911	4019.50	0.31	4007.00	117	01/09/06	325	---	---
National Bank Ltd.**	10002	673.50	3.44	648.00	55369	672.00	3.54	649.00	1920	10/04/07	42.0	---	---
Public Bank Ltd.**	10010	614.00	6.46	576.75	118789	620.00	8.16	572.25	48323	11/03/07	40.2	---	---
Rupali Bank Ltd.**	10001	1856.25	2.61	1855.00	9850	1864.25	3.47	1860.75	11180	12/10/06	28.0	---	---
UCBL**	10050	2324.50	1.34	2336.00	11935	2333.00	0.66	2343.50	1540	---	181	---	---
Uttara Bank Ltd.**	10003	1111.50	3.68	2036.50	9540	2147.00	5.22	2040.50	155	30/04/07	62.2	20.0	---
IDLC Ltd.**	10002	644.75	1.14	637.50	1259	624.50	Not	Not	---	16/04/07	77.5	5.00	---
Eastern Bank Ltd.**	10020	781.25	0.16	738.00	3900	786.50	Not	Not	---	12/06/07	49.5	20.0	---
United Leasing Co. Ltd.**	10024	450.75	1.01	446.25	3109	---	---	---	---	07/05/07	58.6	20.0	---
Uttara Finance and Inv.	10005	455.20	2.30	445.25	2472	450.00	2.27	440.00	50	25/04/07	70.3	10.0	---
Al Arafat Islamic Bank	10005	3088.50	0.15	3083.75	3136	3102.50	1.19	3066.00	95	13/05/07	40.7	---	---
Prime Bank Ltd.**	10050	832.50	1.96	816.50	149577	826.25	1.17	836.00	17429	29/03/07	46.2	15.0	---
Southeast Bank Ltd.**	10050	495.25	2.28	449.00	32853	459.20	2.40	445.75	45336	22/04/07	37.8	20.0	---
Dhaka Bank Ltd.**	10050	501.50	4.48	480.00	32768	500.25	4.76	477.50	69140	28/03/07	31.5	10.0	---
C C Bank Ltd.**	10050	210.75	3.29	266.25	51268	217.75	3.01	265.75	18979	29/04/07	35.4	10.0	---
Secul Investment Bank	10001	1635.75	0.85	1622.00	1110	1616.00	Not	Not	---	06/11/06	23.8	---	---
Dutch Bangla Bank	10050	2200.00	0.00	2200.00	---	11880.00	Not	Not	---	30/04/07	179	25.0	---
Midas Finance and Inv.	10050	24.00	10.82	247.25	28419	20.00	12.50	240.00	1200	20/12/06	12.4	20.0	---
Mutual Trust Bank	10050	393.00	5.36	373.00	48818	391.00	5.68	370.00	12125	17/05/07	47.9	20.0	---
First Leasing Ltd.	10050	247.25	5.32	234.75	600	247.00	6.93	231.00	50	28/05/07	1.5	7.0	---
Standard Bank Ltd.**	10050	31.15	2.38	304.50	34291	31.15	2.38	304.50	7995	29/04/07	26.8	---	---
One Bank Ltd.	10050	277.50	5.01	264.25	21199	272.25	5.18	267.25	2827	28/04/07	15.1	10.0	---
Bank Asia Ltd.**	10050	379.00	4.99	361.00	21082	375.75	2.80	365.50	2100	30/04/07	34.1	---	---
Mercantile Bank	10050	360.00	2.93	347.50	21082	359.50	2.41	347.50	2100	31/05/07	32.9	---	---
Export Import Bank	10050	410.75	6.09	390.00	21083	414.50	6.69	385.50	4543	03/06/07	36.1	20.0	---
People's Leasing	10050	281.00	15.55	332.75	20	336.00	Not	Not	---	29/05/06	23.9	---	---
Prime Finance	10050	262.25	2.24	256.50	4224	260.00	7.13	245.00	121	29/05/07	30.9	20.0	---
Prime Leasing	10050	150.25	0.50	151.00	11080	151.00	0.50	152.00	1250	28/05/07	19.8	15.0	---
Islamic Finance & Inv.	10050	156.50	0.16	156.25	6581	157.00	0.48	156.25	1505	18/05/06	18.0	10.0	---
Jamuna Bank Ltd.	10050	300.50	1.78	295.25	33643	300.50	1.41	296.25	10424	28/09/06	37.2	15.0	---
Banka Bangla Finance	10050	27.50	7.42	25.60	81600	27.50	7.42	25.60	81600	28/05/07	2.56	10.0	---
BIF	10050	158.25	0.16	158.00	11000	158.25	0.32	157.75	1835	29/05/07	20.6	10.0	---
I.P.D.C.	10050	312.00	3.14	302.50	56100	311.75	2.21	305.00	2850	29/05/07	27.5	10.0	---
Shahjalil Islamic Bank	10050	220.75	0.91	218.75	102300	221.50	1.14	219.00	48200	---	23.4	---	---
Prime Bank Ltd.	10050	324.50	1.82	330.00	146750	324.25	2.26	331.75	52900	---	---	---	---
INVESTMENT													
ICB	10050	393.00	2.41	384.25	950	426.00	Not	Not	---	18/10/06	69.9	12.0	---
Int'l ICB Mutual Fund	10050	300.00	0.33	300.00	40	300.00	Not	Not	---	28/05/07	1.59	7.0	---
7th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	620.25	0.59	640.00	50	610.00	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
8th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	247.25	0.52	247.25	600	247.00	6.93	231.00	50	28/05/07	1.5	7.0	---
9th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
10th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
11th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
12th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
13th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
14th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
15th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
16th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
17th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
18th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
19th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
20th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
21st ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
22nd ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
23rd ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
24th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
25th ICB Mutual Fund	10050	275.00	0.58	264.75	2100	252.50	Not	Not	---	15/08/06	66.1	52.0	---
ENGINEERING													
Afshar Automobiles**	10050	299.75	0.65	277.00	2732	178.50	1.92	273.25	70	21/12/06	27.9	20.0	---
Azz Papes Ltd.	10050	71.00	9.27	72.85	2630	71.00	Not	Not	---	28/06/05	159	---	---
Olympic Industries	10050	141.00	1.44	141.00	100	141.00	Not	Not	---	3/4/12/06	13.9	13.0	---
Shahjahan Lamps**	10050	629.50	7.70	584.50	4586	625.00	10.00	570.00	170	20/07/06	17.0	---	---
Eastern Cables Ltd.	10050	356.50	3.02	320.50	16670	355.00	2.78	320.50	7390	14/05/06	10.3	10.0	---
Singer Bangladesh**	10050	104.84	8.81	129.00	2274	139.50	8.84	127.00	45	2/09/07	70.1	30.0	---
Shahjahan Ltd.	10050	110.00	1.90	109.00	1365	110.00	1.90	109.00	1365	21/12/06	8.8	85.0	---
BD Autocore Ltd.	10050	60.25	0.41	60.35	1365	71.00	Not	Not	---	21/12/06	0.06	---	---
Quaden Drycells Ltd.	10050	10.60	0.95	10.50	29000	10.60	1.50	10.50	7000	26/12/06	0.06	---	---
Remon Jewellery Ltd.	10050	152.25	0.97	160.00	250	---	---	---	---	Not Listed	---	---	---
Shahjahan Industries	10050	141.00	1.44	141.00	100	141.00	Not	Not	---	3/4/12/06	13.9	13.0	---
BD, Thil Aluminium Ltd.	10010	53.25	0.48	52.00	700	56.00	Not	Not	---	25/08/05	62.5	---	---
Wonder Linn Toys Ltd.	10050	16.00	1.54	16.25	50	18.00	Not	Not	---	24/12/06	9.8	---	---
Rangpur Foundry Ltd.	10050	19.60	1.55	19.30	23500	19.60	Not	Not	---	14/06/06	18.9	16.0	---
Shahjahan Ltd.	10050	141.00	1.44	141.00	100	141.00	Not	Not	---	17/03/07	10.8	15.0	---
Golden Sun Ltd.**	10050	74.50	0.89	13.50	234500	14.70	7.30	13.70	53000	---	---	---	---
FOOD & ALLIED													
Alpha Tobacco Ltd.	10050	14.00	0.80	2.50	2700	13.00	Not	Not	---	26/06/06	25	---	---
Alpha Foods Ltd.	10050	146.00	1.46	146.00	100	146.00	Not	Not	---	26/06/06	25	---	---
Alpha Foods Ltd.	10050	388.75	5.27	529.55	2155	450.00	1.49	560.00	30	24/12/06	21.7	16.0	---
Tripath Industries Ltd.	10050	26.00	2.80	26.75	6750	28.00	Not	Not	---	24/12/06	11.9	---	---
Bangladesh Food Mills	10050	236.00	1.29	233.00	15	250.00	1.15	253.00	50	30/12/06	149	---	---
BD F&C**	10050	110.00	1.00	110.00	100	110.00	Not	Not	---	21/06/06	2.49	---	---
National Tea Co. Ltd.	10050	721.75	3.32	699.25	245	680.75	Not	Not	---	03/06/06	41.2	20.0	---
Sri Bangla Sugar Mills	10050	14.00	3.70	13.50	8300	---	---	---	---	23/12/06	0.33	---	---
Banladesh Fisheries**	10020	17.25	0.00	17.25	1040	18.50	Not	Not	---	24/06/06	4.7	---	---
Shahjahan Ltd.	10050	141.00	1.44	141.00	100	141.00	Not	Not	---	3/4/12/06	13.9	13.0	---
Raspi Int'l (bd) Ltd.	10050	13.00	1.30	3.00	13.00	13.74	1.4	14	23000	24/12/02	0.12	---	---
AMCL (Pvt)**	10010	388.50	0.38	390.00	701	400.00	Not	Not	---	21/12/06	36.1	26.0	---
Dakka Fisheries Ltd.	10050	141.00	0.00	55.50	150	60.00	Not	Not	---	21/12/06	4.32	20.0	---
Shahjahan Food Mills	10010	388.50	0.38	390.00	701	400.00	Not	Not	---	21/12/06	36.1	26.0	---
Rahima Food Corp.	10050	26.75	2.73	27.50	200	27.00	Not	Not	---	23/12/04	14	---	---
Gold Foods Ltd.	10050	43.00	0.40	43.00	3650	44.50	Not	Not	---	30/12/06	1.15	3.00	---
Shahjahan Food Mills	10050	110.00	1.00	110.00	800	112.50	Not	Not	---	21/12/06	14	---	---
Banladesh Fisheries**	10020	17.25	0.00	17.25	1040	18.50	Not	Not	---	24/06/06	4.7	---	---
Wang Food Ltd.	10050	13.00											