

# West African economic bloc faces bleak outlook in 2007

AFP, Dakar

Lacklustre growth, ballooning petroleum imports, cotton sales hit by Western subsidies and a lingering political crisis in the region's former star economy have crippled a west African economic bloc.

The eight-nation West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), home to some 80 million inhabitants, is set to record a relatively poor growth rate this year, the head of the region's central bank said Tuesday.

"The year 2007 could also be marked by a relatively feeble growth of four percent," said Damo Justin Barro, the acting governor of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO).

The growth rate last year was a mere 3.2 percent -- two percentage points lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa -- and clearly insufficient to pull out the area from endemic poverty.

The UEMOA is a customs and monetary union between some of the members of the larger Economic Community of West African States regional grouping.

It comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Togo and Senegal.

The poor growth rate was blamed to a large degree on falling agricultural revenues, especially for cotton, which is a major cash crop in the region.

Western states provide huge subsidies for their cotton producers, thereby affecting exports from West Africa. Some of the bloc's members argue that the effect of international debt waivers are offset by such subsidies.

The bank chief however said inflation across the region had been contained at an average of 2.3 percent last year against 4.3 percent in 2005.

The grouping has also felt the backlash of a long-drawn political crisis in Ivory Coast, which is still the region's economic powerhouse and the world's top cocoa producer despite having been split in half since a failed uprising in September 2002.

The country's main port Abidjan, which was a regional hub and serviced many of the landlocked countries, has experienced a sharp fall in traffic. But it is still far ahead in terms of volumes than its nearest rival Dakar.

This has driven up costs of goods in the hinterland as they now have to be transported along longer

distances overland.

The BCEAO in a new report warned that the current oil shock had also driven up the prices of oil exports except for the region's sole producer Ivory Coast.

The oil import bill comprised 32 percent of the sum of total imports last year against 19 percent in 2002, it said.

It said the sagging performance of the region's key sectors "showed up the fragility of the economic structures and their vulnerability to external shocks."

Last year, only two nations in the grouping registered an improved growth rate. Benin's economy grew 3.6 percent against 2.9 percent the previous year while Togo's performance rose to 1.5 percent from 0.8 percent.

Growth in Ivory Coast stagnated at 1.8 percent and fell in other countries, notably to 3.1 percent in Senegal from 5.5 percent in the previous year and Niger, where the growth rate halved year-on-year to 3.5 percent.

Meanwhile Western subsidies for cotton growers and chemical producers hit local exports badly. Cotton is among the main revenue earners for Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo.

## Acer repair service launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

Executive Technologies Ltd (ETL), the local business partner of computer and accessories maker Acer, on Saturday launched a service to repair all Acer notebooks and desktops.

The service called "Two-day Express Service" is a programme offered to all Acer notebook and desktop customers of ETL.

The Acer will repair and return all notebooks and desktops within two business days. ETL authorities told the service launching ceremony.

The "Two-day Express Service" is applicable to one-year warranty period of Acer notebook and desktop.

Md Ehsanul Haque, director of ETL, and Salman Ali Khan, manager (sales and marketing) of ETL, among others were present.



PHOTO: STAR  
Officials of Executive Technologies Ltd (ETL), the local business partner of computer and accessories maker Acer, on Saturday inaugurate Acer repair service in Dhaka.



PHOTO: BANK ASIA LIMITED  
Syed Anisul Huq, president & managing director, senior executives and branch managers of Bank Asia Limited are seen at the half-yearly managers' conference held at the corporate office of the bank in Dhaka on Thursday.

## CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's (July 8, 2007) foreign exchange rate 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	68.95	67.95	
Euro	95.61	91.10	
Pound	140.19	135.03	Indian rupee 40.19 1.70
Australian dollar	60.32	57.27	Pak rupee 60.38 1.13
Japanese yen	0.57	0.55	Lankan rupee 111.56 0.61
Swiss franc	57.08	55.25	Thai baht 31.44 2.18
Swedish kroner	10.24	9.49	Malaysian ringgit 3.45 19.85
Canadian dollar	66.36	64.04	USD forward rate against BDT
Hong Kong dollar	8.83	8.68	Buy Sell
Singapore dollar	45.82	44.45	
UAE dirham	18.93	18.38	1M 68.04 69.05
Saudi riyal	18.53	17.98	2M 68.17 69.26
Danish kroner	13.23	11.90	3M 68.31 69.48
Kuwaiti dinar	235.96	234.22	6M 68.50 70.20

\*All currencies are quoted against BDT.

\* Rates may vary based on nature of transaction.

Local Market FX

Local inter-bank FX market subdued on Sunday as the international market was closed for the weekend. The demand for USD was stable against the Bangladeshi Taka. However, the volume of

cross currency transactions was limited.

Money Market

Money market was active on Sunday. Call money rate was stable and most of the deals ranged between 6.50-6.60 percent.



## SHIPPING

### Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 8/7/2007

Berth	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port	Local agent	Dtof	Leaving	Import
J/6	Kota Ratna	Cont	Sing	P(Bd)	6/7	8/7	130
J/8	Mol Karina	Cont	P. Kel	Seacon	4/7	8/7	--
J/9	Banga Borti	Cont	P. Kel	Baridhi	4/7	8/7	--
J/11	Mir Damad	Repair	Ctg	Bsca	6/7	--	--
J/12	Xpress Manasu	Cont	P. Kel	Seacon	5/7	9/7	198
CCT/1	Eagle Progress	Cont	P. Kel	Everest	4/7	8/7	--
CCT/3	Banga Borat	Cont	Sing	Bdship	6/7	8/7	--
CCJ/1	Hao Hang	Cont	Gi(St)	Thai Cosco	4/7	8/7	--
CCJ/2	Maritime Songkla	C. Clink	Tarj	Bsl	4/7	10/7	--
DOJ/6	Al Sabiyah	Hsd	Kuwa	Mstpl	4/7	--	--

### Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Qing Jiang (Liner)	8/7	Hanj	Cosco	Gi	J/7
Apl Lilac	8/7	Kol	Apl	Cont	Sing
Pac Makassar	8/7	Kol	Cel	Cont	Sing
Dawei (Liner)	8/7	Yangon	Everett	Gi(St.C)	--
Maria	10/7	Viza	Sunmoon	Slag	--
Pac Palawan	9/6	Sing	Cel	Cont	Sing
Martha Russ	10/7	Sing	Qcsl	Cont	Sing
Banga Bonik	9/7	Col	Baridhi	Cont	Cbo
Oel Freedom	10/7	Col	Pssl	Cont	Cbo
Pac Aquila	8/7	Sing	Seacon	Cont	Sing
Wisdom	9/7	Sing	Apl	Cont	Sing
Allegiance	9/7	Kala	Lams	Wheat(G)	--
Niki T	9/7	Tanj	Bsl	C. Clink	--
Rea	10/7	Sing	Rainbow	Soyabeen	--
Banga Banka	13/7	Col	Baridhi	Cont	Col

### Tanker due

Berth	Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port call	Local agent	Type of cargo	Loading ports
Borak	8/7	Hald	Fsa	Bitumen (Rm/3)	--	
Gulf Riyad	8/7	--	Psl	Hsd (Dp/6)	--	
Al Kuwaitiit	10/7	Kuwa	Mstpl	Hsd/Jp/1	--	
Shina	10/7	Dumai	Usl	Cpo(Rm/4)	--	

### Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Wira Keris	--	--	Ibsa	R/A(30/6)
United Dynamic	Crude Oil	Jebel	Dsl	27/6

### Outside port limit

Wira Keris	--	--	Ibsa	R/A(30/6)
United Dynamic	Crude Oil	Jebel	Dsl	27/6

### Vessels at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Eagle Pride	Cont	Ptp	Qcsl	7/7
Ja Vesta	Cont	P. Kel	Vega	7/7
Banglar Mookh	Wheat(G)	--	Benam	R/A(2/7)

### Vessels not ready

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Aetos	Cdso	Sing	Rainbow	5/7