

Global commodity prices strike record highs

AFP, London

The price of oil soared to an historic high above 101 dollars this week...

Prices of raw materials are surging on concerns over tight supplies and strong demand for raw materials...

OIL: New York crude spiked Wednesday to a record high of 101.32 dollars a barrel...

"Oil gained sharply, supported by a combination of factors, including persistent supply concerns..."

"In addition to continuing worries over the ongoing row between Exxon Mobil and Venezuela..."

Venezuela, with the Latin American exporter threatening to cut more supplies to the US...

Despite supply worries, the Organisation of Petroleum Countries could cut output at its meeting in Vienna next month...

One Opec member is Venezuela, which has reduced supplies to the United States owing to a row with US energy giant ExxonMobil...

CRUDE PRICES SLUMPED ON THURSDAY after two days of record peaks as a stronger-than-expected rise in US crude-oil reserves damped supply jitters...

GOLD AND SILVER: Gold prices enjoyed a record high of 953.91 dollars per ounce on Thursday...

rising inflation and surging oil prices.

James Moore of TheBullionDesk.com said the precious metal "looks set to extend higher in the coming sessions as investors seek assets to offset rising inflation..."

He added: "The metal should now look to challenge 950 dollars, with 1,000 dollars an ounce still a realistic target this quarter..."

Meanwhile on Thursday, silver hit the highest level for 27 years, at 18.05 dollars an ounce.

"Silver mirrored the move in gold... hitting a new multi-decade high," noted UBS analyst John Reade.

He added that runaway crude oil prices had underscored bumper

gains for corn or maize, which is used to produce ethanol, a clean plant-based fuel.

May-dated soybean meal -- used in animal feed -- soared to 14.24 dollars from 14.05 dollars.

The price of maize for March delivery advanced to 5.21 dollars a bushel from 5.14 dollars a week earlier.

SUGAR: Sugar prices also gained ground on fund buying.

By Friday on LIFFE, the price per tonne of white sugar for May delivery jumped to 376 pounds from 372.10 pounds a week earlier.

Production in several major producing countries including Malaysia and Thailand was hampered by the dry season, which means that trees produce less latex.



M Mosharraf Hossain, chairman and managing director of Rapport Bangladesh Ltd, is seen with 'HR Leadership Award' at the 'Global HR Excellence Award 2008' function held recently in India.

Rapport boss gets int'l award for HR leadership

M Mosharraf Hossain, chairman and managing director of Rapport Bangladesh Ltd, has won 'HR Leadership Award' at the 'Global HR Excellence Award 2008' function of the Asia Pacific HR Congress.

The award giving ceremony was held recently in India, says a press release.

Hossain was given away the award by Indian Accor Services due to his outstanding contribution to the development of human resource management practices in Bangladesh.

The award was given to 30 HR leaders and professionals from 25 countries, including USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia and China.

New executive director of cotton dev board

Md Abdul Zabbar Mia has joined the Cotton Development Board as its new executive director, says a press release.

Prior to the assignment, he was director at the food grain wing of the Agriculture Extension Department.

Earlier, he held different important positions in Agriculture Extension Department and Cotton Development Board.

Baht hits another high against dollar

ANN, THE NATION

The baht rose relentlessly to a new historic high yesterday (Feb 22), reaching 32.30 baht against the greenback amid fears of a US recession and exporters' concern over the abolition of capital controls.

The Bank of Thailand (BOT) said it was continuing to intervene in foreign markets to stabilise the baht and the Kingdom's competitiveness remained unchanged as it was moving in line with other currencies in the region.

The baht opened at 32.45 to 32.46 against the US dollar and strengthened throughout the day's trading to close at a peak of 32.30 baht to 32.31 baht despite intervention from the central bank, dealers said.

A forex dealer at BankThai said the baht's appreciation was due mainly to the weakening of the dollar after US economic data announced on Wednesday showed negative signs. In particular, the growth of US gross domestic product (GDP) this year is expected to be lower than earlier forecast.

Microsoft says it won't uproot Yahoo

AP, Seattle

Microsoft Corp. said Friday it won't totally uproot Yahoo Inc. from its Sunnyvale, Calif. headquarters if it succeeds in its bid to buy the Web portal company.

"In bringing the companies together, we would be committed to maintaining Yahoo's significant presence in Silicon Valley," wrote Kevin Johnson, president of Microsoft's platforms and services division, in an e-mail to employees.

Johnson noted that Microsoft employs 1,800 people in nearby Mountain View.

The e-mail was written in question-and-answer format to address recent issues raised by employees. But Johnson did not directly answer questions about staffing and layoffs.

"While some overlap is expected in any combination of this size, we should remember that Microsoft is a growth company that has hired over 20,000 people since 2005, and we would look to place talented employees throughout the company as a whole," he wrote.

Johnson's comments seem aimed at responding to Yahoo's decision to adopt new severance plans earlier in the week.

The company will "further" use the exchange rate policy to balance the economy, the report added.

"(We) will further bring out the role of the exchange rate in adjusting the balance of international payments and promoting balanced economic growth," said the report, which was published on the bank's website.

Analysts said the wording signals that monetary policymakers may consider quickening the pace

of yuan appreciation to help curb inflation. Growth of the consumer price index (CPI), a bellwether of inflation, surged to an 11-year high of 7.1 per cent last month as snowstorms cut transportation and power, and pushed up food and energy prices.

Analysts warned the situation may worsen through February and March.

"The underlying inflationary pressure/momentum is even stronger than the January headline number is suggesting, and CPI inflation will likely make two more new highs to reach 7.8 per cent in February and 8 per cent in March," said Ma Jun, chief economist of Deutsche Bank, Greater China.

He said in a research note that since the snowstorms happened in



NCC Bank Ltd has opened its fourth brokerage house in Khulna recently. Chairman of the bank Tofazzal Hossain inaugurated the house, while Managing Director Md Nurul Amin and senior officials, among others, were present.

China faces increasing inflation risk

ANN, CHINA DAILY

China's central bank warned on Friday (Feb 22) that China is facing an "increasing" risk of inflation and said price levels will remain high throughout the first half of the year.

"There is an increasing inflation risk," said the People's Bank of China's monetary policy report for the fourth quarter of last year.

The bank will "further" use the exchange rate policy to balance the economy, the report added.

"(We) will further bring out the role of the exchange rate in adjusting the balance of international payments and promoting balanced economic growth," said the report, which was published on the bank's website.

Analysts said the wording signals that monetary policymakers may consider quickening the pace

of yuan appreciation to help curb inflation.

Growth of the consumer price index (CPI), a bellwether of inflation, surged to an 11-year high of 7.1 per cent last month as snowstorms cut transportation and power, and pushed up food and energy prices.

Analysts warned the situation may worsen through February and March.

"The underlying inflationary pressure/momentum is even stronger than the January headline number is suggesting, and CPI inflation will likely make two more new highs to reach 7.8 per cent in February and 8 per cent in March," said Ma Jun, chief economist of Deutsche Bank, Greater China.

He said in a research note that since the snowstorms happened in

the second half of January, much of the inflationary impact of the natural disasters will be reflected in February.

Moreover, although raw agriculture prices went up substantially last month, it normally takes one or two months for the pressure to pass through to manufactured and processed food items, which will add pressure to inflation in the following months.

The inclement weather may have disrupted the supply chain of some products, which will take quite some time to recover, Sun Lijian, senior economist with Shanghai's Fudan University, said.

"I heard that in some places, pigs died due to the cold," he said. Food price rises may in turn spill over to other sectors, pushing up prices of other products and labor costs.



The 'Annual Marketing Conference-2007' of Butterfly Marketing Ltd that markets home appliances in Bangladesh was held recently in Malaysia. Chairman and Managing Director of the company MA Mannan and senior officials, among others, were present at the conference.

Surge in gas prices could be short-lived

AP, New York

Gas prices jumped Friday to their highest level since June, a possible preview of what many analysts believe will be a record spike in pump prices this spring.

But the current price surge could be short-lived. While gasoline has risen sharply in recent days in response to oil's dramatic climb to a new record above \$101 a barrel, gas supplies have quietly grown to their highest level in 14 years.

"We've got a major supply cushion," said Jim Ritterbusch, president of energy consultancy Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Ill.

At the pump, gas prices rose 2.9 cents overnight to a national average of \$3.115 a gallon, according to AAA and the Oil Price

Information Service. That was the highest since June 8.

At the same time, March gasoline futures rose 1.17 cents to settle at \$2.5337 a gallon on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Meanwhile, light, sweet crude for April delivery rose 58 cents to settle at \$98.81 a barrel on concerns about potential supply disruptions and cold weather.

Many analysts believe gas prices will rise this spring to new records near \$3.75 or \$4 a gallon. But not everyone agrees.

Ritterbusch, for example, thinks the high level of supplies, and an eventual decline in oil prices, will pull pump prices down. He doubts prices will rise as high as \$3.75 without a major overseas supply disruption or domestic refinery outage.

Asean to set hospitality standards

ANN, VIENTIANE TIMES

Asean countries will set service standards in the tourism and hospitality sector through the development of a tourism curriculum for the region.

Representatives from government and private sectors working in the tourism and hospitality sector met in Vientiane to discuss the final outputs of a Common Asean Tourism Curriculum prepared by regional representatives, supported by the Australian government through AusAID.

Speaking at the national workshop, the Vice Chairman of the Lao National Tourism Administration, Soukaseum Bodhisane, said this move was very important to the tourism industry of Laos and other Asean countries.

"A specific tourism curriculum will enable us to promote Asean tourism as well as the Asean coop-

eration framework in the hospitality sector."

Laos is one of four recent Asean member countries. To align with regional standards, Soukaseum said "We need to develop a curriculum in Laos to meet Asean standards in order to compete with other countries."

He said Laos needed to improve the Association of Travel Agents and the Hotel and Restaurant Association, because these agencies provide direct services to visitors.

In the past, the curriculum used in teaching tourism in Laos was put together from foreign tourist handbooks, and was not suitable for conditions in Laos, the vice chairman said.

He urged the parties concerned to review and improve the existing curriculum. "We have to assimilate the lessons learnt from other countries in developing a curriculum of our own."

"We are concentrating on human development, especially in the tourism sector," he added.

The National University of Laos teaches a bachelor degree course in tourism and hotel management, but it is not comprehensive enough, said Soukaseum.

"If we can develop to the standard that Asean has outlined, the quality of our services will match those of other countries in the region. When this happens, looking for a job in the hospitality sector will be easier," he said.

A common Asean tourism curriculum would be an important step in the cooperation of member countries on a range of issues for the benefit of Asean, said Project Director Mr Wayne Crosbie.

Such a curriculum would enable the recognition of common skills and standards and relate to the Asean Common Competency Standard, he said.

Table with multiple columns: কাজের বিবরণ, কাজের স্থান, দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য, আমানতের পরিমাণ (টাকায়), কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়কাল. Includes a list of jobs and their details.

Directorate General Defence Purchase. Ministry of Defence. Tender Notice. 1. Sealed tenders in foreign currency are invited from bonafide manufacturers/suppliers (enlisted firms in DGDP) for supply of the following items for Bangladesh Armed Forces: 1. Skimmed Milk Powder 250 Metric Tons. 2. Tender schedule with detailed specifications/conditions will be available on payment as per IT selling rate (non-refundable) during office time between 0800 hours to 1300 hours.