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SECTION II PAGE 9

SEPPELLT



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Moratorium on US banks takeover by foreigners urged

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The General Accounting Office said there should be a moratorium on foreign acquisitions of US banks with assets of \$100 million or more.

The recommendation by the GAO does not have the force of law, but a House banking subcommittee said the request gives new urgency to the need for a full scale congressional review of foreign banking in the US.

The GAO said in a report it recommended the moratorium because some foreign banks have the opportunity to buy medium to large US banks which other US banks are prevented from buying.

However, it said "for the most part" foreign investors have improved weak US banks and maintained strong US banks they acquired by adding new capital, changing management, improving loan portfolios and stopping self-dealing transactions.

As of December 1979, foreign investors held \$202.6 billion in US banking assets. This accounted for 13.7% of US banking assets.

Foreign banks controlled \$182.9 billion or 90% of the US assets controlled by foreign investors. Foreign individuals and non-bank organizations held \$19.7 billion or 9.8%.

The GAO said pending acquisitions by foreigners will increase the level of banking assets under foreign control to 16%.

The House banking subcommittee headed by representative Fernand St. Germain said he will hold hearings on the GAO report September 24 and 25.

US trade deficit declines in July

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 (AFP) - The US trade deficit dropped perceptibly in July, particularly because of a 1.7% decrease in oil imports in both value and volume terms, the commerce department announced Wednesday.

What the commerce department calls the "apparent trade deficit" was only \$1.85 billion in July, against \$2.28 billion in June, \$3.96 billion in May, and \$1.78 billion in March.

Oil imports in July were only 175.5 million barrels, against 213.1 million barrels in June, making the July figure the lowest monthly level in more than four years. The value of July oil imports was \$5.7 billion, against the \$6.8 billion of June.

The department said that during July, all US imports calculated on an FAS basis amounted to \$18.07 billion, down 3% from the June figure. On an CIF basis, overall imports amounted to \$19.9 billion, a drop of 4.8% from the previous month.

A drop in American exports in July, contrasting with almost continuous rises for some months previously, reflected a reduction in exports of manufactured goods, which amounted to \$12.01 billion in July compared with \$12.27 billion in June.

Jobless Britons exceed 2 million

LONDON (Reuters) - The number of jobless Britons exceeded 2 million for the first time since World War II, with a sharp rise in the underlying trend, government officials said.

The number of jobless adults, seasonally adjusted, was a new post-war peak of 1,896,600 after a record monthly rise of 89,900 registered as unemployed.

Employment Secretary James Prior said in a statement the failure to reach suitable pay increases in the last few years caused unemployment to be higher than usual or necessary.

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WG wants more access to Japanese market

WEST BERLIN (Reuters) - West German Economics Minister Otto Lamsdorff said he expected Japan and other industrialized countries to make their home markets more accessible in the future to West German imports.

It is "protosque" that Japan exported three million cars in 1979 and only imported 35,000, despite a pronounced preference for certain foreign cars on the Japanese market, he said in a speech at the opening of a trade fair.

But if import controls were brought in against Japanese goods, they might be extended to other countries, resulting in a worldwide wave of protectionism which could ultimately threaten German jobs.

MITI chief deems bank discount rate too small

TOKYO (Reuters) - Minister of International Trade and Industry Rokusuke Tanaka said the 0.75% cut in the official discount rate to 8.25% made by the Bank of Japan last week, was too small, considering the fact that the bank raised it by a large margin of 1.75% to 9% last March.

Tanaka told a press conference he believed the discount rate is not functioning properly in Japan, because it usually takes one month after the newspapers start speculating about its possible change before an

actual decision is made. The present practice of fixing the discount rate through exclusive high-level consultation between the Bank of Japan and the finance ministry should be altered, so that wider economic circles may participate in the consultation for quicker decisions, Tanaka said.

He also said the discount rate is important in stabilizing the balance of payments and preventing yen fluctuations.

The Japanese Cabinet council on economic measures will meet around September 5 to adopt a package of economy-boosting measures, including hastening of conclusion of public works contracts, increased housing finance, and promoting industrial plant exports, Tanaka said.

This is because the Japanese economy has been showing signs of a slowdown, including a large number of bankruptcies and a decline in electric power consumption, which cannot be explained by an unusually cool summer alone, he said.

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