

WORLD BUSINESS BRIEFING

EUROPE

New Attempts to Salvage a Global Trade Agreement

European and American officials called for improved access to developing markets yesterday, while countries like India and Brazil renewed pleas for deeper cuts in farm subsidies by rich nations. Representatives from Brazil, Europe, India, Japan and the United States sought to rescue negotiations for a new global agreement before the Dec. 13-18 meeting of all 148 World Trade Organization members in Hong Kong. The European trade commissioner, Peter Mandelson, left, sought to move the focus away from farm subsidies, saying that if agriculture "continues to keep everything else blocked at the gate, we cannot get to Hong Kong in the shape we need." The United States trade representative, Rob Portman, said Washington "will be standing" with Europe on opening up access to developing world markets in exchange for easing farm support.



James Kanter (IHT)

Ireland: Ryanair Posts Record Profit, but Shares Fall

Ryanair Holdings, Europe's largest low-cost airline, reported record quarterly profit as sales soared 32 percent. Net income for the period ended Sept. 30 rose 17 percent, to 172.5 million euros (\$203.8 million), or 0.22 euro a share. Second-quarter sales rose to 541 million euros (\$639 million). But the stock fell as much as 5 percent after the airline said fares would decline in the fourth quarter. The chief executive, Michael O'Leary, said he would keep cutting fares to win market share and to double in size in five years, carrying 70 million passengers annually.

(Bloomberg News)

Germany: Munich Re Profit Rises 35% on Allianz Deal

Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurer, reported a 35 percent increase in third-quarter profit as proceeds from selling a stake in Allianz cushioned losses from the worst hurricane season in the United States. Net income rose to 492 million euros (\$581 million), or 2.16 euros a share, from 365 million euros, or 1.60 euros a share, in the year-earlier period, the company reported yesterday. Munich Re said full-year profitability is within reach. Munich Re benefited from an after-tax gain of 552 million euros (\$652 million) on the sale of a stake in Allianz.

(Bloomberg News)

ASIA

Japan: Japan Airlines to Reduce Wages by 10%

Japan Airlines sank to a loss for the six months through September, citing fuel prices and safety concerns, prompting it to announce an average 10 percent pay cut for its workers. The wage cuts are to be introduced from Jan. 1, 2006, to March 2008, and the company is to hold talks with labor unions, it said yesterday in a statement. The pay of board members will be reduced 23 percent to 40 percent, it said. Japan Airlines, known as JAL, posted a group net loss of 12.04 billion yen (\$102 million) for the six months, its first half-year loss in two years.

(AP)

AMERICAS

Canada: Investment Firm to Buy Software Maker

Golden Gate Capital, a private investment firm based in San Francisco, said yesterday that it would buy the software maker Geac Computer in a \$1 billion cash transaction. Geac, once Canada's largest software company, accepted the offer after reviewing bids from 25 prospective buyers. Based in Markham, Ontario, Geac makes financial management software and was hard hit by the fall in software spending after upgrades leading to 2000. Golden Gate plans to transfer some of Geac's product lines to Infor, a company based in Waltham, Mass., that it already owns.

Ian Austen (NYT)