

## Tokyo rubber futures extend gains as yen weakens (Mar. 8)

TOKYO, March 8 (Reuters) – Key TOCOM rubber futures rose to a one-week high on Friday as a weaker yen helped extend gains into a fourth session, although further buying was seen limited as investors await China's trade data and U.S. jobs figures later in the day.

FUNDAMENTALS\* The key Tokyo Commodity Exchange rubber contract for August delivery  $\text{0#2JRU}$ ; was changing hands up 2.3 yen at 293.8 yen per kg as of 0032 GMT. It earlier rose as high as 294.7 yen, its highest since Feb. 28.

\* The TOCOM market is poised to rise about 3 percent this week.

\* The benchmark contract fell on Monday as far as 281.0 yen, a two-and-a-half month low, before improved U.S. economic data fueled demand optimism and invited fresh buying.

\* The dollar hit a 3-1/2 year high around 95.10 yen on Thursday on expectations of further monetary easing. Haruhiko Kuroda, a vocal advocate of aggressive easing, is expected to take over as governor of the Bank of Japan when the bank next meets in early April.

\* Major rubber buyers have started to hold back from the market as prices were set to rise during the dry season, when production drops and inventories fall, dealers said on Thursday.

\* Chinese trade figures on Friday are set to lead a flurry of indicators underlining that the world's second-largest economy gathered steam in February, adding some momentum to a recovery from its slowest full-year of growth since 1999.

\* Japanese gross domestic product was flat in October-December from the previous quarter, government data showed on Friday, revised up slightly from a preliminary estimate, suggesting that the economy is slowly crawling out of a mild recession.

\* Japan's Nikkei share average rose above the 12,000 mark at the open on Friday, buoyed by signs of improvement in the euro zone economy and bullish U.S. jobs data, with Japanese stocks underpinned by expectations of more monetary easing.

\* The euro held on to gains early in Asia on Friday, having posted its second biggest one-day rally this year, after the European Central Bank wrong footed investors who had positioned for a more dovish signal from ECB President Mario Draghi.

\* U.S. crude gained more than \$1 a barrel on Thursday as data showed an unexpected drop in U.S. unemployment benefits and the dollar weakened.

DATA EVENTS\* The following data is expected on Friday: (Time in GMT)N/A China ExportsN/A China ImportsN/A China Trade balance1100 Germany Industrial output1330 U.S. Unemployment rate1330 U.S. Non-farm payrolls1700 World agricultural supply and demand report1930 U.S. CFTC commitment of traders data(Reporting by Risa Maeda; Editing by Richard Pullin)