

Four African nations to take US, EU to WTO Row over cotton subsidies

AFP, Abidjan

Four African cotton-producing countries said on Sunday they would file complaints to the World Trade Organisation against the United States and European Union for cotton subsidies they believe to be anti-competitive.

The trade ministers of Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali took the decision to ask the WTO to look into US and EU cotton subsidies at meeting last week in the Burkina Faso capital Ouagadougou.

Burkina's trade minister Benoit Ouattara said the complaint was designed "to correct the injustice and seek further support for the

development of the countries", where cotton is a major source of revenue.

Brazil has also filed a WTO complaint against US cotton subsidies.

In 2002 the United States, a major cotton exporter, provided 3.9 billion dollars (3.5 billion euros) in subsidies to its cotton farmers, three times the amount of aid provided to African countries.

According to the British non-governmental organisation Oxfam, the subsidies cause 300 million dollars in lost income to African farmers each year and scrapping them would boost the price of

African cotton by some 25 per cent.

The subsidies "seriously compromise" the development programmes of poor countries where cotton is a major source of government revenue, the ministers said in a statement.

The US and EU subsidies also undermine efforts made by African farmers over the past few years to make their production methods more competitive, they said.

During the 2001-02 season Mali was the leading cotton producer in west Africa, followed by Burkina Faso, where it was the major export crop and accounting for 60 per cent of national revenue.

Jordan to facilitate entry of Iraqi traders

AFP, Amman

Jordan has taken measures to facilitate the entry on its soil of Iraqi businessmen in a bid to help resume trade ties interrupted due to the just-concluded US-led war on Iraq, the national economy minister said in statements published Monday.

"A special mechanism has been set up ... to facilitate the entry into Jordan of Iraqi businessmen and merchants," Samer Tawil told the pro-government Al Rai newspaper.

He said the measures would be implemented "immediately" on Jordan-Iraqi border posts as well as in air and sea ports into the kingdom.

"These measures reflect the determination of the government to support trade relations between the private sectors in both countries in a bid to resume quickly trade exchanges and restore it to its former levels," Tawil said.



PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Kazi Habibul Awal, additional secretary of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, speaks at a workshop on Artha Rin Adalat Ayin-2003 held at Prime Bank Head Office recently. Shah Md Nurul Alam, managing director, and M Shahjahan Bhuiyan, additional managing director of the bank, were also present.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's foreign exchange rate statement by Standard Chartered Bank						
Selling		Currency	Buying			
TT/OD	BC		TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer	
59.1500	59.2000	USD	58.2200	58.0490	57.9795	
66.9519	67.0085	EUR	64.7057	64.5157	64.4384	
95.4326	95.5133	GBP	92.7386	92.4662	92.3556	
37.8915	37.9235	AUD	36.1022	35.9962	35.9531	
0.5021	0.5025	JPY	0.4862	0.4848	0.4842	
44.2706	44.3081	CHF	42.9478	42.8216	42.7704	
7.3119	7.3181	SEK	7.1792	7.1581	7.1496	
41.9563	41.9918	CAD	40.7332	40.6136	40.5650	
7.5918	7.5982	HKD	7.4574	7.4355	7.4266	
33.6673	33.6957	SGD	32.8481	32.7516	32.7124	
16.2357	16.2495	AED	15.7232	15.6771	15.6583	
15.8988	15.9123	SAR	15.4021	15.3569	15.3385	
Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar						
Indian Rupee	Pak. Rupee	Lankan Rupee	Thai Baht	Norwegian Kroner	NZ Dollar	Malaysian Ringit
47.3485	57.805	97.125	42.705	7.0135	0.6130	3.80
Local Interbank FX Trading:						
The local interbank foreign exchange market was active Monday. US dollar got stronger initially but later weakened against the Bangladeshi taka due to increased supply of the US currency.						
Local Money Market:						
Demand for call money was high. Market experienced shortfall of liquidity due to huge outflow of funds due to Sunday's auction of treasury bills and reverse repos and the call money rates increased yesterday. At the close call money rates jumped to 12.00-12.50 per cent compared with 7.50-8.00 per cent previously.						
International Market:						
Euro paused near four-year high against the dollar in holiday-thinned trading on Monday ahead of rate verdicts from key central banks this week, including the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank. Euro stood at 133.42, having risen to four-year high of 133.78 on Friday. Euro edged higher against the Swiss franc to 1.5114 in early Europe. Economists are expecting the Fed to leave rates at four decade lows of 1.25 per cent when it meets on Tuesday, but poor data in recent weeks have fanned expectations it might concede there are risks to the economy.						
At 1645 hours on Monday, euro was at 1.1227/30, GBP at 1.6058/65 and yen at 118.83/88 against the dollar.						
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PHOTO: POWERLITE

Sonargaon Healthcare Pvt Ltd, exclusive distributor of Powerlite battery, arranged a distributor conference in Dhaka recently. (From left to right) Lalit Verma, Indian subcontinent head, Sujit Mitra, general manager, Javat, chairman of Powerlite Industries, Azizul Karim, chairman of Sonargaon Healthcare Pvt Ltd, and Mazharul Islam, sales and marketing manager, were present at the function.

Germany eyes ASEAN trade

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's upcoming visit to Southeast Asia shows he is determined to establish strong relations with the region and enhance economic, trade and political ties, a senior German envoy said Monday.

Jurgen A.R. Staks, who is German ambassador here, described Schroeder's week-long visit to four Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries -- the first by a German chancellor -- from May 11 as an

historic event.

"This is a very historic moment. It is historic not only with regards to Malaysia but to Southeast Asia because it is the first visit of a German chancellor," Staks told AFP.

Staks said Schroeder's visit, 14 months after Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad visited Berlin, transmitted two signals about the role Germany wants to play in the region.

"One is with regards to bilateral relations and the other is the inter-regional cooperation between European Union (EU) and

ASEAN," he said.

"It is important that these two organisations develop a more substantive and intensive cooperation in the fields which that they have been active in the past but which could be exploited a little more, particularly economic cooperation and political dialogue," he added.

Staks said Schroeder would also exchange ideas with regional leaders on post-war Iraq, the Middle East conflict and terrorism besides identifying ways to enhance economic and cultural cooperation.

"Despite the turmoil in the aviation industry worldwide, this deal constitutes a vote of confidence in PIA, which has turned into a profitable airline," he said.

PIA will need to spend 1.5 billion dollars to acquire eight new Boeing 777 aircraft, he added.

Under the first phase of the deal, three Boeing 777-200s have been purchased and are scheduled for delivery in the first half of 2004.

STOCK