

HIGHLIGHTS

Ministerial meet

- Demands free market access
- Movement of natural persons
- Uniformity of trade regimes
- Remedy against subsidies on cotton

LDCs adopt 16-point Dhaka Declaration

STAR REPORT

Trade ministers from the least developed countries (LDCs) yesterday unanimously adopted the 16-point Dhaka Declaration amid worry and disappointment over tardy implementation of commitments by developed nations and declining market share in global trade.

Binding commitment on duty- and quota-free market access for all products from LDCs, temporary movement of natural persons and demand for urgent remedy against subsidies on cotton provided by developed countries figured prominently in the declaration.

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury briefed journalists about the declaration at a city hotel.

High officials of the LDCs agreed upon the declaration on Sunday night and it was adopted by trade ministers yesterday with the insertion of a new clause.

The clause included by the ministers read: "-- emphasizing the importance of increased coherence of policies pursued by multilateral institutions on matters of trade."

It calls for bridging the gap in policy regimes between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Adviser of the commerce ministry Barkat Ullah Bulu, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmad, Bangladesh Permanent Representative in Geneva Dr Toufiq Ali were present at the press briefing.

The Second LDC Trade Ministers Meeting opened in Dhaka on May 31 with the participation of 39 countries and 24 trade ministers.

Of the 16-point declaration, 13

Port still in stalemate as foreign operators stick to their stance

RAFIQ HASAN

A shipping ministry move to resolve the deadlock at Chittagong Port fell apart yesterday as foreign feeder vessel operators and main line operators (MLOs) refused to resume operation unless the flag rule was changed.

The minister hurriedly called a meeting with the representatives of some MLOs and foreign feeder vessel operators at his office and urged them to resume operation immediately.

Later, the ministry sent a proposal to the cabinet that was meeting in the evening to amend the Bangladesh Flag (Protection) Ordinance, 1982.

But as the major foreign feeder vessels refrained from loading goods at the port yesterday for the third consecutive day, containers piled up.

"The main change to the ordinance would be to exclude container vessels from the purview of the law," said Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain. He said the MLOs assured him that they would resume operation if the ordinance did not apply to container vessels.

Under the ordinance, foreign vessels before loading or unloading

Khaleda for devising LDC mechanism for fair world trade deal

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has called for devising a mechanism for the least developed countries (LDCs) to have a fair deal and a respectable share of world trade.

"I urge the trade ministers to devise a mechanism so that they get a fair deal, are not asked to make any more sacrifices and their share of the world trade reaches a respectable level," she said.

Khaleda made the call at the inaugural session of the Second LDC Trade Ministers' Meeting yesterday.

The session was attended exclusively by trade ministers from 23 LDCs.

Fifteen other LDCs were represented by their officials.

The prime minister said, "On the complex matters of international trade, we need strong political will and the desire to work together with all in order to achieve our shared goals in the days to come."

The most conspicuous issue of concern for the LDCs is access of their goods to markets of the developed countries, she said.

Chaired by Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, the session was also addressed by Deputy Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Kipkorir Aly Azad Rana and Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD Carlos Fortin.

Khaleda said the concerns of the LDCs need to be adequately



PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia makes a gesture to Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury at the two-day ministerial meet of the least developed countries in the city yesterday.

Unity key to achieving LDC objectives

Tanzanian trade and industry minister tells *The Daily Star*

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

Only unity and consensus among the least developed countries (LDCs) can help achieve their objectives in the next rounds of trade talks, said Tanzanian Trade and Industry Minister Dr Juma Ngasongwa yesterday.

Each LDC has its own area of interests, which it wants to pursue in the talks ahead, he said in an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star*.

Free movement of natural persons is an important issue for Bangladesh, which may not be of as much importance to African LDCs, said Dr Ngasongwa, who attended the Second LDC Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka. "Our area of importance is

subsidy on cotton, which is not important for Bangladesh at all."

"But every issue should be of concern to every member of the LDC forum. Only through a unified voice we can reach our goals," he said.

"If we all agree and reach a consensus to pursue such issues in a unified manner, only then we would be able to press our demands and have all the issues dealt with in the upcoming talks at Cancun in Mexico in September," he hoped.

Dr Ngasongwa, who chaired the LDCs' first ministerial conference in Zanzibar, expressed satisfaction



Dr Juma Ngasongwa

