

US to lift trade embargo against Cambodia

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: The United States will lift its trade embargo against Cambodia with the implementation of the settlement agreement expected to be signed in Paris October 23, according to a State Department official, reports AP.

Richard Solomon, assistant secretary of the state for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs October 17 that "As soon as the Cambodia settlement agreement is signed in Paris and implementation has begun, we are prepared to lift the trade embargo against Cambodia and support plans for the World Bank and other international financial institutions to begin projects there."

While the United States hopes agreement implementation could begin within three or four months, UN authorities suspect the process will take longer, he noted. Solomon said the United States will also set up a liaison mission in Phnom Penh, to interact with Cambodia's Supreme National Council and United Nations authorities who will oversee the troop demobilisation of the warring factions and the successful completion of free and fair elections, said USIS here today.

Solomon said the Cambodia settlement will have far-reaching implications. "Resolution of the conflict in Cambodia will open the way to reconciliation throughout Southeast Asia," he noted. "It will bring an end to Vietnamese military intervention in the neighbouring state and promote peaceful relations between the states of Indochina and their neighbours in ASEAN."

And it will open the way for the US to begin the process of normalising bilateral relations with Vietnam although the pace and scope of that process will be influenced by progress in resolving our POW/MIA and other humanitarian concerns."

Saifur seeks maximum support from EEC Donors seem not to realise urgency to help agriculture

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman sought maximum support from the donors for agriculture, particularly in the irrigation sector for providing facilities to the farmers on easier terms, reports BSS.

He said unless the farmers were given facilities like loans and other inputs on easy terms, the country agriculture would not take off as desired. The Minister was talking to the visiting EEC delegation which called on him at his secretariat office Sunday morning.

The 12-member EEC delegation headed by Dutch Development Cooperation Minister J P Pronk arrived Dhaka Saturday on a four-day visit to make appraisal of the community's assistance programme in Bangladesh. Rahman said the international donors seemed not to

understand the urgency of extending agricultural support to the needy farmers on easier terms. He hoped that the delegation through this visit would be able to appreciate the gravity of the situation. The Finance Minister told the donors to help the government in honouring its commitment to provide necessary facilities to the farmers who constitute majority of the population. Rural development and human resources development are the two most priority areas of this government, he added.

Rahman gave a brief account of the economic mismanagement and policy-based corruption, which he said were the hallmarks of the 9-year of autocratic rule that ruined the economy. The new democratic government wanted to put the economy on rails through structural reforms and pursuing sound economic system.

Establishing rule of law and accountability and transparency in financial dealing are the other goals of the government, he told the delegation. The Finance Minister also stated the government's determination to remove corruption and establish order in the country. The leader of the EEC delegation affirmed the community's support to extend facilities to the farmers as desired by Bangladesh government. Pronk also informed the Minister that community leaders would hold talks with the executives of the World Bank and IMF on this issue.

The Netherlands, Ambassador in Bangladesh H Gajentman and Faizur Rahman Chowdhury, Joint Secretary Economic Relations Division of the Finance Ministry, were among others present on the occasion.

Dubai starts \$ 817m water desalination project

DUBAI, Oct 20: Dubai has started implementing a major desalination project to meet its growing water needs, the semi-official Al-Bayan newspaper reported Saturday, says AFP.

It said a foreign consortium led by the German company Siemens was executing the project, with cost of nearly three billion Dirhams (817 million Dollars). The Jebel Ali-based plant will produce 60 million gallons (272.76 million litres) of drinking water per day and is expected to be completed by 1994.

Dubai is part of the United Arab Emirates, which produces around 200 million gallons of water (909.2 million litres) per day from desalination plants. The UAE's biggest Emirate, Abu Dhabi, is building one of the region's largest desalination plants at Al-Tawila, with a capacity of 100 million gallons of water per day (454.6 million litres). It will be ready in 1995 and its cost is over four billion Dollars.

Sleepless nights for Bangladeshis

Some 50 to 60 Bangladeshis who had been lured by the promise of job in Singapore have been stranded in the island state, languishing under the sky without work and food, press reports said, says UNB.

The plight of the Bangladeshis were focused by the Straits Times, the leading Singapore daily, in a picture captioned "Wasted days, sleepless nights" published on October 5.

The picture showed up to 60 Bangladeshi workers "packed like sardines on the hard concrete", were sleeping outdoors with tent like roof over their heads. The newspaper termed those who could sleep on the floor inside a house as "lucky" because most of them "are forced to sleep outside, with spillover sometimes extended to 20 to 30 metres away from the house".

workers who had only been working intermittently since they arrived penniless, The Straits Times reported in a subsequent story.

The Bangladeshi workers who had sold their cattle, houses and whatever they had to go to Singapore, are badly in need of jobs not only to survive but also to pay debts incurred in trying to go there, the paper quoted one of them.

Tourist arrivals rise in Singapore

SINGAPORE, Oct 20: Tourist arrivals to Singapore rose in June to their highest level this year but the number of Japanese visitors continued to decline, the Sunday Times newspaper said, reports Reuter.

In June 445,781 tourists came to Singapore, up 8.4 per cent from May, but the number of Japanese fell by 8.3 per cent, it said quoting the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board.

\$40m ADB aid for disaster rehabilitation

Star Economic Report Loan savings from Asian Development Bank — financed projects in Bangladesh will be used to repair and rehabilitate infrastructure damaged by the devastating cyclone which struck the country in April.

The cyclone hit the coastal areas of Bangladesh, killing an estimated 140,000 people, destroying or damaging about 1.7 million homes and inflicting serious damage to crops, livestock, fisheries, industry and physical infrastructure.

An ADB press release said funds amounting to \$40 million are available to Bangladesh under loan savings from four projects approved by the Bank between 1980 and 1986. Approval follows a request by the Government for a change in scope, implementation arrangements, reallocation of loan proceeds and the use of surplus loan funds.

The assistance is designed to rehabilitate damaged economic assets affected by the cyclone so that disruption to Bangladesh's efforts to promote economic growth and development will be minimized. Funds will be used to repair damaged physical infrastructure — mainly schools, roads and railways — and rural infrastructure. The assistance, which is in line with the Bank's policy on Rehabilitation Assistance After Disasters, will support the Bank's strategy in Bangladesh which is to promote economic growth and improved productivity while pursuing institutional and policy reforms.

USIS workshop on development today

A series of programmes have been organised by the United States Information Service (USIS) dealing with issues related to the environment, land use, and development, says a press release. A two-day workshop on "Environment and Development" begins today (Monday) at the USIS-American Center auditorium. The workshop will be conducted by Dr Jens Sorensen, a noted US consultant on environment policy analysis and planning. Major topics will include: coastal zone management; environmental impact assessment; environmental planning in developing nations; and balancing socio-economic development needs with the conservation of renewable natural resources. The workshop will begin at 10:30 am and conclude at 12:30 pm each day.

Tokyo biggest city in the world

PARIS, Oct 20: Tokyo is the biggest city in the world with 24 million inhabitants, well ahead of Mexico, formerly the biggest, which has 15.9 million twice the land area, a French official report on world demography said here, reports AFP.

The second-biggest urban area is the area around New York which has 23.9 million people straddling six states on the basis of continuous urban development rather than merely in relation to administrative areas. Next come Sao Paulo with 17 million, Seoul 15.3 million, Los Angeles 13.5 million, Moscow 11.9 million, Calcutta, Buenos-Aires and Bombay each with 11.6 million, Cairo 11.3

million, Rio-De-Janeiro, Jakarta and Manila each with 10.9 million, Osaka 10 million, Paris 9.3 million, Shanghai 9.2 million and Chicago 9.1 million. London was ranked the 23rd biggest city with a population of only 7.7 million on the same basis of uninterrupted urban construction.

The trend was likely to continue, leading to a greater number of cities with populations of between five million and 15 million, the report said. For 40 years the populations of sprawling urban areas have developed more quickly in the southern hemisphere than in the north and in 1990 10.9 per cent of the world population lived in the 100

biggest cities. In 1950 only 8.1 per cent of the population lived in the 100 biggest cities, of which today 44 were in Asia, 30 in the Americas, 15 in Europe, nine in Africa and two in Oceania. The main urban centres have tripled in size since 1950. During the same period the total population has doubled. Growth was fastest in tropical areas. The population of Abidjan had multiplied 35-fold, Lagos 30 times, and of Kinshasa 20 times.

The main reason was that the balance between births and deaths had been broken causing large numbers of people to migrate to cities in search of work.

A fight for displaying cleavage

STOCKHOLM, Oct 20: Swedish businesswoman Helen Wellton is fighting the right to display her impressive cleavage after an advertisement for her own computer firm was condemned by an industry watchdog, reports Reuter.

"It is high time that women are accepted even if they happen to have a big bust and do not dress like a man," Wellton, a stunning young blonde, told the Swedish national daily Dagens Nyheter on Wednesday. The Swedish Council Against Sexually Discriminating Advertising recently condemned a newspaper advertisement showing her holding one of the portable computers sold by the small firm owned by Wellton and her fiancé.



PARIS: Ivana Trump, former wife of US entrepreneur Donald Trump, presents a long structured gold embroidered dress by French designer Thierry Mugler during the 1992 Spring/Summer ready to wear collections. —AFP/UNB Photo.

Aluminium price recovers

The market paid little attention to Soviet economist Grigory Yavlinsky's restatement in Bangkok that Soviet reserves were well below Western estimates. SILVER: Quiet. After a steady start, prices were weakened by sales from Middle Eastern operators and by the hesitant tendency of the gold market, prices firmed towards the weekend on a weaker Dollar.

ZINC: Weak then light recovery. The depressed state of the market was reflected in a fall to a new life-of-contract low at the beginning of the week, with three-month metal reaching 990 Dollars per ton. TIN: Slightly firmer. Prices were steady as the market awaited developments from

the meeting of the Association of Tin Producing Countries (ATPC) in Australia. ALUMINIUM: Firmer. Prices rallied strongly in reaction to world number one producer Alcan's decision to cut its worldwide production by 8.5 per cent, or 143,500 tons per year from November. COPPER: Firmer. Copper prices firmed steadily on fears of a strike at the 176,000-ton-per-year highland valley mine in Canada. Labour negotiations broke down late Thursday and union leaders have already received an overwhelming mandate from miners to call a stoppage. Technical near-term tightness and a consequent premium for cash metal was also supportive.

Most commodities price irregular

LONDON, Oct 20: Most commodities price in last week's trading marked irregular movements, reports AFP. COFFEE: Irregular. Prices moved irregularly, either supported by the return to dry weather in Brazilian producer regions or weakened by the return to normal in the country's ports.

VEGETABLE OILS: Irregular. Vegetable oils moved little despite the publication of US Department of Agriculture figures on world production in 1991-92. Soyabean oil was supported by rumours of large Brazilian purchases, although these were denied by one Brazilian trader.

Wool: Slightly firmer. Wool top prices firmed slightly in Bradford in the wake of the Australian market.

Asian currencies mixed against US Dollar

HONG KONG, Oct 20: Asian currencies ended the week mixed against the US Dollar in quiet trading, reports AFP. The Yen was the only currency to remain unchanged, despite a Group of Seven (G-7) agreement favouring an increase in its value. Political tension in Taiwan sent the island's Dollar sharply down until central bank intervention halted its fall.

Also falling against the US Dollar were the Indonesian Rupiah, the Hong Kong Dollar, the Malaysian Ringgit and Philippine Peso, leaving the South Korean Won and the Australian, New Zealand and Singapore Dollars as gainers. JAPANESE YEN: The Japanese Yen closed the week at 129.85 Yen on the Tokyo foreign exchange market, unchanged from the preceding

week's finish. The Japanese currency opened the week higher reflecting the G-7 agreement on October 12 supporting a higher Yen, but later shed its early gains on prospects of a cut in Japan's official discount rate. Kitchie Miyazawa, assured of succeeding Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu at the end of this month, said Friday the Central Bank of Japan should lower the discount rate to boost the economy. After opening at 128.65 Yen on Monday, the Japanese currency moved between 128.65 Yen 130.05 Yen though the week.

Workshop on credit programme held

A one-day workshop on "Implementation of Credit Programmes" organised by the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WEDP), a project of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), was held Sunday at BSCIC head office, says a press release. Presided over by BSCIC Chairman Mohammad Maniruzzaman Chowdhury, the inaugural session of the workshop was addressed by the special guest Malcolm Purvis, Acting Director of US AID. BSCIC directors, representatives of Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank and 100 officers of WEDP and BKB participated in the workshop.

Taiwan to liberalise gold trade soon

TAIPEI, Oct 20: Taiwan will allow the free trade of gold after a more than four-decade ban on the export of the precious metal, finance officials said here, reports AFP. "We have decided to scrap the regulations governing export, import and transaction of gold in order to liberalise such activities here," said Chen mu-Tai, Director of monetary affairs in the Taiwan's gold market some time next month as soon as the cabinet approves the ministry's decision. Another finance official noted that the liberalisation could help pave the way for Taiwan's bid to rejoin the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which requires its members to practice free trade.

The nationalist government, which fled to Taiwan after losing a civil war to the mainland Chinese communists in 1949, withdrew from GATT the following year after it adopted strict restrictions on exports and imports. At present, Taiwan only allows imports of gold bars and bullion with the authorisation of the state-run central bank of China and a few other approved financial institutions. But export of the precious metal is strictly prohibited. The official said in case of national crises, the government would be allowed to make decisions on gold trade. He said his ministry has also decided to scrap another set of regulations that restrict locals and foreigners from bringing in and out silver and gold coins as well as the Taiwan currency.

France to return Lithuanian gold

PARIS, Oct 20: France and Lithuania reached agreement on the return of more than 2,000 tons of Lithuanian gold deposited here more than 50 years ago, the Bank of France said, reports AFP. Bank Governor Jacques de Larosiere handed a symbolic gold bar to his Lithuanian counterpart Vilnius Baldists after the two discussed the practicalities of the agreement. The bank refused to reveal if the 2,246 tons of gold deposited in France between 1932 and 1936, ahead of Lithuania's annexation by Moscow, would be physically shipped back to Lithuania or if it would be handled as an on paper transaction.

The Bank of France gave no indication on the situation regarding the one million tons it has been holding for Latvia for more than half a century. France never recognised the Soviet annexation of the Baltic republics, and the return of the gold has been made possible by Moscow's recognition of the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Japanese productivity lowest among leading economies

TOKYO, Oct 20: Japan's labour productivity is among the lowest of the leading economies in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an official of the Japan productivity centre said yesterday, reports AFP.

The finding came in a survey of gross domestic product per worker in 11 countries which showed Japan ranking behind all the nations except Sweden. Using a base for Japan of 100, Canada was the most productive country with a score of 134, the official said. It was followed by Belgium (132), the United States (131), France (130), Italy (128), West Germany (115), Spain (110) and Britain and Australia (103). Sweden had the lowest score — 90.

Asian currencies mixed against US Dollar

Friday's close was 0.14 cents up on last week "after a fair bit of to-ing and fro-ing," Macquarie Bank dealer said. "But the Aussie is starting to run out of steam... We should see some peeling off next week," he added. HONG KONG DOLLAR: The Hong Kong Dollar closed the week at 7.7545-7.7555 to the US Dollar, down on last week's close of 7.445-7.4455. The Hong Kong currency has been pegged to the US Dollar at around 7.80 since October 1983. The effective exchange rate index closed the week at 111.8, compared to the previous week's 112.0. NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR: Light trading through the week saw the New Zealand Dollar close at 56.65 Cents, against last week's 56.68 Cents.

Dealers say the Kiwi was holding its place in a range that had remained unchanged all month. Some predicted a slight upward movement next week. TAIWAN DOLLAR: Closing at 26.41 to the US Dollar Friday, the Taiwan currency ended the week slightly down from the previous week's finish of 26.407. Earlier in the week, the local unit had plunged to 26.48 amid fears caused by the island's mounting political tension. But following central bank intervention, the Taiwan Dollar fluctuated within a tight 26.376 to 26.415 range. SINGAPORE DOLLAR: After closing the previous week at 1.6950 to the US Dollar, the Singapore Dollar strengthened through the week to end at 1.6940 Friday.

The local unit also strengthened to 61.70 against the Malaysian Ringgit and 21.85 against the Hong Kong Dollar. The OCB Bank trade weighted index for the Singapore Dollar stood at 135.38, fractionally up on last week's 135.35. INDONESIA RUPIAH: After opening on Monday at 1,973 Rupiah to the Dollar, its closing rate before the weekend, the Rupiah weakened a fraction through the week to close Friday at 1,974. MALAYSIAN RINGGIT: The Ringgit finished Friday at 2.7460 to the Dollar, down against last week's 2.7445 in generally lacklustre trading. According to dealers, pre-budget caution and general worries over the country's widening current account shortfall had exerted pressure on the local currency. THAI BAHT: The Thai Baht slightly strengthened against the Dollar Friday, closing with a mid-rate of 25.50 against last week's 25.53. A Bangkok Bank official attributed the Baht's strengthening against the greenback to the widening of the US trade deficit to 6.8 billion Dollars in August, far larger than economists had expected. PHILIPPINE PESO: After standing at 26.985 to the Dollar October 11, the Peso fell back to 27 to the Dollar Monday, where it remained all week.