

Modest cuts in farm supports to settle GATT talks

WASHINGTON, May 4: More exporting countries are siding with the European Community's view that modest cuts in farm supports are the politically feasible way to settle the GATT talks. EC Farm Commissioner Ray Macsharry said, reports Reuter.

"We have to be realistic about what is possible," Macsharry said at a news conference following meetings this week with US agricultural and trade officials.

Macsharry said he feels talks under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) can be completed successfully by year's end, but said the EC will stick with its proposal to reduce farm trade subsidies by 30 per cent.

The United States and several other exporters want more drastic cuts in farm trade barriers.

"We believe it's the only proposal that can be politically and economically implemented," Macsharry said, adding that more countries realise "high expectations of the others cannot be realised."

He said there are "a number of issues where we can see countries are more supportive of the European Community than they were a year ago."

Meetings this week resulted in some progress in trade talks, Macsharry said, mostly by quelling some distracting bilateral disputes.

The US and EC agreed on terms to settle a dispute that resulted in the EC's barring an

annual 20 million Dollars worth of US processed meat exports. But, he said, the officials did not address the bigger issue of hormones in US beef, which prompted the EC to ban most US beef imports.

The US and EC also will start examining technical aspects of their farm programme, he said, such as sanitation and effects of internal supports.

Macsharry said the EC's re-vamping of its common agricultural policy will proceed independent of the GATT talks, and changes will not be incorporated in its GATT proposal.

He said the EC has offered "sufficient basis for concluding the GATT talks without waiting for changes in the common agricultural policy."



Mahbubur Rahman, President, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, handing over a cheque of Taka 3,00,000 to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on behalf of the members of the Chamber as contribution towards Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the tornado affected people of the coastal areas on Thursday.

Oil prices steady

LONDON, May 4: World oil prices were steady on Thursday in cautious business, traders said, reports Reuter.

"The market is still uncertain. It is unlikely to move sharply in either direction before next week and possibly until the OPEC meeting in early June," one London trader said. He added that the uncertainty had inhibited speculative interest.

Traders said buying was kept subdued on Thursday by a report from the International Energy Agency which said the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) supplied 22.6 million barrels of crude in April, about 300,000 barrels above the ceiling agreed by the cartel in March.

"OPEC's producing 300,000 more than they should be and that is in the back of peoples' minds," said Tom Bentz, an analyst with United Energy in New York.

Brent crude oil futures for June were two cents lower on London's international petroleum exchange at 19.55 dollars a barrel by 1715 GMT.

Light, sweet crude futures for June on the New York mercantile exchange were up three cents at 21.28 dollars a barrel.

Snippets

London silver closes slightly higher
LONDON, May 4: Silver closed at 398/399 cents an ounce, up slightly from Thursday's end at 395/397 cents, reports Reuter.

Dealers said that silver had been underpinned by solid fund and interest during much of the day, but had been unable to hold above four dollar in the face of gold's decline and sharp losses on platinum.

WB to coordinate policy framework with Japan
WASHINGTON, May 4: The World Bank will coordinate a policy framework with Japan to promote joint financing of economic development projects in Asia, World Bank Vice President Attila Karaosmanoglu said Thursday, reports Kyodo.

Karaosmanoglu said in an interview with Kyodo News Service that the Bank and Japan together can deal with major problems facing many developing countries in Asia — population growth, environmental woes and poverty.

Extra aid to Israel may not come
JERUSALEM, May 4: US Ambassador to Israel William Brown criticised Israeli settlement and economic policies on Friday and warned that billions of dollars in foreign aid for absorbing immigrants was not assured, reports Reuter.

His comments came just two days after Washington's snub of Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, which has been seen as the first sting of the off-predicted US pressure on Israel to soften its position toward peace talks.

North Sea oil reserves
LONDON, May 4: Britain has reserves of oil and gas in the North Sea to last well into the next century, Energy Minister Colin Moynihan said Thursday, reports AP.

He said 1990 had been a boom year for exploration companies, with 25 significant discoveries and an increase in exploration wells from 94 in 1989 to 159 last year.

"It is clear that there are still substantial reserves of oil and gas to be found in the North Sea lasting well into the next century," said Moynihan.

Garments sector may see another bumper year

Star Economic Report

Garments industries are likely to see another bumper quota year which ends in January next.

Exports from the garment sector is very encouraging till now. During the first three quarters of the fiscal '90-'91, the total export of garments amounted to 540 million US Dollar. The figure is about 50 million Dollar higher than the corresponding period of last fiscal.

However, the export during the first three quarter narrowly missed the target export amount for this period. The target was Taka 2025 crore out of which over Taka 1904 crore was earned.

Garments sources said this "narrow gap" would not matter in export performance. Last year's export was also encouraging, though earnings were short target by a wider margin. Sources said the sector will be able to increase substantially its output during this quota year if output, there is no labour unrest.

As such, Bangladesh would be able to bag a 16 per cent bonus quota for the next year.

Blanket ban on tobacco ads. runs into trouble

BRUSSELS, May 4: Plans for a blanket ban on Tobacco advertising in the European Community (EC) run into trouble just days before they were due to be unveiled when a row broke out in the European Commission on Friday, EC officials said, reports Reuter.

Senior officials were split on the issue of tobacco companies participating in sports sponsorship.

Cigarette advertising is already restricted in many EC countries, and the prospect of an outright ban has thrown industry lobbyists into a frenzy of activity.

"It's a radical ban out it's no surprise. Letters from the industry and advertisers have been pouring in for months," one senior official at the EC's executive body said.

"It would bar just about every type of advert (including adverts with lighters carrying cigarette logos," the official explained.

But officials said they were still optimistic that the plan could be published on Tuesday as planned.

The proposals were drafted by Greek EC Commissioner Vasso Papatheou and are even more drastic than a limit withdrawn last year because at the time it was deemed too far-reaching.

Latin American states urged to improve trade ties

HAVANA, May 4: Latin American countries should become better trade partners among themselves to be able to respond to US President George Bush's economic "initiative for the Americas," a regional economist said, reports Reuter.

Carlos Garatea, Secretary-General of the Latin American Association of Development Finance Institutions (ALIDE), told a news conference that Bush's proposal last year to set up a free trade zone from Alaska to Patagonia had already stimulated a reaction in the region.

"The Bush initiative carries with it the need to find better conditions to be (trade) partners. This means that we have to be better partners among ourselves first," Garatea said.

He added that incipient industries in Latin American countries were a good basis upon which to start establishing complementary trade links.

"This could allow us to discover our potential for national and regional integration," he said, adding, "we're not going to be better partners by just distributing raw materials."

Cuba could be apart of this international process regardless of differences in economic policies, Garatea added.

US unemployment rate falls

WASHINGTON, May 4: The US unemployment rate fell in April for the first time in almost a year, the government reported on Friday, and White House hailed the drop as a welcome step towards economic recovery, reports Reuter.

The Labour Department said the jobless rate declined to 6.6 per cent in April from 6.8 per cent in the previous month, largely due to a surge in people who began working for themselves.

"I put it down under the category of good news," said President George Bush. But he warned against euphoria, saying the numbers "should not be taken as proof that everything is perfect."

Indeed, businesses beset by recession continued to trim their workforces for the ninth straight month, sending out a contradictory signal on the direction of the economy.

Payrolls outside the farm sector shrank by 124,000 in April after a 241,000 drop in March, the Department said. The rate of job losses slowed from the average 224,500 fall seen in the past six months.

Since July 1990, US businesses have slashed 1.6 million jobs from their payrolls. But in April the losses were somewhat less broad-based than in recent months.

Bush said he and his advisers still expect the Economy to stage a recovery starting around the end of June.

"At least it's going in the right direction," said White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater.

The White House is closely monitoring economic news, and Bush met Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady and other advisers in the morning to discuss the report and where the economy is headed. Republicans badly need a recovery if they are to have any hope of gaining control of the Democratic Congress in autumn elections.

April's improvement in the jobless rate was a surprise to many economists, who had predicted a seven per cent unemployment rate and several more months of rising unemployment.

Meanwhile, President Bush said the decrease in the US unemployment rate for April was good news but cautioned against too much optimism.

Asked about the report, Bush said "that was very good. There's some statistical problems with it that I think analysts will go into."

Upazila roundup

HABIGANJ

15 get life-term for murder

From A Correspondent

May 4: The Additional District and Sessions Judge, Habiganj, Mr Abdul Mannan convicted 15 persons for murdering a man, and sentenced them to suffer life term R. 1. and a fine of Taka 500 each in default to suffer six months more. He delivered this judgement on Apr 29.

The convicted persons are: Nanu Shak, Sajal Shak, Bajlu Shak, Kajal Shak, Elias Shak, Khalek Shak, Arajan Shak, Nabad Shak, Rahmat Shak, Ayub Shak, Altu Shak, Sakir Miah, Sabuj Shak, Aftu Shak, Samsul Haque of village Protappur under Bniachong upazila.

The prosecution in brief is that the convicted persons killed one Abu Miah of village Protappur under Baniachong upazila by a sharp weapon due to past enmity. After investigation police submitted charge sheets against all convicted persons.

The prosecution was conducted by A. K. Abu Lais Chowdhury A.P.P while Mr Asraf Ali and Abdul Matin Khan, advocate pleaded for the defence.

local government girl high school recently.

Chaired by Melandah Upazila unit President A.N.M. Nurul Alam Uzzal. It was addressed by Abdur Razzab, Advocate khairul Islam, Rez-Bahadur, Hemangshu Chandra and Mazhar Badsha. The meeting rounded off with a musical soiree.

SYLHET

Cow lifters active

From Our Correspondent

May 4: cow-lifting in Kanaighat, Chunarughat and Golapganj upazilas has increased alarmingly and people in Kanaighat are holding rallies and meetings to curb the menace. In some areas of the upazila most farmers are spending sleepless nights guarding their cows.

In Chunarughat the situation is more serious as the miscreants are also poisoning the cows for their skins. One such miscreant was recently caught re-handed and handed over to the police.

Kanaighat people are holding meetings and demonstrations to activate police action against the organised gang. Recently the students and local people held a rally at upazila Dak Bungalow yard and later paraded the bazar chanting slogan for police action. In Golapganj also the miscreants are active and in the latest incident stole away cows from Nayagram.

National

Survivors passing agonising days under open sky in storm hit areas

From Aroop Talukdar

BARISAL, May 4: Thousands of cyclone victims of Monpura, Dhalchar, Charkukri mukri, Char Nijam, Charfashion of Bhola district are crying for food and shelter. They are under the open sky.

The grim picture of deaths and devastations in the solitary shore of rivers and sea have turned the living people dumb.

According to an eyewitness, communications from the mainland to about 17 miles off Monpura and other farflung islands like Dhalchar, Charpatila, Char Nijam and Charkukri mukri are yet to be restored.

All these islands are still under water. Relief operations could not be continued due to absence of transports. At least three hours are needed to reach Dhalchar, Charpatila and Char Nijam islands from mainland crossing the furious sea by motor boats.

Now, the illfated people of these islands need particularly foods of any kind and drinking water for survival as they have no shelters, food, drinking water and minimum clothing to wear.

Out of seven upazilas, Charfashion is the worst affected upazila of Bhola where death toll rose to 29 while the up to date death figures in Bhola district is 133.

More than 20 thousand educational institutions and more than 80 per cent standing Boro and rabi crops have already been damaged and the loss of cattle heads are more than 15 thousands in these cyclone hit areas.

It has been roughly assessed that more than 75 per cent kutcha dwellings including shades and structures in bazar areas of different upazilas of the district have already been damaged or blown away.

Almost all the 24 upazilas including off shore islands from Phatharghata upazilas of Borguna to Teknaf are affected by the last Monday's devastating cyclonic storm in 45 islands along the coastline of Bay of Bengal.

The actual figures of deaths cannot be ascertained as the road, water or tele communications links could not be restored with the remote in accessible areas including off shore islands.

District administration, NGO's and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) are trying to gear up relief operations in their respective areas.

In Barisal, nothing has been done as yet to salvage launches which sank in the mighty river Kirtonkhola Monday night.

MV Samad an oil vessel sank about 20 feet under water might create obstacle to the movement of marine traffic in the southern region.

The authorities said that the salvage unit of 'Hamja' is not enough to conduct salvage operation. The three other launches sank in that fateful night about four miles off the town are yet to be salvaged.

Relief and rescue operations have been intensified in the devastated areas of the district.

BSS correspondent Azizul

Islam Bhuiyan from Bhola adds: The Monday's cyclonic storm and tidal surge left behind a trail of devastation and destruction everywhere in the district.

Besides a death toll of over 62 as officially described, standing crops and vegetation worth Taka 70 crore were damaged in the district. More than three hundred people were injured while hundreds

other remained missing.

More than 80 per cent schools, colleges, madrasas and mosques and 60 to 70 per cent dwelling houses were destroyed in the cyclone.

The worst-affected upazilas of the district are Charfashion and Manpura while Daulathkan, Borhanuddin, Tajumuddin and Lalmoan were also badly hit.

Crop loss

Out of the total crop loss, Boro paddy on 60,260 acres, i.e. about 13,92,925 maunds of paddy valued at Taka 31,43,85,000, was damaged.

Red-pepper on 12,169 acres was damaged causing loss of 97,357 maunds valued at Taka 11,68,28,400.

Other crop losses in the district were: 2,491 maunds of groundnuts on 267 acres worth Taka 14,94,720. 2,919 maunds of til-seeds valued at Taka 31,67,640 on 1,131 acres, 27,877 maunds if different varieties of pulses worth Taka 1,47,01,280 over 3,000 acres, and 141,250 maunds of winter vegetable, including mishti ahu (sweet potato), on 1,415 acres, and vegetables valued at Taka 37,34,000.

The worst-hit crop in the cyclone was betel-leaf. Betel-leaf on 750 acres valued at over Taka 3,75,000,00 was damaged. In most of the areas, the damage to "pan-baraj" (betel-leaf plantation) was almost 100 per cent.

Aus paddy of both High-Yielding Variety (HYV) and local variety on 1728 acres was destroyed causing to a loss of 33,889 maunds worth Taka 80,83,280.

Besides, 31,500 maunds of various types of fruits including banana, jack-fruits and mango were damaged. Their value is estimated at Taka 15,75,00,000.



BARISAL: A double-decker launch sank in Kirtonkhola river on Monday with three other launches are yet to be salvaged. —Star photo

SIRAJGANJ

Housewife killed for dowry

May 4: Family brawl over dowry brought the tragic end of a young housewife at Tarash upazila, police sources said here yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the victim, Mondira Khatun (22) was beaten to death by her husband Amjad when she refused to bring dowry from her parent's house recently.

The husband poured poison into her mouth to hush up the murder, they said.

KISHOREGANJ

Absconder arrested

From Our Correspondent

May 4: Bajitpur police arrested an absconder of sensational murder cases and da-coities here with a pistol and a pipe-gun.

According to the police and local people sources, Amin Uddin (45) a notorious da-coit and a murderer of several murder cases of Haor areas came to join a village "shalish" judgement as hirer. The "shalish" started in the morning and came to a conclusion of imposing a fine on the boatmen around 2 p.m. But Amin became furious on the verdict and suddenly revoked a U.P. Chairman and other Patrons of the "shalish" for consequence of their judgement.

Fish can fetch huge foreign currency

From Our Correspondent

It may be mentioned here that there is no fish freezing and ice plant within this coastal belt.

The committee of Bhola krishak Samity demanded the establishment of ice plants and cold storage in this district.

The President of the committee told this correspondent that private investors should be encouraged by giving loan on easy term and small rate of interest to improve the fishing industry and to increase the quantity of foreign exchange earning. They demanded that the respective agencies responsible for the development of this sector, should come forward with all their sincerity to harness rational resources and help earn a good turnover in the form of foreign exchange to strengthen our national economy.

BHOLA, May 4: Bhola with one million population haking plenty of fish and agricultural resources has been facing many problems.

every year thousands of tons of fish are caught in this belt, which is a main source of foreign exchange earner. Due to lack of storage facilities a huge quantity of fish rots causing a substantial amount of loss of foreign exchange.

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80 p.c educational institutions damaged

Damage to the school, college, madrasa and mosque buildings was so heavy that there is no sign of some of them most of their roofs were blown half a mile away by the terrible wind while the partitions and walls and even some pucca floors were totally destroyed.

Notes from Meherpur

From Our Correspondent

MEHERPUR, May 4: Md. Samadul Islam, a ration clerk of Meherpur S.P. office has allegedly embezzled government fund to the tune of Taka 2,02,582 by fraudulent means.

The clerk was engaged in the corrupt practice for the last one year alleged to have been embezzled the huge amount by false and fabricated vouchers.

A case has been registered with Meherpur P.S. in this connection.

Crimes rise

Mystery shrouds housewife's death

Crimes have increased to a great extent in Meherpur district. A clash took place between two rival groups at Badiapara under Gangni U.Z. of the district. Five persons were seriously hurt in the clash. The injured persons were brought to Meherpur Hospital for treatment.

A case has been registered with Gangni P.S. in this connection.

Mystery shrouds death of Shaiforjan (25), wife of Abdul Kader of Shewratala under Gangni U.Z. of the district.

Abdul Kader, husband of the deceased has claimed it to be a suicidal case while the people of the village has alleged that the housewife has been murdered.

A case has been registered with Gangni P.S. in this connection.

Clove seized

Acting on a secret information Damurhuda police has seized seven quintals of clove worth over Taka one lakh.

The police recovered the smuggled goods from a mini truck on Damurhuda highway when it was moving towards Darsana border of the district recently.

35 injured in Jhenidah clash

JHENIDAH, May 4: At least 35 people including a young girl and an HSC examinee were injured in a clash at village Tripurakandi in Shaikupa upazila Thursday, reports UNB.

Doctors stated as critical condition of the examinee, Ziarat, of KC College, Mujibbar (40) and Hashmat (25).