

Iraq returns bulk of treasures to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 24: Iraq has returned the bulk of the treasures it took away from Kuwait's National Museum during its occupation of the emirate, a museum official said yesterday, reports Xinhua.

BCCI made payoffs to Bangladesh leaders?

WASHINGTON, Oct 24: The controversial Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) made payoffs to various third world politicians to buy influence, a former bank official has alleged, reports PTI.

The payoffs took various shapes — cash, hiring of their relatives, payment of medical bills, funding of favourite charities, concessional loans and project finances, the former official, Abdur Sakha told the Kerry Sub Committee of the United States Senate, investigating BCCI.

Asked by Chairman, John F. Kerry to confirm his statement to Senate Staff that payoffs were received among others by leaders of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe and their relatives, Sakha merely detailed how the alleged payoffs were made.

He testified that he had seen BCCI officers handing out cash to the staff of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 1985 and that a colleague had told him about presenting gold bars to some politicians from Zimbabwe before it became independent.

But Sakha did not claim any personal knowledge of transactions alleged in his statement to the Senate staff before appearing for public testimony under oath.

BCCI's global strategy, he

said was to have contacts with everyone of consequence. AP adds: Former federal budget director Bert Lance told Congress on Wednesday he's convinced the CIA recruited the founder of the Bank of Commerce and Credit International in 1984 in order to use the bank for CIA purposes.

Detained BCCI officials allowed to see families

ABU DHABI, Oct 24: Several former executives of the disgraced Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) detained by Abu Dhabi authorities two months ago, will be allowed to see their families, their lawyer said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Acting Attorney General and the Public Prosecutors have agreed to allow those held to meet their families tomorrow, Saleh Farid was quoted by Gulf News Daily as saying.

The 18 executives have been held at the Abu Dhabi Police Club since September 8, when police raided the BCCI head office in the oil-rich emirate and rounded them up.

The detainees, most of whom are Pakistanis, have been under investigation but no formal charges have so far been made.

Lance, testifying before the Senate subcommittee, said BCCI's Pakistani founder, Agha Hassan Abedi, told him in 1983 that he had been on a CIA watchlist since 1981. But within a year after detailing his "grave concern" about incidents of harassment by US authorities, Abedi's attitude toward the CIA changed and he never mentioned any problems again, Lance said.

"In 1984, I felt there was obviously an overt effort by our intelligence agency... to co-opt Abedi and BCCI in an effort to turn them into the bank of the CIA," Lance told the subcommittee on terrorism, narcotics, and international operations.

Lance's statements buttressed testimony Tuesday by Abdur Sakha, a former top BCCI official who told the subcommittee that Abedi apparently had been taken off the CIA watchlist around 1984.

Lance, who resigned as budget director in the Carter administration and later was tried and acquitted of bank fraud charges, is cooperating with the subcommittee's investigation of BCCI.

The Luxembourg-based bank and its two top executives were accused last summer by a New York grand jury of fraud and theft of more than 30 million dollars from depositors.



Dr. Patrick T. Kehoe, Executive Director, Trade Development Institute of Ireland and consultant of the EEC called on Masudur Rahman, Acting President, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) on Tuesday. They discussed about the proposed two-day seminar on "Europe by 1992" to be held in Dhaka. Kehoe sought the assistance and cooperation of the DCCI in this regard. Ismail Hossain Miah, Vice-president, DCCI and S. Zakir Husain, Secretary, DCCI also present at the occasion.



Sritharan Natesan, Manager, Information Technology, DHL Sri Lanka conducted a training course from October 19-22 on Information Technology at DHL Country Office, Dhaka. Roger Lye, Technical Advisor, Showket Hossain, Country Sales & Marketing Manager also in the picture along with its staff.

Pakistan govt to sell 5 more banks

ISLAMABAD, Oct 24: Pakistan is to sell five more state owned banks to private buyers it was announced Wednesday, reports AFP.

The announcement invited individuals consortia and companies to bid for the United Bank Limited, Habib Bank Limited, National Bank, Industrial Development Bank and National Development Finance Corporation.

The bids would be opened on November 30 by a privatisation commission handling the government's programme of divesting state run industrial units and nationalised commercial institutions.

Two banks Muslim Commercial Bank and Allied Bank were transferred to private ownership recently in the first sale under the privatisation programme.

The sale of industrial units including fertilizer factories, cement plants and edible oil mills is also underway.

On Monday, the government finalised deals to sell 24 public sector units to the highest bidders.

Bids for another 77 units which are also up for sale were found to be lower than an undisclosed reference price officials said.

Financial Minister Sartaj Aziz said the privatisation commission would hold negotiations with the bidders to increase their bids to facilitate sale of the remaining units.

'EFTA-EC deal a step towards EC expansion'

SIRASSBOURS, Oct 24: The agreement to set up a giant new common market in western Europe would help prepare some of the countries involved to join the European Community, European Commission President Jacques Delors said, reports Reuter.

He told the European Parliament that the effort required of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries to adapt to EC rules from 1993 would represent a good part of the road which should lead some countries to EC membership.

Agreement was reached in Luxembourg early Tuesday on a pact merging the EC and EFTA into the world's biggest common market, comprising 19 nations from the arctic to the Mediterranean.

Delors said the resulting European Economic Area (EEA) had not been conceived as a device to delay full EC membership by countries which sought it Austria and Sweden have already applied to join the community.

Delors said the EEA was part of the EC's aim to put in place the structure of a greater Europe which omitted nobody and would be ready to cope with unfolding events.

INRO talks over pact deadlocked

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 24: Consumer and producer countries were deadlocked in a debate Wednesday on the need for early renegotiation of the current natural rubber price stabilisation pact which consumers insisted was working well, officials said, reports AFP.

Talks resumed on the third and final day of the International Natural Rubber Organisation (INRO) council meet but were adjourned until later in the day for producers to hold a caucus. INRO's Deputy Executive Director Jurgen Knote said.

Several delegates meanwhile, said they were doubtful that producers and consumers could reach a consensus on the need for an early renegotiation of the current second five year International Natural Rubber Agreement (INRA 11) at the end of this council meet.

They would most likely vote for deferment of a decision until INRO's next semi-annual council meet sometime in July next year, one delegate from the consuming member nation said.

The INRO council, which

groups five exporting and 20 importing countries and the European Community commenced meeting Monday but only began serious debate on a paper drafted by the secretariat on preparations for INRA talks Tuesday.

Producers are pressing for a decision for an early renegotiation of INRA 11 but consumers are adamant that the 1987 pact is working very well and that it is too early to even talk about renegotiating.

The spokesman for the producers Ahmad Farouk who is controller of the Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board, said "what we want is only a decision by the council to begin early preparations.

But one delegate from a major consuming country who requested anonymity said "consumers want to know what producers consider are fundamental flaws in the agreement that should be renegotiated.

The delegate said both producers and consumers had agreed at the last council meeting that INRA 11 had

succeeded in stabilising prices well above what they would have been if they had not been a buffer stock.

Under the INRA rules, the current agreement can still be extended for another two years, and if producers feel that the agreement should be renegotiated, discussions could still begin during the extension period, he said.

"It is too early to begin now,"

Farouk said the agreement, expiring in December 1993, was designed for five years and not perpetuity.

Industry analysts said consumers were likely to block any efforts for early renegotiation because producers, who are demanding that consumer pay higher prices were now in a more commanding position.

Producers now have better bargaining power as INRO's buffer stocks were now holding at 40,000 tons versus some 3,47,000 tons when they negotiated for INRA 11, they said.

Consumers on the other hand, are benefiting from the current depressed prices.

Strike halts transaction in Delhi banks

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Banking transactions came to a standstill in the Indian capital Wednesday in response to a bank officers strike to push for the release of a fellow banker held for six weeks by Kashmiri militants, reports AFP.

The all India Bank Officers' Confederation, which called the one-day strike, sent a letter to federal Home Minister S B Chavan calling for his personal intervention to secure the freedom of the abducted officer, K C Gupta.

Gupta, an official of the Punjab National Bank, was kidnapped on September 9 in the Kashmir summer capital of Srinagar by Muslim militants fighting to secede the state from India, which charges neighbouring Pakistan with aiding the revolt.

The memorandum to Chavan also called for increased protection to bankers "in view of the rising incidents of terrorism in the country."

Single capital market in Gulf sought

MANAMA (Bahrain), Oct 24: Gulf Arab states should merge their infant stockmarkets, introduce unified company laws and allow foreign participation to develop a genuine capital market, an Arab financial expert said in an interview.

Khalid Al-Fyez, Chief Executive of the Kuwait-based Gulf Investment Corp, said while the investment climate in the area had improved, regional capital markets had a long way to go.

"The area cannot support indigenous capital markets — the number of listed firms in any one country without exception could not support a genuine capital market," Fyez told Reuter.

"If we could pool the resources of various countries we could allow one genuine market to trade all the paper available — this would be my personal preference," he said.

Fyez, who heads one of Kuwait's soundest financial institutions, said he believed cash-rich Gulf investors were

now more willing to put money into domestic projects than before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

This was because events had removed some of the uncertainties caused by the Iraqi threat to Kuwait and led to the settlement of unresolved problems between Iran and Iraq left over from their eight-year conflict, he said.

But Fyez said that the oil-rich countries in the area — Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — would have to take many steps before they could create sophisticated capital markets, he said.

Commercial company laws and accounting systems would have to be developed and unified to allow for similar reporting. Firms should be encouraged to issue debt instruments to local investors rather than just borrowing from banks.

Laws should be liberalised to allow foreign shares to be traded and foreign investors and companies to participate.

Dollar rises

NEW YORK, Oct 24: The Dollar rose in quiet trading, despite a negative report on the US economy from the Federal Reserve, as technical factors buoyed the Dollar, reports Reuter.

"It was very technically driven. Certainly the Fed's beige book report didn't spur Dollar buying," said Bob Hatcher, a dealer for Barclays Bank. The Dollar's breach of technical resistance at 1.7070 Marks spurred stop-loss buying, traders said. Mark sales for Yen also lifted the Dollar against its German counterpart, said Linda McLaughlin of AIG Trading.

The Dollar closed at 1.7112/17 Marks, up from the opening of 1.7068/73 Marks and Tuesday's finish of 1.6975/85 Marks.

Price Barometer: Essentials

Table with columns for various commodities like Rice, Wheat, Oil, etc. and their prices per kg or other units.

Soviet oil output pegs at 10m BPD

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 24: The Soviet oil industry's annual crude output is over 500 million tons, or 10 million barrels per day (BPD), and has the capacity to rise to 580 million tons a year, or 11.6 million BPD, Soviet Deputy Minister for Oil and Gas Industry Vagit Alexperov said here, reports Reuter.

Alexperov, who did not specify in how much time that output rise could take place, added that the USSR's potential oil reserves top 100 billion tons.

The official acknowledged that besides the political upheavals the Soviet oil industry faces, it also needs foreign capital and technology to develop its resources.

In a news conference after his address, Alexperov said the Soviet oil industry needs huge capital investments to develop and modernise its major oilfields mentioning figures between two billion to 10 billion dollars.

Alexperov said the Soviet government will soon pass laws specifically covering foreign investments in the oil industry.

"In the near future, our

country will be able to invite foreign partners on internationally accepted basis," he said.

Alexperov said the Soviet government was still entering new agreements with foreign companies despite the unstable conditions, but complained that foreigners use the political situation to try to secure more favourable terms.

"Foreign companies make things more difficult when they start talking about political risk," he said.

Despite the uncertainties posed by the change from a centrally planned regime to a market economy, Alexperov said the Soviet government had set up 40 joint-ventures for oil and gas exploration and will approve 60 more this year.

The Soviet oil industry will benefit from the creation of vertically integrated oil companies including every stage of oil's industrial cycle, from exploration to marketing, he said.

"Such companies would be endowed with forms of property promoting favourable conditions for foreign partners," he said.

Rouble falls to record low

MOSCOW, Oct 24: The Rouble had fallen to a record low of 72.3 to the Dollar on the central Gosbank's currency market compared with 61 Roubles on October 15, the unofficial Interfax news agency reported on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Experts said that the rise of the Dollar was in response to frequent references recently to a possible reform of the Russian economy and introduction of a Russian national currency.

Members of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Spain, Canada and Australia.

The data is from 1988. Staff at the centre said this was the most recent they could find due to the difficulty of gathering comparable information.

In agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Japan ranked last of the 11 OECD countries, having fallen even further behind most of the others since 1975 when the last such survey was taken.

Japanese farmers were less than one third as efficient as their fellows in the United States and Belgium and less than half as those in Britain, France, Canada and Australia.

This is a legacy of decades of protectionism, with the

Israel ready to help Indian irrigation

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: A former Indian minister said on Wednesday that Israel had offered to help New Delhi in a project to improve its irrigation network by linking rivers, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says Reuter.

It quoted former commerce minister Subramaniam Swamy as saying Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon made the offer in Paris last week.

Swamy, a campaigner for improved Indian ties with Israel, said Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had seen the proposal and had sought the irrigation ministry's views.

Drought-prone states in southern India have been planning to build a network of canals by linking their numerous rivers.

Swamy said he hoped India would soon established diplomatic ties with Israel. Indian recognised the Jewish state soon after its foundation in 1948 but never established diplomatic ties, partly because of local Muslim pressure.

China using funds for merger: Taiwan

TAIPEI, Oct 24: China is using its rapidly growing economic links with Taiwan to press for political reunification of the two sides separated since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949 according to a Taiwanese government report, says Reuter.

Beijing's economic policy towards the island is changing from merely attracting Taiwanese capital and technology towards involving Taiwan in a close economic relationship that will make political union inevitable, the report says.

China aims to create an interdependent relationship that will mean the two sides cannot separate and will eventually pull them towards political unification, it says.

Taiwan has received reports that China is secretly sending funds to the island to invest in local companies as part of its new economic policy, the report says government officials would be illegal.

China also believes the

creation of direct air links with Taiwan is just around the corner and is preparing its airports, ports and banks to handle direct trade its says.

Taiwan's official policy is that it will not allow direct trading or transport links until Beijing makes political concessions, such as renouncing the use of force against the island and halting attempts to isolate Taipei diplomatically.

The report by the Board of Foreign Trade was delivered by the Board's Deputy Director General Lin Yi-Fu to an economic seminar on Tuesday as part of government efforts to explain its policy towards China to local businessmen.

The report defends Taipei's restrictions on business with China. The government is under strong pressure from both local businessmen and Beijing to ease the restrictions.

Because of national security considerations economic links between the two sides should not be expanded too much so restrictions are necessary, the report says.

Canadians most efficient on earth, Japanese 10th

TOKYO, Oct 24: You thought Japanese were the most efficient people on earth? Well, think again, reports Reuter.

An exhaustive study by the Japan Productivity Centre found Japan ranked only 10th in the developed world, behind such countries as Spain, Australia and Italy.

Top of the list came Canada with a rating of 134 against Japan's 100, with Belgium second with 132 and the United States third with 131.

The study found that, while Japan's manufacturers rank among the most efficient in the world, its farmers, retailers and wholesalers are among the least productive in the developed world, pulling down the overall average.

government erecting high tariffs or import bans to protect local production, and of tiny farm plots.

The average Japanese farm is only one eighth the size of a typical farm in the European Community. US farms are about 110 times larger.

Japan ranks bottom in productivity of its retail and wholesale trade, scored 100, while Belgium ranked top with 208, followed by the United States (180) and Italy (168).

"Japanese consumers want it this way," one government official said. They want a very wide variety of goods, high quality and personalised service. They do not want their shopping to be reduced to a handful of giant cut-price supermarkets.

Perfumed ladies in uniforms and white gloves wait on him at every turn, offering guidance and three layers of wrapping — but no bargaining, thank you.

Never a rude word or a scowl — forbidden in the company manual — and no gossiping over a cigarette in the corner while the customer waits.

The downside, foreign companies say, is that Japan's labyrinthine distribution system, with thousands of small firms, a major barrier to their penetration of the market.

There is little in the study to comfort manufacturers abroad who face the cutting edge of Japan's industrial might — such as cars, iron and steel, electronics, electrical appliances, construction equipment and computers.

While Japan ranks sixth in manufacturing efficiency, with the United States number one, it has improved by 89.4 per cent since 1975, more than all its main rivals.

An automobile manufacturer, for example, Japan's labour productivity in 1988 reached 235 from a base of 100 in 1975, against 154 for the United States and 130 for Germany.

It is a similar story in iron and steel. Japan's labour productivity reached 236 from a base of 100 in 1975, compared with 134 for the United States and 123 for Germany.

Japan's advantage was further strengthened by longer working time, an average of 2,180 hours a year, against 1,957 in the United States and 1,629 in Germany.

So there is no sign the Japanese juggernaut is slowing.

Japanese make no clear distinction between working and non-working hours as do their western counterparts, Koji Matsumoto, a Professor at Saitama University, said.

The major difference between Japan and the West is the "weak link in the western corporate system between workers." Interests and those of the company while in Japan these are intimately connected, he said.

Other positive factors that show no signs of waning are a high level of worker participation in production, low absenteeism and a low rate of strikes.

Exchange Rates

Table showing exchange rates for various currencies like US Dollar, UK Pound, etc. against the local currency.

Hides & Skin

Table showing prices for various types of hides and skins, such as Cow, Goat, Sheep, etc.

Gold & Silver

Table showing prices for gold and silver in different forms.