

We have a deadline, says Dunkel

GENEVA, Nov 8: GATT Chief Arthur Dunkel, warning that the world economy was in urgent need of stimulation, said on Thursday a long-stalled pact aimed at expanding global trade would have to be ready by the end of this year, reports Reuter.

Dunkel told a news-conference that the five-year-old Uruguay Round of negotiations involving 108 countries had entered their concluding phase and that there "a window of opportunity" now existed to wrap them up successfully.

"We have a deadline. It is at the end of the year," he told reporters after announcing he was calling negotiators into permanent session from Monday in a drive to complete the accord.

In a speech earlier to the round's steering Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC), he said delegations which have often been at loggerheads should keep in mind that the world economy was "in urgent need of stimulation and greater growth."

The TNC session, attended by Ambassadors, was called on the eve of a meeting in the Hague on Sunday between US President George Bush and leaders of the European Community (EC), at which the GATT talks are high on the agenda.

Trade diplomats in Geneva make little secret of the fact that they are looking to the encounter to break the logjam between the United States and the EC over farm subsidies which until now has blocked a new world pact.

GATT pact seen if demand for EC access dropped

BONN, Nov 8: Ignaz Kiechle, German Agriculture Minister, said a new agreement on a GATT trade accord could be reached if some of the major farms exporting nations gave up demands for unrestricted access to the European Community, reports Reuter.

Kiechle told reporters he would never agree to a pact that fully opened up the European markets for cheaper foreign agricultural goods because this would bring ruin to most farmers and wreak havoc in the structure of societies.

"Unrestricted access to our markets will only destroy our farmers and those that do not understand this are under illusions," Kiechle said.

European and US negotiators are currently working on clearing the last obstacles to a new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on world trade. Last December talks broke down over a disagreement over EC farm policies.

Kiechle said he recently had accepted that other non-EC states should have better access to EC markets. However, he stressed that the German government had never discussed how this should occur and which products it could affect.

"This was about access in principle, it could concern bananas, for example," Kiechle added.

The German government last month issued a statement encouraging the EC to secure a conclusion of the GATT trade round by the end of the year.

Kiechle said some German Ministers had interested this decision too strongly to mean that Germany wanted a GATT agreement under any circumstances.

High demand for Russian gold coins

LONDON, Nov 8: As the Soviet Union struggles to meet its mounting debts, unusually large quantities of old Russian gold coins in mint condition, are finding their way onto the world market, a Norwegian dealer said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Jan Olav Aamlid, co-owner of coin dealers Oslo Mynthandel, said he had recently bought 22,000 Five Rouble gold coins of uncirculated high quality and with a retail value of about three million Dollars from Western central banks and Soviet sources.

A London-based dealer said: "What impresses me is the quantity of coins at this quality and the premium price Aamlid is selling them for - which is about twice the scrap value."

Aamlid said he had shipped 20,000 of the coins, each containing just under four grams of gold, to the US market and had already sold half of the remaining 2,000 coins in Norway at a retail price of 850 Crowns (130 Dollars) each.

Bush, EC leaders to meet for trade talks today Political accord likely

BELGIUM, Nov 8: President George Bush and European Community leaders meet in the Hague, the Netherlands, on Saturday trying to start world trade talks that are stuck in a dispute over agricultural subsidies, reports AP.

The 108-nation talks, designed to liberalise global trade, collapsed last December when the EC rejected demands by the United States and other food exporters for cuts of up to 90 per cent in its farm subsidies.

Officials hoped Saturday's EC-US summit can produce a "political agreement" on subsidies so as to conclude the trade talks, held within the Geneva-based General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, by year's end.

Senior EC and US officials discussed the farm subsidy issue here Thursday and will meet again Friday.

EC Farm Commissioner Ray MacSharry said through a

spokesman that there were "no major breakthroughs" in his meeting with US Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan.

Madigan declined to comment.

"If there is no movement at all on Saturday, that would certainly have negative effect in further proceedings," said EC spokesman Nico Wegter.

Bush is to arrive Friday afternoon from the Rome NATO summit, accompanied by Secretary of State James A Baker.

Joining them on Saturday will be Special Trade Representative Carla Hills and Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan.

The EC side will be led by Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, whose country holds the EC's presidency, and Foreign Minister Hans Van Den Broek.

"Its trade partners want the EC to slash farm subsidies by

up to 90 per cent arguing these depress world prices and distort trade.

"There can be no question of demolishing the Common Agricultural Policy," said one EC source, who asked not to be named.

The EC is discussing cuts of about 30 per cent under a new farm policy proposed by EC Agriculture Commissioner Ray MacSharry, who met with Madigan here this week.

They will meet again Friday, also to discuss a dispute over trade in soybeans and other oil seeds.

Within the EC, France has been most reluctant to cut the EC farm budget which this year totals 41 billion Dollars.

This money pays farmers for their output regardless of how much they produce, creating surpluses that are stored or sold worldwide through subsidies for exporters.

India to relax import restrictions

NEW DELHI, Nov 8: India will soon relax tough import restrictions imposed to save its meagre hard currency reserves, Finance Minister Manmohan Singh said here Thursday, reports AP.

Singh told a conference of economic newspaper editors the controls could be based in a phased manner starting before December. By then he expected foreign exchange reserves to reach 2.5 billion Dollars from their current 2.1 billion Dollars.

The restrictions were imposed from March onwards to check the out flow of foreign currency reserves during India's worst-ever fiscal crisis.

Banks were directed not to advance money to public sector units. The proposal would go before the Cabinet within 10 days for approval, he said.

The Minister, a former

head of India's central bank, reiterated his decision to open the country's markets to multinationals, saying only they

India further revises Rupee

BOMBAY, Nov 8: The Pound Sterling has become dearer by another four Paise following a modest downward revision of the Rupee by 0.09 per cent against the British currency, as announced by the Reserve Bank of India, reports PTI.

The new middle rate now works out to Rupees 45.81 per Sterling as against Rupees 45.77 previously.

The new selling and buying rates for spot delivery are 2,1774 and 2,1884 Sterling per Rupees 100, corresponding to Rupees 45.92 and Rupees 45.70 per Sterling.

could bring the latest technology and necessary foreign investment.

He played down the fears expressed by some Indian economists that New Delhi would be sold out by multinationals, citing Singapore as a place where 700 multinationals had established themselves but could not dictate terms, to the government.

In a related development, the Commerce Ministry said between April and August this year India's exports rose by 960 million Dollars and its imports by 597 million Dollars.

The country's trade deficit stood at 795 million Dollars for the same period, down from nearly 1.1 billion Dollars in the corresponding period in 1990, the Press Trust of India reported from Calcutta.

Chinese workers' wages rise

BEIJING, Nov 8: Wage increases given to Chinese workers are outstripping inflation, even as some enterprises go into the red, an official report said Friday, reports AP.

By September, urban state employees were getting an average monthly salary of 177 Yuan (33 Dollars), an increase in real terms of 6 per cent, the China Daily reported.

In the first three quarters, the state paid out 224.15 billion Yuan (42 billion Dollars) in basic wages, an increase of nearly 14 per cent over 1990. That compared with an 8 per cent rise in prices over the same period in 35 large and medium-sized cities.

The state also gave out 85.3 billion Yuan (16 billion Dollars) in bonuses and allowances, in-

creases of 18 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, the report said.

The report said the raises often were given at the expense of technological improvements. Many state-owned firms were giving out pay hikes even though they were running at a loss, the paper said.

Wages in China were kept artificially low for decades, and everyone was given virtually the same pay regardless of skill or experience.

But in 1985, the central government began allowing employers to increase pay by 0.7 per cent for every 1 per cent increase in productivity. At about the same time, employers began handing out bonuses in an attempt to encourage and reward good work.

By 1989, however, wages were going up by 1.2 per cent for every 1 per cent growth in productivity, and the rate of pay hikes shot up to 3.26 per cent last year.

Bonuses, meanwhile, became institutionalised, and were simply added to each worker's pay without consideration for his accomplishments.

The report said officials at the Labour Ministry were concerned that "eating from the same communal pot" has choked creativity and enthusiasm and was contributing to the poor efficiency of the nation's state-owned enterprises.

It said the ministry had drafted measures to restrict wage increases and link them to industrial performance but did not give any other details.

'Soviet economic crisis to worsen'

MOSCOW, Nov 8: The Soviet Union's Revolution Day anniversary was marked by many with the customary greeting of "happy holiday" but newspapers offered fresh economic gloom, reports Reuter.

Few people celebrated the public holiday and the sight of long queues at bread shops reinforced the view of some politicians that the country could be heading for social unrest unless living standards quickly improved.

The former Communist Party daily Pravda gave its readers a pessimistic analysis of the course of Soviet history from the 1917 October revolution up to the present crisis.

Political scientist Boris Slavin was quoted as saying price liberalisation and other reforms would lead to "tumultuous social conflicts, the curtailment of democracy,

government reshuffles."

An opinion poll published in the Daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta showed 67 per cent of the population expected the economic crisis to worsen. Only 30 per cent believed August's failed coup had improved the chances of reforms succeeding.

The figures underlined the extent of the challenge facing Soviet and Republican leaders are trying to maintain their authority as conservative forces attempt to rally opposition.

Leading liberal Alexander Yakovlev, an aide to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, said in Rabochaya Tribuna that "the practical turn towards democracy is now much more difficult than before the start of changes."

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has pledged to lift controls on prices soon as part of

a package of radical free market reforms, which liberal economists say are necessary to fill empty shop shelves.

One writer in Pravda, A Anisimov, argued that Yeltsin's reforms were badly timed and would turn the Soviet Union into "a half-starved debtor."

"Free market will be unable to solve the urgent problems of the Soviet economy... Commodities are in very short supply and the market engine is clearly inoperable," he said.

Tass news agency said the bread crisis, hitting several regions, had reached a critical stage in Moscow where long queues began forming in the early hours of the morning.

Fuel shortages were reported as causing severe disruption to air transport in the far east city of Khabarovsk and at the other end of the country in the southwestern republic of Moldova.

Kuwaiti women pressing for bigger role in society

KUWAIT, Nov 8: Many Kuwaiti women are dynamic, highly-educated and successful in business. Spurning the stereotype of tucked away Moslem wives, they are pressing for a bigger political voice, reports Reuter.

They say their vital role in resisting Iraq's seven-month occupation of their homeland has earned them the right to be part of political life.

Kuwaiti women are by law unable to become ministers or vote. The highest ranking females are assistant under-secretaries. They cannot be diplomats, judges or prosecutors.

"If our constitution ensures justice, freedom, and equality to all citizens it is unjust to deprive women of their right to vote and be elected," said Rasha Al-Sabah, a member of the royal family and Assistant Director of Kuwait University.

litical rights before the coming century," she said.

Many women were out on the streets resisting Iraq's occupation when some men were hiding at home, she added.

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah promised to give women more political say when he was in exile in Saudi Arabia during the Iraq occupation last year.

"It seems everybody forgot these promises," said Rasha. The Emir has praised Kuwaiti women of their "strength, endurance and ability to bear all kinds of mistreatment and difficulties" during the occupation.

The government has asked the national assembly to debate women's right to vote. It will in turn make recommendations to the new parliament which is due to be elected next year.

come the first and only Kuwaiti woman to run a Diwaniyah, a traditional venue where men meet to discuss politics and business.

At one of her weekly Monday night Diwaniyahs, women and men engaged in heated debates on women's role in Kuwaiti society.

A psychology Professor at Kuwait University, Qasem Al-Sarraf, said Kuwaiti women had proved they were equal to men through their active resistance to the Iraqi occupation.

"Kuwaiti women have proved they are not less than men in any thing, especially during the occupation, that's why they must have their right to vote and be elected," he said.

But member of parliament Saqer Al-Anzy disagreed. "Women should have a right to vote, but not to be elected."



BURGAN OILFIELD: A group of dancers perform a traditional dance in front of the last burning oil well. Kuwait put out its last oil fires, ending the tragic legacy of 751 wells sabotaged by Iraqi troops at the end of the Gulf war, Kuwaiti officials said. —AFP/UNB photo

Kuwait's oil output hits 4,65,000 BPD

KUWAIT, Nov 8: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Hamoud Abdullah Al-Raqba said the Emirate was producing 4,65,000 Barrels Per Day (BPD) including 1,40,000 BPD from the neutral zone shared with Saudi Arabia, reports Reuter.

Raqba told the independent Al-Qabas newspaper Kuwait was exporting 3,20,000 BPD and using 1,45,000 BPD for domestic consumption.

Last month, Raqba said Kuwait was producing 3,00,000 BPD.

Kuwait aims to reach 4,00,000 BPD by the end of the year excluding the neutral zone. Output is forecast to reach one million BPD by the end of next June and 1.5 million BPD by the end of 1992.

Before the Iraqi invasion in August 1990, Kuwait was capable of producing two million BPD.

Raqba said about 10 per cent of the wells damaged in the Gulf war had been sealed. At least two years were needed to assess the damage caused to oil reserves.

Kuwait says it paid about 1.5 billion Dollars to cap 732 oil wells blown up or set on ablaze by retreating Iraqi troops at the end of the war in February. Western oil officials have estimated the cost at two billion Dollars.

Iraq accuses West of blocking return to oil market

BAGHDAD, Nov 8: Iraq's Oil Minister said Thursday that the West was using UN sanctions to stop Iraq returning to the oil market and to reward its Gulf war ally Saudi Arabia, reports Reuter.

"I think for some reason or another they are trying to stop us from getting back into the oil market and giving it to countries such as Saudi Arabia to pump as much as they want," Usama Al-Hitti told Reuter in an interview.

He said his remarks were aimed at the United States, Britain and France which pushed through UN sanctions blocking Iraqi crude to punish Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August last year.

The Minister said that for practical reasons alone he rejected UN resolution 706 which would allow Iraq to sell 1.6 billion Dollars of crude to import food and essentials under strict UN monitoring and to pay war reparations.

"It's spider's web. The steps which would have to be taken, the formalities, the arrangements are so complicated that it would make the sales operations very difficult," he said.

Gulf pollution will take years to clean up

KUWAIT, Nov 8: The curse of Saddam Hussein will haunt Kuwait for years even though the last oilfield blazes have been put out, with toxic fallout and spilled crude threatening marine life and migratory birds, scientists said, reports Reuter.

Ordinary Kuwaitis celebrated the end of fires that sent up columns of thick black smoke for eight months but remain worrying about the long-term effects. By putting out the oil fires one begins to save the polluted environment, said Radria Al-Awadi of the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME).

She said it would take from three to five years to clean up

the environment, those giving it two to three years are optimistic. Environmental effects take a long time to erode."

Awadi said the effects of the thousands of tons of toxic gases released into the atmosphere by the oilfield fires would linger for decades.

She said oil which gushed from the wells damaged by the Iraqi leader's retreating troops had left 200 pools containing 20 million to 30 million barrels of oil in the desert and spills would devastate its fragile ecology.

The capping of the fires has minimised the dangers but it is not the end of it because oil pools and thousands of mines are still dotting the desert and will affect the ecosystem.

Sweden revises policy towards LDCs

STOCKHOLM, Nov 8: Cuba and Vietnam, once favourites of Swedish aid-givers, are losing out as a new government revises "Stockholm's policies" toward Third World and socialist countries, reports AP.

The four-party coalition of conservative Prime Minister Carl Bildt came to power two months ago after voters tired of high taxes booted out the long-governing socialists. Although coalition members differ over details, the trend is clear.

Aid to Cuba will peter out. Direct grants to Vietnam will be cut sharply. Others seeking Swedish help will be asked to undertake reform encouraging democracy, human rights and market economies.

Sweden won a reputation

decades ago as a committed supporter of the world's less fortunate. In 1977-78, Sweden achieved the United Nations target of giving more than 0.7 per cent of its gross national income in aid.

Since then, aid has amounted to 1 per cent of gross national income and the new government has promised to maintain that level. Swedish aid during this budget year will total 2.3 billion Dollars, two-thirds of it given directly and the rest through UN or regional agencies.

Svensson told the Stockholm daily Svenska Dagbladet that direct help for Vietnam would be cut by nearly a third in 1992-93. Vietnam would receive 36 million Dollars.

US lowers interest rate

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: The US Federal Reserve central bank on Wednesday cut its key discount rate by half a point to 4.5 per cent as it sought to make credit more widely available and boost the ailing American economy, reports Reuter.

The reduction brings the trend-setting rate at which the Federal Reserve lends to banks to its lowest since the period from December 1972 to January 1973, when it also was briefly at 4.5 per cent before being raised to five per cent.

Action was taken against the background of sluggish expansion of the monetary and credit aggregates in an environment of abating inflationary pressure," the Fed said in a news release.

"The reduction, in part, also realigns the discount rate with other short-term market

rates," the Fed added.

Last Friday the Labour Department reported the October unemployment rate climbed to 6.8 per cent from 6.7 per cent in September and that 1,000 more jobs were wiped out last month.

The latest reduction in the rate charged by the central bank for its infrequent loans to member banks is the fourth cut this year. The rate was last lowered on September 13 to five per cent from 5.5 per cent.

Signs have recently increased that a modest spring and summer recovery from a year of recession is stalling. Sales of new homes and cars have been falling, consumer confidence is at recession levels and factory orders have weakened.

Sharif orders judicial probe into financial scandal

ISLAMABAD, Nov 8: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ordered Wednesday a high-level judicial commission to probe an unprecedented multi-million Dollar financial scandal that has jolted his government, reports AFP.

A Supreme Court Judge, assisted by two High Court Judges, will conduct the inquiry and declare its findings within 15 days, he said.

"If I am proved guilty, I will submit myself before the law, he said in a nationwide broadcast on the first anniversary of his rule.

The statement follows a mounting opposition campaign accusing Sharif, his family and political associates of plundering public savings through privately run finance companies.

Several large firms became insolvent in August triggering a run on scores of such companies by hundreds of thousands of depositors.

The main opposition leader Benazir Bhutto has alleged that Sharif and some members of his ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI) secured huge loans which led to the collapse of the firms.

Dollar closes higher in NY

NEW YORK, Nov 8: The Dollar closed higher in active trading, overcoming an early decline with the help of purchase by US corporations, short-covering triggered by this buying and Bank of France intervention against the Mark, reports Reuter.

The Dollar was well offered in the morning. But after it hit 1.6250 (Marks), a wave of buying interest arose, said John McCarthy, Chief Dealer for AIB/AMRO Bank in New York. The Dollar fell to that level early in the afternoon before rebounding.

The US unit closed at 1.6420/30 Marks, up from the opening of 1.6335/65 Marks and Wednesday's 1.6380/65.

The Dollar also ended at 130,000/10 Yen, up from the opening of 129,80/90 Yen and Wednesday's finish of 129,85/90.

Sales by a large speculator helped send the Dollar down late in the New York morning, and its dip below 1.63 Marks around midday triggered stop-loss selling, said a trader for a major Chicago bank.

But US companies stepped to the plate when the US unit reached its nadir of 1.6250 Marks, traders said. This was the target for some US corporations needing to buy Dollars before year-end, said Matthew Robertson, a corporate dealer for Banque Nationale de Paris in New York.

Those Dollars are not coming back into the market, said McCarthy, referring to the purchase made by US companies.

The corporate Dollar-buying forced speculators, who had shorted the Dollar to cover their positions, traders said. There was one major buyer below 1.63 (Marks). People are now confuse, McCarthy said.

Traders said the Bank of France's open-market sale of Marks for Francs also helped boost the Dollar. French Finance Minister Pierre Berezogov took the rare step of confirming the intervention, saying he and Bank of France Governor Jacques De Larosiere are determined to guarantee the Franc's stability.

The Mark had strengthened across the board in recent sessions on speculation that the Bundes Bank will ultimately raise German interest rates again.

The market's sentiment remains bearish toward the Dollar, due to US economic weakness, traders said. "There is not a lot to be happy about", BNP's Robertson said.

Zimbabwe suspends beef exports to EC

HARARE, Nov 8: Zimbabwe has suspended all exports of beef and dairy products to the European Community (EC) following an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease at a farm in Mvurwi district north of here, the Director of Veterinary Services Stuart Hargreaves said Monday, reports AFP.

The suspension would remain in effect until the extent of the spread of the disease had been ascertained, he said.

Some of the infected 200 head of cattle at Whaddon Chase Farm would be slaughtered while others would be evacuated to vaccinated areas, he said.

The Chairman of the Cattle Producers Association Graham Franceys said the outbreak was a tremendous blow to the industry which was beginning to benefit from the lucrative export market after the lifting in October last year of another EC ban.

"It is not fair to take our traditions as an excuse not to give women their rights all of us are citizens on this land and our rights were ensured by our constitution," she said.

Women in executive positions say they face no problems from men working for them but complain of discrimination by the state.

"Kuwaiti working women do not have the same rights as men. For example men working in the public sector get allowances when they are married and have families, but married women don't, said Badriya Yousef Al-Ali, Head Librarian at Kuwait University.

Despite the growing role of women in Kuwait they say men still look at them as weak creatures who need protection.

"A woman in their opinion is like a glass bottle that should be kept on a shelf so as not to be broken," said Kafyah Ramadan, a sociology Professor.

oil production in the 1940s and its history of contact with more liberal societies have enabled its women to march into the workplace since they first got university degrees in Cairo in the 1950s.

The most popular women's businesses are small boutiques and workshops, especially for clothing and jewellery.

But as education spreads, so will female employment in a country with only 700,000 citizens that is trying to cut dependence on foreign labour.

Rasha Al-Sabah said two thirds of the students enrolled at Kuwait University were women.

Many say they are eager to take part in rebuilding their country, the infrastructure of which was destroyed by Iraq's invasion.

Such ambitions would have been difficult to realise here only a few years ago and still are in most Gulf Arab states.

In neighbouring Saudi Arabia a fundamentalist strain of Islam bars women from driving and segregates the sexes.

But Kuwait's early start in