

Pulp mills to be set up in non-viable sugar units

The Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan announced that pulp mills, based on green jute, will be set up in non-viable sugar mills of the country particularly in Kalia-chopra Sugar Mills and Desbandhu Sugar Mills.

The announcement came while the minister was reviewing the overall situation concerning the use of green jute at a meeting at the BCIC Bhawan in the city yesterday, says a press release.

The meeting reviewed in detail the positions regarding

plantation of jute, procurement and transportation of green jute.

The ministers advised the corporation officials and the managing directors to give preference to the marginal and jute farmers in taking delivery of green jute and handing over payment.

He stressed the need for giving the farmers all possible help and assistance for selling jute to the pulp and paper mills. They must not be harassed in any way, he said.

In view of the prevailing

shortage of jute seed in the country, the minister advised the managing directors to establish and strengthen bilateral contact with the farmers encouraging them to increase jute plantation, retain seed for future crop and sell the green jute to the pulp and paper mills.

He also advised BCIC to give preference to low-grade jute growing areas in the process of collection of jute.

Zahiruddin Khan, urged the managing directors of the industrial units to maximise

productivity, avoid loss and earn profit. In this context, he mentioned that awards would be given to the enterprises showing excellent performance.

The meeting was attended by A M Anwarul Haque, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Industries, and Waseq al Azad, Chairman, BCIC.

Directors of BCIC, managing directors of Khulna Newsprint Mill, North Bengal Paper Mill and Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mill were also present.

Fishing trawlers violating licence regulations

KHULNA, June 14: Proper collection of sea fish, its uses and overall management are being hampered due to the non-compliance of Fish Licence Regulations by the fishing trawlers in the Bay of Bengal, reports UNB.

As a result, huge sanctuary of sea fish is being destroyed and reserve of shrimp is declining gradually.

A source said to ensure proper collection of sea fish, its uses and control and to keep adequate reserve the authorities have introduced licence system of the fishing trawlers.

But ninety per cent of the trawlers violating the regulations are catching fish resources indiscriminately.

The sources said 8 to 10 thousand trawlers are being engaged in fishing in 2,480 square kilometres of the coastal areas of Bangladesh water territory.

Elephant sale by Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka being discouraged

COLOMBO, June 14: President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga has moved to discourage the sale of elephants by Buddhist temples, which receive the animals as gifts from the state, a government newspaper said Monday, reports AFP.

Temples were selling off the elephants at about 20,000 dollars each and asking the government for replacements from the state orphanage for elephants, the Evening Observer said.

The practice is likely to stop, with Wijetunga ordering that baby elephants should be given only to temples that are in a financial position to feed the animals, the newspaper said.

Elephants are revered in Sri Lanka and are decorated and paraded at Buddhist temple ceremonies. The elephant population in Sri Lanka is believed to be dwindling as many animals are slaughtered by farmers.



Minister for Industries A M Zahiruddin Khan delivering his speech at BCIC Bhawan in the city yesterday.

US urges Canada to back down on salmon confrontation

WASHINGTON, June 14: A State Department official says the United States wants Canada to back down from its confrontational approach to a salmon fishing dispute, calling Canada's announced transit fee for US fishing boats "unhelpful," according to USIS.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said June 10 the United States was willing to resume without conditions the Pacific salmon negotiations Canada broke off in February.

"We want to see cooperation instead of confrontation," he said.

Brian Tobin, Canadian fisheries Minister, announced that starting June 15 US commercial fishing boats must pay nearly 1,100 dollars each way to travel the 600-mile Inside Passage through British Columbia's sheltered coastal islands between southeast Alaska and Washington state. Fishing boats are not subject to any transit fee now.

State Department lawyers were examining whether the fee violated international law.

At any rate, the State Department official said, it would endanger the lives of US fishermen who are forced to sail in dangerous open ocean

because they cannot pay the transit fee.

The issue arises now because the 1994 Pacific salmon fishing season is about to start without previous arrangements allocating the total catch among commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen and Indian tribes in southeast Alaska, British Columbia, Washington and part of Oregon.

The underlying agreement, achieved in 1985 after 14 years of negotiation, remains in force; but the annex to the agreement allocating the catch among different fishing regimes expired over 1992 and 1993.

Off-and-on negotiations for a new annex broke down in February. Two sets of inter-related negotiations were going on: Before resuming allocation negotiations, Canada insisted upon first achieving agreement in negotiations on what is called the equity issue.

Putting the issue simply, the Canadians argue that US fishermen annually take six million more Canada-origin salmon, worth 65 million dollars, than Canadian fishermen take US-origin salmon.

The State Department official

said the United States was willing to negotiate over equity although he suggested the Canadians were exaggerating the numbers. He said the United States put forward a serious proposal that Canada rejected.

Canada's confrontational approach, he said, was part of strategy to split the US delegation between fishermen in Alaska, where stocks are plentiful, and those in Washington and Oregon, where stocks are nearly depleted.

The Canadians' ultimate goal, he said, was to shut down US fisheries in Washington's Puget sound and in Alaska.

Already, he said, the US government has essentially closed most fisheries off Washington and Oregon to conserve endangered Pacific salmon such as the Snake River Falls chinook as well as coho and chinook stocks that are considered likely soon to be listed as endangered.

At the same time, he said, Canadian policy aimed at maximizing Canadian interests in the cause of equity encourages Canadian fishermen to go after those endangered US stocks.

He said no resumption of negotiations is scheduled.

20,000 tons of EU wheat reach Ctg

A ship carrying about 20,000 tonnes of wheat as food aid from the European Union (EU) arrived Chittagong yesterday, reports BSS.

According to a press release of the Dhaka office of the European Commission, this shipment is part of the EU's programme of direct food aid to Bangladesh, under which consignments totalling 70,000 tonnes of wheat were supplied last year and 50,000 tonnes more are expected within the next few weeks.

These allocations, it said, were scheduled for delivery in the first year of a six-year programme to provide 5,200 tonnes of wheat in all.

It will be used to support vulnerable groups development, as well as food for work schemes on embankments, rural roads, "ideal villages" and fisheries, the commission ofice said.

The total value of this food aid amounts to 73.1 million ECU equivalent to Taka 345 crore, it said.

T&T earns Tk 683 cr as revenue till June 10

The T and T Board has earned Taka 683 crore as revenue till June 10 this year and is likely to make a profit of Taka 500 crore after achieving its target, reports BSS.

This was disclosed at a high level meeting of the T and T Board at the Board's conference room with Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam in the chair.

Islam said the conversion of digital telephone in the city to ISD would start from next. He said the subscribers, who had agreed to convert their digital telephones to ISD, would get the same without any charge.

He said the minimum charge of Taka one thousand for all the ISD phones would also be suspended from July and the subscribers will not have to pay the charge.

Islam further said that the process of converting the six thousand NWD telephone sets to non-NWD system as requested by the subscribers would start from July 1 in phases.

The minister asked the board to give telephone connections to those persons who had already submitted the fees at the earliest possible time.

South African ostrich egg fetches \$ 2000

PRETORIA, June 14: Foreign buyers are shelling out as much as 2,000 dollars for a South African Ostrich egg, reports Reuter.

Farmers were beating an export ban and smuggling live ostriches or fertilised eggs to the United States, said Chris Coetzee, chairman of a co-operative making products from the birds.

A breeding pair of ostriches will fetch 60,000 dollars and an egg 2,000 dollars there, he said.

SAARC states can save \$18b in 6 yrs slashing defence spending: UN

ISLAMABAD, June 14: Pakistan needs to cut defence spending, spend more on its social sector and sell of all major public assets in international markets if it is to boost its economy, a senior UN official said Monday, reports Reuter.

"Just one year's purchase of arms could have financed most of the essential social agenda of Pakistan," Special Adviser to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Dr Mahbub-ul Haq told a news conference.

However, he said any reduction in military spending should be carried out on a regional basis, with India as the biggest country in South Asia leading the way.

The seven nations in the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could save 18 billion US dollars over the next six years by cutting defence spending by three per cent a year, he said.

"Personally I would have

liked to see a lot more investment in human development... rather than in military and debt servicing," he said, referring to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's budget for 1994/95 (July/June) unveiled last week.

The budget raised defence spending by 8.6 per cent to 26.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Pakistan and India together spent 16 billion US dollar on defence in 1988-1992, double the expenditure by Saudi Arabia, he said.

The UNDP was prepared to match in funds for human development and the social sector every dollar saved on defence by the nations in SAARC, he said.

Pakistan's 1992 purchase of 40 French Mirage 2000 fighters and three tripartite aircraft could have paid for safe water for two years for all 55 million people without it, Mahbub said.

It could also have funded family planning for 20 million

couples, essential medicine for 13 million and basic education for 12 million children without access to primary schools.

He criticised Pakistan's lack of progress on improving its social indicators, saying it ranked 132 out of 173 countries in the human development index.

Pakistan's large debt servicing payments were another burden on development, he said. He suggested the government sell all major public assets to handle the domestic debt servicing burden.

"Pakistan could easily raise 15-20 billion US dollar in the international market by offering small shares of all its public assets," Mahbub said.

Debt servicing cost 78 million rupees (28 billion US dollars) in 1993-94. Next year both foreign and domestic debt servicing will swallow 35.3 per cent of GDP, including 82 billion rupees for domestic debt.

OPEC ministers for maintaining firm control on production

VIENNA, June 14: Anxious to keep oil prices rebounding, OPEC ministers are urging the cartel to maintain a tight grip on crude production in fall and winter, reports AP.

Ahead of Wednesday's opening session of the group's summer conference, several ministers of the 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries said they wanted to hold pumping at current levels.

Oil Minister Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah of Qatar, the group's president, said Monday he doubted the ministers would even discuss making changes in the output guidelines.

"OPEC is giving itself a rest to see how the market behaves," said Energy Minister Erwin Jose Arrieta of Venezuela.

In an effort to stop the fall in oil prices the nations last March agreed to cap surging crude production at 24.5 million barrels a day for the rest of the year.

Since then, the producers have generally abided by their quotas, and prices have gained nearly three dollars a barrel from the five-year lows reached earlier in the year.

The average price of a basket of seven crudes monitored by the cartel was 15.84 dollar a 42-gallon barrel last week. While advancing, the marker was still sharply under OPEC's 21 dollar goal.

Light sweet crudes in the United States and Europe tend to be several dollars a barrel higher than the OPEC gauge.

"There's no need (for OPEC) to do anything," said John Lichtblau, Chairman of

the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation in New York. "Prices are certainly a lot better" than at the group's March meeting, he said.

Lichtblau and other analysts attributed the price rise mostly to greater demand for crude with the improvement of the American and Japanese economies, which are big oil customers.

OPEC is betting that demand for its crude will continue expanding in coming months. If the cartel keeps a steady hand on the oil taps, supplies should tighten for customers in the United States and elsewhere, and prices should continue rising.

OPEC's executive has forecast demand for its oil will rise to 26.2 million barrels a day in the final three months of the year.



Kazuo Haruna (C), leader of the visiting high-powered Japanese investment team addressing the press briefing at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday. Prime Minister's special envoy M Morshed Khan (L) and M Mokammel Huq, executive chairman of the Board of Investment (R) are also seen.

Expansion of international trade enhancing pressure on environment

Abdul Hannan

Trade and environment are ecologically linked. Growth in international trade increases environmental pressures because what was produced locally is now produced non-locally, adding to environmental costs of transport and processing.

The North's attempts to have a 'green' General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is misplaced. GATT, because of its undemocratic, a symmetric and centralized structure, cannot be green. Like its Bretton Woods cousins, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), GATT has an authoritarian structure.

As the Colombian ambassador observed in Geneva, "The Bretton Woods institutions continue to be made the centre of gravity for the principal economic decisions that affect the developing economies... we all know the nature of the decision-making system in such institutions, their undemocratic character, their lack of transparency, their dogmatic principles, their lack of pluralism in the debate of ideas and their impotence to influence the policies of the industrialized countries."

This also seems to be applicable to the new World Trade Organization (WTO). The

terms of its creation suggest that this organisation will be dominated by the industrialized countries and its fate will be to align itself with the World Bank and IMF. We could announce in advance the birth of a new institutional trinity which would between them control and dominate the economic relations that commit the developing world.

GATT is capable of putting environmental conditionalities on the countries of the South. This is what is implied by 'green imperialism'. Vandana Shiva, the Indian environmental activist, describes it as the latest of three broad phases of imperial domination of the South by the North. In the first phase the North perpetrated abuse and exploitation of the South's people and its natural resources under the pretext of the civilizing project — the so-called 'white man's burden'. Exploitation has continued under the guise of economic development to this day, and now appears to be entering a third distinct phase, this time framed in the vernacular of environmental protection.

A recent Environment Minister's meeting in Agra, India, went off track because in response to these charges of Northern domination, the

North charged the South with 'environmental dumping'. What has slipped out of this debate is the environmental dumping by the North in the South. It takes place when the Chief Economist of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, recommends the dumping of pollutants in the South, when pesticides banned in the North are dumped in the South, when the North American Free Trade Agreement encourages all dirty and hazardous industries, now euphemistically referred to as 'sick industries', of the United States to relocate in Mexico. This dogma of comparative advantage was the principle behind the key note speech made by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on her recent visit to Japan when she encouraged the relocation of that country's sick industries in Bangladesh.

GATT enshrines the credo of free trade — of free and unrestrained export of hazardous products and industry to countries where life is considered cheaper because the people are poorer (a logical extension, in fact, of the law of comparative advantage).

The North wants its rights to free export of poisons, pollution and resource depleting production systems to the

South, but would like to protect itself from a return of those products and poisons through Southern exports. This is where the rhetoric of environmental dumping comes in useful. From the Northern perspective, it seems the north has a right to dump, the South does not.

The Southern states are in turn demanding an equal right to engage in environmental dumping (though this environmental dumping is still referred to as economic growth, supported by armies of neo-classical economists: today's high priest of development). The ecological standpoint cannot be the one of Southern states are taking, though on grounds of equality, it is interpreted as equal rights to 'destroy' the environment, it might appear justified.

Eco-dumping is falsely presented as merely a trade relationship between states. However, it carries with it two less visible relationships — the relationship between nature and society, and the relationship between state, corporations and civil society.

Universalising the environmental destruction of free trade practices may appear democratic if viewed only as a relationship between states.

But when viewed from the perspective of civil society, it is not, because it is the poor and marginal communities of the South who bear the cost of environmental dumping irreversibly. Furthermore, irrespective of their mutual accusations, both Northern and Southern states are ignoring the primary agents of environmental destruction on a global scale: Transnational Corporations (TNCs). TNCs use both Northern and Southern governments to minimize their environmental obligations and maximize their environmental externalities. Making corporate functioning more accountable requires environmental regulation, not deregulation.

By shifting the discourse from environmental regulation to management of 'environmental protectionism' and environmental dumping, the focus shifts from corporations to states. This is not to say that states have not themselves been implicitly responsible for environmental destruction. In an era where the territoriality of environmental concerns exceeds the territoriality of state concerns, questions are being increasingly directed to the capacity (if not relevance) of the State in a sustainable future. The institution of State,

both North and South must bear considerable blame for bringing us to the brink of what the World climate change modelers refer to as 'total systems breakdown'. But what is more, in this era of privatization, companies, not countries, engage in dumping. And only citizens have the courage to point this out. The governments of the South have swelled the privatization pill and are busy implementing the policies of deregulation and free trade that absolve corporations of any environmental responsibility.

The South would be stronger if it made visible, and resisted, eco dumping by the North in the South and indicated the asymmetry in the trade environment discussions which are always reduced to green conditionalities on the South.

The demand for mutual accountability and reflexivity, no less than a call for greater environmental democracy, should be the South's strategy in dealing with South-North issues in trade and the environment. If the Australians can demand the labelling of tropical timber to ensure that it has been sustainably produced, why cannot Bangladesh demand the labelling of American

wheat to ensure that it has been sustainably produced, not used chemicals and destroyed biodiversity?

If we turn towards Northern production systems and insist on full environmental accounting of production costs, we will find invisible environmental subsidies in Northern agriculture, forestry and fisheries. These hidden environmental subsidies amount to eco-dumping. When the Third World can begin to protect itself from such dumping under free trade regimes it will cease to be defensive and set the global trade and environmental agenda.

Centralisation is the third feature of GATT that makes it an inappropriate body for dealing with trade and environmental issues. Centralization introduces distance, and distance creates ecological blindness. While the free trade policies of GATT will accelerate environmental destruction, the only environmental issues that will be brought to GATT or the upcoming WTO will be those that are convenient for Northern trade protectionism.

The voices of local communities in the Third World fighting the relocation of hazardous industries, toxic dumping or export-oriented

production will never be heard. These voices will not be carried to Geneva or New York by Southern states which are de facto partners with Northern powers in the rape of the environment.

This does not imply delinking trade and the environment. It implies not linking them through the institutions biased towards the North and trade against the South and the environment. International trade and environment links need to be made in the institutions that emerged from UNCED (the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Biodiversity Convention and the Convention on Climate Change).

Domestically, the only possibility of protecting the environment is to decentralise environmental decision-making. It is not a 'green' GATT but green communities that will ensure protection of the environment. Democracy, or to use its popular simile, participation, and decentralization are essential components of the green agenda of trade and environment at international, national and local levels.

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