

Aussie maritime labour union imposes ban on Indonesian cargo

SYDNEY, Sept 20: Australia's main maritime labour union has imposed a ban on all Indonesian ships and cargo following the recent arrest of two Indonesian labour leaders for subversion linked to opposition rioting in July, reports AP.

The Maritime Union of Australia's assistant national secretary Vic Slater said Thursday the bans would disrupt Indonesian shipping services and create a reputation of unreliability among its other trade partners.

The first ship to be affected will be the Bogassari Empat, which was due to arrive in Western Australia on Thursday.

The bans are in protest against the arrests of independent labour leaders Mochtar Pakpahan and Dita Sari.

Both were implicated in riots that rocked Jakarta in July when troops stormed the headquarters of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party after its leader Megawati Sukarnoputri was ousted from office.

Both men are being held on charges of subversion for allegedly inciting the riots, in which five people reportedly died. The charges carry the death penalty.

Mochtar Pakpahan is the leader of the largest independent trade union, the Indonesian Workers' Welfare Union.

Industrial Relations Minister Peter Reith condemned the bans, which were imposed two days after an official visit to Jakarta by Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

"Increasing trade with Asia is a national imperative which will promote Australian jobs and investment," Reith said.

The bans "will serve to confirm the impression that Australia is an unreliable supplier and that there is little prospect of improving the productivity or reliability of the waterfront," he said.

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US Senate passes bill to preserve fisheries

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: The US Senate unanimously passed a bill on Thursday to try to reverse a trend of overfishing and wasteful practices that has led to the near collapse of many US fisheries, reports Reuter.

But with time running but in this congressional session, the bill faces a tight deadline for being passed by the House of Representatives version and sent to President Bill Clinton.

"We applaud them for passing it, but the challenge now is for the two houses to come together, because the fish can't wait another two years," Gerry Leape of Greenpeace said.

The bill transforms the 20-year-old Magnuson act from a law that blocked foreign exploitation of fisheries but encouraged domestic exploitation to one geared to preserving the declining resources.

While most conservation groups preferred the stricter language in the version the house passed a year ago, they greatly clamp down on over-fishing and the amount of by-catch — commercially unwanted marine life that is netted, then dumped dead or dying back into the sea.

In the North Pacific alone, as much as 750 million pounds (340 million kg) of fish is dumped overboard annually.

The bill also has provisions to restore degraded fish habitats and to reduce fishing capacity through measures such as scrapping or buying back vessels.

6 INRO members ratify global rubber pact

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20: Only six out of 27 members of the International Natural Rubber Organisation (INRO) have ratified the new United Nations global price pact hammered out in Geneva in March, a top INRO official said Tuesday, reports AFP.

The Third International Natural Rubber Agreement (INRO III) has to garner 75 per cent support from both INRO's exporting and importing members by January 1, 1997, for it to succeed INRO II, which expired in December last year.

"So far, Japan, Spain and Greece representing the consumers and Thailand, Nigeria and Sri Lanka from the producers side have signed," INRO buffer stock manager James Hegarty said.

The key consumers — China, the United States and the European Union — are key producers. Malaysia and Indonesia have yet to ratify, he said.

"But we will have a better idea when we meet next month," Hegarty said, referring to INRO's semi-annual council meeting scheduled for the last week of November.

There has been progress made in most of the INRO member capitals, Hegarty said.

Officials have said that without Malaysia's ratification, there will not be enough votes from the producing member nations to put INRO III into effect.

Malaysia, locked in a contest for the INRO's Executive Director's post, has said it will only ratify if it gets the post, now held by Thailand.

But rubber industry officials said they were confident the dispute could be resolved in due course in the spirit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

EU rejects move Britain suspends cattle cull

LONDON, Sept 20: Britain has suspended its cattle cull following new scientific research which questions the value of the mass slaughter programme in eradicating mad cow disease, report agencies.

The new scientific evidence now available means that further work is needed on appropriate culling strategies," Prime Minister John Major's Downing St. office said in a statement Thursday night.

"For the present, the government is not proceeding with the selective cull but will return to cull options in the light of the developing science," it said.

At a European Union farm ministers meeting in Brussels this week, British Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg cited new Oxford University research which says mad cow disease —



Carcasses of pig, cow and sheep thrown by some 40 farmers lay on a street in front of the Niort prefecture, centre France, on Friday. The farmers were protesting against an allowance they have to pay to bring dead animals to the knackery, a service free of charge before the mad cow crisis. —AFP/UNB photo

"The position of the commission has not changed," he told a Reuters television reporter at the commission's Brussels headquarters.

In March, the EU imposed a worldwide ban on British beef exports after Britain admitted there was a probable — but scientifically unproved — link between BSE and the deaths of 12 people from a new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a deadly human equivalent form.

At an EU summit in Florence, Italy, in June, European leaders agreed to phase out the ban step-by-step if Britain carried out a plan that included slaughtering an estimated 140,000 cattle, Britain agreed.

But Major in a BBC interview Wednesday said the Oxford University research had changed things and that by continuing to refuse to review the mass slaughter policy the EU was on very shaky scientific ground.

A Downing St. spokesman insisted Thursday night: "This (the suspension of the cull) is not a departure from the Florence framework which stated that the United Kingdom eradication plan shall be adapted if necessary in the light of scientific and epidemiological developments."

On Thursday, before the suspension of the British cull was announced, the EU's executive commission agreed to study the Oxford University research.

EU commission officials insisted any change in the cull programme would fly in the face of the June summit deal on lifting the ban on British beef exports.

Egypt considering plan to expand cultivation of artificial forest

CAIRO, Sept 20: Egypt is considering a plan to expand the cultivation of artificial forests to reduce its dependence on imported wood, which costs some 3.5 billion US dollars annually, reports Xinhua.

Since artificial forests do not require excessive water resources and are compatible with Egypt's dry climate, the Ministry of Agriculture has approved a project to cultivate 500,000 tropical African mahogany trees each year, a local English-language weekly reported yesterday.

The wood of these trees, which are naturally found in the African rain forests, as proven by the ministry to be stronger than that of beech trees, Al-Ahram weekly quoted Amin Okasha, Head of the Ministry's Horticulture Research Institute, as saying.

These trees can survive both on fresh and sewage waters, making it possible to grow them around sanitary drainage stations, the paper said.

The ministry began cultivating mahogany trees on a small scale about 28 years ago, Okasha said.

Ahmed Abdel-Dayem Head of the Forestry Department at the Horticulture Research Institute, said that Egypt enjoys a number of factors that facilitate the cultivation of artificial forests, the first of which is an abundance of vacant land.

The second factor is that there are enough water resources to irrigate the land on which these trees will be planted. The main source of water will be sanitary and industrial drainage.

Worldwide sales of robots surge in '95

GENEVA, Sept 20: Worldwide sales of industrial robots surged last year, when the market recovered from a three-year slump, a UN agency said Tuesday, reports AP.

Industrial robots are used around the globe, particularly in the motor vehicle industry for welding and assembly, and in the electrical machinery industry. The market is estimated to be worth 5.7 billion dollars globally.

The UN Economic Commission for Europe predicted that growth in such robots will increase by 20 per cent in 1996, and about 15 per cent between 1997 and 1999.

The new annual report, called World Industrial Robots 1996, was prepared by the commission and the International Federation of Robotics.

Japan uses the greatest number of advanced robots, followed by Sweden, Germany, Korea and Italy. In Japan, there are 800 robots per 10,000 people employed in the motor vehicle industry.

The drop in sales between 1990 and 1994 stemmed from the sharp fall in the supply of robots in Japan, the report said. Last year, the market started to recover and some 36,500 robots were installed, a 23 per cent increase over 1994, in Japan.

The recovery in 1995 saw the market in the United States grow by 34 per cent, in Germany 43 per cent, in Italy 30 per cent and France 16 per cent. The United Kingdom's market fell by 27 per cent, the report said.

In smaller European countries, sales increased by 11 per cent in 1995, compared to a much larger increase of 41 per cent in 1994.

Lukoil, Arco reach deal

MOSCOW, Sept 20: Atlantic Richfield Co and Russia's largest oil company Lukoil, agreed Thursday to invest five billion dollars to explore for oil and gas — by far the largest foreign investment in a joint venture in Russia, reports AP.

Lukoil's deal with Los Angeles-based Arco will focus on oil and gas projects in the former Soviet Union but also envisions work in other countries.

Lukoil said the investment will be over about 15 years, but a later statement from Arco said it will span 18 years. An Arco spokesman could not explain the difference.

Lukoil will hold a 54 per cent stake in the venture, called LUKARCO. The two sides agreed in March on the framework for the deal, but at that time Arco said the investment would total three billion dollars over 10 years.

This agreement is unprecedented in the history of cooperation between Russian and foreign companies and testifies to the growing confidence among Western investors in the stability of the political and economic course in Russia, Lukoil President Vagit Alekperov said at the signing.

Scheme to promote jute industries in India

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: In a bid to put jute industry — country's one of the oldest traditional industries — on the path of recovery and regeneration, the UNDP-funded National Jute Development Programme (NJDP) has launched a scheme to promote manufacturing of diversified jute products for consumption both at home and abroad.

The NJDP has identified several new end uses for jute encompassing textiles and non-textile sectors through a massive thrust towards jute diversification and the simultaneous development of entrepreneurship and manpower required for the purpose, the Programme Manager, NJDP, Ajay Prasad told PTI.

In a situation where the jute industry finds itself fighting with its back to the wall to stay viable in the face of the threat from cheaper synthetic substitutes, diversification is the only answer, he said.

Prasad said among the newer items that can find ready markets even within the country is cotton-jute blended yarn which can find acceptance both in terms of price and its eco-friendly character as established by scientists.

As jute fibre is not only environment friendly and fire retarded, but also bio-degradable with capacity to promote safety standards, some top car manufacturers in Germany have plans to use it, he said adding internationally reputed German car maker "BMW" has placed an order with an Indian firm to supply jute based mats and paneling materials for interior car decoration.

Prasad said under the jute diversification scheme of NJDP, the reputed Ahmedabad-based textile firm, Arvind Mills, has started manufacturing Denim Jeans based on blend of jute and cotton for export market.

The NJDP, described as the largest ever funded programme of UNDP involving assistance of 20 million dollars from UNDP to the Indian jute sector during the eight five plan period (1992-97) with a matching contribution of 50 crore rupees from the Indian government, is now focusing on more and more development of diversified jute products having massive export potential, he added.

Prasad said the growing application of modern technology under the NJDP's jute diversification scheme through emphasis on research and development has directly led to development of diversified jute products.

The wide range of jute diversified products developed under the programme include jute carpets, jute yarn, jute shopping bags and soft travel luggage, mats, jute handloom and jute powerloom fabrics, wall hangings, jute handicrafts, jute garments and home furnishings made of jute.

Dhaka Stock Prices
Price-fluctuation of issues

By Staff Correspondent

The share market of Dhaka Stock Exchange faced some corrections last week when prices of a number of issues declined.

Name of issue	Closing price	Difference	
	September 12 '96	September 19 '96	
Islami Bank	Tk 5000	Tk 6000	Tk 1000
National Bank	Tk 260	Tk 242	-Tk 18
Al Baraka Bank	Tk 1450	Tk 1200	-Tk 250
ILDC	Tk 4485	Tk 4436	-Tk 49
ULC	Tk 2182	Tk 2250	Tk 68
BZ Lamps	Tk 4600	Tk 4473	-Tk 127
Aad Pipes	Tk 1597	Tk 1600	Tk 3
Eastern Cables	Tk 727	Tk 701	-Tk 26
Karim Pipe	Tk 755	Tk 717	-Tk 38
Singer BD	Tk 12702	Tk 12780	Tk 78
National Tubes	Tk 2200	Tk 1898	-Tk 302
Alpha Tobacco	Tk 196	Tk 199	Tk 3
Apex food	Tk 5679	Tk 5904	Tk 225
AMCL Fran	Tk 1123	Tk 1493	Tk 370
BOC Bangladesh	Tk 328	Tk 343	Tk 15
Pdina Oil Co	Tk 535	Tk 549	Tk 14
National Oxygen	Tk 220	Tk 200	-Tk 20
Beximco Pharma	Tk 128	Tk 132	Tk 4
Glaxo	Tk 280	Tk 233	-Tk 47
ACI	Tk 155	Tk 163	Tk 8
BCIL	Tk 450	Tk 495	Tk 45
Beximco Infusion	Tk 500	Tk 539	Tk 39
N Polymer	Tk 1240	Tk 1300	Tk 60
Square Pharma	Tk 872	Tk 851	-Tk 21
Imam Button	Tk 273	Tk 295	Tk 22
Eastern Housing	Tk 115	Tk 135	Tk 20
Shinepukur	Tk 118	Tk 114	-Tk 4
Cog Ball pen	Tk 560	Tk 429	-Tk 131
Immo Ceramic	Tk 390	Tk 1108	Tk 718
Usmann Glass	Tk 1383	Tk 1523	Tk 140
Ctg Cement	Tk 3701	Tk 3771	Tk 70
Confidenc Cement	Tk 1494	Tk 1554	Tk 60
Meghna Cement	Tk 832	Tk 829	-Tk 3
Green Delta	Tk 1100	Tk 1102	Tk 2
United Insurance	Tk 694	Tk 580	-Tk 114
Phonix	Tk 625	Tk 616	-Tk 9
Central	Tk 361	Tk 336	-Tk 25
Eastern	Tk 315	Tk 325	Tk 10
Karnaphuli	Tk 357	Tk 336	-Tk 21
Rupali	Tk 741	Tk 733	-Tk 8
Sandhani	Tk 380	Tk 372	-Tk 8
Delta Life	Tk 1700	Tk 1585	-Tk 115
Purabi	Tk 298	Tk 277	-Tk 21

KL plans tax incentives to hi-tech industries

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20: Malaysia's 1997 budget will outline tax incentives to high-technology industries and focus on cutting the balance of payments deficit, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Friday, reports AFP.

"More tax incentives will be provided under the multimedia super corridor (MSC project) and more opportunities will be given to hi-tech industries," Anwar, who is finance minister, said when opening a convention for ethnic Malay contractors.

Last month, Malaysia unveiled plans to set up the MSC, an information-technology hub in an area in suburban Sepang, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of Kuala Lumpur.

Anwar, who will present the 1997 budget on October 25, said the budget would also outline steps to tackle the deficit.

Anwar said the government could not escape from this responsibility and allow future generations to shoulder the burden.

"The country cannot continue to be in debt. We must repay the loans earlier," said Anwar, adding that "we must only spend within our capacity and not more."

Malaysia's current account deficit in 1996 was projected by a private think tank to rise to 19.2 billion ringgit (7.68 billion dollars) from 17.8 billion ringgit last year.

The government has blamed the persistently high deficit on rising imports of bulky equipment to fuel growth, which has averaged more than eight per cent a year since 1987.

Anwar also called on local financial institutions to set up special funds to help smaller ethnic Malay contractors and help the government nurture

IMF report on capital movement World financial markets remain stable this year

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: World financial markets have remained stable this year under generally favourable macroeconomic conditions, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday in a report on international capital movement, reports AP.

It found that systemic shocks such as those that rattled the European exchange rate mechanism in 1992 and Mexico in 1994-1995 as well as crises in such institutions as Barings, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, Daiwa and Sumitomo, "appear to have been a by-product of the transformation and restructuring of international finance."

The systemic risk is very much under control, said David Folkerts Landau, the IMF's Deputy Director of Research.

Market participants have learned to manage financial risks.

As an indication of calmer market activity the report cited a pickup in capital flow toward developing and transition economies.

In 1995 such transfers reached a record 228 billion

Moscow to start paying striking workers next week

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia, Sept 20: The governor of a large, energy-starved region in Russia's Far East came home from Moscow on Friday with promises the federal government will begin paying striking energy workers next week, reports AP.

Yevgeny Nazdratenko said on arriving back in Vladivostok that Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had agreed to start transferring a total of 190 billion roubles (7 million dollars) next week to the region's energy monopoly, Dalenergo.

The Pacific Coast region of Primorsky, the most populous region in Russia's Far East, has been gripped by an energy crisis and labour unrest. Thousands of energy-industry workers have been staging a protest this week, causing already rationed power supplies to dip still lower.

The protests have spread, with unpaid defence workers demonstrating Thursday and a general walkout by state employees called for next month.

Nazdratenko has accused the federal government of failing to pay its energy debts, but Moscow says officials in the governor's administration have not delivered money sent especially for the workers. The striking workers have demanded Nazdratenko's resignation.

There was no immediate word from the workers' unions whether Nazdratenko's promise of payment would lead them to call off their strikes. They have previously vowed to remain on strike until they actually see the money.

Early Friday, union representatives said 180 power plant workers were continuing a hunger strike.

Ilsiyar Malayshveva, a spokeswoman at the regional administration, said the money promised next week is part of an agreement reached early this month in talks between Nazdratenko and First Deputy Premier Alexei Bolshakov.

SIA steps up bid for jt venture with Tata

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Singapore Airlines Ltd has stepped up a bid for a proposed 600-million-dollar tie-up with India's Tata group after two similar projects were given the go-ahead a daily reported Monday, says AFP.

The Tata group the country's second largest business house, and Singapore Airlines argued that their joint venture was no different from existing joint ventures between Indian and foreign firms, the times of India said.

Tata officials said Kuwait Airways and Gulf Airline had been allowed by the Indian government to pick up a 40 per cent equity stake in jet airways and the German carrier Lufthansa also got the nod for buying into modifult.

The 40 per cent equity holding is in keeping with the guidelines for domestic airlines, a Tata official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The equity will only strengthen the airline by opening the channels for most contemporary technology."

The brand equity of Singapore Airlines will only help in secure long term finance.

Civil Aviation Minister C M Ibrahim last month announced that foreign airlines would not be permitted to service domestic services.

The joint venture project was given the green light by Indian government's foreign investment promotion board but later rejected by the aviation ministry.

The alliance was aimed at creating the largest private airline in India, covering 13 domestic routes.

Many of India's fledgling private airlines had opposed the entry of the Singapore carrier. It also met with opposition from state-owned Air India and Indian Airlines.

CEFTA agrees to step up free trade

JASNA, Slovakia, Sept 20: Leaders from the five-member states of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA), all members of the former communist bloc, agreed Friday to step up free trade among themselves and to admit Romania to their organisation, says AFP.

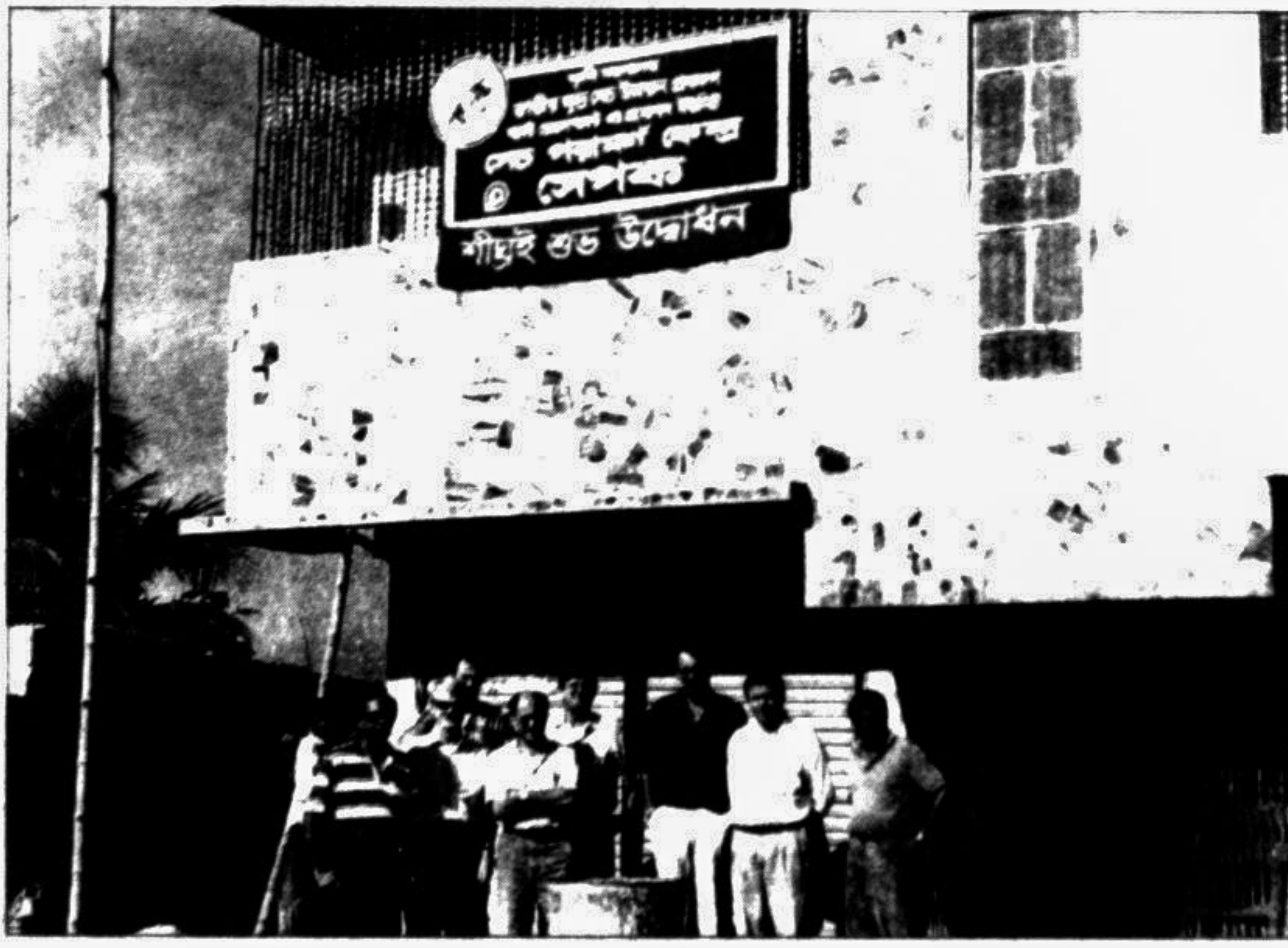
The prime ministers of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia, reaffirmed their "political will" to boost the liberalisation of trade, said Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, hosting the meeting.

Czech Premier Vaclav Klaus, a leading proponent of free market policies, said the prime ministers had noted "that our economies are profiting from the constant growth in free trade."

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the ministers said they aimed to open up the organisation to new members, with Romania a likely new member next year once it has met the entry conditions.

Other candidates such as Lithuania, Ukraine and Latvia would become eligible once they have signed free trade agreements with each of the present signatories of CEFTA.

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin sent a letter to the CEFTA premiers expressing interest in establishing a dialogue with the organisation.



Commission of the European Community (CEC) Donor Review Mission visited the Sech Pamarsho Kendra (SHEPOK) at Gazipur on Monday. National Minor Irrigation Development Project (NMIDP) expanding its advice centre network to facilitate farmers with knowledge on technologies of irrigation tubewells and how to obtain bank loan to buy the tubewells. It has advice centres in 18 thanas of Dhaka-Mymensingh-Jamalpur-Tangail districts.