



MOSCOW: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko (R) gestures while speaking with Russian President Boris Yeltsin during a session of the Inter-State Council of the Economic Integration Treaty member states (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan) in Moscow Friday. During the session Tajikistan became the fifth full member of the Treaty. The day before Lukashenko had offered to host Russian nuclear weapons as a counter-threat to NATO once Moscow and Minsk strike their illusive union. — AFP photo

EU leaders move closer to reprieve of duty-free sector

BONN, Feb 27: The 15 EU leaders moved closer Friday to a reprieve of the European Union's duty-free sector, with only Denmark opposing an extension of tax-free sales over 2 1/2 years, reports AP.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair hailed the leaders' decision to ask EU finance ministers to reconsider extending duty-free sales that were to end July 1 for travel within the Union.

"It is sensible to have some form of extension so we can put in place a proper and sensible successor regime," he told reporters.

The EU governments agreed in 1991 to end duty-free sales this summer, arguing they were incompatible with a borderless Europe. They were initially due

to disappear in 1992, but the deadline was extended to 1999.

Germany, Britain and France have lobbied hard for a second reprieve, citing job losses even though an EU study this month showed those fears to be unfounded.

At the summit, Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was the only one to argue that duty-free sales must end July 1. Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok — who has long favoured ending duty-free sales — said he will accept an extension "provided it is kept as brief as possible."

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the summit chairman, proposed the extension, which requires unanimous approval of all 15 EU governments. Officials said Denmark may well have to yield its oppo-

sition.

Under Schröder's proposal, value-added taxes would be imposed as of July 1 and excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco only 2 1/2 years later.

Leaders also split on the future of duty-free sales at a summit in Vienna last December, asking the European Commission to study the impact on employment. The study found the effect on employment was "likely to be of a more limited magnitude and a more local nature than commonly believed."

But the International Duty Free Confederation has mounted a forceful lobby. The industry estimates ending duty-free sales for travel within the EU will affect up to 140,000 jobs and wipe out an industry with annual sales of some \$7 billion.

152,829 tons of WFP foodgrains arrive

A total of 152,829 tons of foodgrains arrived in Bangladesh during January and February, says a WFP press release issued in Dhaka yesterday.

Of it, 120,605 tons are wheat and 32,224 tons rice. This food assistance is part of WFP's assistance of 352,000 tons of cereals to flood affected people through the government's VGF programme.

The ships that arrived carry 32,000 tons of rice donated by Japan and are currently awaiting at the outer anchorage of the Chittagong port for delivery. In addition, 99,454 tons of wheat supplied by WFP are expected to arrive in Bangladesh ports in March and April this year.

Rahimafrooz offers free services at DITF

For the first time in the country, Rahimafrooz has set a remarkable example by providing free services to its customers at Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) '99, says a press release issued yesterday.

The company, which is the leading battery manufacturer and a reputed business house in Bangladesh, has a long history of customer service performances since its inception in 1954.

Rahimafrooz believes customer satisfaction and after sales service has been the key factor behind its success and growth and the free service at DITF is an extension of its increased customer service.

The service is an absolutely free one and available at the car parking spot of the fair. The company has also sponsored the main gate of DITF '99, the press release added.

Rahimafrooz hopes that the extended customer service at DITF will help enhance the life of the serviced batteries and ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty. Rahimafrooz does not only satisfy the local needs but also exports batteries to countries in the Middle East, Far East, France, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Nepal etc. Moreover, its battery manufacturing process is enjoying the certification ISO 9002, the highest accord by the US quality assurance bodies.

— India Abroad News Service

Commodity: Weekly Roundup

Oil up on US production slashing announcement

LONDON, Feb 27: Oil prices rose this week after US refineries announced production cutbacks, with Brent, the reference North Sea crude, up 60 cents in London at 11.05 dollars a barrel for April delivery, reports AFP.

In New York, light sweet crude for April rose 64 cents to 12.68 dollars a barrel. Phillips Petroleum was to close in mid-March its Borger Texas refinery, which has a capacity of 55,000 barrels a day, as well as several other sites, for two to three weeks.

Ultramar diamond Shamrock announced that it would close part of its McKee, Texas refinery with a capacity of 155,000 barrels a day, for 10 days at the start of March.

The group also plans to reduce production at its Alma refinery in Michigan, with a capacity of 52,000 barrels a day. Cito said it would close its Lemont, Illinois refinery, with 153,000 barrels a day capacity, for a week, following a fire this week.

The closures, although not certain, gave some support to the otherwise moribund oil market.

Rubber: Flat. Rubber prices deflated this week amid poor demand and despite intervention by the International Natural Rubber Organisation.

"Prices went down at the beginning of the week below INRO's intervention level and they immediately bought some rubber which helped a bit," said an analyst at Lewis and Peat brokerage.

However, "basically, the physical demand for rubber has just been dreadful. There was no physical demand," he said.

The rubber organisation did however manage to secure its contribution from one of its members, possibly Indonesia, bringing an extra 40 million dollars into its warehouse for future interventions.

The RSS1 index in Kuala Lumpur was stable, closing at 2.59 ringgits a kilo, compared to 2.58 ringgits the previous week.

In London, rubber for March delivery closed 15 pounds lower at 455 pounds a tonne and 20 pounds lower for April delivery at 480 pounds.

Cocoa: Calm. Cocoa prices rose slightly amid thin trading volume in the absence of any market-moving news.

Cocoa for August delivery on

the London market rose by two pounds to 907 pounds per tonne. Rainfall in growing regions of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana raised the prospect of a healthy mid-season harvest in West Africa.

The US Department of Agriculture predicted that Ghana would harvest 390,000 tonnes of cocoa in 1998/99 and Nigeria would harvest 360,000 tonnes.

Coffee: Blended. Arabica prices fell because of an expected increase in supplies from Brazil, while lower-grade robusta prices rose slightly amid expectations of tightening supply.

Arabica prices on the New York market (for May delivery) fell to 103.75 cents a pound from 104.65 cents.

Brazilian exporters revised upwards their estimate of the 1999/2000 harvest to 26.6 million sacks (of 60 kg).

Dealers were surprised that the figure came in above 26 million tonnes.

Meanwhile, Robusta contracts on the London market rose by 10 dollars to 1,640 dollars a tonne.

Tea: Weak. Tea prices fell sharply as demand ran dry in the Mombasa auction houses, the London Tea Brokers Association said.

Top quality BP1 leaves lost between five and 25 cents a kilo and PF1 leaves fell by six to 12 cents per kg.

Sugar: Meltdown. Sugar prices fell to a six-year low as the market braced for a record harvest in Brazil, while there was almost no demand from Russia, traditionally an important buyer.

August contracts on the London market fell to 211 dollars a tonne, a low point since February 16, 1993, from 215.60 dollars last week.

Producers in the important Brazilian growing region of Sao Paulo state predicted that output of refined sugar would rise by one third this year because of a fall in production of sugar cane alcohol fuel.

India also predicted a surge in output. Officials said that they expected production in 1998/99 to rise to 15 million tonnes, from 12.8 million tonnes last year.

Prices were also hit by speculative selling from investors.

Vegetable oils: Slip. US soy prices fell amid low domestic demand and hefty supply from

Brazil, which has now begun harvesting this year's crop.

On the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT), soy prices fell by 28 cents to 4.54 dollars a bushel (of 27.2 kg for March delivery).

On the Rotterdam market, palm oil for June delivery fell by 50 dollars to 500 dollars a tonne. Sunflower for December fell by 50 dollars to 500 dollars, and groundnut oil lost 25 cents to 25 dollars to 795 dollars a tonne.

Rapeseed oil fell by 9.50 guilders to 83.50 guilders per 100 kg.

On Kuala Lumpur's Commodity and Monetary Exchange (COMEX) palm oil fell after India and Pakistan failed to pay for deliveries. The default spread panic among local traders.

May contracts fell to 1,585 ringgits from 1,772 ringgits.

Grains: Ground. US wheat prices fell amid low export levels after the cancellation of an important order by Iran.

Maize prices fell amid intense competition from grains from Argentina and Brazil, which has stepped up exports after the sharp devaluation of its real currency.

On the Chicago market, wheat prices fell by 20 cents to 2.38 dollars a bushel (of 27.2 kg for March delivery).

Maize prices fell by nine cents to 2.06 dollars a bushel (of 25.4 kg for March).

The European market was buoyed by technical trades, rainfall in France, which delayed planting of spring wheat.

Cotton: Flat. Cotton prices fell under speculative selling ahead of an expected rise in this year's harvest, while demand in the United States this year was expected to fall.

Cash prices covered by the cotton outlook index fell to 55.75 cents a pound from 55.90 cents last week.

Wool: Mixed. Australian wool prices rose amid strong demand, while British prices fell amid low trading volume.

In Australia, the eastern index rose by 11 cents to 4.95 Australian dollars a kg and the western index rose by five cents to 4.46 dollars a kg.

Demand there was strong, 87 per cent of lost in the Newcastle, Melbourne and Fremantle markets found buyers.

In Britain, the wooltops index fell by seven pence to 292 pence a kg.

Pacific states for single air traffic control system from 2010

SUVA, Fiji, Feb 27: Pacific states may adopt a single air traffic control system from 2010, the South Pacific Forum Secretariat said Saturday, says AP.

A single flexible air traffic control system across the whole Pacific would be the world's largest and most cost effective single system, cutting airline operating costs by millions of dollars annually, the Secretariat said in a statement.

Existing air navigation and communication systems focused on eastern Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and San Francisco would be phased out by 2010 to be replaced by a joint venture organization to run the merger air traffic control areas.

This was one of number of recommendations being considered by a working group from the 16 forum countries and industry representatives.

A study into the planned merger was approved by Pacific Island aviation ministers in May 1998. The minister noted the aim of facilitating economic growth, particularly through tourism, in the region.

June, the ministers will meet to discuss a detailed operational concept level study.

The forum said that since the proposed merger would call for the delegation of sovereign and oceanic airspace to an outside service provider, there were "complex legal and institutional issues yet to be resolved."

Forum members are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

World donors offer \$ 470 m to Cambodia

TOKYO, Feb 27: Major world powers and institutions promised 470 million dollars in new assistance to Cambodia at a key two-day meeting here, the Japanese foreign ministry said, reports AFP.

The aid came from the 16-nation Cambodia consultative group and six international organisations who took part in the meeting at a Tokyo hotel.

The sum includes 100 million dollars from Japan in grants and technical assistance, the ministry said in a statement.

Japan also voiced readiness to resume low-interest loans.

Exploration for rich mineral reserves off west Lanka

By Sugeeswara Senadhira

COLOMBO, Feb 27: Sri Lanka is to contract a foreign firm to explore and mine rich mineral deposits in the seabed off its west coast.

The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) has estimated that mineral deposits worth more than \$330 million can be mined in just three places on the seabed off Panadura to Bentota, 60 kilometres south of Colombo.

The deposits of ilmenite, rutile, monazite and zircon were discovered by scientists of NARA's Oceanographic Division working under an exploration programme funded by the United Nations.

Two companies from Australia and Canada submitted bids for an environmental impact assessment as well as a follow-up programme of site drilling to get core samples needed to determine the grain, size and mineral content of the sediments.

Tilak Dharmawardane, head of NARA's Oceanographic Department, said from the initial exploration work it was concluded there are 11 recognised heavy mineral deposits in separate patches on the seabed.

from Panadura to Bentota. The estimated value of minerals was based only on the top two metres of the deposits, he said.

"We are focusing on the monazite deposit which is the most economically viable because of the high concentration of about 15 per cent," Dharmawardane said. Monazite is a light but very hard mineral that is used in the manufacture of aircraft, pigment computer chips and other electronic equipment.

"The monazite deposit found on the inner continental shelf between a water depth of 10-15 metres is rated as one of the richest in the world," Dharmawardane said.

The first indication of the offshore mineral deposits was found when a team of NARA scientists headed by Shanti Wickramaratne conducted a study from on board a research vessel called "Samudra Maru".

The vessel was used to collect seabed samples from Kalpitiya in the northwest to Mullaitivu in the northeast, leaving out only the troubled north, Wickramaratne said.

The research was funded by

the United Nations Revolving Fund for Mineral Resource Exploration with which the government signed an agreement to evaluate mineral deposits.

Under the agreement, if the government makes a profit from the minerals found, it has to repay one per cent of the value of the deposit which the UN fund in turn will give other developing countries for exploration.

About 1,100 line kilometre high resolution data was collected from over more than 450 square kilometres by the research vessel. "We used towed sidescan sonar to scan the seabed and build up a three-dimensional picture of the bottom," Dharmaratne said.

He said as a result of the research, the geomorphologic structure of the seabed was revealed. "With the aid of the sonar we built up a topographic map of the seabed, including reefs and rocks," he said.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Sri Lanka can claim a sea area of up to 23 times its land mass, which is 64,000 square kilometres.

— India Abroad News Service

UNICEF report observes Nations should do more against sex tourism

GENEVA, Jan 27: Governments should do more to strengthen laws prohibiting sex tourism and exploitation of children, including offering protection to all children under 18, a UNICEF report said Friday, reports AP.

About 20 countries have criminal legislation enabling them to prosecute residents for child sex crimes committed abroad, the report said. It urged more to follow suit.

It called on all countries to close loopholes to make possession of child pornography a crime and to clamp down on pornography on the Internet.

Viti Muntarbhorn, a law professor from Bangkok, wrote the report. "Extra territorial criminal laws against child sexual exploitation," for the UN Children's Fund.

It follows up a 1996 conference in Stockholm against child prostitution and contains a list of recommendations on how to stop the international market for sex tourists and pedophiles.

Muntarbhorn praised countries, including the United States, which have introduced laws against sex tourism. But he

said countries that are popular destinations for pedophiles, including Thailand and the Philippines, should also strengthen their legislation. Germany took the most legal action against sex tourists in 1997, with 37 prosecutions and six convictions for sex offenses involving children outside Germany, the report said. In other European countries, dozens of investigations were underway, it said.

Muntarbhorn urged all countries to make prosecutions easier by scrapping a requirement that the offense be a crime in both the sex tourist's home country and the country where the act takes place.

He urged courts to take a more sympathetic stance toward child victims by scrapping intrusive cross examination and allowing videotaped evidence on a routine basis.

And he recommended making 18 the minimum age for protecting children from exploitation.

"Children under this age should be protected absolutely against sexual exploitation," Muntarbhorn said.



The mobile service centre of Rahimafrooz at the DITF. — Rahimafrooz photo

Primakov hails WB for new loan

MOSCOW, Feb 27: Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov said Saturday that a new loan from the World Bank would help Western creditors better understand Russia's economic problems, says AP.

Russia and the World Bank signed a \$400 million loan agreement on Friday to repair and expand roads in western Russia and Siberia.

Primakov met in the Kremlin with Johannes Linn, vice-president of the World Bank, and thanked him "for the documents that were signed yesterday," the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Primakov praised the accord and said that by agreeing to the latest loan, World Bank President James Wolfensohn had helped the West better understand Russia's needs.

"The main thing is that the contacts between Russia and the World Bank are continuing," Primakov said, according to the Interfax news agency.

better understood in the West." The IMF suspended its loan programme to Russia after it plunged into a financial crisis last August and defaulted on some of its debts. Negotiations to resume loans are underway, but the fund still wants Russia to implement a viable economic programme.

At the signing ceremony for the loan Friday, Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov said negotiations with the IMF should be finished by March.

He called the agreement on the World Bank loan "a significant event, not only for us but for the IMF too," according to the Interfax news agency.

At the same meeting, Russia and the World Bank agreed on terms for proposed loans to finance reforms in Russia's coal industry and welfare system. But neither loan can be disbursed without IMF approval of Russia's economic policies.

Following his meeting with Linn, Primakov was scheduled to leave for a 10-day vacation in the Black Sea resort Sochi, his first holiday since taking office in September, ITAR-Tass said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Forest Conservator Coastal Circle, Ban Bhaban Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 Tender Time Limit Extension Notice (Amendment)

Tender Notice No. 01 Dated: 28-1-99

It is hereby notified for general information that, the time limit for collecting schedule of tender for purchase of various kinds of office equipment (viz Computer item — 6 Nos, Fax Machine — 5 Nos & Photocopier Machine — 2 Nos instead of 4 Nos) is extended up to 10-3-99 in place of 24-2-98 to be purchased from the office of the undersigned as well as Divisional Forest Officer, Coastal Forest Division, Chittagong, Bon Pahar, Nandan Kanan, Chittagong office on each working day and the deadline for submitting tender is extended up to 12:00 Noon of 11-3-99 instead of 25-2-99. The tenders received will be opened on 16-3-99 at 11:00 AM at the office of the undersigned in presence (if any) of the attending tenderers. All other terms & conditions of tender notice & schedule will remain unchanged.

Anowar Faruk
Forest Conservator
Coastal Circle, Ban Bhaban
Dhaka

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD) Ferry Division, Topkhana Sylhet Tender Notice

1. Tender Notice No : 34 (98-99) dt 14.02.99.
2. Name of work : Remote control line wiring of 110 H P DAF-615, 2 (two) Nos of selfstator repair of 210 H P DAF-1160 and supplying of spare parts for 150 H P Volvopenta Engine under Ferry Division, Sylhet during the year 1998-99.
3. Estimated cost : Tk 1,80,095/- (Tk one lac eighty thousand ninety-five) only.
4. Earnest money : Tk 3,602 (Tk three thousand six hundred two) only.
5. Time allowed for work : 15 (fifteen) days from the date of issue of work order.
6. Tender Form : Bangladesh Form No 2911.
7. Nature of contractor : 1. A to C general category of RHD.
2. D general of Dhaka Ferry Circle.
3. E general of Ferry Division, Sylhet.
8. Name of offices where tender documents will be available:
1. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Division, Sylhet.
2. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Construction Division, Dhaka.
3. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Maintenance Division, Dhaka.
4. Sub-Divisional Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Sub-Division, Sylhet.
9. Name of offices to receive tender:
1. Superintending Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Circle, Dhaka.
2. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Division, Sylhet.
3. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Construction Division, Dhaka.
4. Executive Engineer, (RHD), Ferry Maintenance Division, Dhaka.
10. Last date of selling tender : 10.3.99 up to office hours.
11. Last date and time of receiving tenders : 11.3.99 up to 12:00 Noon.
12. Date and time of opening tender : 14.3.99 at 12:30 PM.
13. If lowest tender is more than one then date and time of lottery : To be announced later.

Naseem Ahamed
Executive Engineer (Mech) (C. C.)
(RHD), Ferry Division
Topkhana, Sylhet

Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

Ref: No. -Secre/Engg/112/79-97/P-2 (949) Dated: 15/02/1999

Tender Notice

Sealed tenders (as per schedule) are invited from the council's civil enlisted contractors for different works of BCSIR, Dhaka, Nayarhat Leather Research Institute and Chittagong Research Laboratory.

Tender can be purchased on cash payment of Tk 400/= (non-refundable) from the cashiers of BCSIR, Secretariat, Nayarhat Leather Research Institute, Dhaka and Chittagong Research Laboratory respectively during office hours up to 11-03-99. Tenders should be submitted in the tender box kept at the office of the Superintending Engineer, BCSIR, Dhaka, Director in Charge, Chittagong Research Laboratory and Leather Research Institute, Nayarhat, Savar, Dhaka by before 3:00 PM of 14-03-99 and will be opened on 16-03-99 at 3:30 PM in presence of the tenderers/representatives (if any).

Other necessary information can be known from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Superintending Engineer
Bangladesh Council of
Scientific & Industrial Research
Secretariat, Dhanmandi, Dhaka-1205

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G-346