

# US lawmakers predict lifting of sanctions against Cuba

WASHINGTON, May 17: US lawmakers pushing to lift 40-year-old food and medicine sanctions against Cuba yesterday predicted success for the measure amid growing support from food trade groups and agribusiness, reports Reuters.

The legislation, which has already passed at the committee level in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, is popular among farm-state lawmakers because it would open up one of the last big untapped markets for American agricultural exports. It could go before the full Senate in a few days, and before the full House later in the month.

Cuba buys an estimated \$700

million worth of food annually, mostly from Canada, Europe and Latin America.

"We're finally going to break the back of these sanctions on food and medicine," Sen. Byron Dorgan, a North Dakota Democrat, told reporters. "There are times in the Senate and the House when a fundamental shift occurs, and I think that's what has occurred with this issue."

The legislation is bitterly opposed by Cuban-American groups, which have successfully defeated it in the past by contending any easing of US sanctions would benefit only President Fidel Castro. But some experts have said the recent high-

profile custody battle over Elian Gonzales, the young Cuban shipwreck survivor, may have shifted the political momentum.

In that case, the US government forcibly removed the 6-year-old boy from the home of distant relatives in Miami after they refused to comply with a court order directing the child to be reunited with his Cuban father.

The amendment would eliminate a 40-year-old ban on US sales of food and medicine to the communist-ruled nation, and bar any future American president from reimposing them except with the consent of Congress.

The measure would also apply to North Korea.

Some 38 powerful food groups and companies — ranging from the American Farm Bureau to Archer Daniels Midland Co ADM N and ConAgra Inc CAG N — said they backed the legislation.

The sanctions have done little to foster democracy in Cuba, and have deprived US growers of badly-needed sales at a time when grain and meat prices have fallen.

The Clinton administration, which eased sanctions against Iran, Libya and Sudan in recent months, has not endorsed the measure.

China aims 7.5pc GDP growth in 2000

BRASILIA, May 17: Chinese Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng pegged growth for the developing world's largest economy yesterday at 7.5 per cent of gross domestic product in 2000, compared with an expansion of 7.1 per cent last year, reports Reuters.

"It was estimated in the year 2000 GDP will be somewhere around 7.5 per cent," Xiang told the news agency through the aide of a translator during a visit to Brazil.

The forecast comes on the heels of positive GDP data for the first quarter, showing 8.1 per cent growth in the Chinese economy compared with the same period in 1999.

Xiang said earlier this month that China would spend its way to rapid growth in 2000 by pouring a record 120.5 billion yuan (\$14.56 billion) into the military and by funding massive infrastructure projects to develop its poverty-stricken interior.

But the growth will again come in part through deficit spending. Xiang's budget presented earlier in May calls for a deficit of 229.9 billion yuan (\$28 billion) compared with a shortfall of 179.7 billion yuan last year.

Xiang also said that he expected China to soon win entry into the World Trade Organisation, which he added would force Chinese companies to lower costs and diversify product lines to compete with a wave of fierce competition from abroad.

"In my personal analysis, it won't be too long for China to have entry into the WTO," he said.

European Union officials worked on Tuesday to iron out the fine print of deal that would seal its approval for China's entry to the WTO.

# IMF erred in Asia but did things mostly right

First deputy MD says at seminar

WASHINGTON, May 17: The International Monetary Fund made mistakes in the world financial crisis of 1997-99, but has mostly done the right thing, a senior official said yesterday, reports Reuters.

IMF first Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer, speaking a week after big borrower Thailand passed its final IMF test, said the fund had adapted to the challenges posed by the crisis.

The advice that the IMF has offered has not always been right in all of the details — fiscal policy should not have been tightened at the start of the Asian crisis — but mostly we have been on the side of the angels," Fischer told a seminar in Washington.

We adapt and reform. We are engaged in a reform exercise now which will be given added impulse by the arrival of the new managing director."

The IMF, which loaned countries tens of billions of dollars as the crisis spread around the globe, initially urged countries to curb spending to win market confidence. But it changed tack, recommending that countries spend more to ease deep and painful recessions plaguing Asia and other regions.

The problems started in Thailand in June 1997 and spread rapidly across Asia and beyond. By 1999 five major emerging markets — Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Russia and Brazil — were in the IMF's intensive care unit.

But most of the patients got better almost as quickly as they got sick and the IMF last week completed its final review of Thailand's economic pro-

gramme, praising the outlook for low inflation and a stable currency.

The authorities have begun to put in place an ambitious reform agenda that is necessary

to underpin continued strong economic performance over the medium term," Fischer said at the time. The authorities should be congratulated on this record of overall success."



Yukiko Okamoto, employee of Japan's Canon Inc., shows off the world's smallest and lightest digital still camera "IXY DIGITAL" at a Tokyo hotel on Wednesday. The company will put the new product on market from May 26 with a price of 74,800 yen (690 dollars). — AFP photo

## Notice Inviting Tender of RHD

Sealed tender in Bangladesh Form No. 2911 hereby invited.

1. Tender notice no : 21-EE/LRD/1999-2000.

2. Name of work : Construction of 1st floor (part) of Sarak Bhaban, Lalmonirhat under Road Division, Lalmonirhat during the year 1999-2000.

3. Estimated cost : Tk. 9,95,000/-.

4. Earnest money : Tk. 19,900/-.

5. Time allowed for completion of work : 45 (forty-five) days.

6. Name of offices where tender documents will be available for sale : 1) Executive Engineer (RHD), Road Division, Rangpur/Bogra/Kurigram/Gaibandha/Lalmonirhat/Joypurhat/Planning Division-1, (P&D), Sarak Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka.

2) Sub-Divisional Engineer (RHD), Road Sub-Division, Lalmonirhat.

3) Additional Chief Engineer (RHD), Rangpur Zone.

4) Superintending Engineer (RHD), Procurement & Monitoring Circle, Sarak Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka.

5) Executive Engineer (RHD), Road Division, Rangpur/Bogra/Kurigram/Gaibandha/Lalmonirhat/Joypurhat.

6) Last date & time for selling tender documents : Up to 24-05-2000 Eng/10-02-1407 Beng. (within office hours).

7) Date & time of receiving tenders : Up to 25-05-2000 Eng/11-02-1407 Beng. (at 12.30 PM).

8) Date & time for opening of tender box (tenders in sealed cover) : At 12.45 PM on 25-05-2000 Eng/11-02-1407 Beng.

9) Date & time of opening of all tenders by this office : At 12-00 Noon on 30-05-2000 Eng/16-02-1407 Beng.

10) Date & time for lottery : At 1-00 PM on 31-05-2000 Eng/17-02-1407 Beng.

11) Eligibility of contractor : "A to C" class general category of RHD and "D" general class of Rangpur Road Circle.

12) Head of accounts : 168 RBF.

**Mohd. Jafar Ullah**

Executive Engineer (RHD) (C.C)  
Road Division, Lalmonirhat.

## BCIC Tender Notice

বিসিআইসি'র পর্যবেক্ষণে জাতীয় অঞ্চলিক প্রতীক

The Managing Director, Zia Fertilizer Company Limited, Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria invites sealed tender in two envelope system for procurement of M S Plate & Compressor for Air Cooler against Tender No CM/PM/118/2000 & CM/EM/103/2000. Tender schedule may be purchased on payment of Tk 400/- only from (i) ZFCL, Ashuganj, (ii) BCIC, 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka and (iii) BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong. The tender should be dropped within 24-5-2000 up to 11:30 AM at ZFCL & BCIC Head Office and will be opened just after closing the tender. No tender document shall be sold on the date of opening.

**Khairul Anam**  
General Manager  
(Commercial)  
for Managing Director.

## ইন্ডেস্ট্রিয়েল কর্পোরেশন

অব বাংলাদেশ

প্রধান কার্যালয়

৮, বার্জিঙ এভেনিউ, ঢাকা

## দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

### বিষয় : কম্পিউটার কন্টিনিউয়েশন শীট সরবরাহ প্রসংগে

ইন্ডেস্ট্রিয়েল কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ-এর জন্যে দরপত্র কর্তৃতীয় বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন প্রস্তুত সরবরাহ করার জন্যে নির্দেশ শর্তব্যালীকৃত সর্বোচ্চ দরপত্রে বার্ষিক শর্তব্যালী পালন সাপেক্ষে প্রস্তুত সরবরাহকারী এতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নিজের পেটেরহেডে প্রাপ্ত সীলনালোককৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

(০১) দরপত্র আগামী ২৫ মে, ২০০০ তারিখ বেলা ১১.৩০ মিটিগুর মধ্যে কর্পোরেশনের সহায়ে রপ্তান করতে হবে এবং এ দিনই বেলা ১১.৪৫ মিনিটে দরদাতাদের সম্মুখে যদি বেই উপর্যুক্ত থাকে।

(০২) দরপত্রের সাথে উক্ত দরের ৫% পরিমাণ অর্থ আর্টিষ্টমেন্ট হিসাবে ইন্ডেস্ট্রিয়েল কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ-এর অনুকূলে যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাবস্থা প্রে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে জমা দিতে হবে।

(০৩) কোন কারণ প্রদর্শন করিবে না কর্তৃত কর্মসূল প্রধান কার্যালয়ের সহায়েন বিজ্ঞাপন হতে হবে। দরপত্র তফসিল অর্থ আর্টিষ্টানের দরপত্র অর্থ হবে কর্তৃত কর্মসূল করিবে।

(০৪) কোন কারণ প্রদর্শন করিবে না কর্তৃত কর্মসূল প্রধান করিবে।

কফিল উদ্দিন আহসন চৌধুরী  
সহায় মহাব্যবস্থাপক  
সংস্থাপন বিভাগ

তারিখ : ১৫ মে, ২০০০ইঠ  
জিতি-৪৬৩

# Indian lower house okays IT bill

## Big leap towards emerging as software superpower

NEW DELHI, May 17: India's lower house of parliament passed a long-awaited information technology bill yesterday, marking a major step for the nation to build a legal framework to enable electronic commerce, reports Reuters.

It was passed one day after the government rejected a proposal in the bill which called for a licensing of cybercafes, their visitors and the sites they visited.

Industry officials cheered the bill which is seen by India as a keystone in its ambitions to become a software superpower on the strength of its army of professionals. But some saw loopholes and feared police would misuse the law.

The bill is aimed at helping digital signatures, electronic governance and trading, and

sets punishments for pornographic Internet publishing and hackers. It would allow government offices to accept electronic records and digital signatures.

It is noteworthy that India joins the 12 select countries in the world who have cyberlaws," Dewang Mehta, president of the National Association of Software and Service Companies, said in a statement.

Consultants Earnest and Young said in an analysis on the bill that its positive features included digital signatures and legal recognition of electronic records but said the bill had not considered taxation issues or credit card frauds.

Information Technology Minister Pramod Mahajan told parliament that India aimed to have around 35 per cent of its

one billion citizens — or more people than the entire population of the United States — covered by Internet access in about three years.

India currently has less than one million Internet connections, but each subscriber is said to cover four users.

International Data Corp estimates India will have 7.5 million subscribers by 2003. Cable TV networks are estimated to aid a fast expansion of the Internet to homes.

India's software industry estimates e-commerce transactions in the country, aided by the new law, will zoom to 25 billion rupees (\$568 million) in the current 2000/01 (April-March) year from 4.5 billion rupees a year earlier.

The bill, which also changes rules related to evidence and

banking to help e-commerce, must now be passed by the upper house, but no hurdles are foreseen. It then needs a stamp of approval from the president.

In passing the bill, the lower house put behind worries linked to privacy and police harassment of Internet surfers and Web site firms.

However, concerns lingered among some deputies that the police may misuse powers given to them by the bill to search any public place and arrest without warrant anyone suspected of having committed a "cybercrime."

The underlying principle of Internet and e-commerce is openness," Vinnie Mehta, director of the Manufacturers Association of Information Technology, said in a statement.

## Graft maintains its grip on Vietnam

HANOI, May 17: A major anti-graft campaign in Vietnam has borne little fruit at the halfway mark, and is unlikely to have much lasting impact in a country where the ruling Communist Party is accountable only to itself, reports Reuters.

Analysts said that midway through the two-year effort, corrupt officials remained a dark stain on Vietnam's economic prospects and a possible trigger for social unrest.

Despite being regularly tagged one of Asia's most corrupt nations, no senior government official or party cadre has been publicly accused of graft, charged or stripped of Communist Party membership under the campaign, diplomats said.

Several senior officials have been sacked from their posts or rebuked for "mismanagement," although one quickly bounced back. Former deputy Prime Minister Ngo Xuan Loc, dismissed late last year, now advises the premier on key state projects.

One political analyst said key obstacles to stamping out graft were party control over the press and the judiciary, along with the importance placed on collegial personal ties among top leaders that hindered anyone going for the jugular.

"I would not simply dismiss the campaign because at least it shows many leaders are concerned about the problems posed by graft and that they understand its implications for good governance," the Hanoi-based analyst said.

"At the same time, the approach has been into exhort (for less corruption) and give out mild rebukes. That begs the question of how effective it really is that of the party."