

ILO seeks int'l support for Palestinian workers

GENEVA, Nov 25: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Friday called on international organisations to support an emergency employment plan for Palestinians, reports AFP.

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said "international organisations had to address urgently in their spheres of technical competence the rapidly deteriorating living conditions."

Somavia said the bodies should work with the Geneva-based ILO to mobilise resources and expertise behind a programme to help Palestinians affected by eight weeks of unrest in the region.

The "closure of frontiers, the explosive growth of unemployment and the inability of many workers to meet their families' basic needs" was leading to an "evolving humanitarian crisis" in the Territories, Somavia warned.

His remarks followed a meeting with a delegation, which included the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Labour Rafiq Al Natshe.

Natshe said "unemployment was affecting more than 360,000 workers."

ILO will implement an emergency basis self-employment finance projects with France's support, and on rehabilitation for disabled people.

And Italy has agreed to provide 500,000 dollars in support of an ongoing technical cooperation project for the development of vocational training in the Palestinian Territories, the ILO said.

Taiwanese call for easing investment restriction in China

TAIPEI, Nov 25: Several business leaders on Saturday urged President Chen Shui-bian to ease restrictions on investment in China and lift a ban on direct shipping links, Taiwan's official news agency reported, reports AP.

At a two-hour meeting, the business people assured the president investment in China would bolster domestic industries that are not weakening them, the Central News Agency said.

Wang Yung-ching, chairman of Formosa Plastics Corp., said the government could ask Taiwanese firms to keep their capital at home and use borrowed funds from abroad for the overseas investment.

Chen did not comment on the suggestions, the report said.

Saturday's meeting came after Wang and several other business leaders urged politicians to quickly negotiate an end to a monthlong standoff between the new government and the opposition-controlled legislature that is threatening the economy.

Taiwan bans semiconductor firms from investing on the mainland.

It also bans infrastructural and other big projects in China.

Formosa Plastics, Taiwan's largest business conglomerate, was forced to suspend a project to build a petrochemical complex in China several years ago.

Taiwanese firms invested more than US \$40 billion in China. In addition to labour-intensive industries, many Taiwanese computer firms have set up assembly lines on the mainland.

As both Taiwan and China are expected to be admitted to the rules-setting World Trade Organisation early next year, Taiwan has come under increasing pressure to remove its trade and investment barriers.

Asian leaders turn realistic about regional integration

ASEAN summit comes to end

SINGAPORE, Nov 25: Asian leaders injected a dose of reality today into their drive for regional economic integration, cautioning that their vision of an Asia-wide free trade zone was a project for the long haul, says Reuters.

Leaders of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ending three days of talks, also admitted that talk of forging a new political group with Japan, China and South Korea would not get off the drawing board any time soon.

"All the leaders understand that these are just merely ideas for study and if they are to be implemented it will be over the long term," Singapore's prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, told a closing news conference.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad agreed. "We think there is a possibility of a

free trade and investment zone but that is not going to happen any time soon," he told reporters.

Goh's cautious tone contrasted with his upbeat mood a day earlier when he unveiled the "two big ideas" of a free trade zone and an institutional link with Northeast Asia that had emerged from the ASEAN leaders' talks with their three big neighbours.

Goh spoke of the complexity of the issues raised.

In particular, he said a headlong rush could undermine ASEAN. The economies of China, Japan and Korea combined produce more than five times as much as their poorer Southeast Asian partners.

"There is of course the risk that ASEAN may be eclipsed," Goh said. "If you put ASEAN members together with the East Asian grouping up north, eco-

nomically we pale by comparison."

Leap of vision

Thailand's foreign minister, Surin Pitsuwan, said the sense of community born out of Asia's painful financial crisis in 1997 had given leaders the confidence to make a "leap of vision" and consider forming a powerful new regional, political grouping. But he said it could take a decade or two before the time is ripe for either an East Asian Community or free trade links.

"I think both will have to take an evolutionary road until such time that we are more equal, we are more prepared and on a par with each other," Surin said.

Goh said ASEAN should concentrate for now on integrating its four poorer members - Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and

Myanmar - who did not join the 33-year-old body until the 1990s.

"This can't be forced. East Asia we're comfortable, the East Asia community will come about," the prime minister said. "I myself, speaking for Singapore, would prefer a gradual approach because I think I would emphasise ASEAN solidarity first."

Mahathir echoed Goh. "We need to identify the problems and concerns of the participants to make sure that such an arrangement should not be bad for some of the less developed members," he said.

Serious consideration of a free trade area, either with China alone or all three North-east Asian partners, will first require ASEAN members to free up their economies and complete their own free trade zone, Goh said.



Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew (L) chats with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji (R) during a courtesy call at the Mandarin hotel in Singapore yesterday. Zhu was here attending the 4th Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) summit.

- AFP photo

China advocates free trade zone with ASEAN

SINGAPORE, Nov 25: Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji today raised the prospect of a China-ASEAN free trade zone as he sought to strengthen trade and investment links with the 10-nation Southeast Asian bloc, reports AFP.

Zhu, in a speech to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the closing day of their summit here, promoted a free-trade zone as part of a six-point list of priorities.

However he made no mention of ASEAN evolving into a powerful East Asian political and trading bloc including its key dialogue partners China, Japan and South Korea.

The vision of an expanded ASEAN emerged on the opening day of the ASEAN plus three summit, with a study group tasked to report back with 12 months on the prospect of an East Asian summit and eventually a free trade and investment area.

Zhu said the ever-closer economic cooperation between China and ASEAN made it necessary for both sides "to further facilitate the unfettered exchange" of goods, capital and information.

"It might be advisable in the long run for China and ASEAN countries to explore the establishment of a free trade relationship between them," he said.

"With China's membership in the WTO (World Trade Organisation) in sight and the ASEAN free trade area by and large established in 2002, there is a good opportunity for us to enhance our cooperation."

Zhu said Southeast Asian countries were not China's main competitors in the United States and other developed markets, and China's WTO accession would mean a bigger market and more opportunities for ASEAN countries.

In his pack of priorities, Zhu

also listed strengthened political cooperation and more multilateral and bilateral political and security dialogues and consultation.

He saw a need to intensify human resource development, and added a further five million US dollars to the China ASEAN Cooperation Fund to be used for increased exchanges in the economic, trade, scientific, technological, information and other fields.

Zhu pledged strengthening infrastructure building along the Mekong river basin, an area which is home to 240 million people from Thailand to China, and committed Beijing to fund the dredging of navigational courses in Laos and Myanmar.

The Chinese premier also pressed for greater hi-tech and agricultural links, suggesting a China-ASEAN seminar to be held in China next year on ways to increase information technology (IT) cooperation.

Nepal bans old vehicles to better air quality

KATHMANDU, Nov 25: Vehicles more than 20 years old will be banned from operating throughout Nepal from next year in an attempt to improve the country's air quality, officials said today, reports AFP.

"The ban is effective to all the buses, minibuses, private sedan cars, vans, four-wheeler drive vehicles, taxis and three wheeler auto rickshaws manufactured on or before 1980," state-run radio said this morning.

The Ministry of Population and Environment's ban, beginning November 15, 2001, is particularly aimed at the notoriously poor air quality in the Kathmandu area, home to more than 60 per cent of all registered vehicles.

The government had over a year ago banned diesel operated three-wheeler Indian-manufactured auto rickshaws in the Kathmandu Valley.

Environmental studies carried out in recent times have shown the quality of air in the bowl-shaped Kathmandu Valley containing the cities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, is worse than World Health Organization's permissible limits.

According to medical experts, many people in Kathmandu, especially the very old and young children, are susceptible to smog-induced ailments such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and other diseases.

Officials say between 20 to 30 per cent of all vehicles currently running will be affected by the ban.

OPEC won't allow prices to slip to '98 levels

Kuwaiti oil minister says

KUWAIT, Nov 25: Kuwait Oil Minister Sheikh Saad Nasser al-Sabah said yesterday OPEC would not allow oil prices to slip again to 1998 levels, adding that world prices dropping to even \$22 a barrel was an unrealistic dream, reports Reuters.

"Anyone who believes that we will return to the low price in the \$20s (a barrel) or \$22 a barrel I think is dreaming, it is not realistic," the minister said in a live two-hour debate on Kuwait state television.

"We will not allow in any form or shape world oil markets to collapse again like in 1998 (when prices fell below \$10 a barrel). It was disaster," added the minister who is often seen as a price hawk.

IPE Brent crude oil for January closed in London at \$33.12 on Friday, compared with \$33.53 a barrel on Thurs-

day.

Kuwaiti crudes are currently selling for around \$28 a barrel compared with a forecast \$13 a barrel used to calculate the small country's budget in the fiscal period to end-March.

Sheikh Saad said Kuwaiti crudes selling at \$23-\$24 a barrel would allow the small country to balance its budget after large deficits when the price fell to \$7 a barrel in the 1998/99 fiscal year. It averaged almost \$23 a barrel in the fiscal year to end June 2000, compared with a projected \$10 a barrel.

OPEC member Kuwait was granted an additional quota of 40,000 barrels per day (bpd) as part of an overall end-October increase by the oil cartel. Its quota now stands at 2.141 million bpd but is seen to be producing almost at capacity with

an output of around 2.2 million bpd.

When asked about "the fair price" for a barrel and the recent surge in world prices, Sheikh Saad said: "To be honest, crude (prices) has exceeded our expectations... The answer is simple: supply and demand are now balanced and the current price level, in my view, is the real price... Let us leave this issue to the modality of the market and supply and demand," he said.

There is an OPEC accord to cut production, abide by its and monitor it if world prices fell, added the minister.

Sheikh Saad stressed that OPEC has "regained its power. It is now dictating to the world the oil price," adding that Gulf states, with 64 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, are the key exporters of the future.

Metal: Weekly Roundup

Gold calm in lacklustre trade, base metals stay mixed

LONDON, Nov 25: Gold prices stabilised this week in lacklustre trading that at least saw the precious metal regain something of its safe haven status, as stock markets remained vulnerable due to the protracted US presidential election stalemate, reports AFP.

An ounce of gold was selling for 266 dollars from 266.50 last week on the London Bullion Market.

Gold demand continues to be slack and supply plentiful, keeping prices under pressure.

Silver, stillier, silver prices hit their lowest levels for three years as the strength of the dollar continued to undermine the currency, dealers said.

An ounce of silver was selling for 4.62 dollars from 4.66 dollars a week earlier.

"The market has reacted to the strong dollar," said Canaccord Capital analyst Rhona

O'Connell. "We have to bear in mind that there is generally lots of demand from India, but there is less demand there now because of the strong dollar."

Platinum and Palladium: Up and up. The prices of the sister metals rose over the week, as uncertainty over supply from Russia continued to plague the market.

An ounce of Platinum was going for 588 dollars from 586 dollars a week earlier on the London Platinum and Palladium Market (LPPM).

Palladium meanwhile was quoted at 782 dollars an ounce from 776 dollars last week.

"The Russian cold means there are fears about supplies which is (price) positive," said Mitsui Bussan Commodities analyst Andy Smith.

Base metals: Tinny. Base metals remained mixed after last week's profit-taking, even

though the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development raised its forecasts for growth this year and next.

Stronger growth often translates in greater demand for base metals because of their application in the building blocks of economic expansion, but the market responded only slowly to the OECD forecasts this week.

On the London Metal Exchange (LME) three-month nickel prices managed to push up to 6,900 dollars a tonne from 6,815 dollars last week.

But copper came unstuck, falling to 1,791 dollars a tonne from 1,798.5 dollars.

Aluminium ticked up 30.5 dollars a tonne to 1,499 dollars but three-month zinc prices fell to 1,060 dollars from 1,066 dollars.

Paris Club credit Peru's biggest debt headache

LIMA, Nov 25: Credits from the Paris Club are Peru's biggest debt headache as it seeks to ease the burden of payments in its transition ahead, the country's caretaker Economy Minister Carlos Bolona said yesterday, reports Reuters.

"That's why if we talk of improving the debt profile, it could be with creditors from the Paris Club, which is the principal source of pressure, but that's not so easy," Bolona told a news conference.

Bolona said Peru had a \$19.15 billion foreign debt. According to the central bank, total public and private debt totalled \$27.7 billion as of June.

The profile of Peru's debt has been in the spotlight since new interim President Valentin Paniagua said in his inaugural speech his team would examine ways to make foreign debt payments more affordable.

"We will revise with special attention the structure of our foreign debt and after the appropriate technical evaluations, we will set out in a multilateral way... actions to adjust debt payments to our real economic and social means," Paniagua said on Wednesday.

"When anyone talks about renegotiation, with the Paris Club it takes time and is complicated," Bolona said. "There are other more appropriate ways to focus on the issue."

Economists say the other than a full-scale debt restructuring or moratorium, Paniagua probably wanted to negotiate with individual creditor countries from within the Paris Club to ease the pressure of payments.

"The crucial period is 2001-05 in which the debt profile must be improved," Bolona said.

"You don't renegotiate with multilaterals. What you look for with them are credits that are freely available to get over the slumps you might have," he added.

Paniagua is expected to swear in his cabinet on Saturday. Respected former economy minister Javier Silva is a hot tip to return to the key portfolio.

Middle East crisis

Egypt opposed to oil embargo against West

KUWAIT, Nov 25: Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak was quoted today as saying he was opposed to a new Arab oil embargo against the West to put pressure on Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians, reports Reuters.

He also rejected calls for Egypt, the largest Arab state, to launch a new war against Israel.

"What will the benefit be from stopping selling oil? Can we really expect the consequences of that," Mubarak said in an interview with Kuwait's al-Seyassah daily.

However Mubarak, a key US ally in the region, did say that Washington's policy in the Middle East conflict "is strongly influenced by the Israeli lobby, which works inside the American administration as well as American society."

Mubarak led Egypt's air force in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war when regional oil exporters used the "oil weapon", cutting supplies to major industrialised nations in the West.

Gulf states alone, led by Saudi Arabia, sit on some 65 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves while some Arab states in North Africa are also key oil exporters.

There have been some calls in Arab and other Muslim countries for an oil embargo and a boycott of US and Israeli products. Arabs often accuse Washington of blindly supporting Israel.

Some 270 people, the great majority of them Arabs, have been killed in two months of bitter fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinians.

When asked about calls for war against Israel, Mubarak said: "Today is different from yesterday... the war that should really be declared is the war of development."

"We do not listen to those who call for fighting 'until the death of last Egyptian soldier'," he said in reference to calls for Jihad (holy war) against Israel by Arab countries which do not border the Jewish state.

Mubarak, in power since 1981, justified his recent decision to recall the Egyptian ambassador from Israel.

"We had to resort to this decision only when the situation became unbearable... (it was) a clear message to Israel, that continuing its suppression of the Palestinian people and the use of force against them will have dangerous effects," he added.

'Sino-Malaysian economic co-op has bright future'

SINGAPORE, Nov 25: Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji told Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad here Friday that there is a great prospect for their two countries to expand economic and trade cooperation, reports Xinhua.

The two leaders were meeting here at the sidelines of the summit between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China, Japan and South Korea.

Zhu said that the two countries' cooperation in all fields has been deepening in an all-round way with bilateral trade growing rapidly.

The Chinese Premier told Mahathir that Chinese companies are ready to participate in the construction of Malaysia domestic railroad which constitutes part of the Pan-Asian railway.

Mahathir agreed with Zhu on the future cooperation between the two countries and believed there still exist huge potentials for greater cooperation.

Mahathir also briefed Zhu on Malaysia's plans on the Pan-Asian railroad and welcomed China to play an active role in the railroad construction.

Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Transport Section

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Re-Tender Notice

Re-Tender in sealed envelopes are invited from manufacturer establishments approved by the Bangladesh government/agents/dealers for purchasing a 27-seated minibus of the latest model for use in the administrative work of the Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat. Tenders can be deposited in the tender box kept at the office chamber of the Deputy Secretary of this Secretariat (North Bloc, Level-9, Room No-908) on 7/12/2000 (23/08/1407 Bang) till 12:00 Noon. Tenders received will be opened the same day at 12:30 PM in presence of the tenderers (if anyone remains present), 2½% (two and a half per cent) of the total cost mentioned in the form of Bank Draft / Pay-Order (refundable), certificate of payment of income tax for the 1999-2000 fiscal year, attested copies of trade licence for the current fiscal year and registration of the Value Added Tax will have to be submitted with tender. The vehicle will have to be delivered as per description and terms and conditions as mention in the schedule. Each set of tender schedule can be procured on payment of Taka 750/= (seven hundred fifty) (non refundable) from 4/12/2000 (20/08/1407 Bang) to 6/12/2000 (22/08/1407 Bang) on all working days during office hours from the Accounts Section-1 (South-West Bloc, 4th Floor, Room No-523). The attested copy of trade licence for the current year will have to be produced at the time of purchasing tender schedule.

Abu Ahmed
Assistant Secretary
Phone: 9125742

Indian stocks poised to rise this week

BOMBAY, Nov 25: Indian stocks are poised to rise next week if uncertainties over the US presidential elections are cleared, brokers said yesterday, reports AFP.

On the Bombay Stock Exchange the benchmark 30 shares BSE sensitive index closed Friday at 3,868.34 points, down 37.50 points, or one per cent, from the previous week's close.

"Old economy and cement stocks were strong throughout the week as market participants now find value in them," said Nishchal Maheshwari at Anand Rath Securities.

Cement stocks rose as companies cut production and raised prices, while analysts said Tata Steel had turned in a good performance the past six months.

"Value will play an important part next week. Prices of information technology stocks have almost bottomed out. US presidential election results should be clear by early next week," said Maheshwari.

Maheshwari expected the BSE index to rise to 4,000 points at which level it will meet resistance.

Dealer Rajiv Storewala at Sharedeal Financial Services said the BSE was expected to open "steady" on Monday and await the results of the US elections.

"If Bush is declared the winner the Nasdaq is expected to rise and so will the Indian stock markets, particularly technology stocks."

A dealer at Phoenix Share and Stockbrokers said foreign institutional investors are not expected to be active next week due to year-end considerations.

"Most of the activity will be from domestic speculators and financial institutions," said the dealer.

The week's trade saw Associated Cement Cos close up 13.35 rupees at 126.45 rupees while Glaxo India was up 0.30 at 447.20 rupees.

Reliance Industries gained three rupees to 313.20 rupees and State Bank of India was up 0.40 at 169 rupees.

Rampant cigarette smuggling costs Malaysia \$1.3b every year

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25: Rampant smuggling of cigarettes from neighbouring countries has cost the Malaysian government 4.8 billion ringgit (1.3 billion dollars) in lost taxes this year, a news report said today, reports DPA.

Customs Department head Abdul Halil Mitalib said that, based on the sales and consumption of cigarettes in the country, the government should have collected about 6 billion ringgit in import taxes this year.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
Public Works E/M Division-4, Dhaka

Memo No-921

Date: 16-11-2000

Tender Notice
No-43 (2000-2001)

Tenders in sealed envelopes in Bangladesh Form No 2908 are invited from first class (combined) and first class (E/M) enlisted for E/M work, second class (E/M) of Public Works Department, manufacturer establishments or supplier agents for the undermentioned work. Tenders will be received in the tender box kept at the office of the Public Works E/M Division-4/5/6 and Public Works Eden Bhaban Division, Dhaka and tenders will be opened on the same day at 12:15 PM in presence of tenderers or their nominated representatives (if anyone remains present). Tender schedule form and terms and conditions etc. can be purchased from the Office of Public Works E/M Division-4/5/6 and Public Works Eden Bhaban Division, Dhaka during office hours on payment of usual fees for Taka 410/- (four hundred ten) (non-refundable) latest till 10-12-2000. Security money at the rate of 2% (two per cent) of the estimated cost in the form of Bank Draft from any scheduled bank in favour of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-4, Dhaka must be submitted along with each tender. This office authority reserves the right to accept any tender or reject all tenders without assigning any reason. Contractor himself or his representative bearing an authorisation letter can purchase tender by producing all necessary documents including registration book.

S/No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Security money	Time allowed
1)	Work of supply of 4'40 watt and 2'20 watt tubelights for urgent electrical maintenance work of different buildings of Bangladesh Secretariat (2000-2001 fiscal year).	Tk 2,28,500/=	Tk 4,570/=	20 (twenty) days

Apurba Kumar Roy
Executive Engineer
Public Works E/M Division-4, Dhaka.
Phone No 9333865

DFP-28246-21/11
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