

EC-Thailand talks advocate developing world's WTO role

Anti-globalisation activists stage protest

AFP, Bangkok

The next round of WTO talks must take into account the interests of its developing members, European Commission (EC) officials said yesterday after talks with their Thai counterparts.

Robert Madelin, the EC's director for Asian trade policy said the annual meeting touched on the block's support for a more sympathetic World Trade Organisation (WTO) approach towards poorer nations.

"We have called for a new round to be launched this year at the next ministerial meeting in Qatar in November," he said. "We have to address the interests of developing countries within the system."

Jonathan Shee, from the EC's Directorate General for External Relations, said there was a "need for the early launch of a new round of WTO trade negotiations

with a broad agenda reflecting the interests of all WTO members, including developing countries."

Madelin said the EU was preparing to tackle some of the issues raised by developing countries in Qatar, including the impact of trade on society and the environment as well as anti-dumping measures and genetic engineering.

"We need to recall that the biggest gains in terms of global growth and liberalisation of trade have been achieved through the multilateral system and through successive rounds of negotiations," he said.

Meanwhile, another report says: Some 50 banner-wielding anti-globalisation activists yesterday protested outside a World Trade Organisation (WTO) seminar which they branded as manipulative and unrepresentative.

The protesters, mostly farmers and students, dumped garbage on the steps of the hotel in northern

Chiang Mai where WTO officials are holding a two-day meeting with civil society groups.

"WTO manipulation of Asian governments and communities will not be tolerated," said one protester, reading from an open letter.

"The WTO pretends to have organised a forum including members of civil society. However, the representatives invited do not represent either the grassroots or small farmers."

An activist alliance said earlier this week that the WTO was trying to use the meeting to "soften up" regional governments ahead of the next WTO ministerial meeting in Qatar later this year.

Protest organiser Kingkorn Narintarakul from the Northern Development Foundation said the world body had a hidden agenda to promote during its meetings with Asian officials.

"They tried to hide some things

from the eyes of the public. This is a springboard meeting for the meetings in Qatar... this is the non-transparent manner of the WTO," she said.

Kingkorn said groups at the protest included the Federation of Northern Peasants, a consortium of farmers' organisations in northern Thailand whose livelihoods have suffered from globalisation.

"We demanded the withdrawal of the Agreement on Agriculture from WTO trade negotiations. And we just want to show our displeasure about this meeting," she said.

The protesters gathered for about two hours outside the Empress Hotel in Chiang Mai, brandishing banners reading "World Trade Organisation" and chanting through loudspeakers.

No police were involved in the demonstration, which passed off peacefully and ended when the activists dispersed, taking their garbage with them.

China to grow fastest in E Asia in 2001: WB

REUTERS, Beijing

China will probably be the fastest growing economy in East Asia this year with an estimated 7.3 per cent rise in gross domestic product, a senior World Bank official said Thursday.

Most other Asian countries were forecast to record their third year of "steady" growth following a recovery from the regional financial crisis, despite an expected US slowdown, Jemal-ud-din Kassum told a Beijing news conference.

"China is again expected to be the region's fastest growing economy with expected growth of 7.3 per cent in the period leading up to accession to the WTO," said Kassum, vice president for East Asia and Pacific Region for the World Bank.

Beijing could join the World Trade Organisation this year.

"The World Bank expects East Asia to weather the slowdown in the US economy and the wider impact of slowing technology demand, with most countries averaging between three and seven per cent GDP growth in 2001," Kassum said.

"But Asian countries must push ahead with broad reforms, including financial and corporate restructuring, governance reform and poverty reduction, he said.

"The prospect of a slowdown should send a signal to all policymakers across East Asia and the Pacific that the region has a large unfinished reform agenda," Kassum said.

Governments should also address slow progress in improving education and health, protecting the environment and liberalising trade and investment, he said.

China fiscal policy sound

Countries expected to record slower growth in 2001 from 2000 included Indonesia with 4.0 per cent, Korea with 4.5 per cent, Malaysia with 5.0 per cent, Philippines with 3.5 per cent and Thailand with 3.0 per cent, the World Bank said.

Vietnam would stay steady with 5.5 per cent growth as would Laos with 5.7 per cent, it said.

Cambodia, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea were expected to report higher growth this year.

Cambodia's GDP was forecast to rise 5.5 per cent, Mongolia to 1.2 per cent and Papua New Guinea would record 3.1 per cent - reversing a 1.2 per cent decline last year, the World Bank said.

China's GDP rose an annual 8.0 per cent last year, helped by strong exports and massive spending on infrastructure.

With exports expected to slow this year the government's use of an expansionary monetary policy to support growth was sound, despite growing levels of debt, Kassum said.

"We think it will be very appropriate to continue the proactive fiscal policy," he said.

Chinese lawmakers have just approved a near-record budget deficit of 259.81 billion yuan (\$31 billion) and special state bond issuance of 150 billion yuan this year.

China's export growth is expected to slow to 10 per cent this year, from 28 per cent last year, said Deepak Bhattasali, chief of the economics unit for the World Bank in Beijing.

Kassum said China's newly-set target for seven per cent annual economic growth from 2001-2005 was achievable.

But China needed to make sweeping reforms allowing the capital market to play a greater role, shoring up shaky state banks, reforming ailing state firms and setting up a more comprehensive social security system, he said.

The World Bank would lend China around \$3.0 billion for 30 projects over the next three years, much to relatively undeveloped western China, Kassum said.

Moscow wants to end WTO entry talks by early 2002

AFP, Moscow

Russia wants to wrap up talks on its accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by the beginning of next year, Trade and Economic Development Minister German Gref said on Friday.

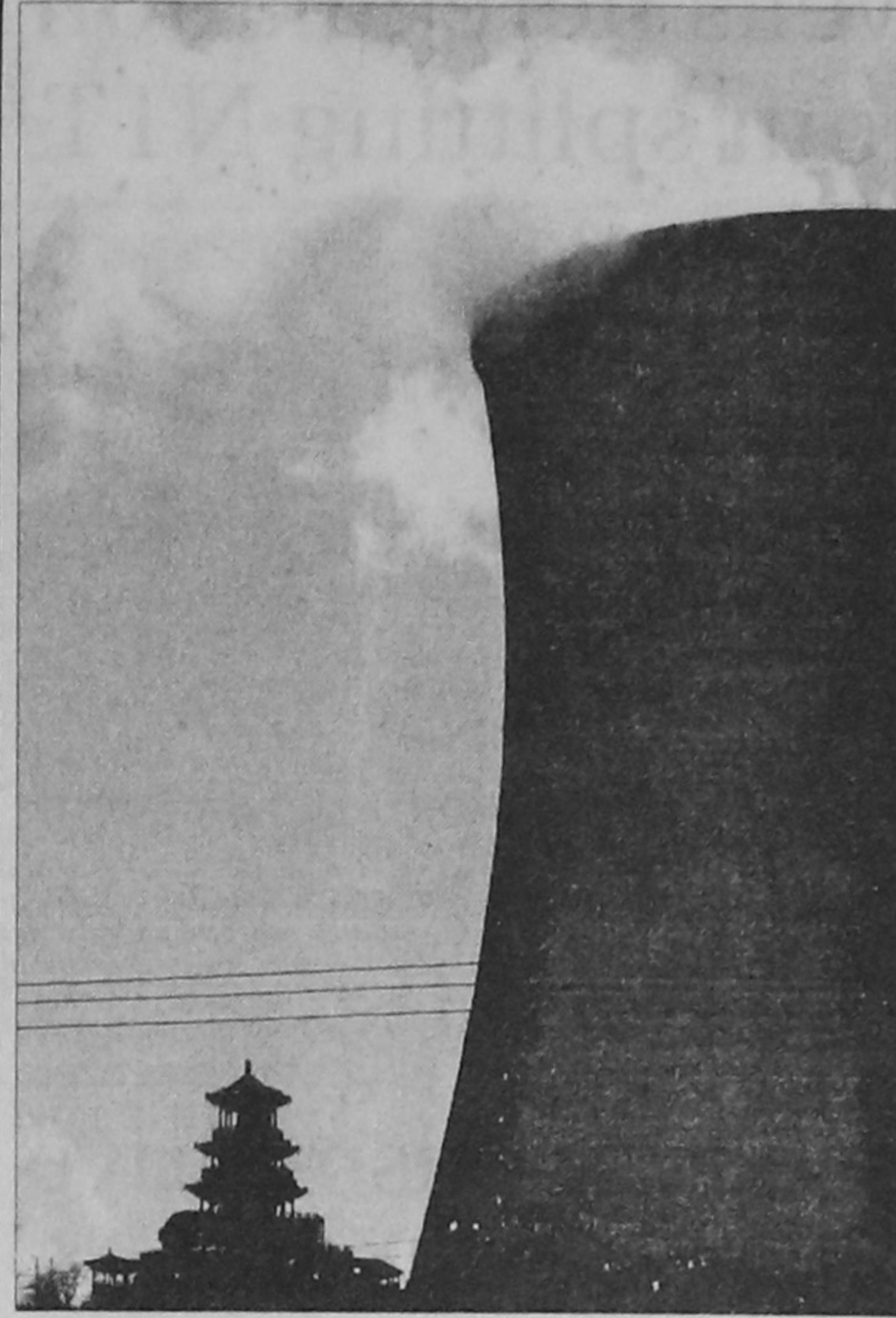
But he said that Russia was holding talks with more than 40 countries and the outcome of the membership negotiations would depend more on its commercial partners than Moscow itself, news agencies reported.

Gref told a conference on "Russia, the global economy and the WTO" that the talks focused on access to the Russian market for foreign companies, the future of domestic agricultural subsidies and Russian steel exports.

"The balance between Russia's rights and obligations should facilitate Russia's accession to the WTO," he said, quoted by IAR-TASS.

It is "still too soon" to indicate a date for Russian membership, he added, while noting that the negotiations were due to be completed by the end of the year.

WTO head Michael Moore assured that the negotiating process on Russia's entry into the powerful world trade club would accelerate in the coming months.



Sitting on a hill, an old Chinese temple is dwarfed by a huge water-cooling tower near an energy plant in Beijing yesterday. Many of the city's old, historic areas have paid a heavy price in the capital's race towards urban development and modernisation, which has robbed Beijing of much of its cultural uniqueness.

Falling prices weigh on Japan economy

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's unemployment rate has dropped slightly from a post-war high, the government said Friday, but analysts see falling prices weighing on the economy and leading to further job losses.

"We cannot rejoice over falling prices," said Hiroki Shimazu, economist at Sanwa Research Institute and Consulting.

"Someone will have to pay the price, and it will most likely be Japanese workers." The nation's jobless rate dropped to 4.7 per cent in February, down slightly from a post-war record high of 4.9 per cent recorded in December and January.

The number of unemployed dropped by 90,000 during the month to 3.18 million in the first decrease since last August, the public management ministry said.

But a separate report by the health, labour and welfare ministry said the ratio of job offers to job seekers slipped by 0.01 to 0.64

in February, meaning there were now only 64 jobs offers for every 100 people looking for work.

"Two interpretations are possible for the improvement of the jobless rate," said Hidehiko Fujii, economist at Japan Research Institute. It could reflect an improvement in the job market.

Alternately, the unemployment rate might have improved because many people had dropped out of the job market, judging there were slim prospects of landing a job in the current economic climate.

Unemployment statistics record those without jobs who are actively looking for work.

"It is mistake to say things are improving just based on this recovery," Fujii warned.

The biggest hindrance to improving employment prospects was the accelerating deflationary trend, which would slash not only prices but also corporate profits, analysts said.

Airbus, Boeing tread separate paths to boost business

AFP, New York

Airbus and Boeing have followed two dramatically different flight paths to win over customers, with the European Airbus focusing on increased cabin capacity with its A380 super jumbo while its US counterpart aims for stunning speeds with its smaller long-range passenger jet.

Facing stiff competition from the A380 in the jumbo jet market, where it has long been the dominant force because of its legendary succession of 747s, Boeing believes its new "Sonic Cruiser" is the ticket to the future of air travel.

The company said it decided to abandon plans for a larger 747, dubbed the 747X, in favour of the speedy new jet after consulting with customers.

"In talking to our customers, we found that the 'sweet spot' in the market will be in the smaller-sized, faster, point-to-point planes," Boeing President Alan Mulally pointed out.

The fastest commercial jet today, Boeing's 747-400, travels at speeds of Mach 0.85 to Mach 0.90 but the new jet capable of flying closer to the speed of sound - Mach 0.95 or just above 1,100 kilometers (684 miles) per hour - is capable of carrying some 300 passengers across the Atlantic about an hour and a half faster than commercial planes can now

travel. And, unlike the enormous A380, it is can land anywhere today's jumbo jets can land.

Mulally expressed marked enthusiasm for Boeing's new endeavor, saying the plane "could change the way the world flies as dramatically as did the introduction of the jet age."

But Airbus Industrie, the US manufacturer's only competitor, feels that the ever-increasing flow of air traffic makes its colossal carrier - capable of transporting between 480 and 800 passengers at a time, depending on the model - the natural winner.

Still, one major roadblock for the A380 remains adapting airport infrastructure to accommodate what will be the world's largest commercial jet - some 100 meters (292 feet) wide and 73 meters (240 feet) long and weighing up to 600 tonnes.

According to Airports Council International, dozens of airports worldwide will be capable of handling the A380 when it begins its scheduled service in 2006, but for the remaining airports, passengers will have to change planes to reach destinations the A380 simply can't fit into.

But the biggest challenge for Airbus lies in accommodating all those passengers once they enter the airport.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
Public Works Deptt Division, Patuakhali

Tender Inviting Notice

No 38(Civil) 2000-2001 Eng

Sealed tenders in Bangladesh Form No 2911 alongwith terms and conditions is hereby invited for the undermentioned work.

- Name of work : Gr No I = Constr of 31 bedded hospital at Dumki Thana Health Complex in the Dist of Patuakhali (remaining work of civil)
Gr No II = do -do -do (remaining work of sanitary and water supply arrangement) Gr No III = do -do -do (remaining work of electrification).
- Estimated cost : Gr No I = Tk 11,38,683/-
Gr No II = Tk 2,97,886/-
Gr No III = Tk 6,87,810/-
- Earnest money : Gr No I = Tk 22,675/-
Gr No II = Tk 5,960/-
Gr No III = Tk 13,760/-
- Time allowed for completion of the work from the date of issue of work order : Gr No I = 45 days
Gr No II = 30 days
Gr No III = 40 days
- Cost of tender form and schedule : Gr No I = Tk 775/- (Tk seven hundred seventy-five) only (non-refundable).
Gr No II & III = Tk 425/- (Tk four hundred twenty-five) only (non-refundable).
- Place of tender selling : Gr No I = i) Office of the Divisional Commissioner, Barisal.
ii) Selected PWD Divisions under PWD Zone, Dhaka/Chittagong/Rajshahi in their jurisdiction.
Gr No II & III = Office of the undersigned as well as all PWD Divisions under PWD Circle, Barisal.
- Place of tender receiving : Gr No I = i) Office of the Divisional Commissioner, Barisal.
ii) Office of the undersigned as well as all PWD Divisions under PWD Circle, Barisal.
Gr No II & III = Office of the undersigned as well as all PWD Divisions under PWD Circle, Barisal.
- Last date for selling tender : 9-4-2001
- Date and time for receiving and opening of tender : 10-4-2001 Eng up to 12:00 noon and will be opened at 12:15 pm on the same day in presence of the tenderer (present if any).
- Date of lottery (if necessary) : In case of more than one tenderer quote the same rate and stand lowest selection will be made by lottery on 25-4-2001 at 11:00 in the Office Chamber of Superintending Engineer, Barisal PWD Circle, Barisal in his presence and the tenderer who may like to remain present.
- Eligibility of the contractor/firms : Enlisted valid each category civil, sanitary & plumbing and E/M contractors/firms of PWD as per their financial limit.

NB: Any other information regarding the above tender will be available during the office hours.

DFP-7541-22/3
G-571

Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Patuakhali.



DESA Tender Notice

Tender No Dev D-1/3.12/216 dt 12-3-2001 sealed tenders are hereby invited Form No T-1 from the DESA enlisted A B C class contractors having valid A B C Electrical & Civil Licence for rehabilitation of the distribution system at (1) Installation of 1 (one) 200 KVA transformer to relieve the existing overloaded transformers under Joar Shahara 11KV O/H feeder under O&M Division Gulshan. (2) Improvement of the distribution system at Anandanagar & adjacent areas under O&M Gulshan under Development Division-I, DESA, Road No-135, House No-47, Gulshan, Dhaka. The tender documents will be available up to office hour of 17-4-2001 in the office of the (I) Member (Engg & Com), DESA, Dhaka (II) Supdt Engr (9th & 10th Power Project), DESA, Dhaka (III) Secretary, DESA, Dhaka (IV) Executive Engineer, Development Division-2 & (V) The City Bank Ltd, Gulshan Branch, Dhaka at the cost of Tk 500/- (Taka five hundred) only each set (non refundable) in the shape of Pay Order/Bank Draft in favour of Addl Director, RAO, DESA, Dhaka with written permission of the undersigned. Tender will be received on 18-4-2001 up to 12:00 noon along with 2.5% (two point five per cent) earnest money of the quoted amount in the shape of Bank Draft in favour of Addl Director, RAO, DESA, Dhaka in the office of (I) Member, (Engg & Com), DESA, Dhaka (II) Supdt Engr (9th & 10th Power Project), DESA, Dhaka (III) Secretary, DESA, Dhaka (IV) Executive Engineer Development Division-2, DESA & (V) The Executive Engineer Development Division-1, DESA, Dhaka. The tender will be opened on the same day at 12:30 PM (in presence of the tenderer, if any). Details information regarding earnest money are shown in the tender notice attached with schedule. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders assigning any reason thereof.

Executive Engineer
Development Division-1
DESA, Dhaka

DFP-7371-21/3
G-557



Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation "Krishi Bhaban"

49-51, Dilkusha Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000 (Purchase Division)

Local Tender Notice

- Tender No & date : Pur/Fert/2F/163/2001 dt. 18.03.2001
- Description of store : 1. Spectrophotometer with Printer - 2 Nos
2. Flame Photometer - 2 nos.
3. Nitrogen Analysis:
(a) Micro-Kjeldahl Digestion Unit - 2*
(b) Micro-Kjeldahl Distillation-Unit - 2*
(c) Exhaust System (Fume hood) - 2*
4. Ph Meter - 2*
5. Distil Water Plant - 2*
6. Meter Balance (Analytical/digital) - 2*
7. Balance (Portable) - 2*
8. Magnetic stirrer (with hotplate) - 2*
9. Automatic Dispenser - 2*
10. Air Conditioner - 2*
11. Orbital Shaker - 2*
12. Centrifuge - 1 No
13. Stop Watch - 2*
- Sale price of tender documents (non-refundable) : Tk. 500.00 (Taka five hundred) only.
- Date & time for submission of tender : 10.04.2001 at 12:00 hours.
- Date & time for closing of tender : 10.04.2001 at 12:05 hours.
- Place of submission of tender : Tender box placed in front of Purchase Division (3rd Floor), BADC, Krishi Bhaban, 49-51, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
- Place of opening of tender : Purchase Division (3rd rd Floor), BADC, Krishi Bhaban, 49-51, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
- Source of fund : Local currency.

N.B.

- Tender documents may be collected from the Cashier of Accounts Division (Cash Section), Krishi Bhaban (3rd Floor) on payment of the value of the tender schedule.
- No tender documents will be sold on the day of closing or opening of the tender.
- No tender or any part thereof will be accepted after closing of the tender.

ADC-118
DFP-7328-21/3
G-560

Manager (Purchase)
BADC, Dhaka.



A cobbler repairs shoes in a commercial district in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Malaysia's labour situation is expected to remain stable in 2001 despite the adverse impact from the US economic slowdown with unemployment at around three per cent which represents full employment, the central bank said.

Syrian parliament okays pvt banks

REUTERS, Damascus

Syria's parliament Thursday unanimously approved a law allowing the establishment of private banks and ending nearly four decades of socialist-inspired state control over the banking sector, officials said.

They said the law, part of wide-ranging economic reform measures promised by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad who took office in July, was passed during a session that was attended by Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa Mero and several other ministers.

Officials said the government would start immediately receiving applications from local and foreign banks and businessmen who are interested in establishing fully private or joint private-public

banks in Syria. They said that within three months from now applications would be approved and the winners would be able start.

According to the law each of the private banks, which would operate under the supervision of the Central Bank, should have a capital of not less than 1.5 billion Syrian pounds (\$30 million).

Khaled Raad, deputy prime minister for economic affairs told Reuters on Monday that as many as 50 foreign banks were thought to be interested in setting up private banks in Syria.

Economy and Foreign Trade Minister Mohammed Imadi, who attended the parliament's session on Thursday said that the establishment of private banks would help improve the economy.