

WTO fails to reach accord on farm trade reform, drugs

Tokyo ministerial meet ends

REUTERS, Tokyo

Ministers from more than 20 countries wrapped up divisive WTO talks yesterday, failing to find common ground on key issues of agricultural trade reform and poor countries' access to life-saving drugs.

How far and how quickly to tear down barriers to world farm trade was a key topic of the discussions, which showed countries were still widely split on the issue.

"Different views were expressed as to the levels of ambition or balance we should be seeking," Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, who chaired the meeting, told a news conference.

But Kawaguchi said that the latest informal talks, on everything from import duties to generic drugs, would help push forward trade liberalisation negotiations launched in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001. "We had an intensive discussion and I believe we have contributed to

keeping and strengthening the momentum of the round," Kawaguchi said.

The Tokyo talks were meant to give ministers a chance to take stock of progress to date, as the clock ticked towards a March 31 deadline to agree on such controversial farm issues as targets for tariff cuts.

Failure to meet the March 31 deadline would reduce the chances of the overall set of World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on agriculture, services, manufactured goods and other sectors being wrapped up by the target date of January 2005.

At the meeting, differences came to the fore over a plan released earlier by the WTO's chief agricultural mediator, Stuart Harbinson.

Harbinson's plan had proposed cutting the highest import tariffs on farm goods but not imposing ceilings on those duties.

The plan pleased neither of the

two main camps in the talks: the United States and other big exporters that want aggressive liberalisation, and the more protectionist Japan and EU, which want less drastic change.

The two sides could not agree on whether the plan could form the basis for negotiations, so the blueprint had to be sent back to the drawing board.

Such differences were underscored by comments by various ministers after the conclusion of the talks.

"Australia and other members of the Cairns group are becoming increasingly concerned that if Europe is not prepared to play the same role it expects of its partners, the round could be headed for trouble," said Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile.

US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick criticised Japan for its stance on farm trade liberalisation.

"In our view they are sacrificing

Japan's strength on the altar of rice," Zoellick said.

Delegates also clashed over proposals to allow developing countries to import cheap copies of patented medicine when facing public health problems.

Washington's demand that extra restrictions be placed on the types of diseases to be covered has already caused the WTO's 145 member countries to miss an end-2002 deadline on the issue.

But, even after a working session on Saturday that often featured heated debate, ministers were able to agree on only the need to resolve the issue quickly, and failed to achieve concrete progress.

"I hope yesterday afternoon's meeting will contribute to further discussion in Geneva and to a solution as soon as possible," Kawaguchi said.

US-Vietnam textile talks begin Wednesday

AFP, Hanoi

The US-Vietnam bilateral trade agreement took six years of tortuous negotiations, but Washington is hoping for a speedier conclusion to a textile accord when talks get under way this week.

Vietnam will be an unwilling participant when the three days of formal negotiations laying out the ground rules for trade in textiles and apparel between the two former sworn enemies begin on Wednesday.

Despite US hopes for a swift result, the talks are likely to be a protracted affair, punctuated by cries of protectionism from Vietnam's communist government, which is fearful of quotas being imposed on its exports.

Hanoi has accused Washington of seeking to shield its small garment manufacturing industry from

cheaper imports from Vietnam, where labour costs are a fraction of those incurred in the United States.

"Industrialised countries always call on developing states to open their markets while they close their markets' products that developing countries have great potential for, such as textiles and garments," Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan told reporters last week.

Deputy Trade Minister Luong Van Tu will lead the Vietnamese side against a team headed by David Spooner, textile expert at the Office of the US Trade Representative, an executive arm of the White House.

Khoan, the key player in the July 2000 trade pact with the United States that came into force in December 2001, said the imposition of quotas would stifle the country's attempts to lift itself from poverty.

SHIPPING

Chittagong port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 16/2/2003

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Import disc
J/1	A.A Venture	GI (Log)	Yang	CLA	11/2	22/2	267
J/4	Suisen	Slag	Viza	SSA	3/2	16/2	1505
J/5	Sagaing (72)	GI	Chen	Everett	13/2	16/2	2350
J/6	Gui Jiang	Wheat	Kaki	Mutual	3/2	19/2	1533
J/7	Ocean Pride	GI	Yang	PSAL	11/2	26/2	728
		(Maize/Log)					
J/8	Bontrika Naree	GI	--	USL	R/A	16/2	771
J/10	Qc Lark	Cont	P Kel	QCSL	11/2	17/2	365X
J/12	Jaami	Cont	Col	Everbest	14/2	18/2	118/08
J/13	Banglar Moni	Cont	Sing	BSC	12/2	16/2	199/236
CCT/1	Kota Cahaya	Cont	Sing	PIL (BD)	14/2	18/2	229/303
CCT/2	Kota Sing	Cont	Sing	PIL (BD)	11/2	16/2	161/161
CCJ	Handy Jade	C Clink	BSL		10/2	18/2	

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Banga Borti	16/2	P Kel	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Qc Teal	16/2	P Kel	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Elena Heart	16/2	Ind	Litmond	Clink	Cont
Haneburg	16/2	Sing	PIL (BD)	Sing	
Maritime Songkhla	17/2	Tari	SSL		
Sushila	15/2	Kol	Sakhi		
Barge: S-657	16/2	Kol	Sakhi		
Tug Britoil-3	25/2	Bata	OTBL	Towing	Sun Kist
Sun Kist	25/2	Bata	OTBL	For Demolition	Sun Kist
Banga Lanka	17/2	Col	Bandhi	Cont	Col
Banga Borak	17/2	Prg	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Banga Bonik	17/2	Col	Bandhi	Cont	Col
Asimont	17/2	Pkl	Seabome	Cont	Sing

Tanker Due

Sceptre	16/2	--	Pana	CDSO
Danat Qatar	18/2	Jebe	Qatar	Crude Oil
Spera-1	18/2	--	Pana	CDSO
Gaza Master	20/2	Viza	Malt	Ammonia

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Outside Port Limit				
Miclyn Moon	--	--	Sakhi	R/A
Smit Borono	--	Sing	Sakhi	2/2
Smit Luzon	--	Sing	Sakhi	2/2
Sea Panther	--	Sing	Sakhi	4/2

Vessels at outer anchorage

Vessels ready

Jon Jin	Sugar	Tuti	Litmond	5/2
Prospects	Sugar	Col	Mutual	7/2
Express Manasu	Cont	P Kel	RSL	15/2
Orion Freedom	Cont	P Kel	PSSL	15/2

Vessel not ready

Banglar Doot	Wheat	K Dia	Lams	R/A
Banglar May	Wheat	K Dia	Lams	R/A
Alex	GI	Dunk	Litmond	R/A

Vessels awaiting employment/instruction

Eltanin	-	-	Royal	R/A
Bosowa Delapan	-	-	Total	R/A

Vessels not entering

Gemini-1	Coal	Tanj	BSL	7/2
Le Chang Ling	C Clink	Tanj	BSL	11/2

Movement of vessels for 17/02/2003

Outgoing	Incoming	Shifting	
J/10 Qc Lark	J/13 B.Borti	J/13	Xp Manasu
CCT/1 Dk Cahaya	J/13 Qc Teal	DD	B Kakoli
J/10 Hane Burg			

The above are shipping position and performance of vessels at Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group, Dhaka.

STOCK



PHOTO: ACI LIMITED
Juan L Blanch, general manager of Invesa International, Spain, shakes hands with M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman and managing director of ACI Limited, during his recent visit to ACI office.