

EU warns Asian countries against bird flu cover-up

AFP, Strasbourg

EU health commissioner David Byrne warned on Tuesday that any attempt by Asian countries to cover up the extent of bird flu would backfire, but denied being hoodwinked by the Thai government.

The Irish member of the EU executive, noting a "lack of transparency" in Thailand, said a European Union ban on Thai poultry imports would only be lifted when the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports the outbreak is over.

He also played down the likelihood of a similar ban on US poultry imports after an outbreak of bird flu on a farm in Delaware, saying the outbreak appeared to be different to the virulent strain afflicting Asia.

As Thailand and Vietnam came under criticism from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for their handling of the crisis, Byrne warned: "These kinds of diseases cannot be hidden. They will come out."

He told the European Parliament that unless authorities in the countries affected compensated hard-hit farmers, "there is a risk that a disease of this kind may be hidden".

"The consequences ultimately

will be worse for those countries who engage in that exercise because they undermine the confidence of the authorities engaged in food safety like ourselves in the European Union," he said.

"That's why in this circumstance no lifting of the ban in Thailand will take place until the FAO have carried out an inspection on the ground and report back that things are satisfactory."

The WHO warned on Tuesday that Asian nations were putting economic considerations rather than human health first in the battle against bird flu, as Vietnam reversed an earlier order to cull birds in infection zones.

The WHO also warned that Thailand may be prematurely lifting its quarantine restrictions on areas hit by the epidemic.

The Thai government has admitted that it "screwed up" in its handling of the bird flu crisis, which has killed at least 19 people in Thailand and Vietnam, but that inefficiency on the part of government agencies was to blame.

The EU imposed its ban on Thai poultry imports on January 23 -- during a visit to Bangkok by Byrne -- and it was extended on February 3

for six months.

After meetings with Thai ministers last month, Byrne had said the EU was "satisfied there is no evidence of any bird flu in Thailand", only to have the government confirm a massive outbreak three days later.

The commissioner on Tuesday acknowledged "some lack of transparency" by the Thai government but denied being tricked.

"I can't imagine any degree of surveillance or monitoring more than the commissioner being there himself, asking the questions himself, not being satisfied with the answers, pressing further, getting the truth and acting within hours," Byrne said.

On the US outbreak, Byrne said the bird flu strain in Delaware appeared to be less virulent "and therefore would not require the same degree of response as for the Asian avian influenza from Thailand".

"However, that is not yet confirmed. We are still looking at this. Our response will be dependent on the answer to that information," he added.

C'wealth trade ministers press rich states for trade progress

AFP, Geneva

Commonwealth trade ministers on Monday launched a bid to convince major industrialised countries to move ahead with deadlocked global trade talks.

The group from Barbados, Bangladesh, the Fiji Islands and Nigeria met WTO Director General Supachai Panitchpakdi in Geneva at the beginning of a mission which is due to take them to the European Union, Japan and Washington over the next ten days.

The group wants to build political momentum for a revival, despite the continued divide between poor and rich countries over key issues such as agriculture.

"We felt it was important to tour some developed capitals of the world to try to encourage them to come back to the negotiating table," said Nigeria's trade minister Alhaji Idris Waziri.

Efforts to reduce world trade barriers, launched in November 2001 in the Qatari capital Doha, have ground to a halt since the collapse of the WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in September.

The Cancun session failed after bickering over cross-border investment and competition added to a more fundamental dispute over farm subsidies in richer countries and the high tariffs on agricultural exports from poorer nations.

Poor countries regard the Doha round as a key step to fight against poverty.

The Commonwealth developing countries claimed they would be flexible in response to signs that industrialised countries might ease their demands on the so-called Singapore issues, notably trade facilitation.

"We are now willing to be flexible as long as the Singapore issues are unbundled," Waziri said.

But the Commonwealth ministers insisted that their priority remained agriculture.

They will also be urging rich countries to maintain trade preferences for poor countries, amid "very grave concerns" about an erosion of the system, according to Billie Miller, the trade minister of Barbados.



PHOTO: DEKKO FOODS

DeKKo Foods Limited organised its annual sales conference recently in Dhaka. General Manager Nurul Amin Sheikh and Manager (Sales and Marketing) Anisuzzaman spoke at the conference.

CURRENCY

Following is Tuesday's (Feb 10, 2004) forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

TT/OD	BC	Currency	TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
59.1500	59.2000	USD	58.2550	58.0839	58.0144
75.9604	76.0246	EUR	73.3838	73.1683	73.0807
110.8767	110.9704	GBP	107.7776	107.4610	107.3324
46.7403	46.7798	AUD	44.6059	44.4748	44.4216
0.5674	0.5679	JPY	0.5469	0.5453	0.5446
48.4360	48.4769	CHF	46.8024	46.6650	46.6091
8.2525	8.2595	SEK	7.6626	7.6401	7.6310
45.0084	45.0464	CAD	43.5649	43.4369	43.3850
7.6214	7.6279	HKD	7.4916	7.4696	7.4607
35.3050	35.3348	SGD	34.4623	34.3610	34.3199
16.2353	16.2490	AED	15.7323	15.6861	15.6673
15.8984	15.9118	SAR	15.4110	15.3657	15.3473

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian rupee	Pak rupee	Lankan rupee	Thai bath	Nor kroner
NZ dollar	Malaysian ringit			

Local Interbank FX Trading

Local interbank market was active on Tuesday. US dollar became slightly weaker against Bangladeshi taka due to increased supply.

Local Money Market
Money market was active. Call money rate was 5.00-6.50 percent Tuesday compared with 5.00-6.00 percent previously.

International Market

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The dollar headed lower across the board on Tuesday, slipping to a one-month low on the euro and multi-year lows on the pound and Australian dollar as the market bought higher-yielding currencies against the falling greenback. The dollar also slipped a quarter percent to 105.39 yen. The spectre of continued low interest rates in the US is also weighing on the dollar, especially against high-yielding

SHIPPING

Chittagong Port

Berthing position and performance of vessels as on 10/2/2004

Berth Import no.	Name of vessels	Cargo	L. Port	Local agent	Dt of arrival	Leaving	Disch
J/1	Ducky Sapphire	Gl(St.C)	Mumb	Bma	1/2	11/2	3118
J/2	Eleana	Sugar(P)	Durb	Bsl	25/1	15/2	1107
J/3	Meres Sajinda	Wheat(P)	Tuti	Rsa	5/2	11/2	649
J/4	Banglar Mamata	Gl(Log)	Yang	Pml	6/2	15/2	691
J/5	Ocean Pride	Gl(Maize/Log)	Yang	Psal	26/1	15/2	1146
J/6	Tai Ping	Gl(Peas)	Sing	Usl	30/1	13/2	1613
J/7	Wang Jae Sun	Sugar(P)	Sing	Usl	3/2	13/2	2115
J/8	Htone Ywa	B. Mapte	Yang	Total	3/2	11/2	435
J/9	Faros	Gl(Y.Peas)		Vanc	Litmond		28 / 1
18/2	1285						
J/10	Banga Bijoy	Cont	Col	Baridhi	6/2	10/2	--
J/11	Dong Tai Fortune	Cont	Sing	Pil (Bd)	7/2	12/2	179
J/12	QC Dignity	Cont	P. Kel	Qcsl	6/2	11/2	---
J/13	Banga Borak	Cont	Sing	Bdship	6/2	11/2	230
Cct/1	Tug De Li & Zhong Ren-1501	--	Z. Zhou	Owsl	7/2	---	
Cct/2	Mardios	Cont	P. Kel	Rsl	6/2	10/2	---
Cct/3	Express Resolve	Cont	Col	Everbest	6/2	11/2	284
RM/14	Rise	Sugar(P)	Viza	Sstl	23/10	15/2	

Vessels due at outer anchorage date: 10/2/2004

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L. Port	Local agent	Cargo	Load port
Dino	10/2	--	Rsshpp	Ballast	--
BBC Sealand	10/2	Sing	Mbl	Defense	
Kota Naga	10/2	Sing	Pil (Bd)	Cont	Sing
Mercs Komari	11/2	Kaki	Able	Sugar (P)	
Bright Pescadores(Liner)	11/2	Yang	Everett	Gl(St.C)	
Mawlamyine (Liner)	12/2	Yang	Everett	Gl(St.C)	
QC Star	13/2	P. Kel	Qcsl	Cont	Sing
Long An	11/2	--	Rainbow	Gl(H.R.St)	
Pathein	12/2	Kaki	Gpsl	Rice (P)	
Banga Borak	14/2	Pkl	Bdship	Cont	Sing/P. Kel
Kota Berjaya	12/2	Sing	Pil(Bd)	Cont	Sing
Jaami	13/2	Col	Everbest	Cont	Col
Magway (Liner)	14/2	Yangon	Everett	Gl(St.C)	
Xpress Manaslu	14/2	P. Kel	Rsl	Cont	Sing

Tanker due

Salamat-2	10/2	Sing	Olm	Bitumen(RM/3)
Al Deerah	12/2	Kuwa	Mstpl	Hsd (RM/3)
Siam Sriwatana	11/2	P. Kel	Usl	Cdso(RM/3/4)

Vessels at Kutubdia

Name of vessels	Cargo	Last Port	Local agent	Date of arrival
Atroditi	C. Oil	Jebe	Ssst	8/2
Banglar Jyoti	C. Oil	--	Bsc	R/A
Dea Captain	--	--	lbsa	R/A(10/2)

Outside port limit

Pact Makassar	Cont	Hald	Psst	8/2
Dieresa-II	Cpol	Dumai	Bma	8/2
Orient Enterprise	Cont	Ptp	Pssl	9/2
Sea Luck-V	Clink	Tanj	Bsl	8/2
Banga Borti	Cont	Sing	Bdship	10/2
Rio Negro	Cont	P. Kel	Qcsl	10/2

Vessels at outer anchorage

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Pact Makassar	Cont	Hald	Psst	8/2
Dieresa-II	Cpol	Dumai	Bma	8/2
Orient Enterprise	Cont	Ptp	Pssl	9/2
Sea Luck-V	Clink	Tanj	Bsl	8/2
Banga Borti	Cont	Sing	Bdship	10/2
Rio Negro	Cont	P. Kel	Qcsl	10/2

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



PHOTO: FEDERAL INSURANCE CO

Md Abdul Khaleque, chairman of Federal Insurance Company Limited, presides over the company's branch in-charges' and executives' conference-2004 recently in Dhaka. Executive Committee Chairman Jashim Uddin, directors Abdus Salim Chowdhury and Nurul Alam and Managing Director AKM Sarwardy Chowdhury were, among others, present.

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