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Approved by:

Chad R. Russell

U.S. Embassy, FASNEWDELHI

Prepared by:

A. Govindan, V. Shunmugam, Sayed Sarwer Hussain

Report Highlights:

India, Brazil, and South Africa review WTO farm talks, *EU to protest India's ban on chicken & meat imports*, *Milk product imports restricted*, *Plan panel asks for projects on Transgenics*, *Bangladesh: National Biotechnology Institute to open in June*.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
New Delhi [IN1]
[IN]

Welcome to Hot Bites from India, a weekly summary of issues of interest to the U.S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within India, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included in this report. Significant issues will be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office.

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INDIA, BRAZIL, AND SOUTH AFRICA REVIEW WTO FARM TALKS

Coming ahead of the WTO agriculture negotiations beginning in Geneva on March 22, India, Brazil, and South Africa met in India on March 4 to review the situation and formulate a united strategy for the developing countries. "We are relatively positive about the March meetings. These definitely have better prospects than earlier," said Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorin. He, however, said that the framework should not backtrack on what is laid on the table. Endorsing Amorin's views, Indian Commerce Minister Jaitley said that the G-20 are formulating a united strategy that will blend offensive and defensive interests to have a balanced approach. (Source: Financial Express, 03/05/04)

EU TO PROTEST INDIA'S BAN ON CHICKEN & MEAT IMPORTS

Speaking on the sidelines of a seminar organized in Chennai, European Union's counselor for Trade and Economic Affairs said that the EU will lodge a formal protest against the Indian government over its last month's notification banning imports of live birds and poultry meat in the wake of bird flu epidemic in parts of Asia. He mentioned that the ban had affected exports of some EU member countries. Speaking at the same seminar, Mr. Bruce Quinn from the US Consulate in Chennai indicated to the countries, which blame the United States of being protectionist, that the U.S. is currently running a huge trade deficit of half a trillion dollars per annum and India enjoys a trade surplus of about \$9 billion with the U.S. Dr. H.A.C. Prasad, Economic Advisor to the Department of Commerce, Government of India noted that India faced barriers from developed countries every time it became strong in a particular product or service. (Source: Business Line 3/6/04)

Post Comment: Trade sources indicate that about a third of India's broiler industry depends on imported genetics and vaccines. A prolonged ban may force them to quit the business. Post has taken up this issue with concerned officials at the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture and a reply is still pending.

MILK PRODUCT IMPORTS RESTRICTED

According to a press report, the Indian government has slapped a ban on imports of milk and milk products from animals that have been treated with prostaglandin. None of the Indian government websites have information on the ordered ban.

Prostaglandins are commonly used in most countries in cows prior to artificial insemination. An Australian cheese exporter is of the opinion that it is a non-tariff barrier by India against imports of products such as cheese and butter. Experts in India believe that this could be a part of the Government's drive to check increasing imports of sensitive products, including dairy products. (Source: Business Line 3/9/04)

Post Comment: Recently, in a communication allowing an Indian importer to import whey permeate, the government authorities stated that imports should be accompanied by a

sanitary certificate assuring that the milk used in the process is not derived from animals treated with estrogenic treatment during the previous 90 days.

PLAN PANEL ASKS FOR PROJECTS ON TRANSGENICS

Government of India's planning authority, the Planning Commission of India had, for the first time, asked for proposals for transgenic projects by next month. In response, Dr. Mangla Rai, Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), speaking at a recent conference on transgenics said that ICAR had identified institutes and projects worth \$55 million on transgenics and will be forwarding their names to the Planning Commission. The two-day conference is expected to come up with a clear roadmap and action plan on areas of transgenic research and a time frame for completion. The conference is also expected to prioritize research areas and identify appropriate technologies for public and private sector research. (Source: Indian Express 3/10/04)

BANGLADESH: NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE TO OPEN IN JUNE

National Biotechnology Institute (NBI) of Bangladesh will start functioning from June this year. The Bangladesh Government had spent \$5 million to establish this institute. The 100 scientists working in this organization will focus on research on DNA, plant, animal, and fish biotechnology, fermentation, and bioprocessing. The Institute will also have a bio-energy and fertilisation laboratory. This was disclosed by the Bangladesh Minister for Science, Information, and Communication Technology, Mr. Abdul Moyeen Khan at the Global Biotechnology Forum in Chile. He mentioned that a bio-safety guideline for his country was in the offing and that the Ministry of Environment and Forest is planning to enact a Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge Protection Act, which is still awaiting approval by the Parliament. (Source: The Financial Express, 03/08/04)

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