

NEPAL

HRH CROWN PRINCESS INAUGURATES FLORICULTURE TRADE EXPO 2005

Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Himani Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah inaugurated the five -day long Floriculture Trade Expo-2005 at a function at Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall in Kathmandu on 17th March, 2005.

On the occasion, the Crown Princess gave away awards to eight nurseries participating in the fair for their outstanding performance related to various aspects of floriculture. The awards were given in the categories of flower decoration, best plant, best cut flower, and best stall. The expo was organised by the Floriculture Association of Nepal(FAN).

The Crown Princess also observed flowers from various nurseries being displayed at the fair with great interest .

Speaking on the occasion, Binod Bahadur Shrestha, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) said, their is a good prospect for floriculture in the country.

He also stressed on government support to promote floriculture trade as a large - scale industry. Minarab Bista, president of FAN asked for government support on market promotion as well as infrastructure development to foster the floriculture trade.

Agro Enterprises Center at FNCCI and Export Promotion Committee were co-organiser, of the event.

According to organiser, more than 450 species of flowers decorative paints, garden paints, cut flowers, seeds and saplings, machinery, fertilizer and insecticides were on display at 50 stalls.

INDUSTRY-COMMERCE DAY OBSERVED WITH VARIOUS PROGRAMMES

Dr Tulsi Giri, Vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers, on 10th April in Kathmandu said that the government is committed for creating a conducive environment for business-led growth in the country.

At a programme organised to mark the Industry-Commerce Day-2005 by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Dr Gigi reiterated the government's commitment to promote liberal and broad-based economic policies. FNCCI has been marking April 10 as the Industry-Commerce Day since 2056 BS.

Calling upon all sides to extend cooperation to the government against terrorism and corruption, he said that they can be brought under control if collective efforts were made in that direction.

Referring to the tremendous potential for economic development in Nepal, which might propel the country towards prosperity, he said the country would make rapid progress through collective commitment fall Nepalis.

Dr Giri said the economic policies to be adopted by Nepal could not be inferior compared to the two big and fast growing economies in the neighbourhood. He pointed out the need to learn a lot from these fast growing economies.

Appreciating FNCCI's role in economic development of the country, he urged the business community to help in the drive against corruption.

Binod Bahadur Shrestha, president of FNCCI, noted that the Nepali private sector is undergoing 'one of the toughest time' in history due to escalating violence. He also asked the government to protect Nepali business and let the business community do their business in a free and fair manner.

Shrestha also asked the government to introduce effective fiscal policies by amending industrial, commerce and labour laws to create a conducive business environment.

First vice-president of FNCCI Chandu Raj Dhakal express the view that the government should consider private sector as an integral part in the development programme.

On the occasion, the FNCCI National Excellence Award 2061 was conferred upon Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Ltd, and Himalayan Snax and Noodles Pvt. Ltd, Nepal Pharmaceuticals Lab and Nepali Paper Products Pvt. Ltd. were awarded with best industry award under the category of large, medium and small-scale industry respectively.

Narayanganr, Tanahun, Lekhnath and Dolkha Chambers were conferred with letters of appreciation as the best district and municipal chambers, while Floriculture Association of Nepal, Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal and Handicraft Association of Nepal were honoured as the best commodity associations.

Nepal German Chamber of Commerce and Industry was awarded the best bilateral chamber, Dr. Giri gave away awards and letters of appreciation on the occasion. On the occasion, Vice-Chairman Dr.Giri also handed out letters of appreciation to the chamber celebrating their golden jubilee which included the Pokhara, Butwal and Siddharthanagar CCI.

Bhaktapur CCI received a letter of felicitation for ISO. On the occasion former presidents of FNCCI were also felicitated for their great contribution towards FNCCI.

During the programme a documentary depicting various activities of FNCCI was also displayed.

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT FRUITFUL

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing on 1st April maintained his government's earlier stance on the recent political development in Nepal and said, 'it was Nepal's internal matter, which had nothing to do with China.'

"We respect and would like to help the Nepalese have their own way in their nation's specific political development," Li told journalists in Kathmandu at the end of his meeting with the Vice Chairman of the Council of Minister Dr. Tulsi Giri and Kiritnidhi Bista.

Li said that the priority of the Chinese government was extend bilateral relation at the people's level and emphasised the need to further promote cooperation in the education sector.

Before his departure at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Li said that China would continue to support in Nepal's development efforts. "My host the Foreign Minister (Ramesh Nath Pandey) and I have reached a consensus that we will continue to work together to make the bonds of friendship between our people's stronger and to make their cooperation that we are having even more fruitful for their benefit as well as for stability and prosperity."

Following Li's departure Minister for Foreign Affairs Ramesh Nath Pandey said that during the talks with his Chinese counterpart they developed "substantial understanding" not just on matters of immediate concerns but also for long term interests of our bilateral relations.

Li expressed confidence that Nepal would overcome the present temporary difficulties under the able leadership of His Majesty the King, Pandey said. "Apart from regular economic cooperation, we have also exchanged views for budgetary support for Nepal, which our two sides shall discuss further."

Minister Pandey revealed that they had developed understanding for China's support to establish a Special Economic Zone in Nepal for promotion of bilateral trade and investment. " We also discussed matters related to mutually beneficial exchanges between Nepal and Tibet Autonomous Region of China, specially taking advantages of development of China's western region and train service to Lhasa by 2006.

NEPAL, PAKISTAN AGREE TO EXPEDITE TRADE AND ECONOMIC TIES

Nepal and Pakistan have expressed their willingness to expedite trade and economic activities for mutual benefit through a free trade agreement.

During the fifth meeting of the Nepal-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission held on March 29 at the Ministry of Finance, both the nations emphasised the need to ensure greater effectiveness of the JEC for trade promotion.

Speaking at the meeting, Minister for Finance Madhukar Shumshere Rana said. "Nepal looks forth to expanding trade, investment and tourism relations so that both the nations could embark on an export-led growth for our national economy."

Appreciating the Government of Pakistan for the duty free status given to Nepalese tea, Minister Rana expressed optimism that Pakistan would

further extend the facility to other commodities like cardamom, ginger, lentils and coffee.

Speaking at the meeting, leader of the Pakistan delegation Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Economic Affairs, said that Pakistan was willing to consider signing a free trade agreement (FTA) with Nepal.

Pakistan has already removed all duties on the import of tea from Nepal, she said. "A major hurdle for bilateral trade has been the difficulties encountered during the transit.

She further said, "We should explore alternative transit routes for trade through Bangladesh and even through China."

Earlier, Secretary at the Ministry of Finance Bhanu Prasad Acharya said that the governments and private sectors from both the countries had been in constant touch to augment bilateral trade and investment.

Bilateral cooperation in agriculture and livestock, marketing of Nepalese and Pakistani products, promotion of joint ventures and cooperation in education and health targeted by the fourth session needed further reinforcement, he said.

Economic relations between Nepal and Pakistan were established more than four decades ago. The JEC was established 22 years ago with the aim of promoting bilateral trade between the two countries. The fourth JEC meeting was held in 1995.

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) also hold separate meetings with the Pakistani delegation.

NEPAL, PAKISTAN SIGN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

In a bid to further strengthen the economic ties between Nepal and Pakistan, the fifth meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in the Kathmandu on 30th March formally agreed to extend and diversify bilateral trade and economic relations between the two nations.

The two-day meeting agreed to from a Joint Task force to expedite the process of the bilateral trade agreement. The meeting also discussed the possibilities of exploring new areas of cooperation. At the end of the meeting, Minister for Finance Madhukar Shumshere Rana and Pakistani State Minister for Economic Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar signed the free trade agreement.

Pakistan provided five million US dollar credit facility and requested Nepal to utilise it for the furtherance of bilateral economic relations between the two nations.

A joint press communique at the end of meeting states that the discussions during the JEC were focused on broadening and diversifying bilateral economic relations. possibilities of cooperation in the field of health, human resource development, establishment of joint ventures in textile and pharmaceutical sector, culture, tourism and civil aviation, communications and alternative energy including micro- hydle power, projects, solar and bio-gas energy were discussed.

Establishment of institutional linkages between educational institutions and cooperation in the field of food, agriculture, livestock and forestry was emphasised by both the sides, the joint communique stated.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate with each other and explore the possibilities of investing in each other's countries. Both sides agreed to form a joint Task Force to initiate negotiations on a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

The JEC between Pakistan and Nepal had not met since 1995 when its fourth session was held in Islamabad.

BIRGUNJ DRY PORT PROVES EFFICIENCY TO HANDLE BULK CARGOES

Twenty three hundred tons of raw sugar being exported from Nepal to Portugal was dispatched from the Dry Port Birgunj on April 1,2005.

The cargo will be loaded on board a ship at Haldia Port on the way to Lisbon of Portugal.

This is the first overseas export commercial break-bulk cargo handled by the ICD in covered wagons of Indian Railway. So far the ICD has handled over 70 containers of export cargo including 49 containers for the Royal Nepal Army working in UN peace keeping mission. Five other shipments were handled by the ICD for third country in containers.

The ICD had started its operations from 1st Shrawan 2061 handling only overseas imports and exports. From February 1, 2005 ICD is open to handle bilateral cargo between Nepal and India.

Now the ICD is handling containers and break bull cargo in Indian Railway wagons.

The fact that the 46,000 bags (2,300 tons) of this sugar shipment loaded on board the Indian Railway wagons within seven hours, proves the efficiency of the ICD to handle such big volume of cargo.

Himalayan Terminals Private Limited, the joint venture company of Nepalese and Indian investors that manages the Dry Port, says 65% of the third country container traffic arrived Kolkata Port now passing through the Birgunj Dry Port, which proves wrong the complaint that the Dry Port is expensive for the importers and exporters.

NEPAL -QATAR SIGN LABOUR AGREEMENT

The first ever labour agreement, signed with Qatar in Doha recently will guarantee the security of about 100,000 Nepalese workers working there apart from enabling them to receive many facilities that they were deprived earlier.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ramesh Nath Pandey, who stopped for a three- day official visit of Qatar on this way back after participating in the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, signed the agreement in Doha.

The agreement is the first ever labour agreement to be signed with any foreign country that has been hiring Nepalese workers. The agreement materialised after ten years of untiring efforts.

Foreign Minister Pandey and Qatar's Minister for Civil Service Affairs and Housing, Sheikh Falah Bin Jassem Al-Thani signed the agreement at a ceremony in Doha, official sources said.

AD INDUSTRY TOLD TO USE MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Nepal's advertising industry should apply new and modern technology for the growth of the industrial sector, said advertising entrepreneurs.

"We can promote the industrial sector through advertising if there is sound cooperation between the industry, media, advertising agencies and the government," Bhaskar Raj Rajkarnikar, President of the Advertising Agencies Association of Nepal (AAAN), said at a press conference organised in Kathmandu recently. The press met was organised after a Nepalese team returned from Mumbai, India after participating at the 38th ABBY Awards- 2005 held on March 19.

Nepal was nominated in the prestigious ABBY award in the 'Best of Nepal Advertising' under two headings - press and television/cinema.

Those nominated were Konika Mobile, Fitrite Shoes, Walkathon, Wild Candy, Jagadamba Pipe and Konta Television.

Advertising agencies of Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan participated in the competition.

NEPAL TO EXPORT COFFEE TO US

As Nepali coffee starts making impression in the overseas market, a Dutch company has announced that it would import 30 tons of Nepal; coffee to supply these to the US market.

In recent years, leading marketing companies from various European countries have been visiting Nepal eyeing the possibility of supplying Nepali coffee to the European and the US market.

According to the office bearers of Palpa Coffee Entrepreneurs Association (PCE A), the company would be buying eight tons of coffee from Palpa district alone. Palpa is popular for coffee production in Nepal.

SAARC

REALTY FDI NORM 50% OF PROJECT WITHIN 5 YEARS IN INDIA

Investors will have to develop at least 50% of the project within five years after obtaining clearance, according to the new FDI guidelines for construction development notified recently.

A minimum capitalisation of \$10 million for whollyowned subsidiaries and \$5 million for joint ventures with Indian partners has been made compulsory.

Investors would not be able to repatriate original investment before a period of three years from completion of minimum capitalisation.

They may be able to exit earlier with the prior permission of the Foreign Investment promotion board.

As per the guidelines, FDI upto 100% under the automatic route includes townships, housing, built-up infrastructure and construction development projects.

Housing, Commercial premises, hotels, resorts, hospitals, educational institutions, recreational facilities, city and regional level infrastructure also include the list where FDI has been put on automatic route but it would not be restricted to these areas only.

In case of serviced housing plots, a minimum area of 10 hectares has been stipulated, while for

construction development projects, a minimum built-up area of 50,000 sq metre is required.

The guidelines have emphasised that investors would not be allowed to sell undeveloped plots which would include roads, water supply, street lighting drainage, sewerage and other conveniences as applicable under prescribed regulations.

INDIAN EXPORTS SURGE

India's exports surged 24 percent to a record 80 billion dollars for the year ended March, but a soaring oil import bill meant the country still ran a trade deficit, Trade Minister Kamal Nath said recently.

"This growth is unprecedented in India's economic history. Is we can maintain the momentum I am confident that India will cross 150 billion dollars" in exports by 2007, Nath said.

He said India could not only boost its less than one percent share of world trade, but could also add as many as 10 million jobs over the next four years if it achieved the target.

India revised its export target for the current financial year started Apr. 1, upwards to 92 billion dollars from 88 million dollars in view of the "unprecedented achievement," Nath said.

Imports during the financial year grew 34 per cent to 105 billion dollars exceeding export earnings by 25 billion dollars primarily because of a higher oil import bill as fuel prices rose to record levels in the past year.

"If oil imports were not counted, then our exports exceeded our imports by almost four billion dollars," Nath said.

BANGLADESH'S ECONOMY TO GROW

Bangladesh's economy has recovered from devastating floods last summer and is poised for higher growth in the second half of the financial year to June, the country's central bank said recently.

The central bank said in its latest quarterly report that the economy has rebounded from floods which submerged large areas of the low-lying delta nation for weeks last July and August.

Hundreds of people died and crops were destroyed by the floods with the World Bank Asian Development Bank estimating the economic damage at 2.2 billion dollars.

The bank said the economy grew by "below five per cent" in the period immediately after the floods. But was set to grow faster, in the second half of the fiscal year in line with a government forecast of six per cent for the full-year.

The economy grew 5.52 per cent in the previous financial year.

INDIA - PAKISTAN TRADE SOARS BY 146%

Trade between political rivals India and Pakistan soared by almost 150 per cent last year, government officials said recently, pointing to one of the quickest gains from the fledgling peace process between the South Asian neighbors.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars, and have a six-decade rivalry centered on their rival

claims to the Himalayan region of Kashmir, their principal dispute.

After the peace process began last year, business executives from both countries said they were desperate to do business across the border-eagerness that was unimaginable in Just 2002, when the rivals appeared poised to fight their fourth war.

Indian companies are now exporting sugar, plastic, pharmaceuticals, rubber, iron ore and tea to Pakistan. From across the border, Pakistani business send fabrics, spices, fruit and nuts.

Between April 2004 and November 2004, the total trade between the two countries stood at US\$ 381 million (euro286 million), up from US\$155 million (euro116 million) in the same period the previous year. Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath told Parliament.

SRI LANKA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH LOWER

Sri Lanka's economy grew by a lower-than-expected 5.4 percent last year compared after a gain of 6.0 per cent in 2003, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka said recently.

The central Bank had forecast 2004 growth at between 5.5 and 6.0 per cent.

The last quarter of 2004 saw gross domestic product (GDP) growth slow to 4.4 per cent from 6.6 per cent in the corresponding period of 2003, the central bank said in a statement.

It noted that growth rates had been going down through 2004 and warned that prospects for this year could be affected by both a slowdown in the import of goods and the impact of the December 26 tsunamis which killed nearly 31,000 people and left almost a million homeless initially.

"The deceleration in the fourth quarter raises concerns about the continued vulnerability of the economy, particularly the traditional agriculture sector, to weather conditions," the central bank said.

"A slowdown in the growth of investment goods imports from the second half of (2004) and continuation of high oil prices could affect future economic growth," it added.

ASIA

CHINA TO CAP GROWTH AT 15%

China will seek to keep export growth in 2005 within 15 percent in order to address growing trade friction, according to a report submitted to parliament recently. "Export volume has grown considerably in recent years to a very high level, and international trade friction is intensifying," the report from the National Development and Reform Commission said. "Setting the target at 15 per cent should help push enterprises to accelerate change in the pattern of their import and export mix, and raise the quality and level of their foreign trade growth," it said. China's export engine last year roared ahead, gaining 35.4 percent from the year before, further fueling foreign worries.

CHINA CULTIVATES 'SUPER CORN'

Chinese agronomists have cultivated a new species of 'super corn' with an average per-hectare yield approaching 15,000 kg, reports Xinhua.

Agro-scientists in Zheng Zhou have developed the new 'super corn' strain with their own intellectual property right through repeated experiments for dozens of years, according to sources at the city's grain wholesale market.

The high -yield, high -quality new 'super corn' strain will be of great significance in boosting China's food grain production and is regarded as another major breakthrough in the agro-scientific research following the development of 'super rice'. According to Zhao Jiuran, director of the Corn Research Centre in the Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forest, the centre sorted out and cultivated four new species of hybrid maize with per hectare yield up to 13,500 kg in 2004.

JAPAN'S INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP

Japan reported stronger-than-expected January industrial output figures giving stocks and the yen a boost while bolstering hopes the economy, in recession for most of 2004, could get back on track soon.

Industrial output rose 2.1 per cent, well above the economist forecasts for a gain of 0.8 per cent and after a fall of 0.8 per cent in December, according to a preliminary report by the trade ministry.

The ministry also said January commercial sales, or total sales at the wholesale and retail levels, rose 3.1 per cent from a year earlier for the eighth consecutive monthly increase, reflecting surging commodity prices.

The output data supported stocks and the yen while Bank of Japan Governor Toshihiko Fukui sought to cheer public sentiment.

"In light of recent softer economic indicators, such as (gross domestic product) and the coincident index, we cannot rule out the possibility of the economy falling into recession," Fukui said in a speech.

"However, overall, I see a low risk of the economy falling into a serious recession," he said.

SINGAPORE'S EXPORT SLOWS

Singapore's non-oil domestic exports (NODX) rose at a slower pace in February as orders for key electronics products from the United States and Europe fell, the government said recently.

NODX in February rose 5.3 per cent from a year earlier to 10.25 billion Singapore dollars (6.33 billion US) after a 9.0 per cent gain in January, trade promotion agency international Enterprise Singapore said in its monthly report.

On a month -to-month basis, NODX grew 7.9 per cent in February, a marked improvement from the 0.6 per cent contraction posted in January.

"Non-electronic NODX continued to report steady gains in the month," the IES said, adding; "However, electronic NODX posted a 3.6 per cent decline."

The decline in electronics exports to 4.54 billion dollars was largely due to weaker orders for disk-drives from the United States and the European Union, the city-state's two largest NODX markets.

S. KOREAN INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT FALLS

South Korea's industrial output fell sharply in February but officials said the downturn was largely explained by Lunar New Year holidays that reduced the number of days worked.

Analysts were cautious on the figures, describing them as disappointing given recent hopes that the economy was on the mend after two years in the doldrums as domestic consumption slowed dramatically.

Output in February fell 7.3 per cent compared with a year earlier after a gain of 14.2 per cent in January. It was the first decline in 21 months since May 2003 when output was down 0.8 per cent, the National Statistics Office said.

The government said the figures were not a setback of an early economic recovery because February had 3.2 fewer working days than a year earlier and 4.3 fewer than in January due to the Lunar New Year holidays. Fewer working days led to a decline in production, consumption and investment.

MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY GROWS

The Malaysian economy expanded 5.6 per cent in the December quarter, taking 2004 growth to 7.1 per cent, its fastest pace in four years, the central bank said recently.

The 2004 gross domestic product growth beat the official target of 7.0 per cent, driven by robust domestic demand while government's consolidated its fiscal position, Bank Negara Malaysia said in a statement.

It said growth prospects remain "favourable" this year as the global economic expansion was expected to be sustained at a steady pace.

Although the global electronics industry is consolidating since reaching a peak in mid-2004, the downcycle was likely to be modest in view of continued demand, more rapid inventory adjustments and relatively low stock levels.

WORLD

US ECONOMY PICKING UP PACE

Federal Reserve policy makers recently tightened US borrowing costs in line with expectations but spooked Wall Street with an aggressive warning on inflation.

With the world's biggest economy picking up pace, the Federal Open Market Committee lifted the benchmark federal funds rate by 25 basis point- for the seventh time in as many meetings - to 2.75 per cent.

In a statement, the FOMC under chairman Alan Greenspan retained its use of the soothing terms "measured" and "accommodative" to describe its probable future course of action.

But the statement also packed a punch that caught investors off guard.

"Though longer-term inflation expectations remain well contained, pressures on inflation have picked up in recent months and pricing power is more evident," it said.

On Wall Street, the dollar strengthened against major currencies, long-term borrowing rates shot up

and the stock market weakened on the Fed's warning. Both the Dow Jones and Nasdaq averages closed down nearly one per cent.

Merrill Lynch chief economist David Rosenberg said the Fed had taken a "half step towards a more aggressive move on the interest rate front".

US JOBS GROW, BUT JOBLESS RATE RISES

US employers created 262,000 jobs in February, the biggest gain in four months and double January's pace, but the good news for workers was tempered by a rise in the jobless rate.

Other reports showed an unexpected, if slim, rise in factory orders in January and a dip in consumers sentiment. The Labor Department said February's increase in nonfarm employment, the biggest since October, came as auto workers returned from temporary layoffs and construction activity snapped back from an unusually cold January.

The unemployment rate, however, rose to 5.4 per cent from January's 5.2 per cent. The rise in the jobless rate, drawn from a separate survey of households, partly reflected an entering the labour force.

US SEEKS FREE-TRADE DEAL

The United States would be willing to open free-trade negotiations with Association of Southeast Asian Nations members Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia and the Philippines, a senior U.S. official said recently.

The negotiations would fall under a U.S. program offering free-trade deals with ASEAN countries that already have a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Washington and are World Trade Organization members, said Barbara Weisel, assistant U.S. trade representative in the Asia-Pacific region.

Washington has completed a free - trade agreement with Singapore and is in early negotiations with Thailand.

No timeframe has been set for negotiations with the countries, Weisel said, pointing out that U.S. standards are high and the process is difficult because it involves a commitment to structural reforms and liberalization.

The objective is to "tie our futures in a way that we have common goals" that will result in a win-win opportunity for both sides, she said.

The 10-member ASEAN also includes Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

U.K.'S TRADE DEFICIT NARROWS

Britain's trade deficit narrowed in November though the higher cost of imports of oil and natural gas drove the value of imports to a record level, the government said recently.

November's goods trade deficit was 4.6 billion pounds (euro 6.6 billion, US\$ 8.7 billion) compared to 5.0 billion pounds in October, National Statistics reported.

Imports of goods totaled a record 21.5 billion pounds (euro 30.8 billion, US\$ 40.5 billion).

This was offset by a recovering level of exports, which reached 16.9 billion pounds (euro 24.2 billion, US\$ 31.81 billion), up from 16.2 billion pounds the month before. This was mainly down to greater

exports of petroleum products, chemicals and capital goods.

GERMANY'S TRADE SURPLUS UP

Germany's trade surplus increased in February as exports fared better than imports, official data showed recently.

The German trade surplus-the balance between exports and imports amounted to 13.5 billion euros (17.3 billion dollars) in February, up from 13.3 billion euros in January and also higher than the 12.2 billion euros recorded in February 2004, the federal statistics office, Destatis, calculated in preliminary figures.

The biggest eurozone economy exported goods worth 61.5 billion euros in February. That represented a decline of 2.8 per cent in calendar and seasonally adjusted terms from the figure for January.

But imports declined even more sharply, falling by 3.7 per cent to 48.4 billion euros, the statisticians said.

Taking into account trade in services and income. Germany's current account showed a surplus of 8.4 billion euros in February, up from 6.8 billion euros in both January and in February 2004.

AUSTRALIAN GROWTH SLUMPS

Australian interest rates were raised for the first time in 15 months recently as growth slumped to a near four-year low, forcing the government to defend the record for economic management on which it won last year's election by a landslide.

An announcement by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) increased the official cash rate quarter of a percentage point to 5.5 per cent, the highest level for four years and the first change since December 2003.

Although expected, the increase drew immediate fire from business groups and the opposition because it was aimed at cooling consumer spending in a preemptive strike against inflation at a time when the economy is already slowing.

Shortly after the move, figures showed gross domestic product (GDP) growth had dropped to a worse-than-expected 0.1 percent in the December quarter for an annual rate of just 1.5 percent, compared with a revised 0.2 per cent and 3.0 per cent in the three months to September.

Economists had forecast fourth quarter GDP growth of around 0.5 percent and 2.0 percent for the year, weighed down by weak export growth.

Commonwealth Bank of Australia chief economist Michael Blythe said the GDP figures were surprisingly low and a lot worse than expected.

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Following Business Opportunities have been received in the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FNCCI). Interested Parties may contact with parties concerned.

IMPORT

- America Import and Export 2005 Corporation**
1/85B, Clinton Way Avenue, New York, USA
Email : america import export2003inc@yahoo.com.in
· Readymade garments, Toiletries products, All kinds of mobile phones, cosmetics, perfumes, stationeries, building materials, Toys and gift items, pharmaceuticals etc.
- 32 Companies Incorporated**
55, Brivibas-Street,Riga, Latvia
Email : hammad horological center@yahoo.co.uk
· communications equipments, horological products, watches & bands, construction materials, hardware, readymade garments, leather products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, chemicals items, cosmetics/ perfumeries, & toiletries items, food stuff, toys & gifts and all general goods.
- Ujjwal Paul**
Kolkata, India
Tel : 91 033 2401 4833
Fax : 933 08 74945
Email : ujjwal paul@yahoo.com
· Ginger and Onion.
- Zrinka Orr USA.**
Email : zrinka@tellink.net
· Silk clothing for women - Jackets, blouses, Skirts and shawls
- The Tohoku University School of Medicine**
Sendai, Japan
Tel & Fax : 81 22 353 2180
Email : jay@mtc.biglobe.ne.jp
·ENAMELED BOX
- Embassy of the Union of Myanmar**
GPO Box 2437, Krishnagalli, Pulchowk, Lalitpur
Nepal
Tel : 977-1-5521788
Fax : 5523402
Email : emb@myanmar.wlink.com.np
· Fish and fishery products
- Raj Amit Exports**
4138, Baya Bazaar, New Delhi-11006, India
Tel : 91 935 031 6448, 931 284 1064
Fax : 11 239 52132
Email : rajamitexports@rediffmail.com
· Grocery products
- Sedef Vatka Ltd.**
10006/1 Sokak No. 31
Ataturk Organize Sanayi Bolgesi
Cigli Izmir 35620
Tel : 90 232 3281206
Fax : 3282641
Email: info@sedefvatka.com.tr
· Shoulder Pads
- Goyal Herbal Udhog**
81, Jawahar Negar Extention, Bhelupur
Varanasi- 221005, India
Tel : 91 542 2400491- 92
· Fast moving consumer goods - herbal products
- HJ International**
Pakistan
Tel : 92 41 581003 - 4
Fax : 745167
Email : smtex@fsd.comsats.net.pk
· Woven fabrics, Textiles products and made ups
- Meriton International Corp.**
11/8, No. 130. Sec. 2, Chung Hsiao East Road. Taipei, Taiwan, ROC.
Tel : 886 2 2397 9137
Email : meriton86@ezenet.prouit.be
Website : www.meriton.com.tw
· Computer bags, briefcases, backpack, travel bags, garment bag, shopping tole, school bag trolley upright.
- SMEST Co. Ltd.**
No. 17 Wentidonglu Dongling District
Shenyang, China 110015
Tel : 86 24 24532719
Fax : 24533127
Email : sunlight@pub.in.cninfo.net
· Trolley bus equipments and parts:electronic chopper, power converter.
- CHEMOGAN USA Inc.**
24 Marion Street, Greenvale,
New York - 11548
P.O.Box 22, Glen Head, New York. USA
Tel : 212 362 3360
Fax : 212 202 4823
· nutritional products in forms of tablets, capsules and liquids
· Rajasthani Marbel, tiles,sandstones, Slate, & Limestone.

EXPORT

- Spanish Commercial Office in India**
2,Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi
110057, India
Tel : 91112614 64 77
Fax : 26145956
Email: gaviles@mcx.es
· Fertilizers
- Hamona Trading Corporation**
Ispahani Building, 14-15, Motijheel
Commercial
Area, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh
Tel : 880 2 9555898, 9550903
Fax : 9565324
Email : hamona@bol-online.com
· Jute and jute products
- Song Young International Co. Ltd.**
12-1 F, Min Chou Bldg. No 376, Sec. 1 Tun
Hwa S.Road, Taipei 106, Taiwan ROC
Tel : 886 2 2703 6465
Fax : 27053571
Email : songyoung@ms94.url.com.tw
Website : www.songyoung.tw
· Dental laboratory products, articulators, abrasive materials, dowel pins, portable micro motor, disposable products, Ultra Sonic cleaner.