



Lead Stories

Sanctions on US products introduced by Brazil

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Sanctions on US products introduced by Brazil

Brazil has announced, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) has approved, new trade sanctions on US goods, in response to illegal subsidies paid by the US government to American cotton growers.

A list was published by Brazil of the items on which import tariffs would be placed, which includes more than 100 different American products, worth nearly \$600 million. Cotton products would face the highest penalty, with the tariff increasing from 6% to 100%. Other American products will be included in the sanctions as well, although the tariff increase will not be as significant.

According to a Brazilian official, a wide range of products was chosen, in order to "maximize pressure." The tariffs will go into effect in 30 days, unless the two countries can reach an agreement before then.

The subsidies cited by Brazil as justification for the tariffs pay out around \$3 billion to American cotton growers annually. Brazil has argued for eight years that these subsidies were the reason that the US was the second-largest producer of cotton in the world, and in 2008, the WTO ruled that they were illegal. The National Cotton Council in America,

however, argued that that the system of subsidies has changed since the WTO's first ruling on the matter in 2005.

A senior executive at the council said that the subsidies were justified, and that they were an "important financial safety net for producers."

New York attorney general Cuomo recuses himself from governor Paterson investigation

New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo announced on Thursday that he will recuse himself from the investigations involving incumbent Governor David Paterson. The probe involves two separate incidents. The first one regards Paterson's handling of a domestic violence allegation that was directed at one of Governor Paterson's top aides, David Johnson. The case became public when The New York Times reported in February that Paterson had "influenced" the alleged victim in the case to drop her allegation. There were also reports that the State Police had engaged in witness tampering as well. The other incident involves whether or not the New York Governor unethically received several tickets to the World Series.

Attorney General Cuomo recused himself because of a conflict of interests that might arise should he personally handle the investigation. Cuomo is expected by many to announce his candidacy for the upcoming gubernatorial election this November. While this could have meant that he would be running against Paterson for the Democratic nomination, Paterson recently announced that he will seek a full term. Paterson became governor in 2008, when then-Governor Eliot Spitzer was caught in a prostitution scandal. Spitzer resigned shortly after the affairs became public; allowing Paterson, who was the lieutenant governor at the time, to take the post. Paterson had announced his candidacy for reelection before removing himself from it when the allegations of wrongdoing arose.

Cuomo announced that after his recusal, Judge Judith Kaye would be in charge of the investigation. Kaye was the Chief Judge on the New York Court of Appeals from 1993 through 2008. Kaye was the first female to ever serve on the court. She currently works at a private practice for the firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

Suicide bomber kills at least 45 in Lahore, Pakistan

According to police, at least 45 people in Lahore, Pakistan were killed earlier on Friday after multiple suicide bombings. Over a hundred others were injured.

In the first incident, a double bombing apparently targeting military vehicles in RA Bazaar, a commercial and residential neighbourhood of Lahore, killed 45 people, among them ten troops. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah reported that the bombers arrived at the area by a motorbike and approached the vehicles, then detonated jackets containing 26 pounds of explosives, according to The Telegraph.

Chief of Punjab police Tariq Saleem Dogar said that "[t]wo suicide bombers attacked within the span of 15 to 20 seconds and they were on foot."

A second attack, reportedly targeting a police station, is said to have killed at least four other people.

Senior Lahore police official Chaudhary Shaffiq Ahmed commented that "[t]he explosions occurred at a bus stop in RA Bazaar market. Two suicide attackers approached two patrolling army vehicles fifteen seconds apart causing the explosions."

Some witnesses said they heard gunfire shortly before the explosions. "I saw smoke rising everywhere. A lot of people were crying," recalled Afzal Awan, an eyewitness.

Local government blamed the Taliban for the bombings, although no group has, as

of yet, claimed responsibility.

Up to one-half of Somali food aid diverted from needy

According to a leaked United Nations report, up to one-half of all food aid to Somalia from the World Food Programme (WFP) is diverted to local contractors and militants.

The United Nations monitoring group in Somalia authored the report, which has not yet been publicly introduced, but was shown by diplomats to the The New York Times, and is to be formally presented on March 16. According to the document, food aid to Somalia is regularly diverted to a complex network of contractors for the United Nations within the country, who in turn have moved either the aid itself or monetary profits from the transportation of it to armed militant groups within Somalia.

A part of the report said that "A handful of Somali contractors for aid agencies have formed a cartel and become important power brokers—some of whom channel their profits, or the aid itself, directly to armed opposition groups."

The WFP, which is in charge of the aid, was heavily criticized for its actions regarding to Somalian aid, particularly the contracts for the movement of the aid, which the report claims are largely awarded to three Somali businessman who are alleged to have connections to militant groups. The report also blames problems with the general distribution of aid in the country, where the lack of a functioning government has led to "ineffective, disorganized and corrupt" security forces. It suggests that the only way to resolve these problems is to completely overhaul the aid system to break the control of aid by local forces.

The WFP has denied previous allegations of corruption and abuse in Somalia, but it said that it would investigate the findings of the new report. The programs' executive director also released a statement saying, "The integrity of our organisation is paramount and we will be reviewing and investigating each and every issue raised by this report."

Allegations that food aid was being diverted also arose last year, which led the United States to reduce funding to Somalia, for fears that aid was ending up with the Islamic group al-Shabaab. Since then, the WFP has been banned by al-

Shabaab from operating in Somalia, a move that followed the WFP's suspension of operations in southern Somalia amid attacks from militants.

Turkey recalls ambassador to Sweden over "genocide" vote

Turkey has recalled its ambassador to Sweden after the Swedish Parliament voted to describe Turkey's killings of Armenians in World War I as "genocide".

The Swedish vote came despite the Swedish government's opposition to the resolution, as several parliament members crossed party lines in the vote, which passed the resolution by a vote of 131–130, with 88 parliament members absent. The Swedish government called the vote a "mistake," but added that it will not influence their position on the matter.

The Turkish government released a statement saying, "our people and our government reject this decision based upon major errors and without foundation," and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan immediately cancelled a planned visit to Sweden. Despite the reaction, Turkey said that the moves did "not correspond to the close friendship of our two nations," and they were only recalling their ambassador for consultations.

The resolution is particularly sensitive given that Sweden has long been a strong supporter of Turkey and their bid to join the European Union, and Turkey has been for years maintaining that their actions in World War I against Armenians did not amount to genocide. Despite Turkey's claims, Armenians have been heavily campaigning for the killings, which they say number up to 1.5 million, to be recognized as genocide, and over twenty countries worldwide have done so.

Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said that the vote would likely have a significant effect on the fate of negotiations between Turkey and Armenia, which have been attempting to resume normal diplomatic relations. The Turkish ambassador that was recalled said that the vote would have "drastic effects" on the negotiations, and it would have an impact for some time.

The Swedish vote came not long after a similar vote by a US Congressional panel, which also approved a resolution with similar terminology, leading to the removal of Turkey's ambassador. In that case, the US government has been trying to prevent

the resolution from going further, in an attempt to limit the consequences of the vote.

Quiz of the Week

1. "Here's what you get, guys, when the kids are out of school." The man who uttered this phrase was suspended from his job last week for allowing his children do what?
2. Which major airline recently announced that it would be cutting over a thousand jobs?
3. A NASA scientist has suggested that the recent heavy Chile earthquake may have done what to the Earth?
4. Russian president Dmitry Medvedev recently requested for the resignations of some of his country's Olympic coaches, but for what reason?
5. A heavy 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck which eastern Asian country recently?

Answers in tommorrow's edition.

Commons Picture of the Day



A blind man carrying a deformed man on his back in the Levant. Image is in the public domain.

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