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Business

India raises market access issues with the Netherlands

Staff Reporter

The country is among India's top ten trading partners

—PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA



FOR A LEVEL FIELD: Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath (right) with Dutch Economic Affairs Minister M. J. A. van der Hoeven at a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday urged the European Union to ease phytosanitary regulations to help export of Indian floriculture and dairy products. It also objected to the false propaganda of some European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) regarding use of child labour and human rights violations in some industries.

Raising these issues in his meeting with Dutch Minister for Economic Affairs M. J. A. van der Hoeven, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath said floricultural consignments from India were subject to 50 per cent mandatory checks that were carried out randomly, while imports from countries in Africa were subject to only two per cent checks. Similarly, exports of dairy products from India into the European Union were permitted only from the approved list of plants.

“We would appreciate if the Dutch could assist in helping to create a level-playing field for our exporters on these issues at the EU level,” he said, adding that the Centre was pursuing with the EU the matter related to child labour as some EU-funded NGOs were trying to malign India’s image and hurt its exports.

“This also impacts the Government’s credibility. Our industries are subject to laws and

Indian labour laws are quite good,” he said.

On Tuesday also Mr. Kamal Nath had raised the same issue with visiting Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Paavo Vayrynen.

On boosting Indo-Dutch trade ties, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, agriculture and food processing, information technology and chemicals, Mr. Kamal Nath said the Netherlands was among India's top ten trading partners and, in terms of investments, the fourth largest foreign investor. Bilateral trade last fiscal stood at \$3,826 million. Imports from the Netherlands increased by 116 per cent last year, while exports have grown by about 88 per cent.

Referring to WTO trade talks, Mr. Kamal Nath said, “India looks forward to the conclusion of the world trade talks by the end of 2007 or at the latest by the early part of the next year. India has been engaging constructively and actively with other fellow member countries of the WTO towards this end. Such a conclusion can only be possible if we are faithful to the mandate and the outcome reflects a clear balance between market opening and the development needs of the majority of the membership. India will obviously show flexibility to achieve such an outcome but the onus for movement is clearly with the large developed countries.”

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