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GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Canadian groups urge U.S. to stop new GE alfalfa

Monsanto's new GE lines could contaminate Canadian crops if approved for commercialization in the U.S., say critics



PELLETIZED ALFALFA HAY: Canadian farmer and consumer groups say deregulating GE alfalfa in the United States could have an irreversible negative impact on the future of organic food and farming in Canada. MICHAEL SMITH/NEWSMAKERS

By JOAN DELANEY
Epoch Times Staff

Canadian farmers are worried that a ruling prohibiting the planting of genetically engineered alfalfa in the United States may soon be overturned.

Several farmer and consumer groups are urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) not to permit the introduction of GE alfalfa in the U.S., saying the move could have an irreversible negative impact on the future of organic food and farming in Canada.

The USDA is currently inviting comments on its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concerning the environmental and

socioeconomic impacts of allowing the deregulation of two lines of GE alfalfa produced by Monsanto Company and Forage Genetics International.

If the USDA decides in favour of the herbicide tolerant alfalfa, the current court injunction on plantings in the U.S. will be lifted. A hearing is scheduled for April 27.

In responding to the FDA, groups including the National Farmers Union, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, and Beyond Factory Farming argue that commercializing GE alfalfa in the U.S. would result in widespread contamination of Canadian alfalfa and loss of markets.

Arnold Taylor, national president of Canadian Organic Growers, says there are several ways in which GE alfalfa could make its way across the border, including being carried by honey bees.

"Bees don't recognize the border, they'll fly right across that border," he says, adding that since GE alfalfa is an "approved event" in Canada (though not for commercial use) there's nothing to stop people from importing alfalfa hay, seed, feed, or pellets into Canada from the U.S.

"The biggest threat is importation of seed as well as the fact that if they do deregulate in the U.S., Monsanto will most certainly try to introduce it in Canada. That's the biggest threat as far as I'm concerned."

An important rotational crop in organic and conventional agriculture, alfalfa's many attributes make it particularly vital in organic farming.

PLEASE SEE ALFALFA ON P3



LOOMING UNREST: A Thai security officer directs a pedestrian during a security check in front of the residence of Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva in Bangkok on March 10. Thailand's government agreed to impose a tough security law ahead of protests this weekend, vowing to use 'all means' to stop violence by backers of ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra. PORNCHAI KITTIWONGSAKUL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Storms of protest loom over Thailand

Anti-government 'red shirts' prepare for mass protests; PM cancels state visit to Australia

By CINDY DRUKIER
Epoch Times Staff

Political storm clouds are gathering in Thailand again, threatening more protests and unrest.

Supporters of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) or the "red shirts," have been preparing for a mass rally in Bangkok this weekend. They are demanding the dissolution of the government and new

parliamentary elections, and are hoping to draw hundreds of thousands or even as many as 1 million supporters.

Most of the protesters will be poor people from the countryside who have always been attracted by Thaksin's populist policies.

Up to 20,000 Buddhist monks are also expected to join the demonstrations, according to Arisman Pongruangrong, a prominent UDD member. He said the monks "will join this mass rally to give moral support to the red

shirts while reminding the government, police, and army officials who serve the elite bureaucrats not to harm the protesters," reported the Bangkok Post.

According to UDD organizers, the plan is for protesters to begin gathering in the provinces on March 12 and then converge on Sanam Luang, Bangkok's expansive royal grounds, on March 14.

Thaksin supporters are angry over Thailand's Supreme Court decision on Feb. 27 to seize \$1.4 billion of the former prime minister's assets—representing half of what was frozen when the military overthrew him in a coup in September 2006.

The court ruled that the mobile-phone-mogul-turned-prime-minister had abused his power to ensure satellite communications policies that benefitted his businesses. Also while in office, Thaksin divested shares in his company, Shin Corp., to family members—promptly selling them to a Singapore state-owned company for \$1.9 billion without paying capital gains tax.

The sale of Shin Corp is what triggered the 193-day long protest by the "yellow shirts" that eventually led to a bloodless coup while the prime minister was out of the country in September 2006.

PLEASE SEE PROTEST ON P4

U.S. States divided over soda tax

By GENEVIEVE LONG & NICHOLAS ZIFCAK
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—A national debate over an excise tax on sugary drinks is polarizing state-level politicians and advocacy organizations in the United States. Those in favour of the tax, which is determined state by state, say it will help curb obesity and generate badly needed revenue.

There are 33 states that have a

sales tax on soft drinks, but some say an excise tax is needed to discourage people from buying soda.

According to Gov. Christine Gregoire of Washington state, an excise tax of 5 cents per 12 ounces would raise US\$93.6 million for the state in the coming two years.

In a February 2010 letter to the Washington state legislature, Gregoire justified her position by citing risks to the public.

PLEASE SEE SODA ON P5



INDICTED: A court sketch made at Paris's central criminal court on Feb. 15 shows three alleged members of the Basque separatist group ETA during their trial. The three are being prosecuted for 'conspiracy with a view to terrorism.' BENOIT PEYRUCQ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Spanish judge accuses Venezuelan gov't of aiding terrorism

By CARLOS MORALES
Epoch Times Staff

CARACAS, Venezuela—A Spanish High Court judge has accused Hugo Chavez's Venezuelan government of aiding terrorist organizations. Judge Eloy Velasco concluded

that the government of Venezuela had helped facilitate collaborations between Basque separatist rebels ETA and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), both of which are considered terrorist organizations.

PLEASE SEE JUDGE ON P4

'Statements' shows that MPs can be civil

Remarks on police officer's death bring rare calls for silence

COMMENTARY

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Parliament Hill Reporter

OTTAWA—During question period, Parliament can look like a classroom without a teacher as the opposition parties fire tainted questions like spitballs that the government dodges with taunts and elusive answers.

But just before the chaos of question period (QP) is 15 minutes of democracy at its finest—if somewhat ineffectual. It is called "Statements by Members," and for this brief time any MP can rise and speak for up to a minute on anything they like.

Because it precedes QP,

Statements is one of the few times there are more than a handful of MPs in the house. Although the House may look full on TV, CPAC coverage of debates isn't allowed to show the field of green chairs in the chamber that are empty most of the time and photographers are told to fill their camera frame with the politician speaking if surrounding seats are empty.

While MPs stand to make their statements, others file in for QP and reporters sit ready to catch the muck that will start to fly shortly. Frivolous comments and congratulatory messages are prohibited during Statements, but still are often heard. While these remarks can make Parliament seem hokey, like when an MP congratulates a local high school for completing a history-minded field trip to Europe, they don't spoil the show.

PLEASE SEE MPS ON P3

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THE SHOW THAT'S LEAVING MILLIONS IN AWE.

SHEN YUN

神韻晚會

ALL-NEW 2010 PROGRAM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA

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QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

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Hotline: 1-800-683-0191
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