

SIA's cabin crew given training on sushi making

About 40 staff from Singapore Airlines' Cabin Crew Division were given a "hands-on" demonstration of making sushi (Japanese rolled rice cakes) recently, says a press release.

The session was held at a function room in SIA Training Centre.

The activity was organised by Cabin Crew's Gourmet Circle as part of its objective to upgrade crew knowledge and skills in preparing fine cuisine to satisfy the tastes of discerning passengers.

During the session, participants were introduced to the fascinating world of sushi by SATS Catering's Executive Chef Masayoshi Takahashi.

He started the session by defining the different types of sushi and the ingredients that go into making them. Takahashi also elaborated on the intricacies of sushi making.

India's cement industry may grow by 9 pc a yr

NEW DELHI, May 31: India's cement industry, the fourth largest in the world is expected to grow at between nine and 10 per cent annually between April 1997 and March 2002. Industry Minister Murasoli Maran said, reports Reuter.

"With GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth envisaged at seven per cent per annum, the cement industry should produce 113 million tonnes by 2002, in comparison to 76 million tonnes in 1996/97 (April March), Maran told a cement industry meeting.

He said demand for cement would be driven by an expected spurt in industrial growth and an increase in demand from the infrastructure roads and housing sectors.

Maran said he expected cement exports to grow to eight million tonnes by 2001/2 from 2.73 million tonnes in 1996/97, mainly to the key markets of South-East Asia and the Middle East.

Russia, France end decades of acrimony about gold, bonds

MOSCOW, May 31: Russia and France have dropped a series of mutual claims, ending decades of acrimony about gold and imperial bonds dating back to the Bolshevik Revolution.

A government order, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters on Friday, paves the way for Moscow to join the Paris Club of creditor nations and pursue claims for billions of dollars owed it by developing countries, and also issue new bonds in France.

The regulation signed by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on May 26 says neither Russia nor France will pursue claims on mutual debts accumulated before May 9, 1945.

There was no immediate confirmation from the French authorities.

Philip Poole, Director of research Eastern Europe and Russia at Ing-Bank, said the agreement would help Russia enter the Paris Club and seek repayment of about 37 billion dollars it is owed mainly by developing countries.

"These payments in relation to France are a stumbling block for allowing Russia into the club because as a club member you should be current on all your debts and you should have dealt with previous indebtedness problems," Poole told *Reuters*.

Moscow is to decide whether it wants to join the club, which France chairs, by next month's G-7 meeting in Denver.

France claimed repayment on bonds floated by the Tsarist government on international markets to finance various projects including the construction of the trans-Siberian railway.

As a debtor Russia signed a 40 billion dollars rescheduling agreement with the Paris Club for 25 years in 1995.

The new Soviet government repudiated its pre-First World War debt to France, leaving 400,000 French holding beautiful but worthless bits of paper.

Moscow has settled smaller debts to bondholders in Britain, the US and Switzerland.

But France, where most of the bondholders came from, says it is owed about 30 billion dollars, mainly in interest payments.

Under the new agreement Moscow has settled the claim by agreeing to pay France 400 million dollars within three years. It hopes that French investors will participate in buying Russia's next Eurobond due in June.

In turn Russia will drop claims for compensation from France for damage caused by the French 1918-22 intervention in the Russian civil war after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the document says.

Moscow will also not seek the return of gold transferred to Germany under the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Peace Accord, which pulled Russia out of the First World War. The gold was later transferred to France under the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty.

Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos get ASEAN membership in July

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) decided today to admit Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos in July, shrugging off Western pressure to keep out army-ruled Myanmar, respectively, says a press release.

The session was held at a function room in SIA Training Centre.

The activity was organised by Cabin Crew's Gourmet Circle as part of its objective to upgrade crew knowledge and skills in preparing fine cuisine to satisfy the tastes of discerning passengers.

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He started the session by defining the different types of sushi and the ingredients that go into making them. Takahashi also elaborated on the intricacies of sushi making.

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Malaysia is the current chairman of the grouping.

Badawi told reporters that the decision to admit the three countries in July, rather than December when ASEAN leaders told a summit, was unanimous, and denied that it was a signal to the West.

"ASEAN is not sending a signal to anybody. We are doing it in the interests of the region and in the interests of ASEAN," said Badawi, who chaired the meeting.

The special meeting was held amid pressure from the West and human rights organisations to put off the entry of army-ruled Myanmar because of a crackdown on pro-democ-

racy activists, and rising political temperatures in Cambodia.

Badawi said ASEAN members were all "very aware of the circumstances" but no one expressed any reservations.

He said "all factors have been taken into account" in deciding to expand the grouping in July and fulfil the vision of an "ASEAN 10" in the 30th year of its existence.

"We have expressed our concerns over what is happening in Myanmar, but we believe it is better if Myanmar is in ASEAN," Badawi said.

The Malaysian Foreign Minister said Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos will be given 10 years from January 1998 to comply with tariff cuts required under a

plan to create an ASEAN free Trade Area (AFTA), which will be in place by 2003.

"I think we have made a good decision," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, who had openly called Friday for an expanded ASEAN by July rather than December.

"By having all three enter we are now complete. We are in a better position as ASEAN to contribute to peace and stability in our own region and the larger East Asia," Alatas said.

He said Badawi would travel to the capitals of Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos to inform the would-be entrants of the "decision and the intent" ahead of their formal admission.

The ministerial meeting concerned is scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur July 24-25.

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