

Pak govt gives traders 3 months to clear smuggled goods

ISLAMABAD, Apr 30: Pakistan's government today gave traders of smuggled goods three months to clear their stocks...

lars) while big shopkeepers will be charged 60,000 rupees (1,200 dollars).

imports thereafter will be charged at full rates," it said.

goods. They also said the campaign to curb smuggling in Pakistan by tightening controls on the border and sea routes would continue.

UN oil-for-food system in Iraq may improve

AMMAN, Apr 30: The new coordinator of Iraq's UN oil-for-food programme said today he hoped to improve the system under which Iraq feeds its people with proceeds from crude oil sales, reports Reuters.

signed in protest over the impact of UN sanctions, imposed in August 1990 after Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Iraq's trade with Egypt to near \$400 million

BAGHDAD, Apr 30: Iraq's trade minister said today Baghdad would buy Egyptian products worth close to \$400 million under the current six-month phase of a UN oil-for-food programme, says Reuters.

Mohammed Mehdi Saleh said during the opening of an exhibition of Egyptian goods in Baghdad that contracts worth \$300 million had already been signed with Egyptian companies under the seventh phase of the programme which ends in June.

"We hope the deals will approach \$400 million for the whole seventh phase," he told reporters, adding that Egypt was currently the number one exporter to Iraq.

He said the deals concluded were mainly in construction products and he expected further deals to be concluded in talks this week with Egyptian Public Enterprise Minister Mokhtar Khattab, who is in Baghdad for the exhibition.

Around 100 Egyptian companies are taking part in the eight-day exhibition, offering food, medicine and agricultural products.

Egypt, which took part in the US-led force that evicted Iraqi troops from Kuwait in 1991, has led calls for Iraq to be reintegrated into the Arab world and international community.

It has said that UN sanctions have made the Iraqi people suffer for the policies of President Saddam Hussein.

Lankan tigers claw at budget with battle booty

COLOMBO, Apr 30: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels have often proved ferocious in the battle field, but their latest success in capturing a highly strategic base may be an even bigger blow to the national budget, says AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they captured a large haul of weapons and vehicles after seizing the Elephant Pass army garrison which had for decades guarded the gateway to the Jaffna peninsula.

"The capture of these weapons along with high-tech communication systems has replenished the armoury of the LTTE several fold and enhanced its fire power," the Tigers said in a statement.

This year's budget, presented on February 14, banked on the Oslo peace bid, but the plans are already in tatters. The dates for a peace meet have not been announced.

The allocation of 52.43 billion dollars (728 million dollars) for defence this year was comparable to the 53 billion rupees spent last year, but no new military initiatives were expected.

Treasury secretary P B Jayasundera has said defence spending would simply maintain the "military status quo."

"We are not planning to rebuild the military strength but keep the (military) presence to create pressure to take the peace process forward," Jayasundera said in February.

He said defence spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) has come down in the past two years but the country was still spending more in rupee terms.

"Within the defence budget there is an increased allocation for the police," he said, adding they expected a bigger role for the police with an eventual settlement of the conflict which has dragged on for over two decades.

But analysts say the deteriorating situation in the north has had an effect on investor confidence and the general business environment.

Foreigners are selling heavily at the tiny Colombo Stock Exchange, which has now slumped to below the key 500-point mark.

The all share price index has shed more than 11 per cent in the last three months.

An International Finance Corporation (IFC) official described the flight of foreign capital as a "crisis in confidence."

The World Bank affiliate IFC's new South Asia director, Bernard Pasquier, said here earlier this month that Sri Lanka's economic fundamentals appeared good despite the seemingly unending war.

However he warned that the country could not afford to relax as the region was set to grow at a much faster rate.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) raised the issue of Sri Lanka's economic prospects in its annual outlook report Wednesday.

It said the civil war and lackluster reforms were hampering economic development in Sri Lanka, where economic growth fell to 4.2 per cent last year, compared to 6.3 per cent in 1997 and 4.7 per cent in 1998.

To sustain higher economic growth, the government should continue structural reform efforts, including fiscal consolidation and reforms in public administration and the financial sector," the ADB said.

Central bank figures show that Sri Lanka's trade deficit had more than doubled to 301 million dollars in the first two months of this year compared to 138.5 million dollars in the corresponding period last year.

Sri Lanka's external reserves had dropped by about 11 per cent to 2,582 million dollars at the beginning of this year compared to the position a year earlier.



A Chinese tourist dressed in imperial costumes poses for a photo session at the Forbidden City in Beijing yesterday. Millions of Chinese will take advantage of May Day holiday in an ever growing package tourism market.

San Miguel gallops into Aussie beer stakes

SYDNEY, Apr 30: As the lightning quick colt Fairway sprinted away to take the Australian Derby at Royal Randwick last weekend, it wasn't just owners and backers of the speedy three-year-old who were smiling, says AFP.

San Miguel's Australian general manager, told AFP. The San Miguel brand has been available in Australia for the rest 20 years but was mainly aimed at niche markets such as the Filipino and Chinese communities.

That is all changing now as it moves into the mainstream to challenge the established giants such as Foster's and Lion Nathan, which previously sponsored the Randwick meeting.

"If we didn't want to be as big as VB (Victoria Bitter) then we would be wasting our time. That is our dream and there is no point us coming here if we do not pursue it," Miguel said.

His company's plans are certainly ambitious. Foster's, which owns VB, currently holds 56 per cent of the market.

For company chairman Edmundo Cojuangco, who entered 400 guests in a marquee, the link-up combined business with pleasure.

The whole weekend was a tremendous success, Saturday in particular," Carlos Miguel, San Miguel's Australian general manager, told AFP.

Emirates to buy 10 A3XX jumbo jets from Airbus

DUBAI, Apr 30: Emirates Airline said Sunday it was ordering 10 A3XX super jumbo jets from Airbus Industrie, becoming one of the first customers for the next-generation aircraft that is costing around \$12 billion to develop, says AP.

The Dubai-based airline said it was ordering five A3XX aircraft for delivery in 2006 and 2007, and retaining options for five additional airplanes, including two freighters.

"I have told the Chief Executive Officer of Airbus Industrie that Emirates should be considered a launch customer for the A3XX programme," Emirates chairman, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, told reporters.

Based on the financial and operational data supplied by Airbus Industrie, the results indicated that the A3XX would fit well into our development plans," Sheikh Ahmed said.

The 600-seat aircraft has been years in the making, and the European consortium that is building it had said it would not develop the plane without solid demand.

Emirates currently operates 32 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, and flies to 50 destinations from its hub in Dubai.



File photo dated January 21, 1997, shows a flight simulation of an Airbus A3XX. Emirates Airlines has ordered five Airbus A3XX becoming a launch customer for the giant plane being developed by the European consortium, the Dubai-owned carrier announced yesterday. The delivery of the five planes is scheduled in 2006 and 2007. Emirates will become the first company to acquire a future generation A3XX, which can seat between 480 and 650 passengers.

Idle assets make restructuring tough for Chinese leaders

Value seen equal to 6pc of GDP

BEIJING, Apr 30: In a startling admission of waste and ineptitude by state planners, a Chinese newspaper said today more than half a trillion yuan (\$60 billion) in equipment was sitting idle at government-owned enterprises, says Reuters.

The value of the cobwebbed equipment was equal to six per cent of China's Gross Domestic Product.

The huge waste indicates the difficult task leaders face in restructuring the economy and making efficient use of capital.

Officials have called the idle assets "a serious concern" and are scrambling to find remedies, from Internet auctions to tax reform, the China Daily Business Weekly said.

In Shanghai alone, a key commercial hub, idle equipment was valued at 20 billion yuan, the newspaper said.

The problem underlines a yawning disconnect between the quantity of raw capital Beijing is pouring into its economy and the quality of investments.

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ADB sees brighter Indian economy

NEW DELHI, Apr 30: India's economic growth is set to quicken but the government must widen the scope of reform to build on the recovery and tackle its troublesome fiscal deficit, the Asian Development Bank said today, reports Reuters.

The ADB, forecasting a rebound in industrial output and the service sector, put India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the fiscal year to March 2001 at 7.0 per cent, against 5.9 per cent the previous year.

In its annual report, the ADB also projected GDP growth of 7.0 per cent for 2001/02, and said the country needed to sustain this or a slightly higher rate of growth to make significant progress towards reducing poverty.

The ADB said last year's general election, which ended years of revolving-door politics and brought a coalition led by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee back to power, had renewed optimism in India's economic prospects.

"The new government has a significant majority and forceful leader with a clear vision to carry out new structural reforms," said the Manila-based bank.

"Simultaneously, a recovery is being sustained, aided by a favourable external environment. Meanwhile, a global technological revolution is helping India benefit from its own 'new economy' boom."

clearing skies, with public finance deficits "a serious cause for concern," the ADB said.

India is addressing the problem through tax reforms and expenditure cuts, it said, but still it saw the fiscal deficit falling only slightly to 5.0 per cent of GDP in 2000/01 and 4.0 per cent the following year from 5.5 per cent in 1999/2000.

The bank said there have been signs of reform fatigue, though India has maintained the broad direction of its nine-year-old economic liberalisation drive.

Exchange Rates

Table with columns: Currency, Selling TT & OD, Selling BC, Buying T T Clean, Buying OD Sight Export Bill, Buying OD Transfer. Includes rates for US Dollar, Pound Sdg, Deutsche Mark, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, etc.

Bill buying rates

Table with columns: TT Doc, 30 Days, 60 Days, 90 Days, 120 Days, 180 Days. Includes rates for 50.7112, 50.3866, 49.9632, 49.5398, 49.1163, 48.6925.

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

Table with columns: Buying (\$), Selling (\$), Currency, 1 Month, 3 Months, 6 Months, 9 Months, 12 Months. Includes rates for 50.5650, 51.2200, USD, 6.29125, 6.50250, 6.73125, 6.94750, 7.10125.

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars

Table with columns: Indian Rupee, Pak Rupee, Thai Baht, Malaysian Ringgit, Indonesian Rupiah, Korean Won. Includes rates for 43.60/43.70, 51.89/51.90, 38.06/38.11, 3.7998/3.8003, 7900/7950, 1109.5/1110.

Amex notes on Sunday's market. The USD/BDT market was relatively quiet due to weekend in the international market. USD/BDT rates mostly moved between 51.15 and 51.16. Call money market was steady with call rates moving between 5.90 and 6.25 per cent level today.

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong Port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 30.4.2000

Table with columns: Berth No, Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Local Call, Agent, Arrival, Departing. Lists various vessels like Alpine, AA Venture, New Success, etc.

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Date of Arrival, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Cargo, Loading, Port. Lists vessels like Xpress Resolver, Dea Conqueror, Sheng Yang, etc.

Tanker due

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists Ocean Dolphin, Ocean Moray, etc.

Vessels at Kutubdia

Table with columns: Energy Explorer-IV, Ismaya, MFB Dev Matha, MFB Sona, MFB Lakshmi, Barge CSK-6, Tog Magarta, Tog Dharmasakti-108, Dia Champlon, Seabulk Command, etc.

Vessels at outer anchorage

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists Nové Voyage, Chavchavazde, etc.

Vessels not ready

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists Altair, Axton Andrians, Amer Energy, Arkaam, Halia, Llyok Sin, Jon Jiny, Handy Humanity, Mergul, etc.

Vessels awaiting instruction

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists Xing Ye, Banglar Gourab, Banglar Jyoti, Banglar Urmi, etc.

Vessels not entering

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists Accord, Sonali, Leopard-1, Gannet, Sun Bright, Revenge, Karya Sentosa, etc.

The above are shipping position and performance of vessels of Chittagong port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group, Dhaka.

Dwindling Asian demand Japanese auto output, export fall in '99

TOKYO, Apr 30: Japan's production of cars, trucks and buses fell 0.4 per cent to 9.97 million in fiscal 1999, falling below 10 million for the second year in a row, an industry association said Wednesday, reports AP.

The Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association said the nation's auto output for fiscal 1999 that ended March 31 fell to 9.93 million units from 9.97 million a year earlier.

The figure fell below the 10 million mark in fiscal 1998 for the first time in 21 years, said association spokeswoman Emiko Shoji.

Shoji said the 1999 decline mainly resulted from dwindling demands in Asia, Middle East and South America.

Exports to Asia have increased in recent months, but the figures were much smaller than those before the 1997 financial crisis, Shoji said.

Japan's auto exports for fiscal 1999 slipped 3.9 per cent to 4.34 million for the second straight year.

In March, the output rose 0.5 per cent from a year earlier to 1.02 million units, thanks to recovering domestic demand, Shoji said. It was the second straight month of gains.

Passenger vehicle output for March rose 20.9 per cent to 845,903, while truck production fell 10.3 per cent to 168,186, the association said.