

# Pak traders extend strike against wider taxes by two days

KARACHI, June 2: Pakistani retailers said yesterday they would extend their four-day-old strike for two days to try to force the military-led government to back down from plans to widen the tax net, says Reuters.

But the protest showed some signs of weakening. The leader of the powerful All Pakistan Organisation of Small Traders and Cottage Industry, Umar Saliya, said police had detained him at his home in Karachi, but added that the strike would continue on Friday and Saturday.

Saliya's statement, distributed to news organisations, said he was detained by police as he was about to leave for Islamabad, the capital, and was confined at his home. No police comment was immediately available.

About 80 per cent of the shops were closed in the port city of Karachi, but in Islamabad, where tyres were burned in protests on Wednesday, most of the shops were open despite a strike call by business groups.

Military ruler General Pervez Musharraf has repeatedly told business leaders he will not back down from plans to reform the tax system to bring a huge underground economy into the tax net.

The underground economy is estimated at \$60 billion, the same size as the official one.

Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz told brokers during a visit to the Karachi Stock Exchange on Thursday that the tax survey was not aimed at any one group, as the small shop owners have said. "The tax

survey is not against a particular sector, the tax and the survey will be conducted at all levels," he said.

Aziz defended the plan to widen the tax net, saying this would allow some tax rates to be cut. "Broadening of the tax base would allow us to lower the tax rate," he said.

Business leaders said they would meet later on Thursday to decide their next move. The nationwide retailers' strike is the most organised challenge yet to the eight-month-old government of Musharraf, who seized power in October.

Saliya has also called for protest demonstrations after Friday prayers in Karachi and other cities.

"Traders should gather in large numbers outside the country's mosques soon after

Friday prayers to protest against the general sales tax and the tax survey which is being delivered at gun point," said Saliya, whose group is behind the shop closures.

The government has been sending tax teams guarded by soldiers to deliver tax surveys to shops and property owners.

Most of the country's shops have been closed since Saturday in protest against the survey, designed to register them for collection of a general sales tax, in line with the demands of international aid donors.

On Wednesday, about 200 traders in Islamabad blocked traffic by burning tyres after police arrested about eight merchants for allegedly forcing other shopkeepers to close their businesses.

# US Justice Deptt wins delay in Microsoft ruling

WASHINGTON, June 2: Unwavering in its insistence that Microsoft Corp. be split in two, the Justice Department won a surprise delay in its antitrust case against the software company while lawyers explore possible agreements on secondary issues, reports AP.

A schedule approved Thursday by US District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson requires the government to file legal papers Monday specifying areas of agreement. Microsoft has until Wednesday.

The moves provided a temporary breather just as tension mounted with a ruling appearing imminent. By Wednesday, the case once again could reach the stage where Jackson is ready to administer punishment for the anticompetitive practices he found in April.

Lead Justice Department attorney David Boies sought the delay in a conference call that

included the judge and attorneys for the Redmond, Washington-based software giant.

Explaining why the government sought another chance to brief the judge, Justice Department spokeswoman Gina Talamona said, "We believed it was appropriate to request a short opportunity to comment on Microsoft's specific suggested changes — both to determine whether there may be a few things we can accept without undermining our proposed remedy and also to offer our reasons for urging rejection of the others."

Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said the additional time was sought to address questions such as how to deal with foreign governments and how tax issues should be handled in any breakup. Microsoft already has said it will appeal the entire case.

In a transcript of the confer-

ence call, Boies said, "And from a quick review, some number of those (issues raised by Microsoft) seem to make some sense to us, and we would like the opportunity to go through those in detail and to give the court our view on that."

Boies said he would "try to advise the court of our agreement and why we agree to them, and with respect to the points that we disagree with, try very briefly just to indicate the reasons we disagree."

Microsoft lead attorney John Warden raised no objections to the additional filings.

Microsoft filed a legal brief Thursday that attacked the proposal of the Justice Department and 17 of the 19 states in the case to split Microsoft into two companies. There was no indication the government would compromise on the basic proposal.

# Indonesian trade minister favours limited capital controls

JAKARTA, June 2: Indonesia's Trade and Industry Minister Luthut Panjaitan appeared Friday to back calls for limited currency controls as a way of bolstering the sagging rupiah, says AP.

Luthut, an army general who served as ambassador to Singapore prior to being named minister in April, said the issue was still being discussed by the Cabinet's economic team.

He said some capital controls would not be a huge risk for Indonesia.

"I see only a little risk from capital controls as a move to stabilize the rupiah," Luthut told reporters. "I'm not overly worried if they are implemented."

At a regular meeting Monday with economic advisers, President Abdurrahman Wahid asked Finance Minister Bambang Sudibyo and other officials to explore the possibility of some form of capital controls to shore up the rupiah, according to people who attended the meeting.

Wahid's first proposal suggested somehow prohibiting overseas trading of the currency. The second proposal centers on making exporters park their foreign exchange at the central bank, rather than keeping it outside the country, as many Indonesian companies do.

Government officials — including central bank Governor Sjahril Sabirin — have downplayed the chances of Indonesia actually slapping controls on rupiah movements.

"The matter is being discussed," by the economic team, Luthut said. "If we want to be honest, our capital regime is too liberal so it needs adjustment here and there."

Wahid's instructions are being interpreted by the president's economic advisers, Luthut said. "The objective is to prevent the rupiah from speculation," he added.

# PMTC awarded ISO 9001 accreditation

Project Management Training Consultants (PMTC) has recently been awarded ISO 9001 accreditation for its world class services in the field of training and education support services and management consultancy, says a press release.

PMTC (Bangladesh) Limited, a leading project management and training consultancy company, is a leader in human resource development and believes in progress through people.

# India needs 8pc growth

NEW DELHI, June 2: Indian Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha yesterday said the country's economic growth must be eight per cent and above to solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, healthcare and education, says Reuters.

"I am convinced that an eight per cent-plus growth in GDP (gross domestic product) is not only desirable but imperative," a government statement quoted Sinha as saying. It said he was speaking at a conference on the Indian economy at Stanford University in California.

The central Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has estimated that the GDP will grow by 6.5-7.0 per cent in 2000/01 (April-March).

Sinha said achieving the higher growth rate would not be easy, but his government was confident of attaining it.

"It would be presumptuous on my part to say that we have done everything," Sinha said. "Nevertheless, we are confident that we will be able to tackle such difficult areas with our determination."

He said the success of India's economic reforms hinged on fiscal discipline, good governance, intra-government reforms, and disinvestment of state-run firms.

Meanwhile, an AP reports from Singapore says: Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said Friday he strongly favours the ideas of an Asian monetary fund, a concept floated by Japan during the recent economic crisis in the region, reports AP.

"We must look at it much more closely," Singh said. He was taking questions after giving a lecture in Singapore on security cooperation between India and the 10 countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Japan's proposal for an Asian fund followed the regional crisis of 1997.

While the Southeast Asian countries favoured the idea, the United States said it might undermine the financial discipline imposed by the International Monetary Fund as a condition to lending.

On Thursday, the IMF's new Managing Director Horst Koehler said he was open to the idea of an Asian fund, but said such a body would need to complement, and not compete, with IMF operations.

The idea of an Asian fund, in any case, "cannot be rushed," Singh said. The minister is on a three-day official visit to Singapore.

Separately, Singh said it was inevitable that Asian economies would move closer together, although he stopped short of predicting regional integration similar to that of the European Union.

# Technology holds out future for Women in Muslim world

## Seclusion seen as a major concern

NEW YORK, June 2: The key to a better life for millions of women in the Muslim world struggling against poverty, lack of education and isolation may be in one letter: "E," says AP.

"E-inclusion, E-consultation, E-campaign," listed Noeleen Heyzer, director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) at a conference on technology and

women in Muslim societies held at New York University on Thursday.

Although bringing 'E-access' to most women in the Muslim world remains a faraway goal, only four per cent of Internet users in the Arab world are women — the arrival of e-mail has already made women activists more effective.

In Muslim societies, the whole process of seclusion is a major concern, so (with technology), even from the household the women can have access to information," said Heyzer.

"Many women in the Muslim world are not heard, not consulted," she added.

Less and less though, said Janice Brodman, who works on an e-mail network, Global Knowledge for Development.

Now there's a television in Nigeria, that drives from village to village giving women access to the Internet," she said.

Getting women around the world — not just in Muslim countries — to use the Internet and other high-tech communications will be a major theme at a UN conference starting Monday to assess progress on women's equality since the 1995 international women's conference in Beijing.

Charlotte Bunch, director of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey and an expert on women's rights, said the Internet is also connecting women's groups.

"Women's organisations are able to exchange strategies and

solidarity, to use the net to mobilize support for a cause," she said.

In one example, UNIFEM sponsored a "virtual working group" where participants communicated through e-mail, on ending violence against women. It brought grass roots groups and activists across the world to share information on campaigning and legislation.

Even simple access to video technology has led to regional cooperation among voluntary associations.

The Arab Women, Speak Out, which set up a documentary and training program in the Arab world, has reached 20,000 women across the Muslim world with films about women from low or middle-income backgrounds who have made significant achievements in different spheres of society.

The Internet will also help women who live in isolated areas make money as it has for a group of village women who have a site advertising their hand-woven Moroccan carpets.

But the net too will have to change, said some Muslim women's.

The Women's Learning Partnership, a US-based voluntary group which jointly sponsored the conference with the Kevorkian Centre for Near Eastern Studies at New York University, is launching three pilot programmes to promote the use of modern technologies by women in Nigeria, the Palestinian territories and Morocco.



A trainee receives his certificate from A Z M Shamsul Alam, Chairman of Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd, at the concluding session of General Banking Training Course at the bank's training institute on Wednesday. Mohammed Hossain, Managing Director, Motinuddin Ahmed, EVP, M A Matin, VP and Course Director were also present on the occasion.

— Al Arafah Bank photo

# Ban on soft wool renders 20,000 jobless in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, June 2: A court order banning the manufacture of a soft wool derived from the endangered Tibetan antelope has left nearly 20,000 workers jobless in troubled Kashmir, a newspaper report said Wednesday, reports AP.

Federal Textile Minister Kashi Ram Rana told representatives of artisans, weavers and the chamber of commerce and industry in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, on Tuesday that the government would revive handicraft, handloom and silk industries in troubled Kashmir to rehabilitate these jobless workers, the Statesman reported.

An insurgency war by Islamic militants since 1989 has badly hit people of Kashmir

# Al-Arafah Bank training course concludes

A comprehensive training course titled "General Banking for 15 officers of Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited (AIBL) was concluded at the Training Institute of the bank on Wednesday, says a press release.

A Z M Shamsul Alam, Chairman of the Board of Directors, was present as chief guest at the closing session of the training course which was presided over by Mohammed Hossain of Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd.

Matinuddin Ahmed, Executive Vice President, M A Matin, Vice President and Course Director, and Course Coordinator, also spoke on the occasion.

# US gasoline prices likely to hit record high

## Hurricane season may take huge tolls on energy sector

NEW YORK, June 2: Record US gasoline prices may be swept even higher as an expected busy Atlantic hurricane season this year threatens the oil and gas sector heavily clustered in the Gulf of Mexico, analysts said yesterday, reports Reuters.

"Hurricanes would just be another of a long list of troubles in the energy industry this year," said Aaron Brady, analysts for Energy Security Ana-

lysts Inc. in Boston.

While the annual hurricane season which kicks off June 1 and lasts until November 30, always makes the energy industry nervous, the 2000 season is expected to be "above average."

Packing at least 11 tropical storms and three or more major hurricanes, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The threat of such storms is often greatest in the hurricane-vulnerable Gulf of Mexico where the closure of a major refinery has been known to raise gasoline futures prices.

Gulf Coast refineries, which spread from Corpus Christi, Texas to Pascagoula, Mississippi, consume around 7.5 million barrels-per-day (bpd) of crude oil and account for nearly half of the nation's refined oil production.

# Officials seek to boost WTO image APEC holds talks on promoting free trade

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Brunei, June 2: Senior officials from the Asia-Pacific region on Friday began two days of talks in Brunei aimed at promoting free trade, boosting the beleaguered World Trade Organisation and dealing with electronic commerce, says AP.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) representative were set to discuss a Japanese plan for "confidence building measures" to improve the WTO's image, according to a draft agenda for the talks.

WTO talks on worldwide free trade were bogged down by violent anti-globalisation protests during the organisation's Seattle meeting in November.

Critics argue that global free trade puts the interests of multinational corporations above ordinary workers and the environment, and lets rich nations dominate poorer ones.

Delegates "are discussing how APEC can play a constructive role in getting the WTO agenda moving again," US deputy assistant trade representative for APEC, Joseph Diamond, told the Associated Press at the Brunei meeting.

Delegates said APEC, which has 21 member economies, hopes to lend its weight to pushing for another attempt at a new round of multilateral trade talks at the WTO.

The role of e-commerce in international trade was also on

the discussion agenda at the Brunei meeting APEC representatives said. APEC members would discuss how even the weaker economies could benefit from the new Internet explosion, a Western delegate said, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the AP.

APEC's aims to achieve free trade and investment among its member economies by 2020.

During the Brunei meeting Friday and Saturday, Australia was slated to report on a proposal to improve APEC's Internet services for businesses, the draft agenda said.

Australia and Thailand were also scheduled to give presentations on the progress of social safety nets in the wake of Asia's brutal economic crisis of 1997 and 1998.

China's imminent entry into the WTO was likely to be another major topic at the Brunei talks, delegates said. In addition, the officials were preparing the ground for an APEC trade ministers' meeting in Darwin, Australia next week.

APEC includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

## Government of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Faridpur PWD Division

Memo No 922

Dated: 23-5-2000/9-2-1407 Bang

## Notice Inviting Tenders

No 129 of 1999-2000

Sealed tenders are hereby invited in Bangladesh Form No 2911 from the approved special class-I/combined class-II contractors of PWD for "construction of 5-Medical College — one at Faridpur, (SH: Constr of Ladies Hostel including sanitary and water supply arrangement, approach road and compound wall at the premises of 250-bedded Faridpur Medical College Hospital) and will be received by the undersigned as well as by the Divisional Commissioner's Office, Dhaka and Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Magura, Jhenidah, Jessore, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Maherpur, Narail and Rajbari in their respective offices up to 12:00 Noon of 14-6-2000. The estimated cost of the work is Taka 1,89,30,902/00 only and the earnest money is Taka 3,78,619/00 in TC/PO/BD from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh or Pratiksha Sanchaya Patra, Bonus Sanchaya Patra, 5 Yrs BD Sanchaya Patra must accompany each tender duly endorsed to the Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Faridpur. Otherwise his/her tender shall be declared informal. No tender form, schedule of items, additional terms and conditions etc will be sold after 13-6-2000. The tender paper, schedule of items, additional terms and conditions etc may be obtained from the office of the undersigned as well as by the Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka Office and all the Executive Engineers, under PWD Zone, Khulna and Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Dhaka Zone, Chittagong Zone, Rajshahi Zone on all working days during office hours on payment of usual charges of Tk 750/00 (seven hundred fifty) per set of the tender schedule and a sum of Tk 25/00 (twenty-five) only per copy of Tender Form No 2911 (both non-refundable).

Details may be seen from the office of the undersigned during office hour.

**Md Syedur Rahman**

Executive Engineer  
Faridpur PWD Division  
Phone No 3257.

DFP-13543-30/5  
G-1060

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Public Works E/M Division-8, Mirpur, Dhaka

## Tender Invitation Notice

No-1 Pra 76/99-2000

- 1) Tenders in Bangladesh Form No-2911 on item rate basis in addressed sealed envelopes from special class-I/combined class-II E/M/class-II E/M contractorship establishments enlisted with Public Works Department which have valid ABC/BC supervisory and contractorship licence issued by Electrical Licensing Board and registration of Value Added Tax Department/TIN certificate for the undermentioned work. Tenders will be received in the tender box kept at the office of this Division, Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M-1/2/3/4/5/6/7/Timber Workshop Division, Workshop Division, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka till 12:00 Noon on 12-6-2000 and will be opened on the same day at 12:30 PM in presence of tenderers (if anyone remains present).
- 2) Tender form, schedule of items and rules and regulations etc can be purchased and seen from this Division, Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7, Timber Workshop Division, Workshop Division, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka during office hours on payment of Taka 425/- in cash (non-refundable) by producing all necessary papers including registration book by the contractorship establishments or their nominated representatives latest by 21-6-2000.
- 3) The original money receipt for purchasing tender must be enclosed with tender at the time of submitting tender.
- 4) Security money at the rate of 2% of the estimated cost in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/CD from any scheduled bank in favour of the "Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-8, Mirpur" will have to be deposited with each tender. Otherwise tenders will be treated as outright rejected.
- 5) Mentionable that the quantity of item/specification/rate etc. will be refixed on the basis of necessary amendments of technical approved estimate.
- 6) The authority is not obliged to accept the rate of the lowest tenderer and reserves/maintains the power to reject any tender or all tenders without assigning any reason.

Sl No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time allowed
1	Work of repairing of existing electrical installations change of compound light, and renewal at the residential building of physicians and officials in the residential area of National Cancer Research Institute and Hospital at Mohakhali in Dhaka.	At the quoted rate.	At the rate of 2% (two) per cent of the quoted cost.	30 (thirty) days.

**Executive Engineer**  
Public Works E/M Division-8  
Mirpur, Dhaka.

DFP-13338-29/5  
G-1059

## Government of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
PWD Division, Kushtia

## Tender Notice

1. Tender Notice : 96/99-2000.
2. Name of work : Providing & installation of 100 KVA Transformer L. T. Switch Gear, PFI Plant for the Technical Training Centre at Kushtia.
3. Estimated cost : Tk. 7,97,059/00.
4. Earnest money : Tk. 15,942/00.
5. Place of sell : Office of all the Executive Engineers of PWD Division under PWD Circle, Jessore.
6. Place of received : Office of all the Executive Engineers of PWD Division under PWD Circle, Jessore.
7. Last date of selling tender : 14.06.2000 during the office hours.
8. Date of receiving and opening of the tender : Up to 12.00 Noon of 15.6.2000 & will be opened on the same day at 12.15 PM.
9. Eligibility of contractor/firm : Enlisted & valid E/M contractor/firm of PWD according to their financial capacity.

DFP-13568-30/5  
G-1063

**Executive Engineer**  
PWD Division, Kushtia.