

Travel warnings hit India's struggling tourism industry

AFP, New Delhi

India's tourism industry has been hit hard by international warnings against travel to Pakistan and India, with around 30 per cent of hotel bookings in India's main cities being cancelled in the past few days, industry officials said Sunday.

The cancellations followed immediately travel warnings issued Friday by the United States, Britain, Australia, Germany and Japan, one official said. "Leisure traffic has been affected not so much by the India-Pakistan tension, but by the travel advisories which have created panic," said Subhash Goyal, president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry's tourism and travel committee.

He said the full impact of the advisories would be felt later as most foreign tourists plan their travel in advance. India's travel industry had already been affected by recent sectarian riots in the western state of Gujarat, as well

as by fears of a conflict with Pakistan following an Islamic militant attack on India's parliament in December.

India blamed two Pakistan-based militant groups for carrying out the attack and moved tens of thousands of its troops to the border with Pakistan, triggering international fears of a war between the two nuclear-armed rivals.

The latest fears of a war between the South Asian neighbours were set off by an attack by Muslim militants on a civilian bus and an Indian army camp in Kashmir on May 14.

Both sides have also been exchanging artillery and mortar fire along their borders in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Last week, the US government advised tourists to defer their travel plans and Americans already in India and Pakistan to consider leaving.

Travel agents in New Delhi reported that Americans and Europeans have been flocking to airports in a bid to get

back home.

However, many families had planned to travel this weekend in any case as international schools in the Indian capital closed for the summer holidays on Friday.

The United Nations said on Saturday the families of UN staff in Pakistan and India were to be sent back to their home countries due to fears of a conflict between the two neighbours.

The cancellation of travel plans are expected to affect trade and industry in India generally, while war fears are likely to deter investors, economists said.

Travel consultant Rabintra Seth said the latest disruptions in the tourism sector had come at a time just when the industry was expecting a turnaround after three years of stagnation.

"The Indian government and tourism industry should do everything to persuade the tourists to come and then pray that all these war tensions disappear before the peak tourist season

(from September to December)," Seth said.

India had recently hosted the Pacific Asia Tourism Association's annual conference in New Delhi and was hoping the attention would generate more interest in travel to the subcontinent.

Local tourism industry officials said while the chance of a war were remote, their trade could fall victim to war-mongering and rumours.

"If the current situation continues for some more time, it will deal a death blow to the industry," Arjun Sharma, a leading travel industry official, was quoted in the Hindustan Times, as saying.

Tourism industry's Goyal appealed "to all the governments to withdraw their advisories because this fear of war has been going on for years".

"Nobody is stupid enough to start a nuclear war," he said.



PHOTO: AIPE

Representatives of Nestle Bangladesh Ltd, Partex Group, British American Tobacco Bangladesh, Singer Bangladesh Ltd, Energypac Engineering Ltd, Rahimafrooz Batteries Ltd and Holcim Bangladesh Ltd participated in the manufacturing session on the closing day of a three-day IPE Day '02, organised by Association of Industrial & Production Engineers (AIPE), at BUET.

No need to increase crude output: Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

The current state of the world's oil market does not necessitate an increase in crude output, Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Rashid said Sunday.

"In our minds, the market does not currently need an increase" in oil production, Rashid told journalists after a ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the nationalisation of Iraq's oil sector.

Rashid added that OPEC will decide at its June 26 meeting in Vienna to maintain production at current levels.

OPEC slashed production by 1.5

million barrels per day (bpd) from January for a period of six months, under an agreement with leading non-OPEC oil exporters to haul prices out of a steep post-September 11 slump.

But the 11-member cartel is under pressure from consumer countries to increase output amid concern that high oil prices could hinder the recovery of the global economy.

Iraq, under a crippling UN sanctions regime since invading Kuwait in 1990, is not included in OPEC's quota system.

Weekly Currency Roundup

Asian units gain on worsening tensions in South Asia

AFP, Hong Kong

Most regional currencies made limited gains against the greenback due to the worsening tensions in South Asia and worries over the US economy.

JAPANESE YEN: The yen rose against the dollar during the week on worries over the US economy, but its gains were constrained as the Bank of Japan intervened to halt a rise in the Japanese unit.

The yen stood at 123.95-97 to the dollar late Friday, up from 125.02-05 a week ago.

The US currency faced selling pressure due to "fears over tensions in Pakistan and India as well as worries over the US economy not growing as quickly as previously expected," said a dealer at Barclays Capital.

As Tokyo conducted yen-selling intervention twice last week to curb a rise in the yen, investors were cautious in buying the Japanese unit.

On Friday, Moody's Investors Service cut Japan's sovereign debt rating by two notches to single-A status on concerns about mounting government debt and a lack of tough economic policies.

Hours after Moody's downgrade, the Japanese central bank, under instructions of the ministry of finance, sold the yen in their third intervention in the past two weeks.

"The yen was pressured against the dollar following the intervention, but the impact was moderate as investors expected the BoJ to intervene," said Hideyuki Tsukamoto, dealer at Mizuho Bank.

"While the yen touched the 124 level, it quickly recovered to the 123 level," Tsukamoto said.

AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR: After a week in which it reached new 16-month highs, the Australian dollar was tipped to continue its strong performance, refuelled by an expected early hike in interest rates, analysts said Friday.

By week's end, the "Aussie" had

risen to 56.82 US cents, almost a cent and a half above last week's 55.46 US, underpinned by a weakening US dollar and an interest rate differential in Australia's favour.

However, central bank chief Ian Macfarlane told a parliamentary economics committee on Friday that interest rates will have to rise by up to two per centage points from the present level of 4.5 per cent to prevent an overheating of Australia's world-beating economy.

Another rise, probably of 0.25 per centage point, is expected as early as next week when the Reserve Bank of Australia holds its monthly meeting to discuss monetary policy.

Another rise in interest rates would increase the rate differential between Australian and US rates, which could only further strengthen an already popular currency.

NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR: New Zealand's dollar closed Friday worth 48.06 US cents, continuing its recent climb which last week saw it

close at 47.20 cents.

Deutsche Bank currency dealer Tim Robinson said the kiwi was buoyed by bullish comments from Australia's Reserve Bank governor Ian Macfarlane.

HONG KONG DOLLAR: The Hong Kong unit ended the week at 7.7997-7.8000 to the US dollar from 7.7996-7.7999 a week earlier.

SINGAPORE DOLLAR: In late Singapore trade Friday, the US dollar was at 1.7852 Singapore dollars, down from 1.7989 the previous week.

PHILIPPINE PESO: The peso strengthened to close at 50.25 to the dollar on Friday compared to 50.35 to the dollar on May 24.

INDONESIAN RUPIAH: The rupiah closed the week stronger at 8,665-8,685 to the dollar compared with the previous Friday's close of 8,945-8,955.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank.

Selling	Currency		Buying		
	BC		TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
58.5500	58.5800	USD	57.4000	57.2314	57.1629
55.4533	55.5402	EUR	52.8592	52.8758	52.5992
86.1646	86.2066	GBP	82.9278	82.8613	82.6067
34.0761	34.1007	AUD	31.8794	31.7889	31.7068
0.4740	0.4741	JPY	0.4580	0.4578	0.4568
37.5640	37.5885	CHF	36.2853	36.1907	36.1662
6.9546	6.9598	SEK	5.8367	5.8131	5.7974
38.5178	38.5424	CAD	37.3417	37.2481	37.1649
7.5142	7.5155	HKD	7.3544	7.3367	7.3193
32.864	32.8850	SGD	31.9365	31.8957	31.7811
16.0710	16.0886	AED	15.4925	15.4706	15.4521
15.7373	15.7557	SAR	15.1905	15.1538	15.1356

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar.

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Lankan Rupee	Thai Baht	Nor Kroner	NZ Dollar
49.01	60.075	86.15	42.34	8.0044	0.48066

The local interbank foreign exchange market was subdued on Sunday. Demand for dollar was steady. Demand for BDT for overnight borrowing at call was steady and the call rate ranged between 15.50 and 16.00 per cent for the day.

SHIPPING

Chittagong port

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 2.6.2002.

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L Port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving	Imprt disc
J1/J1	Ocean Pride	GI(Log)	Yang	PSAL	31/5	7/6	422
J2	Shun Winner	C Clink	Bela	Unique	20/5	9/6	1080
J4	Shun An	GI	Sing	RML	22/5	3/6	1562
J5	Amalfi	C Clink	Pada	KSL	14/5	2/6	850
J6	Jin Cheng	GI	S Hai	BDShip	20/5	3/6	1354
J9	Banglar Maya	GI (S Ash)	P Band	BSC	24/5	7/6	1310
J10	Jaami	Cont	Col	Everbest	26/5	3/6	-
J11	QC Lark	Cont	P Kel	QCSSL	30/5	5/6	160/58
J12	Kuo Hsiung	Cont	P Kel	QCSSL	27/5	4/6	414/13
J13	Banga Biraj	Cont	P Kel	BDShip	30/5	5/6	125/45
CCT/1	QC Teal	Cont	P Kel	QCSSL	26/5	2/6	-
CCT/2	Xpress Manaslu	Cont	P Kel	RSL	29/5	3/6	120/X
CCT/3	Kola Cahaya	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	26/5	2/6	-
RM/15	Banglar Robi	Idle	Sing	BSC	18/5	6/6	-
CCJ	Mikado	C Clink	Krabi	BSL	21/5	2/6	-
GSJ	Argentina	C Clink	Kant	Uniship	8/5	5/6	-
TSP	Palachara Naree	Phos	Aqaba	Litmond	14/5	4/6	-
RM/4	Freja Scandic	CPO	Bela	USL	1/6	3/6	-
RM/5	World Sea	SKO/JP-1	Sing	MSTPL	30/5	2/6	-
DDJ/2	Banglar Jyoti	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	-	-
RM/9	Banglar Mamata	-	-	BSC	R/A	-	-
RM/10	Banglar Shourabh	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	6/6	-
K(U)	Rak Won	Urea	Sing	MBL	19/5	2/6	-

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L Port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Rainbow Spring	2/6	Yang	CCNL	GI(LOG)	-
Alkimos	2/6	Aust	CCNL	GTSP	-
Banga Lanka (Cont) 20/5	2/6	-	Bandihi	Cont	Col
Orient Patriot (Cont) 22/5	2/6	-	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Win Song	2/6	B Abb	R Kship	Bitumeen	-
QC Honour (Cont) 23/5	6/6	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Jaya Mars (Cont) 28/5	6/6	CBO	Everbest	Cont	Col
Baltic Leader (Roto/24/27/5	3/6	P Kel	JF	Vethi	-
Banglar Shikha (Cont) 27/5	4/6	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing
Kola Naga (Cont) 27/5	4/6	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
Ava	4/6	Yang	Bnship	GI (Y Ma/Rice)	-
Sagang (48/1/6	5/6	Yang	Everett	GI (SI C)	-
Banga Barta (Cont) 16/5	5/6	Sing	BDShip	Cont	CBO
Xpress Resolve (Cont) 22/5	5/6	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Jurong Bauhinia (Cont) 30/5	5/6	Sing	NOL	Cont	Sing
Hermes (Liner) 30/5	6/6	Yang	H&SL	GI (HR, Coil)	-
Asian Wind (liner)	6/6	Yang	H&SL	GI (St Prop)	-
Banga Birol (Cont) 27/5	6/6	-	BDShip	Cont	Sing
Kola Singa (Cont) 23/5	7/6	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
Oreint Freedom (Cont) 28/5	7/6	-	PSSL	Cont	Sing
Banga Bijoy (Cont) 30/5	8/6	-	Bandihi	Cont	Col
Banga Bonik (Cont) 30/5	8/6	-	BDShip	Cont	Sing
QC Dignity (Cont) 30/5	9/6	P Kel	QCSSL	Cont	Sing
Feng Kang Shan (Liner)	12/6	-	BDShip	GI	-
Paragon Pescadores (liner)	16/6	-	Everett	GI (SI C)	-

Tanker due

Danat Qatar	6/6	Rast	USS	C Oil	-
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Vessels at Kutubdia

Dea Captain	-	-	Arafeen	R/A(28/1)	-
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Vessels at outer anchorage

Ready on

Consistence (Cont)	Cont	Vish	PSSL	31/5
Mardios (Cont)	Cont	P Kel	RSL	31/5
Maritime Pease	C Clink	Tarj	BSL	28/5
Kota Berjaya (Cont)	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD)	1/6
Asimont (Cont)	Cont	P Kel	Seaborne	2/6

Vessels not ready

Foruna Australia	GI (D.Peas)	Sing	Litmond	26/5
New Auspicious	WT/DP/RS	Sing	Litmond	28/5

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

STOCK