

Global airline industry leaders meet today

Focus on efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions

AFP, New York

The world's airline industry opens its annual meeting in the Canadian city of Vancouver Sunday with the link between increased air traffic and global warming front and center on its radar screen.

"This year, one of the top issues is going to be the environment," said Anthony Concil, spokesman for the International Air Transport Association.

IATA represents some 250 airlines, or 94 percent of scheduled international air traffic.

"It's at the top of several policymakers' agendas -- the United Nations is going to discuss it in September within their civil aviation organization ICAO," said Concil, adding that airlines have made some progress in efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

More than 150 airline chief

executives as well as top management from airports, civil aviation authorities, manufacturers and non-governmental organizations are expected to attend the three-day event in Vancouver, the Geneva-based organization said.

On Monday IATA plans to unveil its latest financial forecasts for the sector, which are expected to confirm a healthy recovery from the nosedive that followed the September 2001 terror attacks in the United States and soaring fuel prices.

IATA already had sharply revised upward its 2007 estimate in April, as a relatively robust global economy spurred tourism and airline transport.

After more than 40 billion dollars in losses in the past six years, the global airline industry will generate 3.8 billion dollars in profit this year, up from a previous estimate of 2.5 billion, IATA predicted in April.

"We've made some progress but we're still in the single-digit billion profits and we should reach the double-digit," Concil said.

The latest figures reported by IATA back the current firmness of the market: during the first four months of this year, air passenger traffic increased by 6.7 percent from the same period a year ago, dwarfing a 2.6 percent rise recorded in cargo traffic.

"Demand is better than expected," said IATA, led by the hot markets of the Middle East, up 17.6 percent, and Africa (10.1 percent).

Industry leaders are also expected to focus on security issues and how to harmonize national security standards.

"We've had a good start with the liquids and gels control procedure, but the overall procedures are not harmonized enough," Concil said.

Liberalization of the aviation sector also was on the agenda, in

the context of the upcoming first phase of an open-skies agreement between the United States and the European Union that begins in October.

In addition, China and the United States recently pledged to develop air traffic between the two heavy-weight powers.

Two other subjects were also expected to fuel debate: the undertaking by 95 percent of the member airlines of a safety audit certified by IATA and dubbed IOSA, and a December 31 deadline for all member airlines to use only electronic ticketing.

By the end of this year, paper tickets are supposed to have vanished, replaced by e-tickets. As part of the switchover, 70 percent of airports should be outfitted with multi-carrier electronic kiosks and 80 percent of airlines should have adopted a standard bar code.

\$620m ADB loans for India

AFP, Manila

India is to get two Asian Development Bank loans totalling 620 million dollars to improve rural roads and basic urban services in two states, the Philippines-based lender said Friday.

The first loan, for 320 million dollars, will help rebuild 1,800 kilometers (1,120 miles) of road in Madhya Pradesh, one of India's poorest regions, an ADB statementsaid.

The bank also approved up to four loans totalling 300 million dollars, to be disbursed over the next eight years, to improve basic urban services in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The program will expand water supply, sanitation, waste management, urban transport and other municipal functions in Jammu, Srinagar and other vital towns and commercial centers of the state of Jammu and Kashmir," said ADB specialist Alex Jorgensen.

The number of individual loans from this facility could rise to five or six, "depending on the speed of reforms and the capacity of the state to implement the works," the statement said.

Both the Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir loans carry market rates, with the former payable over 25 years including a five-year grace period. The latter facility's payment terms were not made public.



PHOTO: NCC BANK

Md Nurul Amin, managing director of National Credit and Commerce (NCC) Bank Ltd, and Mustafizur Rahman, managing director of International Leasing and Financial Services Ltd, exchange documents after signing a term loan agreement recently. Senior officials from both the sides are also seen.



CARE Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO), and Square Consumer Products Ltd signed an agreement recently to create sustainable business opportunities for rural poor women. Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of the company, and Hasan M Mazumdar, deputy country director of the NGO, signed the deal.

Indian exports may get a breather from govt

ANN/ THE STATESMAN

Indian government on Friday said it would formulate a package to soften the impact of rising rupee on exports from employment-intensive sectors which do not rely on imports in a big way.

Employment intensive industries, where dependence on imported inputs was less, need to be supported as the rupee has risen around 12 per cent, commerce and industry minister, Kamal Nath, said.

"Industry should give specific ideas on which the government can work so that a package can be formulated for them," he said at the Engineering Export Promotion Council's awards function.

He said in industries which rely on imports, margins have been neutralised by the impact of rising rupee.

The minister said the proposed package could be in the form of a scheme to refund local taxes that exporters have to pay. Nath said while RBI has taken steps to manage the impact of growth, government does not artificially calibrate the rupee.

He asked the exporters to deal with rising rupee and high costs of inputs by becoming more efficient as it would also help them in facing existing and emerging competition.



PHOTO: BANGLALINK

Mobile phone operator Banglalink opened a 'Banglalink Point' on Station Road in Sirajganj recently. Members of the regional management team of the operator, among others, were present at the inauguration.



PHOTO: THE CITY BANK

Managing Director of The City Bank Ltd Dilwar H Choudhury inaugurates a relocated branch of the bank at Sherpur in Bogra on Wednesday.

Kuwait Airways cuts losses in 2006-07

XINHUA, Kuwait City

The Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) said Friday its losses in the past fiscal year ending on March 31 were estimated to reach 9.2 million Kuwaiti dinars, or about 31.3 million US dollars, local KUNA news agency reported.

Suffering as high as 23.8 million dinar losses in the previous fiscal year, the national carrier has minimised its losses to 61 percent in the 2006-2007, KAC Chairman and Managing Director Sheikh Talal Mubarak Abdullah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was quoted as saying.

According to the official, KAC's revenues reached 265 million Kuwaiti dinars, or about 901 US dollars, in 2006-2007, an increase of 5.2 million dinars from that of the previous year.

Talking about KAC's current difficulties and obstacles, Sheikh Talal attributed them to the continuous competitions from other companies and a delayed implementation of the company's improvement plan.

In February, KAC announced its plan to upgrade the fleet by purchasing 30 to 34 new aircrafts from Boeing and Airbus manufacturers.

"KAC will continue to lower operation expenses ... going back to policies that will achieve more income in the current fiscal year," he vowed. (1 Kuwaiti dinars = 3.4 US dollars).

Pakistan economy posts 7pc growth

APP, Islamabad

Pakistan economy has shown a robust growth as the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has registered an average growth rate of 7 percent for the fourth consecutive year.

Official sources highlighting the performance of economy during 2006-07 said that the per capita income in the year increased to US\$ 926 or Rs 56,121.

They attributed the excellent performance of the economy in all the sectors to prudent economic policies initiated by the government and consistency and continuity in the policies.

They said that during the year the services sector grew by 8 percent, industry 6.8 percent and Agriculture sector by 5 percent.

The investment grew by 21.4 percent or 23 percent of the GDP and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) posted a growth of 71 percent from US\$ 3.5 billion to US\$ 6.0 billion in 2006-07.

The sources added that Tax collection increased by 18 percent during July-April 2007 and exports increased by 18.3 percent and imports up by 8.9 percent.

"Worker remittances increased by 22 percent," they remarked.

They said that pro-poor expenditure is up by 6 percent of the GDP and unemployment reduced to 6.2 percent.

They said that GDP in the financial year 2005-06 grew by 6.6 percent while it registered an estimated growth of 7.02 percent in 2006-07 and keeping in the view of the growth in the economy a GDP target of 7.2 percent has been fixed for the year 2007-08.

Similarly the agriculture grew by 1.6 percent during the year 2005-06 while it grew by 5.0 percent in the current financial year 2006-07 and growth target of 4.8 percent has been fixed for the year 2007-08.

The sources added that industry has shown a growth of 5 percent in the year 2005-06 and an estimated growth of 6.8 is expected during the current financial year 2006-07 while a growth target of 9.4 has been fixed for the financial year 2007-08.

They added that large scale Manufacturing (LSM) posted a growth of 10.7 percent and an estimated growth of 8.8 percent is expected in the year 2006-07.