

Protests in Lanka over trade pact with India

AFP, Colombo

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in the capital Colombo Tuesday demanding Sri Lanka's government abandon a proposed trade pact with neighbouring India.

President Mahinda Rajapakse met the demonstrators at his tightly-guarded Temple Trees residence in Colombo and vowed he would not enter any pact that was harmful to the island's economic interests.

"Professionals, including doctors and engineers, came to the streets and protested against the CEPA with India," the president's office said, referring to the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

It said the president, who is also the finance minister, assured them that he would not go ahead with "any pact or agreement" that was not in the best interest of the island.

"The government will not enter into any pact or agreement that is inimical to its people and economic interests," the statement said. The protests came two weeks ahead of a proposed visit by Rajapakse to India.

The CEPA had been proposed almost two years ago but had been held up due to opposition from Sri Lankan business leaders who fear that the island could be swamped by cheaper Indian services.

The two South Asian neighbours entered a free trade deal in 1998 limiting tariff concessions to goods, but the CEPA covers services such as banking and allows greater cooperation between customs administrations.

The bilateral trade balance is heavily in favour of India. Sri Lankan exports to India amounted to 418.3 million dollars compared to imports of 3,443 million dollars from India in 2008, according to the latest trade figures.



In this handout picture released by The Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB) yesterday, Indian President Pratibha Patil (2L) receives a floral bouquet from a Chinese student on her arrival at Beijing International Airport in Beijing yesterday. Patil is on a state visit to China from May 26-31.

Indian govt slams Air India strikers

AFP, New Delhi

India's aviation minister yesterday condemned as "irresponsible" striking Air India staff, whose walk-out led to flight cancellations and travel disruption just days after a fatal crash.

Praful Patel said the 15,000 striking staff must stand behind the ailing airline, which faced an uncertain future even before a plane from its low-cost subsidiary crashed on Saturday near the city of Mangalore killing 158 people.

"The entire Air India family should have been one in solidarity and tried its best, not only to help the families of the victims but also to have resurrected the brand of Air India and tried its best to redeem the damage to the airline," Patel said in a statement.

"Irresponsible sections of the employees have resorted to such illegal action without any notice," he said.

Air India said 76 flights, including 14 on international routes, were cancelled on Wednesday because of the strike, which was prompted by an alleged management "gag" on staff talking to the media after the crash.

Nearly 50 flights were cancelled on Tuesday -- the first day of the strike -- with services to and from Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Kolkata the worst affected.

Talks between union representatives of the striking ground crew and engineers with Air India management to end the stand-off were due to take place in New Delhi on Wednesday.

"The strike continues. It's definitely across the country. We are not going to buckle under pressure," Vivek Rao, from the Air Corporation Employees Union, told AFP before Patel spoke. "We are asking for the gag order to be removed."

Air India issued a statement denying the "gag", saying the media had misinterpreted their demand that staff not speak to the press about the crash for the sake of the company's "image and revenues".

The flag carrier is trying to recover heavy losses and improve its market share of the domestic aviation sector, which has been eroded by the growth in private airlines in recent years.

Chinese PM to meet with Myanmar junta leaders

AFP, Beijing/Madrid

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao will meet with leaders of Myanmar's junta to discuss energy cooperation and aid to the southeast Asian nation during a visit next week, a top diplomat said yesterday.

During the June 2-3 visit, Wen will hold talks with reclusive junta chief General Than Shwe, Prime Minister Thein Sein and other top officials, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun told reporters.

"The two countries will sign a number of cooperation documents covering economy, trade, finance, energy, science and technology," Zhang said, without offering specifics.

Last year, bilateral trade between the neighbours reached 2.91 billion dollars, up 10.7 percent year-on-year, as progress was made in joint projects involving energy, transportation and power supply, Zhang said.

'Stalin blocked attempts to kill Hitler'

REUTERS, Moscow

Soviet dictator Josef Stalin blocked two attempts to kill Adolf Hitler during World War Two, fearing that his replacement as Nazi leader would make peace with the Western Allies, a top Russian general said Tuesday.

A plan to attack Hitler's bunker in 1943 and a 1944 plot involving an assassin who had gained the trust of the Nazi leadership were both canceled on Stalin's orders, General Anatoly Kulikov told a historical conference in Moscow.

"A plan to assassinate Hitler in his bunker was developed, but Stalin suddenly cancelled it in 1943 over fears that after Hitler's death his associates would conclude a separate peace treaty with Britain and the United States," Russia's RIA news agency quoted Kulikov as saying.

In 1944 the Soviets again plotted to kill Hitler after a potential assassin managed to gain the trust of the Nazi leadership. "A detailed assassination plan was prepared, but Stalin cancelled it again," Kulikov was quoted as saying.

Hitler killed himself on April 30, 1945, as Soviet forces closed on Berlin, effectively ending the war in Europe and setting the stage for the Cold War stand-off between Russia and the West.

An estimated 27 million Soviet citizens died in the 1941-1945 war with Nazi Germany.



Hitler

Stalin

Car bomb hits outside Nato base

AP, Kandahar

A car bomb exploded yesterday outside a small Nato military base in southern Afghanistan's largest city, wounding two Afghans and destroying several cars, police said.

It was the latest in a string of bold attacks on high-profile Nato targets in the past two weeks, following a Taliban announcement of a spring offensive against alliance and Afghan forces their response to the Obama administration's vow to squeeze the militants out of Kandahar province strongholds.

The blast occurred around 11:30 a.m. in a parking lot used by Afghans visiting Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar city, said Gen Shafiq Fazli, the police commander for southern Afghanistan. The base houses a few hundred Canadian soldiers, along with American military police and US and Canadian government employees working on development projects.

Buddha Purnima

FROM PAGE 16

celebrated in all monasteries and by different Buddhist organisations through elaborate programmes. The day's programmes will start with hoisting of the national and religious flags atop all monasteries at dawn and chanting of sacred verses from the Tripitaka.

The Buddhist devotees will also offer fruits, flowers and candles to statues of Lord Buddha throughout the day. Other programmes include prayer meets, sermons on the life of Gautam Buddha, religious discourse, continuous recitation from the Buddhist scriptures, group meditation, processions and worship of the statue of Buddha.

In Chittagong city, the main religious congregations will be held at Nandankanan Buddhist temple, Katalganj Nabapandit Vihar, Purnachar International Buddhist Monasteries at Devpahar, Sarbajanin Bouddha Vihar at Momin road and Bishwamoitry Bouddha Vihar at Agrabad.

To mark the day, the dailies will bring out special articles

while Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television will air special programmes highlighting the importance of the festival.

A good number of periodicals of the community like Amitabh, Sombodhi, Krishi and Arya will bring out special supplements on the occasion.

Besides, special prayers seeking continued peace and progress of the country and world will also be offered in all monasteries.

The Buddha Purnima will also be celebrated in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar in a befitting manner.

Bouddha Bihar sources said the day's programme will begin with lighting of lamp in the morning. Later prayers and other rituals will take place.

Bangladesh Bouddha Sangskritik Kendra will bring out a procession at 8:00am from Shahbagh to National Press Club in the city.

State Minister for Religious Affairs M Shajahan Miah will inaugurate the procession.

In separate a message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

have greeted the countrymen, including members of the Buddhist community on the eve of the day.

In his message, the President said Gautam Buddha, the proponent of Buddhism, was the symbol of peace and humanity. His efforts for creation of friendship among the people and love for creatures inspire all in building a happy and peaceful world.

In her message the premier said Gautam Buddha used to foster equality, friendship, sacrifice, mercy and non-violence throughout his life. He preached the message of peace.

Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has also greeted the Buddhist community in a message on the occasion of the Buddha Purnima.

As per the belief of the Buddhists, the emergence of great Gautam Buddha took place on this day before 2,553 years. Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad has greeted the countrymen on the occasion of the Buddha Purnima.

DIFFERENT BITES

Vienna best city to live, Baghdad worst

AFP, Vienna

Vienna is the best city in the world to live while war-torn Baghdad is the worst, a survey said yesterday, putting Europe at the top of the rankings with Asia and Africa trailing.

The Austrian capital "retains the top spot as the city with the world's best quality of living," British consultancy firm Mercer said in its 2010 Quality of Living Survey.

Swiss cities Zurich and Geneva followed in second and third places respectively, while Vancouver in Canada and Auckland in New Zealand were joint fourth.

Traunt Russian MPs exposed in video scandal

AFP, Moscow

Russia's oft-ridiculed parliament was hit by a new scandal yesterday after deputies were caught on video running from seat to seat pressing voting buttons for fellow MPs who did not bother to turn up.

The episode is the latest embarrassment for the Russian lower house of parliament, the State Duma, which often just performs the role of a rubber-stamp and rarely blocks initiatives from the Kremlin.

Baby alive after train hits stroller

AP, Melbourne

A 15-month-old boy escaped with just a few cuts and bruises yesterday after a train struck his stroller, which rolled onto the tracks when his grandmother looked away for just a moment.

The dramatic escape came just seven months after another baby in the southern city of Melbourne survived a train striking his stroller, which also had rolled onto the tracks.

Indian army foils Kashmir infiltration bid

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops yesterday killed two suspected militants who tried to enter Indian Kashmir from the Pakistani side of the disputed region, the military said in a statement.

The fresh fighting came three days after a Pakistani soldier was killed, allegedly by Indian troops, along the Line of Control -- the demarcation that splits Kashmir between the South Asian rivals.

Security officials have warned of a possible escalation in violence after the Indian military said last month 400 militants were poised to cross into Indian Kashmir from the Pakistani zone of the disputed Himalayan region.

PM for raising

FROM PAGE 1

agriculture, which is necessary to eradicate hunger. "We have the potential. What we need is our resolve to overcome the impediments that stand in the way of achieving this goal," Hasina said.

She mentioned that poverty is a social curse and around 60 million people of the country are poor. The government is committed to freeing the country of this curse.

"The government therefore has intensified efforts to expand various safety net programmes for the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable people. But this is not a sustainable way to reduce poverty," she added.

The growth in agriculture could reduce poverty most effectively. Her government has therefore taken various farmer-friendly measures, including increasing subsidies and making agri-inputs like seed, fertiliser and fuel available, for boosting agricultural production.

Bangladesh is already a major victim of climate change though its contribution to it is insignificant. "We have approved 134 Climate Change Action Plans. To meet the costs, we have established a \$100 million Climate Change Fund; and also a Multi-Donor Trust Fund worth \$150 million from friends," Hasina mentioned.

She said Bangladesh has also endorsed the Copenhagen Accord and appealed to the world community to create and meaningfully utilise a "Multi Donor Trust Fund" to address climate change impacts for the most affected developing countries, including Bangladesh. "Now it is the duty of the developed countries to transfer resources and technology to the LDCs."

Bangladesh is fully aware that increasing production and adapting agriculture to climate change for future production are indispensable. "A comprehensive approach is necessary. This also means that various sectors have to work together. Only this will ensure that all our people have access at all times to the safe and nutritious foods necessary to lead a healthy and active life. This vision is embedded in our National Food Policy," the premier said.

She mentioned the Food Policy prepared in 2000 provides for strategic guidance to address the key challenges in achieving food security in all its dimensions, including availability, access and utilisation/offset.

She said that implementation of the Food Policy will

require concerted efforts on many fronts. "Some are expected to come from the private sector. But there are areas where we need to work together with development partners."

She requested the USAID, EU and other development partners, who are already helping in the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Food Policy that was launched a year back, to coordinate their own actions well, in time and with a logical sequence.

Hasina said detailed investment programmes have to be worked out based on the outcome of this Forum, and interventions will certainly be needed in certain areas.

These include technology generation and dissemination; improving water resource management; development of input supply, marketing and infrastructure development; promotion of fisheries and livestock; strengthening public food management, social safety nets and capacity to cope with the impact of disasters; promotion of dietary varieties and community based nutrition, health, sanitation and food safety.

She said due attention must be given to improve governance, women's participation and adaptation to climate change.

The premier said the food crisis of 2007-2008 has compelled the entire world to attach higher priority to food security. In Bangladesh, the crisis has signalled a policy shift from self-reliance to self-sufficiency.

"During our previous tenure in government in 1996-2001, Bangladesh achieved self-sufficiency in rice production for the first time, which helped us win the prestigious Ceres Award from FAO. Assuming office for the second time in 2009, we took pragmatic measures for boosting domestic agricultural production."

The country's population is increasing by nearly 2 million a year. On the contrary, arable land is decreasing by 1 percent per year. Feeding these extra mouths is a formidable job, but not impossible, she observed.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzak chaired the meeting while Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury; USAID Administrator Dr Rajiv Shah; FAO Assistant Director General; UN Special Representative for food security and nutrition Dr David Nabarro and IFPRI DG Dr Shenggen Fan, among others, spoke at the ceremony.



RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited

RAK Tower (7th, 8th & 9th Floor), Plot No. 1/A, Jasimuddin Avenue, Sector 3, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka 1230, Bangladesh
Telephone: +88(02)8917393, +88(02)8912303, Fax: +88(02)8917096, Website: www.rakcerambd.com

DISTRIBUTION OF REFUND WARRANTS & ALLOTMENT LETTERS

DISTRIBUTION TIME 9.00 A.M TO 4.00 P.M.

This is to inform that Allotment Letters/Refund Warrants of valued IPO Applicants of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited are ready for distribution. The valued Investors may collect the same by submitting original Company/Bank acknowledgement slip from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. as per following schedule:-

Date	Dhaka Zila Krira Sangstha Jheelpar, Motijheel, Dhaka	AGB Colony Community Centre, Dhaka (Opposite Motijheel Ideal School)	White House Hotel 155, Shantinagar Dhaka-1217.
29.05.10 Saturday	Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) (All nominated branches) Dhaka Bank Limited (Local Office)	Uttara Bank Limited (All nominated branches)	—
30.05.10 Sunday	Dhaka Bank Limited Uttara Br, Bangshal Br, Imamgonj Br, Islampur Br. F. Ex. Br, Dhanmondi Br, Kawran Bazar Br, Amin Bazar Br, Islami Banking Br. & nominated branches outside Dhaka.	Standard Chartered Bank (All nominated branches) HSBC Bank (Motijheel Br.) Trust Bank Limited Principal Br. & Dhanmondi Br.	—
31.05.10 Monday	Trust Bank Limited SKB Br, Gulshan Br, Dilkusha Br, Mirpur Br, Uttara Br, Millenium Corp Br, Kawran Bazar Br. & Kafur Br.	Trust Bank Limited nominated branches outside Dhaka. Citibank N.A. (All nominated branches)	—
01.06.10 Tuesday	National Bank Limited Dilkusha Br, Bangshal Br, Babubazar Br, Elephant Rd Br, F. Ex. Br, Gulshan Br, Imamgonj Br. & Dhanmondi Br.	National Bank Limited Kawran Bazar Br, Motijheel Br, Banani Br, New Eskaton Br, Mohakhali Br, Malibagh Br, Mirpur Br, Z.H. Sikder MC Br. & Islampur Br.	National Bank Limited Uttara Br, North Brook Hall Br, Jatrabari Br, Lake Circus Br, Mohammadpur Br, Pragati Sarani Br. & Savar Bazar Br.
02.06.10 Wednesday	Southeast Bank Limited Principal Br, Corporate Br, Dhanmondi Br, Uttara Br, Motijheel Br, Gulshan Br. & Bangshal Br.	Southeast Bank Limited & nominated branches outside Dhaka. Bank Asia Limited Principal Br, MCB Dilkusha Br. & Corporate Br.	National Bank Limited nominated branches outside Dhaka.
03.06.10 Thursday	Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited Local Office, Motijheel F. Ex. Br. Nababpur Br, Banani Br, Kawran Bazar Br. & Shantinagar Br.	Bank Asia Limited Scotia Br, Gulshan Br, MCB Banani Br, Uttara Br, Mirpur Br, North South Rd Br, Dhanmondi Br, Bashundhara Br, Mohakhali Br. & Mirpur Br.	Bank Asia Limited Shantinagar Br. & nominated branches outside Dhaka.
04.06.10 Friday	Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited Mirpur Circle-10 Br. & nominated branches outside Dhaka.	Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited Dhanmondi Br, Mohakhali Br, Gulshan Br, Mirpur Br, Uttara Br, Islampur Br, Dania Br. & Dhaka EPZ Br.	Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited Elephant Road Br, Naya Bazar Br, Joypara Br, Imamgonj Br, Savar Bazar Br, Bashundhara Br, Satmosjid Road Br, Ring Road Br. & Bandura Br.
05.06.10 Saturday	Non Resident Bangladeshi (NRB) & All Mutual Fund & Portfolio A/C	—	—

N.B. No Refund warrants will be issued in favour of the applicants (except NRB) maintaining account with Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd., Bank Al-Falah Ltd., Bank Asia Ltd., BRAC Bank Ltd., Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, Dhaka Bank Ltd., Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd., Eastern Bank Ltd., Exim Bank Ltd., First Security Islami Bank Ltd., Habib Bank Ltd., HSBC Bank, ICB Islamic Bank Ltd., Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd., IFIC Bank Ltd., Jamuna Bank Ltd., Mercantile Bank Ltd., Mutual Trust Bank Ltd., National Bank of Pakistan, One Bank Ltd., Premier Bank Ltd., Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd., Social Islami Bank Ltd., State Bank of India, Standard Chartered Bank, The City Bank Ltd., Trust Bank Ltd. and Woori Bank. The refund money shall be credited to the applicant's account by their respective bank.

If the Allotment Letters/Refund Warrants are not collected by hand from the distribution centre within scheduled time, the Allotment Letters/Refund Warrants will be sent by courier services at the respective mailing addresses at applicant's own risk and responsibility.