

# Gilani urges new era in trade with India

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan yesterday called for a "new era" in economic collaboration with arch-rival India, as business leaders from the two countries met for a trade conference.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said the population of Pakistan's giant neighbour offered his country's exporters a "billion-plus market", adding normal trade relations were vital to Pakistan achieving its economic potential.

Relations between the countries have been fraught since independence in 1947 and trade has been hampered by restrictions and tariffs -- even now, direct cross-border traffic accounts for less than one percent of their global commerce.

The nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars and both spend heavily on their military while millions of their people languish in poverty.

But Gilani said: "We want to start a new era of economic collaboration with India... so that we leave behind a legacy of peace and prosperity for our future generations."

He told delegates there were many areas and sectors with huge trade potential, from information technology to engineering, education and health.



"Our textiles, I am told, have a huge market across the border," he said, adding that India could find a market in Pakistan for goods including chemicals, pharmaceuticals and engineering products.

Pakistan has decided to grant India "most favoured nation" trading status by the end of the year, ending strict curbs on what New Delhi can export across their border.

At present, Pakistan maintains a list of 1,945 items allowed to run from India to Pakistan -- but only 108 can be transported directly by road through the Wagah crossing in Punjab.

India now also says it is ready to end a ban on investment from Pakistan and the countries are planning to allow multiple-entry business visas to spur exchanges -- a key demand by company executives.

Last year India exported goods worth \$2.33 billion to Pakistan, while its imports from its neighbour were worth \$330 million.

But Adi Godrej, the Confederation of Indian Industry president who is leading the Indian delegation, said: "By 2015, we should be able to achieve the target of \$10 billion mutual trade between India and Pakistan."

# Afghan govt slams Taliban offensive

AP, Kabul

The Afghan government yesterday condemned the recent Taliban announcement of the start of their annual "spring offensive," calling it cowardly and un-Islamic and saying the country's forces would thwart any attacks.

The Taliban's offensive begins every year as snows melt and the weather warms across Afghanistan, making both travel and fighting easier. It normally leads to a surge of militant attacks throughout the country as the Taliban attempt to retake lost territory and intimidate the government.

Meanwhile, the US Embassy in Kabul acknowledged a two-year, rarely used program to release detainees from a military prison run by the American military near the capital, saying it meant to bolster reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

But the Taliban announcement last week was another sign of the difficulty of reconciling with a group that has been fighting the US-led coalition and Afghan forces for more than a decade. The Taliban said they would

target anyone - from government workers to tribal leaders - who works against them and helps foreigners in their "occupation" of Afghanistan.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Interior said that "while again declaring war against the Afghan people, their government and constitution, the Taliban insurgents also abuse their religious values in the name of a cause opposed to the basic Islamic principles of peace, education and kindness."

It said the Taliban use propaganda and "twist holy religious values to justify their criminal activities," which have killed thousands of innocent people.

Last year was the deadliest on record for civilians in the Afghan war, with 3,021 killed, according to the United Nations. Taliban-affiliated militants were responsible for more than three-quarters of those deaths.

The Taliban have launched several large-scale attacks in recent weeks, including coordinated attacks on Kabul and three other cities that left 11 people and 36 insurgents dead, and a strike on a compound used by foreigners in the Afghan capital that killed seven.

## Magnetic bacteria may build bio-PCs

BBC ONLINE

Magnet-making bacteria may be building biological computers of the future, researchers have said.

A team from the UK's University of Leeds and Japan's Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology have used microbes that eat iron.

As they ingest the iron, the microbes create tiny magnets inside themselves, similar to those in PC hard drives.

The research may lead to the creation of much faster hard drives, the team of scientists say.

As technology progresses and computer components get smaller and smaller, it becomes harder to produce electronics on a nano-scale.

So researchers are now turning to nature - and get microbes involved.

Magnetic bacteria  
In the current study, the scientists used the bacterium *Magnetospirillum magnetotacticum*.

These naturally magnetic microorganisms usually live in aquatic environments such as ponds and lakes, below the surface where oxygen is scarce.

They swim only up and down following the Earth's magnetic field lines, aligning in the magnetic field like compass needles, in search of preferred oxygen concentrations.

When the bacteria ingest iron, proteins inside their bodies interact with it to produce tiny crystals of the mineral magnetite, the most magnetic mineral on Earth.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian protesters hold portraits of jailed relatives in Gaza City during a demonstration in support of more than a thousand prisoners who are on an open-ended hunger strike in Israeli jails yesterday.

## Israel court rejects hunger strikers' appeal

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's Supreme Court yesterday rejected an appeal by two Palestinian prisoners who have been on hunger strike for 69 days in protest at being held without charge, their lawyer told AFP.

"The Supreme Court refused both appeals," Jamil Khatib said of the move by Bilal Diab, 27, and Thae Halahla, 34, who had appealed to Israel's highest court on Thursday to end the administrative detention orders under which they are being held.

The Israeli courts administration confirmed their appeal had been rejected.

"They will continue their strike till the end," Khatib said.

"Israeli courts do not handle administrative detention in a positive way. It shows that the intelligence services have the final word."

## Number higher

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The pass percentage of female students was 80.76 in 2011, 77.95 in 2010, 68.41 in 2009, 70.45 in 2008, and 55.47 in 2007.

The male students also dominated in securing the highest grades (GPA-5) under all education boards. A total of 48,915 boys achieved the top grade against 33,297 girls.

The girls in science group, however, are a bit ahead of the boys with an average 95.80 percent pass rate in eight general education boards as a fewer number of females took the exams in this group. The pass rate for the boys is 94.27 percent.

The highest 96.47 percent pass rate for the girls in science group is in Sylhet board while the lowest 85.69 in Chittagong board.

REASONS BEHIND SUCCESS

Board chairmen, teachers and students attributed the success of this year's record-breaking SSC results to the joint efforts of students and teachers and the care of guardians.

The pass rate of 86.37 percent is the highest in the country's history so far.

Strict monitoring by the education officials ensuring regular classroom activities, special care in English and mathematics, giving equal emphasis on each subject, examinations free from unfair means and students' competitive attitude played vital role for the success.

Besides, the examiners are also evaluating the answer scripts more liberally now.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dhaka education board Chairman Prof Fahima Khatun said it is needless to say that English and mathematics are the decisive factors in achieving good results, as most of the students are scared of these subjects. This year the students did well in these subjects, she added.

The average pass rate in English this year under Dhaka board is 93.01 percent while it was below 85 percent last year. Besides, the pass rate in mathematics is 92.75 percent which was below 90 percent, she mentioned.

"It is the creative method that played a key role behind such a good result," Prof

Tofazzal Hossain, chairman of Sylhet education board, told this newspaper.

The students earlier used to memorise some common questions, but now they need to have a good idea about the textbook to answer a question, he added.

Chairman of Barisal education board Prof Dr Bimal Krishna Mazumder expressed a similar view saying that the teachers now emphasise the importance of reading the textbooks thoroughly as the exam questions are unseen.

According to the creative method introduced in 2010, each question in the narrative section of a subject has four segments. Only the students who have studied the textbooks thoroughly can answer those questions.

The big success in the SSC exams, however, causes a concern for a large number of successful students as they fear facing a hard contest to enrol in reputed colleges.

But there will be no seat crisis in the colleges across the country, said education ministry officials.

## Govt may go for rice export

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"We see a bumper paddy production this year. The price of rice is falling at an alarming rate... I am very worried. We may go to export rice as we do not have adequate warehouses to procure more rice," he told an inaugural session of a two-day workshop at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the city.

The minister said the farmers were deprived of getting fair price of rice "as the government does not procure rice from them directly and the middlemen are getting the benefit".

He said the government considers agriculture, food security and nutrition as the major priority areas. "Although we have made

impressive achievement in food grain production since independence, we are still facing considerable challenges in the areas of population growth, climate change and persistence of large scale poverty and malnutrition."

The National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) of Fao organised the workshop on food and nutrition security policies with supports from the USAID and the EU.

Chaired by Food Division Secretary Barun Dev Mitra, the inaugural session of the workshop was also addressed by US Ambassador in Dhaka Dan W Mozena, Fao representative in Dhaka Dominique

Burgeon, Charge d' Affaires and Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh, Milko van Gool, NFPCSP Chief Technical Adviser Ciro Fiorillo and Director General of Food Planning and Monitoring Unit Naser Farid.

Speaking as the chief guest, the minister said he was very much hopeful that Bangladesh would achieve surplus in food production this year.

"We are very good in rice production... we are happy to see the country as sufficient in food or surplus in food," he said.

Razzaque said achieving food and nutritional security is considered by the government as a prime develop-

ment agenda to make the country a middle income one as envisaged in the Vision-2021.

About the government initiatives in achieving food security, the minister said, "Bangladesh has successfully prepared the Country Investment Plan (CIP) to implement the food security programmes."

He said the CIP aims at securing funds from multi-lateral and bilateral partners and Bangladesh is the first recipient of a grand of \$52 million in Asia from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programmes.

Commitment for \$325 million was also received from the USAID while \$52.70 million from the Danida, the minister added.

## Militants behead 2 Pak soldiers

AFP, Miranshah

Eleven Pakistani soldiers were killed including two who were beheaded after being captured during fighting with Islamist militants in North Waziristan, officials said yesterday.

Gunmen armed with rockets attacked a military convoy on Sunday, sparking gun battles near Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan -- an al-Qaeda and Taliban stronghold on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

The military said nine soldiers were killed in the clashes over several hours and claimed that "heavy casualties" were inflicted on the militants.

The heads of a further two soldiers were later found dumped without their bodies -- one hanging from a barbed wire fence in the neighbourhood of Makane Bagh and the other in Zafar Town, local officials said.

Three worshippers were also killed and 15 wounded when a shell hit a mosque near Miranshah on Sunday, security officials and residents told AFP.

## Latifur receives Oslo Business

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like Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata Group in India, who got the award in 2010, and Jeffrey R Immelt, CEO of General Electric in the US, who won it in 2009.

Transcom Group's growth has taken place under adherence to ethical and responsible business practices that serve as a guideline for other businesses in the region, according to a citation by the Oslo-based Business for Peace Foundation, which has been giving the award since 2009.

The Group is one of the highest payers of corporate tax, VAT and import duty in

Bangladesh, with a clean bank record, said the Foundation, adding that the companies in the Group also adhere to labour standards and industrial laws.

"Other businesses in the region look up to Latifur Rahman for leadership and guidance for his integrity, ethical standards and business acumen -- well illustrated by Mr Rahman's re-election as the chairman of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry for a total of seven terms," read the citation.

The award was presented as part of the "Oslo Summit on Peace through Trade" in

Oslo City Hall.

The summit -- Essences of Trust in Business Today -- featured keynote speeches by Alexandra Christina, countess of Frederiksborg, and Roberto Servitje Sendra, founding member and chairman of Grupo Bimbo.

This year, six honourees, including Latifur Rahman, have been selected from out of 90 candidates from 60 countries. The remaining five recipients of the award are Ibrahim Abouleish (Egypt), Eduardo Eurnekian (Argentina), Vlasas Lasas (Lithuania), David W MacLennan (USA), and Reginald A Mengi (Tanzania).

An independent committee of Nobel Prize winners in peace and economics selects the recipients. They adhere to the criteria for "being businessworthy" stipulated by the Foundation.

The award-giving committee consists of Prof Muhammad Yunus, winner of 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, and Prof A Michael Spence, Nobel laureate in economic sciences of 2001.

Prof Wangari Muta Maathai (Nobel laureate of 2004), who died on September 25, 2011, was the third member of the committee.

The supporting partners of the Business for Peace Foundation are International Chamber of Commerce, World Chambers Federation, the City of Oslo, the Oslo Chamber of Commerce, and the initiators of the Oslo World Trade Centre.

ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman also joined the award ceremony at the invitation of the Foundation.

Further details of the programme were not immediately available from Oslo.

## Request for Quotation(RFQ)

### Office Renovation

UNDP Bangladesh seeks quotations from interested and qualified vendors for Office renovation as mentioned in the RFQ document. All interested firms may collect the Bidding documents (RFQ) from [md.asfezzaman@undp.org](mailto:md.asfezzaman@undp.org) by a formal request to UNDP that will register bidders into participants list, so any correspondence, questions regarding the bidding documents and respective answers can be sent to all bidders.

Submission of Quotation: The envelope should state "Office Renovation" and should be addressed to the **UNDP Procurement Unit**, IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207. The quotation should be submitted in the bid box placed in the 12th Floor of IDB Bhaban.

The deadline for submission of quotation is **May 17, 2012, 12.30PM.**



Bangladesh

**CANCELLED**  
**INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING**  
**ICB No. UNFPA/BGD/12/002:**  
**SUPPLY OF GENERATOR, 320 KVA, DIESEL**

The ICB No. UNFPA/BGD/12/002 is cancelled and the bidders are requested not to submit any bid on this. If we decide to initiate this procurement in future, fresh notifications will be issued in the UNGM and local dailies accordingly.