EYE ON UNESCAP

A Media file on coverage of economic and social issues



PART I

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

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THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE MEDIA

By Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary, UNESCAP

2003 has been a busy year for us here at UNESCAP as well as globally for the United Nations, and the increasing amount of news coverage provided by you – the local, regional and international media is testimony to the importance of our work here in the Asia and Pacific region.

The international news media, in particular, is paying closer attention than ever before, and this sixth issue of Eye on UNESCAP contains reports about UNESCAP from media organizations in the region, both local and international.

With the assistance of the many UN Information Centres around the world, including our Bangkok-based UN Information Services (UNIS), we have participated in television and radio interviews with the BBC, CNBC, CNN, VOA, Star TV, and many more.

My programme of refocusing the work of UNESCAP into three thematic areas: Reducing Poverty, Managing Globalization, and Addressing Emerging Social Issues has revitalized our efforts to make Asia and the Pacific a better place for the region's 3.8 billion inhabitants, home to more than two thirds of the world's population.

Throughout this year, UNESCAP will provide our friends in the media much to write about and we look forward to working with you in order to highlight the work that remains to be done to improve the lives of the underprivileged.

January 2004



Mr. Kim Hak-Su talks to the media during the launch of the Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives, 19 December 2003.

EYE ON UNESCAP

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is the largest of the five UN Regional Commissions in terms of population served and area covered. It comprises 53 members and 9 associate members and represents approximately 62 percent of the world's population, or 3.8 billion people. UNESCAP plays a unique role as the only intergovernmental regional forum stretching from the Pacific to Turkey (excluding Iraq).

In 2003, UNESCAP continued to receive a high level of media coverage. UNESCAP-related news and articles were reported by major international news services and frequently appeared in the local and international press, while an increasing level of information on UNESCAP can be found on the Internet.

UNESCAP media coverage focused on all aspects of the organization's activities: quality of life – regional economic cooperation, socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and environment-related issues. A significant number of articles were devoted to human settlements, population and other humanitarian issues as well as areas of transportation, communications, information and space technology. Additionally, a number of articles were published in the observances of UN special "Days", e.g. UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, Human Rights Day, United Nation Day, and International Day of Disabled Persons.

In terms of geographical distribution of the coverage, the distinction between "local" and "worldwide" sources have become less clear as articles from national or local sources are often reproduced by internet-based news services with global outreach. However, it is still possible to determine whether the article was intended for local distribution or for a broader international audience. Hence, the division of sources into local and worldwide proves valuable as it helps to monitor which of the issues drew international attention, and which were merely of local interest.

The launch of UNESCAP's *Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction* report on 4 June 2003 was the year's most newsworthy event. Many news agencies and newspapers in the region and throughout the world reported it.

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The high coverage of this year's 59th annual Commission Session has been consistent over the last 3 years, despite this year's event being disrupted due to the outbreak of SARS. The 59th Commission Session was held in April and September, generating much interest from the media as it focused on 'Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region'.

As in previous years, the UNESCAP's "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" attracted much attention from the experts and the general public. In addition to numerous articles on the socio-economic situation in particular countries, there were a considerable number of articles analyzing trends and developments on regional level.

Other UNESCAP meetings that generated strong media interest included the Expert group meeting on the state of the environment (Bangkok 9-10 July), the High level regional policy dialogue and seminar on facilitating WTO accession through regional cooperation (Bangkok 10-13 June), Regional training workshops for women with disabilities (Pattaya, 18-22 August), National seminar on capacity building in central Asia countries for managing globalization (Bishkek, 25-26 August), Launch of joint AusAid/UNESCAP HIV/AIDS study (Bangkok, 2 September), Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, sixth session (Bangkok, 1-2 September), First session of the Committee on Emerging Social Issues (Bangkok, 4-6 September), and the UNESCAP/CDPF Regional Seminar on an International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (Beijing, 4-7 November).

UNIS, the United Nations Information Services for UNESCAP, has worked in close collaboration with various UNESCAP divisions, other United Nations Information Centres, United Nations Development Programmes and the Department of Public Information to ensure that the media adequately covers the organization's activities. The result has been a steady high media interest in the work of UNESCAP led by its Executive Secretary.

David Lazarus
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Bangkok
January 2004

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. The criterion for inclusion of articles in this volume has been set as follows: printed or electronic articles on UNESCAP and/or its activities including material that mentions, refers to or in any other respect concerns UNESCAP, was included.

2. Articles are divided into thematic groups and subgroups, according to UNESCAP's priorities and activities.

3. The volume is composed of articles that have been monitored and identified by the United Nations Information Services (UNIS) in Bangkok as well as articles that have been sent to UNIS by the United Nations Information Centers (UNIC) and the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDPs) in the region. Although this publication cannot claim to include the entire information on UNESCAP produced and covered in member countries and worldwide, efforts have been made to identify and include as much materials as possible on the organization.

4. It should be noted that an increasing amount of information is being posted on the Internet, either as original articles or as reproductions from other sources. In the latter case, the classification of the source is made according to the Internet site, rather than the original source.

5. Sources of articles are classified according to the country of origin or as "worldwide" or "United Nations". Most of the sources with global outreach, such as major international news agencies and news services (Reuters, AP, AFP, BBC, Xinhua, etc.), periodicals with regional and global circulation (*Wall Street Journal,* etc.) and international Internet news services (*Yahoo! News, NewsEdge Insight, ProQuest,* etc.), are categorized as "worldwide".

6. In cases where an article is reproduced and published by several sources, one version of the article is presented and, when possible, credit is given to the original source (for example, *Yahoo! News/Xinhua).*

7. Articles in a language other than English are marked by an asterisk.

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3.	UN postpones ministerial meeting in Thailand over SARS fears – *NewsEdge Insight/AFP*	15 April 2003	Worldwide	3
4.	U.N. postpones ministerial meeting in Thailand because of war – *NewsEdge Insight/AP*	15 April 2003	Worldwide	5
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11.	AIDS Warning Sounded in Asia – *Medical Observer*	22 August 2003	Worldwide	13
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13.	Mogae to Attend Asia-Pacific Talks – *DailyNews Online*	1 September 2003	Worldwide	15
14.	59th Commission Session to Debate HIV/AIDS, Poverty Epidemics more Dangerous than War – *PR News Services*	1 September 2003	Worldwide	18
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Megawati's Russian trip important: Minister

(Excerpt)

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Indonesia's foreign minister stressed the importance of President Megawati's planned visit to Russia to forge bilateral ties between the two countries in an attempt to counterbalance the dominating role of the United States in the world. ...

The trip has been extended as she was originally slated to come home on April 27, but following an invitation from Thailand, Megawati will now visit Bangkok for two days.

Sources at the Presidential Palace said that Megawati was also slated to deliver a speech to a meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-**ESCAP**) in Bangkok on April 28.

The President is scheduled to arrive home in Jakarta on April 29.

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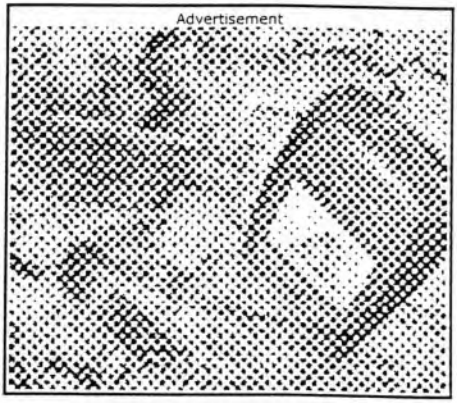
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UN postpones ministerial meet in Thailand over SARS fears

A key regional United Nations ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in Bangkok has been postponed amid concerns over the deadly SARS virus, UN officials said Tuesday.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP) said it would hold its 59th meeting in two parts, agreeing to postpone indefinitely the session that was to include ministers from dozens of countries, including those affected by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

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"We consulted with our 61 country members, and they were divided as to whether to postpone or to continue," said David Lazarus, chief of the UN Information Service in Bangkok.

"We are going ahead with the first part, while the second (ministerial) part is being postponed," he said.

"It was not only because of SARS, but the global and regional uncertainties and security reasons," he added.

Mr Lazarus said UNESCAP's "bread and butter" issues, including budgeting for programmes in the region, would be discussed at the initial segment on April 24-25 by the members' ambassadors and other diplomats already based in Bangkok.

Sources within the UN in Bangkok said fear over the mystery virus was the reason for altering the schedule for UNESCAP, the UN's largest regional commission.

The ministerial symposium was to focus on HIV/Aids, in what was being seen as preparations for Thailand hosting the 15th International AIDS Conference in 2004.

Thailand was said to have supported hosting the full symposium in late April. The country has reported just eight probable SARS cases, including two deaths, and has struggled to convince the international community that the country is safe.

Thailand has launched emergency measures to cope with the epidemic, including health screenings and the wearing of masks for visitors from SARS-affected areas, which the WHO lists as Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam.

04/15/2003 21:18:57

UN postpones ministerial meet in Thailand over SARS fears

ATTENTION - ADDS quotes, detail ///

BANGKOK, April 15 (AFP) - A key regional United Nations ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in the Thai capital has been postponed amid concerns over the deadly SARS virus, UN officials said Tuesday.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (**UNESCAP**) said it would hold its 59th meeting in two parts, agreeing to postpone indefinitely the session that was to include ministers from dozens of countries, including those affected by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

"We consulted with our 61 country members, and they were divided as to whether to postpone or to continue," David Lazarus, chief of the UN Information Service in Bangkok, told AFP.

"We are going ahead with the first part, while the second (ministerial) part is being postponed," he said.

"It was not only because of SARS, but the global and regional uncertainties and security reasons," he added.

Lazarus said **UNESCAP**'s "bread and butter" issues, including budgeting for programmes in the region, would be discussed at the initial segment April 24-25 by the members' ambassadors and other diplomats already based in Bangkok.

The decision by the members was approved by **UNESCAP** executive secretary Kim Hak-Su, Lazarus said.

The postponement highlights continuing worldwide concern over the respiratory illness that has defied containment and has been blamed for the deaths of at least 143 people and the sickening of 3,400 others.

Sources within the UN in Bangkok said fear over the mystery virus was the reason for altering the schedule for **UNESCAP**, the UN's largest regional commission.

"The whole thing is being held hostage by SARS now," said one Bangkok-based UN official who asked not to be named.

Several Thai staffers at **UNESCAP** had "lodged strong protests against holding the meeting because of SARS, and they're not willing to service these people should it go ahead," the source said.

The ministerial symposium was to focus on HIV/Aids, in what was being seen as preparations for Thailand hosting the 15th International AIDS Conference in 2004.

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U.N. postpones ministerial meeting in Thailand because of war

BC-AS-GEN--Thailand-SARS Virus U.N. postpones ministerial meeting in Thailand because of war, SARS

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) _ The United Nations is postponing a regional ministerial-level conference that was to be held in Bangkok this month, because of concerns over SARS and the war in Iraq.

The U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said Tuesday it will hold its 59th annual meeting in two parts.

The first, on April 24-25, will be attended by Bangkok-based ambassadors, permanent representatives and senior officials. The second, which will include the ministerial meeting, has been postponed, **UNESCAP** executive secretary Kim Hak-Su said. No new date has been set.

The two meetings were originally scheduled to be held together from April 23 to 30.

``In view of the current global uncertainties, not all our member countries were keen about going ahead with the original schedule,'' Kim said.

He did not elaborate, but other U.N. officials said the uncertainties referred to severe acute respiratory syndrome and the tensions in postwar Iraq.

The first phase of the meeting will deal with management issues and budgets for U.N. development programs in the region.

SARS has killed more than 150 people and infected about 3,000 worldwide. Most victims have been in Asia, especially China and Hong Kong, which on Tuesday reported nine more deaths.

Thailand has not reported any infections, but most of the SARS-affected countries would have sent representatives to the **UNESCAP** meeting.
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WHO officials seek unreported SARS cases

(Excerpt)

By Christopher Bodeen

PRINT EMAIL

April 15, 2003 | BEIJING (AP) -- International hea officials visited two secretive military hospitals in B to check for unreported cases of severe acute respi syndrome, and met with officials from a third, a tea spokesman said Tuesday. ...

Also Tuesday, the U.N. Economic and Social Comm for Asia and the Pacific postponed its annual minist level conference scheduled for this month in Bangk Thailand, because of concerns over SARS and the w Iraq. Thailand has reported two SARS deaths.

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UN resets Bangkok meet



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The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP) said it would hold its 59th meeting in two parts, agreeing to postpone indefinitely the session that was to include ministers from dozens of countries, including those affected by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

"We consulted with our 61 country members, and they were divided as to whether to postpone or to continue," David Lazarus, chief of the UN Information Service in Bangkok, told AFP.

"We are going ahead with the first part, while the second (ministerial) part is being postponed," he said.

"It was not only because of SARS, but the global and regional uncertainties and security reasons," he added. The decision by the members was approved by UNESCAP executive secretary Kim Hak-Su, Lazarus said. —AFP

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Ministers decide to skip Escap meeting

■ *Agence France-Presse*

A REGIONAL UNITED NATIONS ministerial symposium scheduled for Bangkok later this month has been postponed amid concerns over the Sars virus, UN officials said yesterday.

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"The whole thing is being held hostage by Sars now," said one Bangkok-based UN official who asked not to be named.

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The ministerial symposium was to focus on HIV/Aids, in what was being seen as preparations for Thailand hosting the 15th International Aids Conference in 2004.

The government was said to have supported hosting the full symposium in late April. The Kingdom has reported just eight probable Sars cases, including two deaths, and has struggled to convince the international community that the country is safe.

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Manager Daily Newspaper of Wednesday 16 April 2003 reported on its front page under the headline **"SARs kill 9 more in Hong Kong, UNESCAP Cancels Meeting in Thailand"** The newspaper quoted Reuters/AFP saying that the 59th annual Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), which was scheduled on 24-30 April will be postponed. However, it has been decided that the annual session will be held in two phases. The first, on 24-25 April 2003, will be attended by Bangkok-based ambassadors, permanent representatives and senior officials. The second, which will include ministerial meeting, has been postponed till further notice.

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อาร์ตุส บริษัทเทคโนโลยีชีวภาพเยอรมัน โชว์ชุดตรวจสอบเชื้อไวรัสโรคไข้หวัดมรณะ ซึ่งบริษัทคุยว่าพัฒนาขึ้นมาได้สำเร็จโดยใช้เวลาเพียง 2 สัปดาห์นับเป็นชุดตรวจสอบโรคซาร์สเพื่อการพาณิชย์เป็นเจ้าแรกของโลก

เอสแคปเลื่อนประชุมในกรุงเทพฯ

สำนักงานคณะมนตรีเศรษฐกิจและสังคมแห่งสหประชาชาติ ประจำภูมิภาคเอเชียและแปซิฟิก (เอสแคป) แถลงที่กรุงเทพฯวานนี้(15)ว่าตกลงที่จะจัดการประชุมครั้งที่ 59 ของตนด้วยการแบ่งวาระออกเป็น 2 ช่วง โดยสำหรับวาระช่วงหลัง ซึ่งจะมีบรรดารัฐมนตรีจากหลายสิบประเทศในภูมิภาคเข้าร่วมหารือด้วยนั้น จะเลื่อนออกไปอย่างไม่มีกำหนด

เดวิด ลาซารัส ผู้อำนวยการฝ่ายบริการสารสนเทศของสำนักงานยูเอ็นในกรุงเทพฯแจ้งว่า การประชุมในช่วงแรกอันจะมีวาระอย่างเช่น การจัดสรรงบประมาณสำหรับโครงการต่างๆ ที่เอสแคปจะดำเนินการในภูมิภาคแถบนี้ จะยังคงมีขึ้นตามกำหนดเดิมคือในวันที่ 24-25 เดือนนี้ โดยผู้เข้าร่วมได้แก่บรรดาเอกอัครราชทูตและนักการทูตอื่นๆ ของชาติสมาชิกซึ่งพำนักในกรุงเทพฯอยู่แล้ว

แต่สำหรับวาระช่วงหลังที่บรรดารัฐมนตรีจาก 61 ชาติสมาชิกจะเข้าร่วม รวมทั้งรัฐมนตรีจากหลายประเทศซึ่งเป็นเขตระบาดของไข้หวัดมรณะด้วยนั้น ลาซารัสบอกว่าจะต้องเลื่อนไปอย่างไม่มีกำหนด

ทางด้านแหล่งข่าวในสำนักงานยูเอ็นประจำกรุงเทพฯหลายรายเผยว่า ความหวาดกลัวไข้หวัดมรณะคือสาเหตุที่ทำให้เอสแคปต้องเลื่อนประชุม โดยมีพนักงานที่เป็นคนไทยจำนวนมากแสดงท่าทีคัดค้านหนัก เนื่องจากไม่ยินดีที่จะให้บริการแก่พวกซึ่งเดินทางจากพื้นที่ไข้หวัดมรณะระบาด

HISTORIC ADMITTANCE OF TIMOR-LESTE TO UNES

Bangkok--Apr 28--UNISBKK

59th Commission Session, First Phase 24-25 April Bangkok

Publications slashed, results-based workplan part o reform efforts BANGKOK (United Nations Information Services)--Ambassadorial-level officials from thirty-three member governments of the United Nations Economic a Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) concluded the first phase of an unprecedented 59th annu session of the Commission (24-25 April 2003) by increas membership with the admittance of Timor-Leste.

The Commission unanimously decided to admit Tim Leste as a full member bringing its membership to 62, comprising 53 members and 9 associate members.

"We warmly welcome Timor-Leste and hope their participation in UNESCAP's programmes, and socio-eco development in the region will be enhanced," said one delegate.

Members also welcomed UNESCAP's revitalization efforts. Its publications had been cut down by 47%.

Delegates also considered programme changes of UNESCAP for 2003 and the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005. "The new work programme uses a results-based framework with emphasis on the achieven the desired outputs. We have sharpened the focus of the programme of work to achieve greater impact," said Mr. Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP.

"We also emphasized multidisciplinary approaches delivery of services and provided a balance between ana and operational activities. Special attention is being give the needs of the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries as well as countries with economie transition," Mr. Kim added.

Other important issues included a briefing on transit transport in multi-landlocked and transit developing cour

ahead of a major August Ministerial Meeting in Kazakhst

The first phase of the 59th session unanimously ele
H.E. Mrs. Leela Krisnamurty Ponappa, India's Amabassa
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent
Representative to UNESCAP as chairperson of the sess

"We will observe closely the developments regardin
SARS and further consult members to set the dates for t
second phase of this 59th Commission Session," said M
Kim. End.

-SN-

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Current Issue



Country Report

AIDS Warning Sounded in Asia

New dengue strain ups cases in Malaysia

ASIA'S LOOMING CRISIS

Asia-Pacific nations must tackle the region's mounting AIDS crisis promptly if they ar problem escalating into the pandemic proportions of Africa.

The warning comes from Kim Hak Su, executive secretary of the 61-member UN Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, who urged Asian governments not to "rep mistake."

"If Africa had controlled HIV/AIDS, it would not be in this situation. Twenty percent of Africa] are sick from HIV/AIDS and there are growing numbers of orphans," he said.

An estimated 30 million people in Africa have the AIDS virus. South Africa has one HIV infection rates in the world, with five million of its 43 million citizens carrying th 360,000 died in 2001.

HIV first emerged in Asia in Thailand in the 1990s but has since spread to other cou the region at risk of becoming the new global center of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Kim sai

Some 300,000 people are infected with HIV in Cambodia and there are an estimat carriers of the virus in India, the worst affected country in the region. Thailand has people infected with HIV. The problem is also spiraling in China where infection is spre the use of dirty needles among drug users and the practice of selling blood for money Kim said. China has some one million HIV/AIDS carriers, he said. The UN has warned, the number of Chinese infected with HIV could soar to more than 10 million by the end c

"If we don't properly control the problem now, then young people will become suffer young people getting sick, then where will our labor productivity and our workforce cc added.

The UN has said it needs US$10 billion per year to fight AIDS.

Calendar of events taking place during the 59th Commission session of the Ur Nations Economic

Bangkok–Aug 29–UNISBKK

Calendar of events taking place during the 59th Commission session of th Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific atthe UN Conference Centre in Bangkok from 1 to 4 September 2003.

I. Monday, 1 September

10:00 - 10:30 hrs. - Opening of the 59th Commission session by H.E. Mr.Korn Dabbaransi, Deputy Prime of Thailand in the ESCAP Hall. (Opening statements/messages by UN Secretary-General, Deputy Prime Minister of Tha and UNESCAP Executive Secretary)

10:30 - 10:40 hrs. (Photo-op) - Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand opens exhibition on "Dare to Care" and is welcomed by a Thai self-help group of Pe Living with HIV/AIDS that is participating in the UNESCAP "Partners for Health project.

11:00-12:00 hrs. and 14:00-17:00 hrs. - UNESCAP Executive Secretary his Policy Statement and policy issues for the UNESCAP region to be address Ministers from the region. (ESCAP Hall)

II Tuesday, 2 September

9:00-12:00 hrs. - Ministerial Round Table on HIV/AIDS. (Conference Ro

A special multimedia presentation on HIV/AIDS in Asia-Pacific by UNESC Executive Secretary Dr Kim Hak-Su highlighting the need for governments to i urgent and comprehensive action against the pandemic before it is too late.

A Key note Address will be delivered by H.E. Mr. Festus Mogae, Presiden Botswana. With an adult HIV prevalence rate of 38.8 % by the end of 2001, B is one of the world's most HIV/AIDS affected countries. H.E. Mr.Mogae has be recognized as one of Africa's leading statesmen in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia, Dr Nafis Sac also address the gathering of ministers and top officials from Asia-Pacific coun

12:30- 13:45 hrs. (Photo-op) - The launch of a HIV/AIDS advocacy kit d to help governments combat the pandemic through a multisectoral and multi-ministerial approach. H.E. Mr Miles Kupa, Australian Ambassador to Thailand Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP will jointly launch the advocac titled " To Care To Dare: Fight HIV/AIDS SaveLives". (Reception Hall)

A 45-minute theatre performance by the Wan Smolbag theatre group fron Vanuatu. Renowned throughout the Pacific for their innovative combination of information and entertainment the Wan Smolbag performance will touch on m aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. (Light lunch will be served.)

14:00-15:00 hrs. - Ministerial Round Table on Millennium Development Report. (Closed Door)

III. Thursday, 4 September

Closing Press Conference (Venue and time will be announced later).

14:00-17:00 hrs. - Adoption of the report and report of the Commission.

Security Note: Media are invited to cover most events as listed here, how please be aware that as security will be very tight, proper identification and pas must be obtained on Registration. Your cooperation is much appreciated.

Further information : Chief, UN Information Services, Second Floor (Block UN Building (Room No. 0251) or Press Suite on the Ground Floor of the UNCC http://www.unescap.org/59/index.asp End.



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Next: Gender violence cant be anyones culture - Mogae ▸

Mogae to attend Asia-Pacific talks

01 September, 2003

BANKOK (Thailand) - President Festus Mogae is expected to arrive here in the Thai capital today (Monday) to attend the 59th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Th four-day meeting will be attended by 62

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member states from the UNESCAP region.

Mogae, who will attend the session at the invitation of UNESCAP executive secretary Kim Hak-Su, is expected to address the ministerial roundtable of this year's annual meeting of the commission at the UN Centre here.

The ministerial roundtable will be held under the theme: "Integrating Economic and Social Concerns, Especially HIV/AIDS in the UNESCAP Region", organised by UNESCAP and the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The president's three-day visit will include a courtesy call on Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra while Hak-Su, who is to will host a dinner for Mogae.

Mogae will also attend the launch of an HIV/AIDS advocacy kit before viewing the UNESCAP publications on HIV/AIDS at the Centre. He will also attend a mini press conference by UNESCAP sponsored journalists from the most populate countries in the UNESCAP region namely India, China, and Indonesia.

The president will have two radio interviews by UN Radio and Radio Thailand while on the third and final day of the visit, he will meet with Thailand HIV positive people and representatives of the Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS.

UNESCAP is a regional arm of the United Nations for Asia and the Pacific and focuses on reducing poverty, managing globalisation and tackling emerging social issues.

The 50th annual session therefore presents

The 59th annual session therefore presents an opportunity for the UNESCAP members to discuss HIV/AIDS as a development challenge for the Asian and Pacific rim.

Prime Minister Thaksin will officially open the four-day meeting. Other speakers include Kim and UNAIDS director Peter Piot.

When President Mogae left Gaborone for Bangkok on Saturday he was seen off at the Sir Seretse Khama Airport by Vice President Ian Khama, Permanent Secretary to the President, Eric Molale and senior government officials. He is expected home on Thursday. BOPA

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59th Commission Session to debate HIV/AIDS, Poverty Epidemics more dang than war, says Thai Deputy Prime Minister

Bangkok–Sep 1–UNISBKK

A deadly epidemic may, if not dealt with in the most effective and expediti manner, be more dangerous to the world than the impact of war, said H.E. Mr. Debbaransi, Deputy Prime
Minister of Thailand in opening the second phase of the 59th annual Commiss Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission For Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP).

"Against this backdrop, there is therefore an urgent need for a quick respc mechanism to deal with the outbreak of infectious disease. Access to the right information is critical in times of crisis. People must not be left in limbo of what on," urged the Deputy Prime Minister.

Ministers and senior officials from 47 member and associate member cou gathered here today at the second phase of the 59th annual Commission sess UNESCAP which opened today at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bai

Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, warned that it is ess countries to have contingency plans to deal with unforeseen events in his polic statement to the Session. These include public health crises and terrorism, wh could occur at any time.

In 2002, developing countries of the region were able to exceed their colle 2001 growth by nearly 2 percent point and were the fastest growing economie world in that year. "But in looking ahead to the remaining months of 2003 and 2004 it is clear that matching this performance is subject to major caveats," pc out Mr. Kim.

The Thai Deputy Prime Minister emphasized that the UN Millennium Deve Goals (MDGs)–high on UNESCAP's agenda— have set a standard for human development in the world. "In fact, Thailand is one country that proposes the concept of MDGs-Plus, using the Millennium
Development Goals as a baseline of development rather than an ultimate goal are confident that Thailand can achieve and even exceed the Goals by 2015", Debbaransi.

The economy was also of great concern to the region. Mr. Kim said UNE region is vulnerable to high energy prices as it is dependent for about 40 per c energy needs on imported oil. Second, on-going political tensions on the Kore peninsula are almost certainly having a negative impact on business and cons confidence in East Asia, home to three of
the four largest economies of the region.

"Low business confidence inevitably means that investment expenditure, engine of medium-term growth, is kept on hold.The danger of a major terrorist such as the one in Jakarta a few weeks ago, while adversely affecting industrie tourism, will pre-empt and divert scarce resources from urgent development ne the needs of security in the region as a whole," said Mr Kim.

The Commission Session whose theme, "Integrating economic and soci concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, meeting the needs of the region.",unanimously Hon.Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok, Minister of the Prime Minister's Departm Malaysia as the chairman of the
59th Session.

Special features for this year's session are the two Ministerial Round Tabl HIV.AIDS and the first-ever UNESCAP–UNDP Millennium Development Goals which will be held on Tuesday, Sept.2nd The HIV/AIDs roundtable will be addr by Hon Festus Mogaes, President fo Botswana.

The three-day session will also include discussions on implications of rec economic and social development on the region and delegates are expected t recommend policy responses. Emerging issues and development at the regio such as poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues as least developed, and locked and island developing countries.

The Session will conclude on Thursday, 4 September with the adoption report containing resolutions and a summary of the three-day discussion. End

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59th UNESCAP Commission Session Open Today in Bangkok

Bangkok, Sept. 01: "A deadly epidemic may, if not dealt with in the most effective and expeditious manner, be more dangerous to the world than the impact of war," said Korn Debbaransi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, when declaring open the second phase of the 59th annual Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

"Against this backdrop, there is therefore an urgent need for a quick response mechanism to deal with the outbreak of infectious disease. Access to the right information is critical in times of crisis. People must not be left in limbo of what is going on," urged the Deputy Prime Minister in his inaugural address.

Ministers and senior officials from 47 member and associate member countries gathered here today at the second phase of the 59th annual Commission session of UNESCAP which opened today at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok.

Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, warned in his policy statement to the Session, that it is essential for countries to have contingency plans to deal with unforeseen. He clarified that these include public health crises and terrorism, which could occur at any time.

In the year 2002, developing countries of the Asia-Pacific region were able to exceed their collective 2001 growth by nearly 2 percent point and were the fastest growing economies in the world in that year. "But in looking ahead to the remaining months of 2003 and into 2004 it is clear that matching this performance is subject to major caveats," pointed out Kim Hak-Su.

The Thai Deputy Prime Minister in his speech emphasized that the UN Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs)--high on UNESCAP's agenda--- have set a standard for human development in the world. "In fact, Thailand is one country that proposes the new concept of MDGs-Plus, using the Millennium Development Goals as a baseline of development rather than an ultimate goal. We are confident that Thailand can achieve and even exceed the Goals by 2015", said Kom Debbaransi.

The economy was also of great concern to the region. Kim Hak-Su further elaborated in his speech that UNESCAP region is vulnerable to high-energy prices, as it is dependent for about 40 per cent of its energy needs on imported oil. He added secondly the on-going political bickering and tensions on the Korean peninsula are almost certainly having a negative impact on business and consumer confidence in East Asia, home to three of the four largest economies of the region.

"Low business confidence inevitably means that investment expenditure, the main engine of medium-term growth, is kept on hold. The danger of a major terrorist attack, such as the one in Jakarta a few weeks ago, while adversely affecting industries like tourism, will pre-empt and divert scarce resources from urgent development needs to the needs of security in the region as a whole," said Kim Hak-Su, UNESCAP Executive Secretary.

Commission Session, whose theme, "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, meeting the needs of the region.", unanimously elected Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok, Minister of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia, as the chairman of the 59th Session.

Special features for this year's session are the two Ministerial Round Tables on HIV.AIDS and the first-ever UNESCAP--UNDP Millennium Development Goals Report, which will be held on Tuesday, Sept.2nd. Furthermore Festus Moges, President of Botswana is scheduled to address the HIV/AIDs roundtable.

The three-day session is expected to include discussions on the implications of recent economic and social development in the region and delegates are to recommend policy responses. Emerging issues and development at the regional level such as poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues as well as least developed, and land-locked and island developing countries.

The Session is to conclude on September 4th with the adoption of a report containing resolutions and a summary of the three-day discussion.

(With inputs from UN Information Service)

China calls for coordinate regional economic, social development

www.chinaview.cn 2003-09-01 20:29

BANGKOK, Sept. 1 (Xinhuanet) -- Countries in the Asia Pacific region should work together to maintain coordinate development of economy and society, said Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang on Monday at the 59th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

"Our fight against SARS in the region earlier this year has given full exposition to the interaction between economic and social development and to the importance of promoting a balanced development," said Shen in his speech at the UNESCAP session, which opened here Monday morning.

With this in mind, he noted, the Chinese delegation has submitted a draft resolution on "strengthening social safety in the Asia-Pacific region" to the meeting.

Health and poverty issues are high on the agenda of the three-day session, with the theme topic being "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of the region.

The Chinese delegation also called for further cooperation and upgraded public systems to curb the spread of communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS.

"The raging HIV/AIDS is not only a challenge to human life, butalso a serious threat to the economic and social development of all countries," said Shen.

He urged countries in the region to control the disease under the guidelines of seeking comprehensive control, removing both theroot cause and symptoms, providing scientific guidance and conducting close cooperation.

Shen stressed that the coordinate economic and social development rests on each country's own efforts as well as variousforms of international cooperation.

The UNESCAP session, attended by delegations from 62 member andassociate member countries and territories of UNESCAP, includes two ministerial round-tables on HIV/AIDS and the report of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for Asia and the Pacific.

The MDG, agreed at the UN General Assembly in September 2000, set specific human development targets in the areas of poverty, education, gender equality, health and the environment, all of which are to be achieved by 2015.

The session would also include discussions on implications of recent economic and social development in the region and delegatesare expected to recommend policy responses.

The session will conclude on Thursday with the adoption of a report containing resolutions and a summary of the three-day discussion. Enditem

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Last updated at (Beijing Time) Tuesday, September 02, 2003

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Associated Press

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Quick response to epidemic threats vital

BC-AS-GEN--Thailand-UN-Epidemics Quick response to epidemic threats vital, Asia-Pacific nations told

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) _ Asia-Pacific countries were urged on Monday to set up a ``quick response'' mechanism to deal with outbreaks of infectious diseases and other potentially catastrophic events including terrorism.

``Access to the right information is critical in times of crisis. People must not be left in limbo (about) what is going on,'' Thai Deputy Prime Minister Korn Debbaransi said in a speech opening the 59th annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Ministers and senior officials from 47 countries are attending the four-day meeting at ESCAP's headquarters in Bangkok to review the United Nations' work in the region.

Korn said there is an ``urgent need for a quick response mechanism to deal with the outbreak of infectious disease.''

Singapore, China and Taiwan, among other places, were ill-prepared for the outbreak earlier this year of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, which killed hundreds. By the time an adequate response was formed, the epidemic had already spread.

UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim **Hak-su** said countries also must have contingency plans to deal with unforeseen events, including public health crises and terrorism.

Fears of terrorist strikes are rampant in the region after the Aug. 5 bombing of the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in which 12 people were killed.

``The danger of a major terrorist attack ... while adversely affecting industries like tourism, will pre-empt and divert scarce resources from urgent development needs to the needs of security in the region as a whole," Kim said.

Ongoing political tensions on the Korean Peninsula are also hurting business and consumer confidence in East Asia, he said.

``Low business confidence inevitably means that investment expenditure, the main engine of medium-term growth, is kept on hold," he said.

During the next three days, the meeting will discuss economic and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues. (PROFILE (COUNTRY:China; ISOCOUNTRY3:CHN; UNTOP:142; UN2ND:030; APGROUP:Asia;) (COUNTRY:Singapore; ISOCOUNTRY3:SGP; UNTOP:142; UN2ND:035; APGROUP:Asia;) (COUNTRY:Taiwan; ISOCOUNTRY3:TWN;) (COUNTRY:Thailand; ISOCOUNTRY3:THA; UNTOP:142; UN2ND:035; APGROUP:Asia;) (CAT:Business;) (CAT:Travel;) (CAT:Defense;) (CAT:Terrorism;)

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THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMA

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NEW Monday, September 1, 2003 NEW

Region

Minister for NPED to attend 59th Annual Meeting of ES

YANGON, 31 Aug-A Myanmar delegation led by Minister for I Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha left h morning for Bangkok to attend the 59th Annual Meeting of E and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to be held fro September in Bangkok, Thailand.

The delegation was seen off at the airport by Minister Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, Resident Coordinator Agencies and Resident Representative of UNDP Mr Charles Petrie and departmental officials.

The delegation comprises Deputy Director-General of Department Dr Soe Aung, Deputy Director-General of Economic Relations Department Daw Myo Nwe and Deputy D General of Planning Department U Win Kyi as members.

NEWSDESK

02 Sep 2003 10:41:00 GMT

Asia leaders ignore looming AIDS crisis-U.N. envoy

By Darren Schuettler



An Indian woman infected with HIV prays in Calcutta. *File photo by JAYANTA SHAW*

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Asian leaders are ignoring a looming "African-style" HIV/AIDS crisis that threatens the region's economic and social development, a United Nations special envoy said on Tuesday.

"Some leaders have buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/AIDS is not really an Asian problem -- that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups," Nafis Sadik told a U.N. conference on health and poverty.

"This is a denial of reality," she told the meeting, attended by ministers and officials from 47 Asia-Pacific countries. "Countries must tackle it head on."

Sadik, special U.N. envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia, did not identify which Asian leaders she thought were not facing up to the AIDS threat.

While infection rates are far lower than in southern Africa, the global epicentre of the disease, experts say the Asia-Pacific region may account for 40 percent of new global infections by 2010 if prevention efforts are not stepped up.

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Asia, exceeding one percent in only three countries -- Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, according to the World Health Organisation.

But the region added one million new cases last year.

"Every day HIV spreads across various sub-populations and into the general population," Sadik said.

"UNPLEASANT REALITY"

The pandemic had yet to show its "full power for destruction" in Asia, but African countries had seen the full, appalling impact, Sadik said.

"Two of the most advanced countries in that region, Botswana and South Africa, are looking at the possibility of economic disaster and social disintegration as a result of HIV/AIDS," she said.

"It could happen here," Sadik told the annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok.

An estimated 14 million people are affected by AIDS in southern Africa. South Africa has the world's highest caseload with 4.7 million people infected with HIV or AIDS, while the disease affects about 35 percent of the population of Botswana.

Among Asia's most populous countries, about one million people are living with HIV in China and that could rise to 10 million cases by 2010.

Beijing has been slow in responding to the pandemic and only in recent years felt able to discuss sexual health in public.

India could have up to 25 million HIV carriers by 2010, up from nearly four million cases today. HIV has also shown up in 26 of Indonesia's 30 provinces, Sadik said.

"Neglect in a region where 60 percent of the world's population live will have global consequences. A major AIDS epidemic is waiting to happen. I urge you to make sure that it does not," Sadik said.

Thailand, where infection rates are falling after a

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campaign to promote condoms in the commercial sex trade, is one of the region's rare success stories.

But experts fear the government's commitment to promoting AIDS awareness and condom use is weakening.

"I think the message that leaders should act applies to our country too. I'm afraid infections will rise again because there is no campaign on television or billboards," said Dr Prapan Phanuphak, of the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre.

Up to 98 percent of Thai men use condoms at brothels, the government says, but too many people still refuse to use condoms with casual sex partners.

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Associated Press

09/02/2003 10:30:57

U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) U.N. officials on Tuesday urged Asia-Pacific countries to take decisive action against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which they said is devastating the region the same way it ravaged Africa.

Speakers at an annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said that even a low prevalence rate could translate into massive numbers of infections given the region's huge population.

UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Kim Hak-su said more than 50 percent of new infections worldwide occur among young people, making the region especially vulnerable to HIV because of its estimated population of 620 million youths.

He said regional governments need ``to initiate urgent and comprehensive action against the pandemic before it is too late,'' according to a U.N. statement.

Asia is home to two of the world's most populous countries China and India. India is already the world's second worst hit nation, behind South Africa, with 4.5 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The Chinese government says 1 million people have been infected with the AIDS virus, but experts warn the number is higher and could reach 10 million by the end of the decade.

The U.N. special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia, Dr. Nafis Sadik, said AIDS is no ordinary crisis and requires ``an extraordinary response.''

``We cannot continue to live in a make-believe world,'' she said.

Botswana's President Festus Mogae gave the keynote address at the meeting.

Despite his country's adult HIV prevalence rate of 38.8 percent at the end of 2001, he expressed optimism that the disease can be contained and offered encouragement.

``In the fight against HIV/AIDS, we have found that it is absolutely imperative to be open and frank about sexuality. We have to deal with cultural taboos and traditions that stand in the way of the fight against the pandemic,'' said Mogae, who has been recognized as one of Africa's leading statesmen in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The **UNESCAP** meeting, which has brought together government and U.N. officials from 47 countries, ends on Thursday.

(PROFILE

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CORRECTED-Asia leaders ignore looming AIDS crisis - U.N. envoy

ADV

12 minutes ago

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A Discourse by Korn Dabbaransi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand.

Korn Dabbaransi, a veteran political leader in the region and Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand delivered the inaugural address at the 59th session (Second phase) of United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia (UNESCAP) on September 01 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

The full text of the thought provoking inaugral address Korn Dabbaransi is given below:

Mr. Chairman
Mr. Executive Secretary
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to extend my warm welcome to all participants. Bangkok has been the home to the Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for over fifty years, and I wish all participants a pleasant stay in Thailand.

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to officially inaugurate the second phase for the 59th session of ESCAP on behalf of the Prime Minister of Thailand. His Excellency Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, who is unable to be present here due to his prior engagements.

Additionally, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, I also wish to take this opportunity to welcome Timor Leste as the 53rd member of ESCAP. I am confident that the United Nations in its role as the main economics and social development forum in the Asian and Pacific region.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand is particularly proud to host ESCAP, which now serves more than 3.5 billion people, representing over 60 percent of the world's population. Being the only

intergovernmental forum covering the entire Asian and Pacific region, ESCAP has been a catalyst for long-term social and economic development for over five decades, with the last two decades showing substantial progress. Besides a decrease in poverty, there have been improvements in other areas, such as health care, education, basic infrastructure and gender equality. Furthermore, last year, according to the ESCAP report, most economies in the Asia-Pacific region showed signs of surprising strength, despite the continued weakness of the world economy.

This year may tell a different story. Even though it is still unclear to what extent the war in Iraq and the spread of SARS may affect this year's growth, their ramifications to core industries of the region, especially tourism, are detrimental. The most obvious impact upon all of us is that we have to meet here today in the second phase of the annual session, rather than as originally scheduled in April. The impact of these two events may have been put under control in relatively short period of time, but one lesson that we may draw is that a deadly epidemic may, if not dealt with in the most effective and expeditious manner, be more dangerous to the world than the impact of war.

Against this backdrop, there is therefore an urgent need for a quick response mechanism to deal with the outbreak of infectious disease. Access to the right information is critical in times of crisis. People must not be left in limbo of what is going on. The public must be informed of the latest developments while assuming that the appropriate measures are in place so that there will be no room for panic. This was exactly the approach of the Thai Government took in dealing with the recent SARS crisis. Giving the public accessibility to the facts concerning the severity of the disease and the Government's actions to control it on a regular basis has proven to be a successful strategy for Thailand. We also created public confidence through measures taken in concert with other countries. For example, Thailand hosted the ASEAN-China Leader's Meeting on SARS in April, and the APEC Health Ministers' Meeting on SARS in June. These meetings have given rise to a general consensus that there is a need for a regional accessibility to accurate information necessary for early warning and confidence building among the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have set a standard for human development in the world. It reiterates the fact that economic and social aspects— ranging from poverty eradication to fighting HIV/AIDS to ensuring environmental sustainability— are two sides of the same coin. We have to achieve both in order to sustain the well being of the world community. The

priorities reflected in the Millennium Development Goals mirror those of our own development strategy, which aims to stimulate sustainable growth and social equality through empowerment of the people, building strength from the grassroots. In fact, Thailand is one country that proposes the new concept of MDGs-Plus, using the Millennium Development Goals as a baseline of development rather than an ultimate goal. We are confident that Thailand can achieve and even exceed the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

ESCAP has been playing an important role in strengthening the capacities of countries in the region in order to cope with the challenges of globalization. We have to address these challenges collectively with a view to accelerating the economics dimension of development while attending to the management of complex social issues. In this regard, we recommend the work of the ESCAP Secretariat on the implementation of resolution 51/1, which aims to restructure the conference of the Commission to focus on three thematic areas: poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues.

It is therefore significant that the themes of this year's sessions, "Integrating economics and social concerns, especially HIV/AIDS, in meeting the needs of region," allows participants to discuss these concerns and decide how they may be dealt with in the context of regional cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of HIV/AIDS always stands out as a grave concern of modern times. The spread of HIV/AIDS is extremely alarming, with over 42 million people worldwide infected by the deadly virus, of which 90% reside in developing countries. HIV/AIDS and the recent outbreak of infectious diseases such as SARS are non-traditional threats that pose a severe challenge to human security and socioeconomic development, affecting health care, industrial productivity and human resources. A holistic approach is therefore needed to combat these threats.

Statistics have shown that currently one in five of new HIV infections throughout the world occur in the Asia-Pacific region, which threatens ti replace sub-Saharan Africa as the new center of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic if corrective action is not taken. It is therefore imperative that we strive to control this common threat, for it is t his kind of threat that hinders the opportunities for economics and social development. This is why Thailand remains committed to containing the spread of HIV/AIDS and eliminating the scourge of malaria and

other major diseases that afflict humanity, in line with Millennium Development Goals. We also stand ready to cooperate and share our experiences in combating HIV/AIDS with other countries. In this connection, I am pleased to announce that Thailand will host the 15th International Conference on AIDS in July 2004, in the hope that regional and international cooperation in preventing and alleviating the HIV/AIDS pandemic will save millions of lives and prevent economic and social gains of the region from being reversed.

Mr. Chairman,

On the economic front, one of the challenge facing ESCAP developing countries, including Thailand, is to maintain the momentum of economic recovery while committing to trade liberalization and enhanced productivity and competitiveness. In order to create a stronger foundation for economic stability and a more equitable distribution of income, Thailand has initiated a new policy aimed at extending resources to support SMEs and micro-business. We are also committed to seizing the benefits of the digital economy and promoting a knowledge-based economy. These are issues that we have pursued rigorously in various forums, including APEC and ACD.

Since October last year, Thailand has arranged APEC meetings in various parts of the country. The APEC Summit itself will be organized in Bangkok in October, which is just a month away from now. The theme of this year's APEC " A world of Differences: Partnership for the Future," underscores the diversity of APEC member economics and the importance of building a strategic and mutually beneficial partnership from our diversity. One of the sub-themes of the APEC Summit is "Promoting Human Security," which clearly reflects Thailand's vision in attaching high importance to the incorporation of both economic and social concerns into our development strategy.

Mr. Chairman,

Another regional forum that is gaining momentum by leaps and bounds is the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (or ACD), which was inaugurated in June 2002 to serve as a forum for both cooperation and dialogue on common issues such as poverty alleviation, SMEs, E-commerce, energy security, tourism and financial cooperation, thus propelling the whole of Asia into a new dimension. Two months ago, Thailand was honored to host the Second ACD Ministerial in Chiang Mai. One of the outstanding outcomes of this year's ACD meeting is the formal creation of the Asian Bond Fund and the Asian Bond market, representing the new architecture of the world of differences. The Asian Bond Fund is designed to enable surplus capital from one Asian country to create

wealth in another and to contribute not only to ensure the full recovery of our economies but also to promote the adoption of best practices in Asia's capital market development. The Asian Bond will also benefit regions outside Asia, serving, together with the US and Euro Bond markets, to support a more balanced and stable world financial market.

Mr. Chairman.

Let me now turn to the domestic front. Since the present Thai Government assumed office more than two years ago, we have carefully rearranged our domestic needs and priorities based primarily on our domestic resources and strengths. Poverty and debt reduction has been place at the top of our development agenda. Our economic growth of 5.2% last year, the highest since economic crisis in 1997, demonstrated the Government's notable success in pursuing a dual track economic policy. On the one hand, this policy underscores the important role of the private sector in trade and investment with emphasis on social responsibility. On the other hand, the grassroots economy is being stimulated through a number of government-assisted programmes, such as the establishment of village funds, micro-credit facilities, SME incentive schemes, and the "one village, one product" scheme. Despite the SARS incident, this year's growth is projected to be around 5.5 to 6%, coupled with very sound fiscal and financial records. On 31 July, Thailand announced its last payment of loans to the IMF, making the country free from all IMF obligations two years ahead of schedule.

We realize that growth in GDP alone is inadequate to enhance the welfare of the people, especially in rural areas. Out efforts are therefore directed towards improvement in the delivery of basic social needs such as health care, education, employment, credit housing and social security, and towards more participation of local communities in the development process. We must create new opportunities while enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit of the grassroots so that they will, in turn, become an enterprising element in our growth. Thailand is certain that our economy rests on a secure and stable foundation that will lead us to along a path of sustainable development. It is our firm conviction that we can rid ourselves of the problem of poverty within 6 years.

Mr. Chairman,

There are many challenges lying ahead of us in the light of rapid globalization. The new structure of the ESCAP conferences and programmes provides a sound basis for something ESCAP's future role in the promotion of sustainable development, which is critical to achieving regional and universal prosperity and peace. ESCAP

needs vision and policy guidelines from its members and associate members on how to steer its work in response to their needs. W must cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership to achieve the objectives of sustainable development.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of Thailand, I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the offer made by the Government of the People's Republic of China to host the Sixtieth Session of ESCAP in Shanghai next year.

I now have the to declare open the Fifty-ninth Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and wish for its successful conclusion.

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UN warns Asia its faces the same devastation as Africa if AIDS left unchecked

Canadian Press

Tuesday, September 02, 2003

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estimated population of 620 million youths.

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Asia is home to two of the world's most populous countries - China and India. India is already the world's second-worst hit country, behind South Africa, with 4.5 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The Chinese government says one million people have been infected with the AIDS virus, but experts warn the number is higher and could reach 10 million by the end of the decade.

The UN special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia, Dr. Nafis Sadik, said AIDS is no ordinary crisis and requires "an extraordinary response."

"We cannot continue to live in a make-believe world," she said.

President Festus Mogae of Botswana, delivering the keynote address, told the gathering he remains confident the disease can be contained in his country despite an adult infection rate of almost 39 per cent.

"In the fight against HIV/AIDS, we have found that it is absolutely imperative to be open and frank about sexuality," said Mogae, who has been recognized as one of Africa's leading statesmen in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"We have to deal with cultural taboos and traditions that stand in the way of the fight against the pandemic."

The UNESCAP meeting, which has brought together government and UN officials from 47 countries, ends on Thursday.

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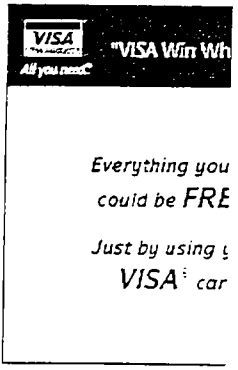
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September 2, 2003

U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

U.N. Officials Urge Asia-Pacific Countries to Take Decisive Action Against the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

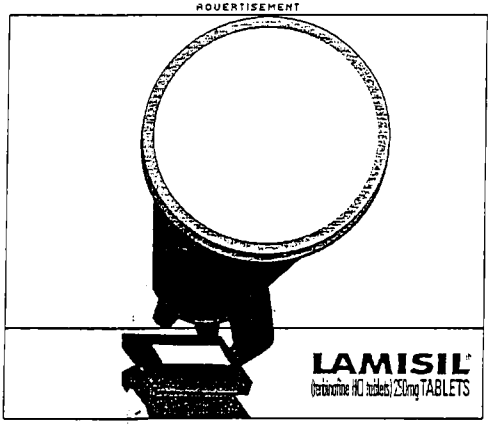
The Associated Press

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He said regional governments need "to initiate urgent and comprehensive action

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Leaders in Asia ignoring AIDS crisis

U.N. says countries must tackle looming epidemic head on

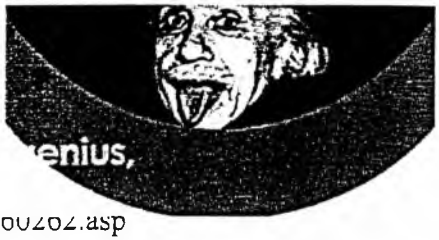
REUTERS

BANGKOK, Sept. 2 — Asian leaders are ignoring a looming "African-style" HIV/AIDS crisis that threatens the region's economic and social development, a United Nations special envoy said on Tuesday.

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The Asia-Pacific region may account for 40 percent of new global infections by 2010 if prevention efforts are not stepped up.

"SOME LEADERS HAVE buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/AIDS is not really an Asian problem — that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups," Nafis Sadik told a U.N. conference on health and poverty.

"This is a denial of reality," she told the meeting, attended by ministers and officials from 47 Asia-Pacific countries. "Countries must tackle it head on."

Sadik, special U.N. envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia, did not identify which Asian leaders she thought were not facing up to the AIDS threat.

While infection rates are far lower than in southern Africa, the global epicentre of the disease, experts say the Asia-Pacific region may account for 40 percent of new global infections by 2010 if prevention efforts are not stepped up.

Adult HIV prevalence rates are still relatively low in Asia, exceeding one percent in only three countries — Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, according to the World Health Organisation.

But the region added one million new cases last year.

"Every day HIV spreads across

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The AIDS epidemic
A look at AIDS around the globe

various sub-populations and into the general population," Sadik said.

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The pandemic had yet to show its "full power for destruction" in Asia, but African countries had seen the full, appalling impact, Sadik said.

"Two of the most advanced countries in that region, Botswana and South Africa, are looking at the possibility of economic disaster and social disintegration as a result of HIV/AIDS," she said.



"It could happen here," Sadik told the annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok.

An estimated 14 million people are affected by AIDS in southern Africa. South Africa has the world's highest caseload with 4.7 million people infected with HIV or AIDS, while the disease affects about 35 percent of the population of Botswana.

Among Asia's most populous countries, about one million people are living with HIV in China and that could rise to 10 million cases by 2010.

Beijing has been slow in responding to the pandemic and only in recent years felt able to discuss sexual health in public.

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India could have up to 25 million HIV carriers by 2010, up from nearly four million cases today. HIV has also shown up in 26 of Indonesia's 30 provinces, Sadik said.

"Neglect in a region where 60 percent of the world's population live will have global consequences. A major AIDS epidemic is waiting to happen. I urge you to make sure that it does not," Sadik said.

Thailand, where infection rates are falling after a campaign to promote condoms in the commercial sex trade, is one of the region's rare success stories.

But experts fear the government's commitment to promoting AIDS awareness and condom use is weakening.

"I think the message that leaders should act applies to our country too. I'm afraid infections will rise again because there is no campaign on television or billboards," said Dr Prapan Phanuphak, of the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre.

Up to 98 percent of Thai men use condoms at brothels, the government says, but too many people still refuse to use condoms with casual sex partners.

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U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

The Associated Press

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Asia in danger of AIDS disaster: United Nations

Press Trust of India
Bangkok, September 2

Asia-Pacific leaders must take drastic measures to combat the regional HIV/AIDS crisis if they were to avoid the disaster gripping African nations, a United Nations envoy said on Tuesday.

Nafis Sadik, the UN's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, urged regional leaders to stop living in a "make-believe world" and adopt extraordinary responses to fight the epidemic's rampant spread.

"Despite many, many expressions of commitment to urgent action against HIV-AIDS, it has become clear to me that national and local authorities are not yet convinced," Sadik told a gathering of ministers and officials from members of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"We have simply not seen the extraordinary responses that ESCAP members need to turn back the infection in the Asia-Pacific region," Sadik said.

"HIV/AIDS is the most serious challenge to development that ESCAP countries have ever faced, the more serious because it has not yet shown its full power for destruction. But African countries have seen the full, appalling impact," she said.

"It could happen here," she added.

Asia-Pacific is home to 60 per cent of the world's population and includes the world's two most populous nations, China and India.

Seven million infections had already been recorded in the region, with one million new infections recorded last year alone, she said.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

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（本報記者高昌攝）

此次會議今天上午由泰國副總理乃功，塔帕蘭西主持揭幕，來自亞太經社會60多個成員國家和地區代表與會。

在「面對區域需要，解決經濟社會問題，尤其是愛滋病問題」的主題下，他們將討論近來經濟和社會發展的問題，探討對策，包括愛滋病防治、減少貧困、區域發展、應對全球化、社會問題等等。

【本報曼谷訊】泰國副總理乃功，塔帕蘭西昨天主持聯合國亞太經濟社會第59屆年會開幕儀式，並介紹泰國在防止傳染病蔓延方面的實際經驗，以及泰國運用「千年發展目標」的治國理念。

乃功介紹泰國在預治愛滋病和SARS等傳染病方面的措施，認為必須依靠強有力的防治機制，掌握最切確的信息資料，並採取果斷迅速的迎對措施。因為某些傳染病的破壞影響力可能比戰爭更為嚴重。此外泰國已經開始運用聯合國提出的「千年發展目標」作為制訂國家發展政策的一條「基準線」，預計泰國能在2015年開始實施千年發展目標下的治國方針。

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: The Universal Daily News	Date: 2 September 2003
Page(s): 2	

Summary



中國外交部部長助理沈國放（前排右起第 2 人）昨天（1 日）出席聯合國亞太經濟社會第 59 屆年會會議，並發表講話，他向大會提出三點主張。(本報記者葛昌義攝)

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News

Posted on Tue, Sep. 02, 2003

U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand - U.N. officials on Tuesday urged Asia-Pacific countries to take decisive action against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which they said is devastating the region the same way it ravaged Africa.

Speakers at an annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said that even a low prevalence rate could translate into massive numbers of infections given the region's huge population.

UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Kim Hak-su said more than 50 percent of new infections worldwide occur among young people, making the region especially vulnerable to HIV because of its estimated population of 620 million youths.

He said regional governments need "to initiate urgent and comprehensive action against the pandemic before it is too late," according to a U.N. statement.

Asia is home to two of the world's most populous countries - China and India. India is already the world's second worst hit nation, behind South Africa, with 4.5 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The Chinese government says 1 million people have been infected with the AIDS virus, but experts warn the number is higher and could reach 10 million by the end of the decade.

The U.N. special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia, Dr. Nafis Sadik, said AIDS is no ordinary crisis and requires "an extraordinary response."

"We cannot continue to live in a make-believe world," she said.

Botswana's President Festus Mogae gave the keynote address at the meeting.

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The UNESCAP meeting, which has brought together government and U.N. officials from 47 countries, ends on Thursday.

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World

Posted on Tue, Sep. 02, 2003

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09/02/2003 05:24:36

Asia in danger of Africa's AIDS disaster: UN

Source: AFP English Wire Date: September 02, 2003

BANGKOK, Sept 2 (AFP) - Asia-Pacific leaders must take drastic measures to combat the regional HIV/AIDS crisis if they are to avoid the disaster gripping African nations, a United Nations envoy said Tuesday.

Nafis Sadik, the UN's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, urged regional leaders to stop living in a "make-believe world" and adopt extraordinary responses to fight the epidemic's rampant spread.

"Despite many, many expressions of commitment to urgent action against HIV-AIDS, it has become clear to me that national and local authorities are not yet convinced," Sadik told a gathering of ministers and officials from members of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**).

"We have simply not seen the extraordinary responses that **ESCAP** members need to turn back the infection in the Asia-Pacific region," Sadik said.

"HIV/AIDS is the most serious challenge to development that **ESCAP** countries have ever faced, the more serious because it has not yet shown its full power for destruction. But African countries have seen the full, appalling impact...

"It could happen here," she added.

Asia-Pacific is home to 60 percent of the world's population and includes the world's two most populous nations, China and India.

Seven million infections have already been recorded in the region, with one million new infections recorded last year alone, she said.

China, where knowledge of HIV prevention is poor, reported a 17 percent increase in the number of new infections in the first half of 2003, according to Sadik, and it can expect 10 million cases by 2010, the UN estimates.

The number of carriers in India, where there are now nearly 4 million carriers, is expected to skyrocket up to 20-25 million by 2010.

"We urge moral behaviour, but we make policy and policies must be realistic. Let us not live in a make-believe world where HIV/AIDS is someone else's problem," Sadik said.

"It may threaten Asia-Pacific's prospects for continued economic and social development, if countries and the international community do not act."

Sadik said leaders, although frequently paying lip service to fighting the deadly disease, were failing to take action.

"Some leaders have also buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/AIDS is not really an Asian problem: that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups," she warned.

"This is a denial of reality and **ESCAP** countries must tackle it head-on."

Sadik also urged donors to work to better coordinate their programmes, which have mushroomed in number but have improved the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The World Health Organisation has said that the Asia-Pacific region is set to become the epicentre of the global pandemic in the next decade, while the US has already warned that China and India are facing an AIDS "catastrophe".

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U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

By Associated Press

September 2, 2003, 10:25 AM EDT

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U.N. Tells Asia-Pacific to Fight AIDS

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He said regional governments need "to initiate urgent and comprehensive action against the pandemic before it is too late," according to a U.N. statement.

Asia is home to two of the world's most populous countries -- China and India. India is already the world's second worst hit nation, behind South Africa, with 4.5 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

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"We cannot continue to live in a make-believe world," she said.

Botswana's President Festus Mogae gave the keynote address at the meeting.

Despite his country's adult HIV prevalence rate of 38.8 percent at the end of 2001, he expressed optimism that the disease can be contained and offered encouragement.

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The UNESCAP meeting, which has brought together government and U.N. officials from 47 countries, ends on Thursday.

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2003/09/02

Asian nation urged to combat AIDS

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Nafis Sadik, the UN's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, urged regional leaders to stop living in a "make-believe world" and adopt extraordinary responses to fight the epidemic's rampant spread.

"Despite many, many expressions of commitment to urgent action against HIV-AIDS, it has become clear to me that national and local authorities are not yet convinced," Sadik told a gathering of ministers and officials from members of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"We have simply not seen the extraordinary responses that ESCAP

members need to turn back the infection in the Asia-Pacific region," Sadik said.

"HIV/AIDS is the most serious challenge to development that ESCAP countries have ever faced, the more serious because it has not yet shown its full power for destruction.

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Asia Pacific

UN AIDS Specialist Sees Asian Crisis Looming

VOA News
02 Sep 2003, 14:47 UTC

A United Nations envoy is urging Asian governments to take quick and decisive action against the AIDS epidemic, before it ravages economic and social development in the region.

The warning came Tuesday from Nafis Sadik, a U.N. expert on AIDS and the virus that causes it.

Visiting Thailand, Dr. Sadik said Asian leaders are ignoring a looming crisis like the one that has devastated Africa. She told a U.N. conference on health and poverty that some leaders wrongly think HIV and AIDS will remain confined mainly to high-risk groups such as prostitutes and intravenous drug abusers.

Infection rates in Asia are far lower than in southern Africa, the AIDS epicenter. Only three countries, Cambodia, Burma and Thailand, have infection rates higher than one percent. But Dr. Sadik predicted Asia will account for 40 percent of new infections worldwide within seven years, if countries do not address the problem now.

Asia is home to two of the world's most populous countries, India and China. India, with at least four million AIDS cases, is second only to South Africa. China has one

million reported infections, but experts say the number is higher and could reach 10 million by the end of the decade.

The annual meeting of UNESCAP, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, brought together in Bangkok government officials from 47 countries. The president of Botswana, Festus Mogabe, urged them to avoid the mistake Africa made by acting too late to stem the spread of AIDS.

Some information for this report provided by AP and Reuters.

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REUTERS

09/02/2003 06:45:34

UPDATE 1-Asia leaders ignore looming AIDS crisis-U.N. envoy

(Adds details in paragraph six, Thai Aids campaign)

By Darren Schuettler

BANKOK, Sept 2 (Reuters) - Asian leaders are ignoring a looming ``African-style'' HIV/AIDS crisis that threatens the region's economic and social development, a United Nations special envoy said on Tuesday.

``Some leaders have buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/AIDS is not really an Asian problem -- that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups,'' Nafis Sadik told a U.N. conference on health and poverty.

``This is a denial of reality,'' she told the meeting, attended by ministers and officials from 47 Asia-Pacific countries. ``Countries must tackle it head on.''

Sadik, special U.N. envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia, did not identify which Asian leaders she thought were not facing up to the AIDS threat.

While infection rates are far lower than in southern Africa, the global epicentre of the disease, experts say the Asia-Pacific region may account for 40 percent of new global infections by 2010 if prevention efforts are not stepped up.

Adult HIV prevalence rates are still relatively low in Asia, exceeding one percent in only three countries -- Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, according to the World Health Organisation.

But the region added one million new cases last year.

``Every day HIV spreads across various sub-populations and into

the general population," Sadik said.

``UNPLEASANT REALITY"

The pandemic had yet to show its ``full power for destruction" in Asia, but African countries had seen the full, appalling impact, Sadik said.

``Two of the most advanced countries in that region, Botswana and South Africa, are looking at the possibility of economic disaster and social disintegration as a result of HIV/AIDS," she said.

``It could happen here," Sadik told the annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) in Bangkok.

An estimated 14 million people are affected by AIDS in southern Africa. South Africa has the world's highest caseload with 4.7 million people infected with HIV or AIDS, while the disease affects about 35 percent of the population of Botswana.

Among Asia's most populous countries, about one million people are living with HIV in China and that could rise to 10 million cases by 2010.

Beijing has been slow in responding to the pandemic and only in recent years felt able to discuss sexual health in public.

India could have up to 25 million HIV carriers by 2010, up from nearly four million cases today. HIV has also shown up in 26 of Indonesia's 30 provinces, Sadik said.

``Neglect in a region where 60 percent of the world's population live will have global consequences. A major AIDS epidemic is waiting to happen. I urge you to make sure that it does not," Sadik said.

Thailand, where infection rates are falling after a campaign to promote condoms in the commercial sex trade, is one of the region's rare success stories.

But experts fear the government's commitment to promoting AIDS awareness and condom use is weakening.

`I think the message that leaders should act applies to our country too. I'm afraid infections will rise again because there is no campaign on television or billboards," said Dr Prapan Phanuphak, of the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre.

Up to 98 percent of Thai men use condoms at brothels, the government says, but too many people still refuse to use condoms with casual sex partners.

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Press/Media:	BANGKOK POST	Date: 3 September 2003
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ADDRESS / ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Challenges ahead will test region's resilience

The following is an abridged version of a policy statement by Kim Hak-su, executive secretary of United Nations' Escap, to the 59th commission session being held in Bangkok this week.

In 2002, Escap developing countries were able to exceed their collective 2001 growth by nearly two percentage points and were the fastest growing economies in the world in that year. But, looking ahead to the remaining months of 2003 and into 2004, it is clear that matching this performance is subject to major caveats.

First on the list is the aftermath of the war in Iraq. Slow progress in achieving stability in Iraq, and the tragic death of so many of our United Nations colleagues in Baghdad last month symbolise the acute dangers existing in that country.

Energy markets remain volatile, with oil prices continuing to fluctuate around $30 a barrel, some 15% more than at the same time a year ago. The Escap region is vulnerable to high energy prices as it is dependent for about 40% of its energy needs on imported oil.

Second, on-going political tensions on the Korean peninsula are almost certainly having a negative impact on business and consumer confidence in East Asia, home to three of the four largest economies of the region.

Low business confidence inevitably means that investment expenditure, the main engine of medium-term growth, is kept on hold.

Third, the danger of a major terrorist attack, such as those in Jakarta and Bombay recently, will pre-empt and divert resources from urgent development needs to the needs of security in the region as a whole.

Our theme study, "Integrating economic and social concerns, especially HIV/Aids, in meeting the needs of the region", states that, more than ever before, it is crucial to promote public health in the region. If we do nothing, or if we do too little, future generations may well hold us responsible for an unravelling of the economic and social gains of the region, threatened as they are by the HIV/Aids pandemic.

Notwithstanding these external and domestic challenges, Escap developing countries should be able to maintain the 2002 momentum of growth in 2003 with the likelihood of modest acceleration in 2004 as global conditions improve.

As of the end of August 2003, our best judgment for the remainder of 2003 is that the balance of risks is broadly neutral. This is based on the view that evidence of stronger growth in the global economy, particularly the United States and Japan, is still somewhat hazy and such growth is likely to materialise only in 2004. Meanwhile, China, the second largest economy in the region, continues to grow strongly and should provide an impetus for continuing intra-regional trade growth that underpinned regional gross domestic product growth in 2002, and should continue to do so in 2003 as a whole and beyond.

Sustaining growth at existing levels will need the strong commitment and resolve of governments in the region in a number of areas. It is imperative that countries must pursue, within a prudent macro-economic framework, with renewed vigour, corporate and financial sector reform and improved standards of both public and private governance. They must also continue to enhance regional and sub-regional cooperation in its various forms, be it in trade, public health, financial markets, or in the sharing of information and intelligence to counter terrorism.



Kim Hak-su

There is also a need for governments in the region to prepare for unforeseen events. One of the lessons of the last few years is that in a globalised world economy negative shocks do not remain confined to particular countries or to specific regions. As we look ahead over the next 12 months, it is essential for countries to have contingency plans to deal with unforeseen events. These include public health crises and terrorism, which could occur at any time. Intra-regional cooperation, through formal and informal channels, is needed even more today than in previous years.

Economic, social and technological trends are leading to unprecedented changes in the socio-economic milieu of the region. In order to bring a sharper focus in our work we will concentrate on three key thematic areas: poverty reduction, managing globalisation and addressing emerging social issues.

These three themes provide a conceptual basis for us to integrate economic and social concerns to meet the needs of the region. They also present a framework for combining theoretical precepts with lessons drawn from real life.

The process of globalisation has been more vibrant in Asia than elsewhere. However, its benefits have not been distributed equally and marginalisation remains a pervasive and on-going threat for many in the region. Trade and investment flows are the principal means to enable countries to participate in the world economy.

As we approach the mid-term review of the Doha work programme at the fifth World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Cancun, Mexico next week, developing countries rightly wish to see concrete evidence of development benefits accruing from the on-going negotiations.

The recent revision by the government of Japan of its GDP scheme to substantially expand duty free and quota free access to the products of developing countries, and of the least developed countries in particular, is a welcome initiative. Similarly, recent initiatives to expand the membership and coverage of products under regional trade arrangements, including those under the third round of negotiations of the Bangkok Agreement should also continue to provide a mechanism for expanded trade flows among countries of the region.

The last few years have demonstrated the enormous benefits of information, communication and technology (ICT) in a wide range of applications relevant to globalisation. Yet, despite significant efforts at the national and regional levels, we are still far from ensuring that the benefits of ICT are available to all in Asia and the Pacific.

This is partly because the so-called digital divide is a reflection of the economic and social divides of poverty, illiteracy and uneven access to health care, and partly because of low levels of investment in the required human and physical capital by governments. There is an urgent need for concerted actions by all stakeholders to narrow the gap by creating favourable national policy frameworks. One of Escap's contributions to the process has been the creation of the Information, Communication and Space Technology Division, which has the promotion of ICT in the region as its primary mandate.

When I first joined Escap, I was concerned that we were undertaking piecemeal activities at a scale too small to make a meaningful impact in the region. Hence, one important decision, which has already begun to shape Escap's technical cooperation projects, has been to encourage the concentration of our limited resources on fewer projects.

Rather than spreading resources thinly across a wide range of activities, resulting in a plethora of small projects of limited scope and impact, Escap has now moved towards implementing larger projects in areas of key strategic concern.

The region faces major challenges over the coming months. Some of these challenges are external in origin and governments in the region may not be able to fully counter the risks to development that emanate from them. The region also has many strengths, not least being its resilience. These strengths need to be harnessed to meet the challenges facing the region.

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Date: 3 September 2003

State leaders 'must carry the HIV/Aids fight'



ESCAP EXECUTIVE SECRETARY *Kim Hak-Su, right, Botswana President Festus Mogae, centre, and UN special envoy for HIV/Aids Nafis Sadik called for strong leadership in the fight against HIV/Aids at its 59th session yesterday.*

■ *Mukdawan Sakboon*
THE NATION

EVERY PRIME MINISTER and president in Asia-Pacific must take the lead in the fight against HIV/Aids, which poses a serious threat to the region's economic prosperity and social development, regional ministers were told yesterday.

HIV/Aids must be integrated into national development planning and poverty-reduction strategies with adequate resources, said Kim Hak-su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

As the disease poses serious challenges to development, governments must pay more attention to health, education, gender equality and social justice, he told the ministerial round table at Escap's 59th session yesterday.

Despite much rhetoric, national and local authorities have yet to be convinced, said Nafis Sadik, special envoy of the UN secretary-general for HIV/Aids in the region.

"We have not seen the extraordinary responses needed to turn back the infection in the region," said Sadik, who advises Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Many leaders have said nothing, too few are willing to stand up, and some have buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/Aids is not really an Asian problem, she said.

Yet if leaders fail to act promptly, the disease may threaten the region's prospects for continued economic and social development, Sadik said.

Botswanan President Festus Mogae cautioned the international community against repeating the failure of some African countries to address HIV/Aids quickly.

He said society needed to talk openly about sexuality and overcome cultural taboos that obstructed the fight.

Mogae, Kim and Sadik orchestrated a call for countries in the region to unite to prevent the possible economic disaster and social disintegration that has affected countries like Botswana and South Africa.

Sadik said regional leaders had to tackle the stigmatisation of HIV-positive people and vulnerable groups, and protect their human rights.

Countries must ensure that everyone in need of treatment is provided with medicine and must make use of the new dispensation on the part of the World Trade Organisation by importing cheaper, generic versions of HIV/Aids drugs from developing countries with pharmaceutical manufacturers, she said.

National programmes must address the scourge of Aids on women and prioritise the vulnerability of girls and women to HIV/Aids, she added.

In some countries men's demands for sex with virgins in a bid to avoid infection has "fuelled a vicious trade in these girls", Sadik said.

She called for realistic policy to decriminalise "high-risk" behaviour, including drug use, homosexuality and prostitution.

Kim said Escap had developed three publications on best practices in the HIV/Aids fight as an action guide for governments.

The Daily Star
Comitted to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW
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International

Asia faces AIDS doom: UN

AFP, Bangkok

Asia-Pacific leaders must take drastic measures to combat the regional HIV/AIDS crisis if they are to avoid the disaster gripping African nations, a United Nations envoy said yesterday.

Nafis Sadik, the UN's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, urged regional leaders to stop living in a "make-believe world" and adopt extraordinary responses to fight the epidemic's rampant spread.

"Despite many, many expressions of commitment to urgent action against HIV-AIDS, it has become clear to me that national and local authorities are not yet convinced," Sadik told a gathering of ministers and officials from members of the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"We have simply not seen the extraordinary responses that ESCAP members need to turn back the infection in the Asia-Pacific region," Sadik said.

"HIV/AIDS is the most serious challenge to development that ESCAP countries have ever faced, the more serious because it has not yet shown its full power for destruction. But African countries have seen the full, appalling impact...

"It could happen here," she added.

Asia-Pacific is home to 60 percent of the world's population and includes the world's two most populous nations, China and India.

Seven million infections have already been recorded in the region, with one million new infections recorded last year alone, she said.

China, where knowledge of HIV prevention is poor, reported a 17 percent increase in the number of new infections in the first half of 2003, according to Sadik, and it can expect 10 million cases by 2010, the UN estimates.

The number of carriers in India, where there are now nearly 4 million carriers, is expected to skyrocket up to 20-25 million by 2010.

"We urge moral behaviour, but we make policy and policies must be realistic. Let us not live in a make-believe world where HIV/AIDS is someone else's problem," Sadik said.

"It may threaten Asia-Pacific's prospects for continued economic and social development, if countries and the international community do not act."

Sadik said leaders, although frequently paying lip service to fighting the deadly disease, were failing to take action.

"Some leaders have also buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/AIDS is not really an Asian problem: that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups," she warned.

"This is a denial of reality and ESCAP countries must tackle it head-on."

Sadik also urged donors to work to better coordinate their programmes, which have mushroomed in number but have improved the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The World Health Organisation has said that the Asia-Pacific region is set to become the epicentre of the global pandemic in the next decade, while the US has already warned that China and India are facing an AIDS "catastrophe".

edia: BANGKOK POST
s): 5 (international)
Date: 3 September 2003

UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT

Asia 'ignoring looming crisis'

Sadik: Nations must tackle Aids head-on

Asian leaders are ignoring a looming "African-style" HIV/Aids crisis that threatens the region's economic and social development, a United Nations special envoy said yesterday.

"Some leaders have buried themselves in the illusion that HIV/Aids is not really an Asian problem — that the infection will somehow restrict itself to the high-risk groups," Nafis Sadik told a UN conference in Bangkok on health and poverty attended by ministers and officials from 47 Asia-Pacific countries.

"This is a denial of reality," she said. "Countries must tackle it head-on."

Ms Sadik, special UN envoy for HIV/Aids in Asia, did not identify which Asian leaders she thought were not facing up to the Aids threat.

While infection rates are far lower than in southern Africa, the global epicentre of the disease, experts say the Asia-Pacific region may account for 40% of new global infections by 2010 if prevention efforts are not stepped up.

Adult HIV prevalence rates are still relatively low in Asia, exceeding 1% in only three countries — Cambodia, Thailand and Burma, according to the World Health Organisation. But the region added one million new cases last year.

"Every day HIV spreads across various sub-populations and into the general population," Ms Sadik said.

The pandemic had yet to show its "full power for destruction" in Asia, but African countries had seen the full, appalling impact, Ms Sadik said.

"Two of the most advanced countries in that region, Botswana and South Africa, are looking at the possibility of economic disaster and social disintegration as a result of HIV/Aids.

"It could happen here," Ms Sadik said at the annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

An estimated 14 million people are affected by Aids in southern Africa. South Africa has the world's highest caseload with 4.7 million people infected with HIV or Aids, while the disease affects about 35% of the population of Botswana.

Among Asia's most populous countries, about one million people are living with HIV in China and that could rise to 10 million cases by 2010. Beijing has been slow in responding to the pandemic and only in recent years felt able to discuss sexual health in public.

India could have up to 25 million HIV carriers by 2010, up from nearly four million cases today. HIV has also shown up in 26 of Indonesia's 30 provinces, Ms Sadik said.

"A major Aids epidemic is waiting to happen," she said. — Reuters

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: The Universal Daily News Date: 3 September 2003

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Summary

波札那總統來訪 昨晤塔信

兩人交換愛滋病防治意見 泰允提供援助

【本報曼谷訊】塔信總理會見到訪的波札那共和國總統摩戈，並表示非常願意在預防和治療愛滋病方面給予支持和幫助。

塔信總理昨天(2日)在政府官邸會見應亞太經社會委員會邀請來訪的波札那共和國總統摩戈，塔信對摩戈的到訪表示歡迎，並相互交換有關預防和治療愛滋病意見，泰國政府非常願意在包括醫療保健等方面給博國予援助。

波札那總統摩戈對塔信總理給予該國的援助表示感謝，對泰國能夠快速從97年金融危機中復甦和提前償清IMF貸款感到高興，並讚賞泰國在科技和人類財富，特別是研究和生產價格低廉的愛滋病用藥方面取得的成績，相信以上的成就將對其他發展中國家有很大的幫助。

塔信總理也向摩戈總統探詢該國的經濟狀況，並表示泰國的農產品和非洲國家生產的珠寶可以在貿易上互補，將來的貿易和投資前景十分優越。

Press/Media: The Universal Daily News
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Summary

亞太經社會呼籲控制愛滋病蔓延

金學洙敦促各國採取經濟社會協調發展政策控制愛滋病

聯手遏止愛滋病蔓延

亞太經社會執行秘書金學洙(左)昨天在曼谷舉行的亞太經社會年會中，與與會的非洲國家代表商談關於防治和制止愛滋病患者的最新和資料。大會昨天呼籲亞太各國在消除貧困的同時要控制愛滋病的蔓延。(本報記者馬嘉祿攝)

【南越社曼谷2日電】聯合國亞洲及太平洋經濟社會委員會（亞太經社會）第59屆年會的與會者2日在曼谷呼籲亞太各國採取經濟、社會協調發展的政策，在消除貧困的同時控制愛滋病的蔓延。

在當天舉行的有關愛滋病防治問題的部長級圓桌會議上，亞太經社會執行秘書金學洙說，愛滋病問題不僅僅是醫學問題，更是一個對經濟社會發展和人類生活方式構成威脅的發展問題。他說，經濟社會發展不足直接導致了愛滋病的蔓延，疾病的流散又會對生活在發展中國家的低收入人群和經濟發展造成巨大危害。

金學洙說，聯合國公佈的數據顯示，世界上95%的愛滋病患者生活在發展中國家，因此應該把控制愛滋病蔓延和消除貧困結合起來，只有經濟、社會協調發展才能從根本上控制疾病兩端。他呼籲各國政府在制定國家發展戰略、各行業運行計劃和扶貧項目的時候考慮有關愛滋病的因素，並提醒各國確保足夠的財力和人力資源理對愛滋病帶來的影響。

統計數字顯示，目前全球4,200萬愛滋病患者和愛滋病病毒帶菌者中有800萬生活在亞太地區，每5名新增感染病例中就有1例發生在這一地區。如果不採取切實有效的控制措施，亞太地區將取代非洲撒哈拉沙漠以南地區成為世界上愛滋病嚴染的高發區。

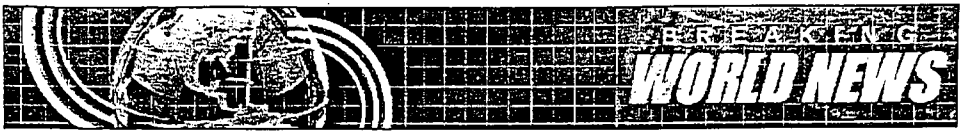
亞太經社會本屆年會的主題是理對本區域需要，解決經濟社會問題，尤其是愛滋病問題。其他議題包括區域經濟合作、扶貧、環境及新出現的社會問題等。

【本報特約記者道瑞祥報導】亞太經社會此次大會的主要議題是愛滋病在本地區的發展及影響亞太各國政府理應採取的理對措施。

全球愛滋病大爆發的第2波主要在印度，中國等一些發展國家產生，如果控制不住，將給本地區造成無法估量的巨大的經濟損失，影響本地區社會穩定和發展。

中國外交部部長助理代團長率領中國代表團參此次會議。代團成員表示：在面臨這樣的巨大挑戰面前，所有的國家唯一的選擇就是共同努力，來克服我們所面臨的挑戰。

上海市政府也派代表出席此次會議。旨在親眼此次會議，並為明年在中國上海市召開的第60屆大會做準備。據悉，明年會議的主題還是愛滋病及愛滋病帶來的貧困問題。



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UN warns Asia its faces the sam devastation as Africa if AIDS left unchecked

BANGKOK (AP) - UN officials on Tuesday urged Asi Pacific countries to take decisive action against the A epidemic, which they said is devastating the region t same way it ravaged Africa.

Speakers at the annual meeting of the United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the P said that even a low prevalence rate could translate i massive numbers of infections given the region's hug population.

UNESCAP's executive secretary, Kim Hak-su, said n than 50 per cent of new infections worldwide occur a young people, making the region especially vulnerab HIV because of its estimated population of 620 millio youths.

He said regional governments need to initiate "urgen comprehensive action against the pandemic before it too late," according to a UN statement.

Asia is home to two of the world's most populous cou - China and India. India is already the world's second worst hit country, behind South Africa, with 4.5 millio people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The Chinese government says one million people ha been infected with the AIDS virus, but experts warn t numbers is higher and could reach 10 million by the

Suggest a poll question

number is higher and could reach 10 million by the e the decade.

The UN special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia, Dr. Nafis Sadik, said AIDS is no ordinary crisis and requires "a extraordinary response."

"We cannot continue to live in a make-believe world,' said.

President Festus Mogae of Botswana, delivering the keynote address, told the gathering he remains confi the disease can be contained in his country despite a adult infection rate of almost 39 per cent.

"In the fight against HIV/AIDS, we have found that it i absolutely imperative to be open and frank about sexuality," said Mogae, who has been recognized as of Africa's leading statesmen in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"We have to deal with cultural taboos and traditions t stand in the way of the fight against the pandemic."

The UNESCAP meeting, which has brought together government and UN officials from 47 countries, ends Thursday.

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Last updated at (Beijing Time) Wednesday, September 03, 2003

China Ready to Work with All Parties to Offset HIV/AIDS Impact

China is contributing within its own capacity to the global prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and ready to cooperate with all parties to offset the epidemic's impact, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang said Tuesday in Bangkok.

PRINT DISCUSSION CHINESE SEND TO FRIEND

China is contributing within its own capacity to the global prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and ready to cooperate with all parties to offset the epidemic's impact, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang said Tuesday in Bangkok.

"We have incorporated the prevention and treatment of the epidemic into the national overall development," said Shen at a ministerial roundtable of the second phase of the 59 Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Trying to take control the spread of the disease, the Chinese government had set up inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms and formulated related laws and regulations, the assistant minister said.

One hundred demonstration zones for comprehensive prevention and treatment have been set up around China and strengthened efforts have been taken to expand publicity and education of the disease in China's rural and remote provinces.

The Chinese government has pledged a donation 10 million US dollars in the coming 5 years to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

After the outbreak of SARS, Shen said, China has given greater importance to the development of public health system so as to

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setup a sound public health emergency mechanism.

Noting HIV/AIDS both a medical and development issue, Shen called on all-round measures, such as balanced social and economic development, parallel emphasis on prevention and treatment, to be taken to tackle the problem.

He also said that effective international cooperation was central to addressing the issue.

By the end of 2002, China reported an accumulated number of 40,560 HIV infected cases, while experts estimated the number was around 1 million.

The UNESCAP session, attended by delegations from 62 member and associate member countries and territories of UNESCAP, included two ministerial roundtables on HIV/AIDS and the report of the UN's Millennium Development Goals for Asia and the Pacific.

The session would also include discussions on implications of recent economic and social development on the region and delegates are expected to recommend policy responses.

The session will conclude on Thursday with the adoption of a report containing resolutions and a summary of the three-day discussion.

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Don't ignore AIDS, UN envoy warns Asian government officials

2 September – A top United Nations envoy today called on ministers and senior government officials from 47 Asian nations not to ignore the threat of HIV/AIDS and its devastating impact on communities.

In Bangkok for the 59th annual meeting of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia Nafis Sadik said "AIDS is no ordinary crisis. It must call forth an extraordinary response. We cannot continue to live in a make believe world."

Also speaking at the meeting being held from 1 to 4 September, UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su warned that even a low prevalence rate could translate into massive numbers of infections in the Asia-Pacific region as it has the largest population base in the world.

Given the fact that over 50 per cent of new infections worldwide occur among young people there are an estimated 620 million young lives in the region especially vulnerable to HIV, he warned. Mr Kim Hak-Su highlighted the need for governments to initiate urgent and comprehensive action against the pandemic before it is too late.

Another highlight was the launch of an HIV/AIDS advocacy kit entitled "To Care To Dare: Fight HIV/AIDS Save Lives" - designed to help governments combat the pandemic through a multi-sectoral approach.

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UN-ESCAP promotes right-based approaches for PWDs

BANGKOK, Sept 4 (TNA) - The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) is promoting its member countries to formulate and implement right-based approaches to assist and support persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the region, according to executive secretary of UN-ESCAP.

Mr. Kim Hak-Su, the UN-ESCAP's Executive Secretary, who is also UN Under Secretary General concurrently, said that the UN-ESCAP was assisting its member countries to formulate and implement policies based on the rights-based approaches to support the improvement of living conditions and quality of life of PWDs.

The assistance was part of the Bangkok-based UN body's strategic attempts to help address socio-economic woes in the region, he indicated.

Among other moves, the UN-ESCAP organized a regional gathering, called the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002 in the Japanese city of Otsu last October, in which the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) for Action towards an Inclusive, Rights-based and Barrier-Free Society for PWDs in the region was adopted, he stated.

"The BMF emphasizes the rights of PWDs to education, employment, and access to the built environment, public transport, and information and communications technologies (ICT)", he disclosed.

Mr. Kim made the remarks as part of his keynote speech delivered at the second phase of the UN-ESCAP's 59th session, held at the UN Conference Centre here on 1-4 September.

The UN-ESCAP had to divide its 59th session into two phases this year due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic, which struck the region earlier this year.

The UN-ESCAP now has 53 member countries and nine associate member countries in the Asian-Pacific region after its admission of Timor-Leste as its latest full member country in July.

Apart from the meeting in Otsu late last year, the UN-ESCAP is also supporting the tailoring of a new comprehensive and integral international human rights convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of PWDs by all parties concerned.

Workshops have been organized, aimed at brainstorming ideas and exchanging views of parties concerned, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, human rights institutions, and disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) on proposed and elaborated contents of the new convention.

For instance, the one organized here on 2-4 June, 2003, in which the Bangkok Recommendations on the Elaboration of a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of PWDs was adopted.

Realizing that most women and girls with disabilities have suffered even more difficulties and disadvantages in the society than men and boys with disabilities, as they are the most vulnerable and the least protected group having faced with triple discrimination--being female, disabled and poor--the parties concerned have attempted to include issues of women and girls with disabilities in the proposed new convention concretely.

The UN-ESCAP has supported the moves.

One good example was its organizing of a workshop on Women and Disability:Promoting Full Participation of Women with Disabilities in the Process of Elaborating on an International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, held at the Bangkok-based UN-ESCAP office on 18-22 August, 2003.

At the end of the five-day workshop, participants adopted a statement of recommendations, saying mainly that elements of the new convention should ensure that women and girls with disabilities would enjoy the full range of human rights and freedom with dignity and without any discrimination, and that state parties should have an obligation to implement provisions to ensure equal protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

The statement of recommendations also urged existing human rights bodies and mechanisms to intensify their efforts to address issues of disability, including those concerning women and girls with disabilities.

In its annual session last year, the UN-ESCAP also adopted the year 2003-2012 as the Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, with the BMF being the core of collective moves towards the expected achievement of inclusive, rights-based and barrier-free society for PWDs in the region. (TNA)--E002

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Challenged by Annan on AIDS, Asian-Pacific region pledges urgent action

4 September – Summoned by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to answer the "terrifying challenge" of reversing the growing threat of AIDS, Asian-Pacific countries today committed themselves to urgently address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and deadly infectious diseases.

The 59th Commission Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) adopted four resolutions, including one demanding commitment and political will at the highest decision-making levels to fight HIV/AIDS, calling it "a major development challenge of our times, which could unravel the many social and economic gains that the region has achieved."

In a message urging the Commission to gird itself for the challenge, Mr. Annan told ministers and senior government officials from 47 nations: "Left unchecked AIDS can devastate millions of lives and impose big burdens on the region's health system."

UNESCAP's Executive Secretary, Mr. Kim Hak-Su, said: "Inertia and inaction on HIV/AIDS when we can prevent death is a crime against humanity. We must act now to increase resources for targeted interventions – protect 620 million young people in the region."

A resolution on Strengthening Social Safety in the Asia

and Pacific Region, stressed that public policy on social welfare should move beyond "crisis management" to strengthening the overall social safety systems to help people manage risks.

It calls for strengthened efforts to foster social integration and an enabling environment for social development, by promoting productive employment and eradicating poverty.

Other resolutions called for full equal rights for peoples with disabilities and for promoting sustainable growth and development in the least developed countries (LDCs).

"The population of the LDCs has risen to an estimated 700 million, about 11 per cent of the world's population," Anwarul K. Chowdhury, UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, said in a statement read out for him.

"However, their share of the world's GDP is only about 0.6 per cent. After two decades of efforts to address their social and economic agenda, development remains still elusive for the 49 LDCs, of whom 13 are in the Asia-Pacific region," he added.

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UNESCAP calls for political commitment to HIV/AIDS control

www.chinaview.cn 2003-09-05 01:27

BANGKOK, Sept. 4 (Xinhuanet) -- The highest degree of political commitment is crucial to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Asia Pacific region, said a resolution adopted by delegations from the area.

All members and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) are called upon to "respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic with political commitment at the highest decision-making level," said the resolution released on Thursday at the end of the second phaseof UNESCAP's 59th Commission Session.

The resolution asked the governments of this region to mainstream HIV/AIDS into national economic and social development planning and to guarantee abundant human and finance resources to address HIV/AIDS related issues.

It urged the governments to make concrete efforts toward the target of 0.7 percent of the gross national product for official development assistance.

According to the resolution, the Asia and Pacific region would face a resource gap of an estimated 7 billion US dollars by 2007 for HIV/AIDS.

The governments are also urged to make related policies to prevent the spread of the disease in high-risk sexual behavior, reuse of virus-contaminated equipment and unsafe blood and blood products.

"If we don't act now, Asia will be in disaster several years later," said UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su at a press conference after the session.

Among the world's HIV affected population of 42 million, 8 million live in the Asia Pacific region.

The region also has some 620 million young people that are

The region also has some 130 million young people that are especially vulnerable to HIV.

Statistics showed that currently one in five of new HIV infections throughout the world occur in the region, which threatens to replace sub-Saharan Africa as the new center of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic if effective actions are not taken.

Kim cited Thailand as a good example of political commitment's effectiveness on the control of the disease.

Through several years' efforts, Thailand has cut down the number of HIV infection cases from over 140,000 annually in 1991 to about 20,000 today.

It's predicted that the number of new infections should not be higher than 15,000 by the year 2006.

"Without the prime minister, deputy minister's political commitment, there would be millions more of infection cases in Thailand," said Kim. Enditem

Related Stories

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09/08/2003 04:02:10

ASIA-PACIFIC/ NEGLECT OF HIV/AIDS PROBLEM WILL UNDERCUT ECONOMY

English IPS News via NewsEdge Corporation : by Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK, Sep. 4 (IPS/GIN) -- Countries across Asia and the Pacific may soon be staring at a drastic cut in their labour force - and see their economies undermined -- if their leaders fail to take action to stall the deadly march of HIV/AIDS, a senior U.N. official here.

This dire prediction by Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**), comes at a time when the region is still to witness the commitment displayed by Thailand to confront the killer disease.

"Inertia and inaction on HIV/AIDS when we can prevent death is a crime against humanity. We must act now to increase resources for targeted interventions - protect 620 million young people in the region," Kim said in a statement released Thursday at the end of **ESCAP**'s annual session for government leaders held here.

"If we don't act now, HIV/AIDS will become a social and developmental issue," he told a press conference earlier in the day. "Our accumulated economic growth will be wiped out."

The impact the pandemic will have on the region's labour force was one among many concerns Kim and other officials reiterated during this week's meeting, which began Sep.1.

Earlier, Festus Mogae, president of Botswana, told a group of journalists on the sidelines of the meeting that Asian countries should avoid the mistake made by African countries in "starting very late" to mount a determined response to HIV/AIDS.

"It is very important to mount serious projects now, when the prevalence rates are low," said Mogae.

"It has to be seen more than a health problem, which was one of our mistakes," added Mogae, whose country has over one-third of

its population living with HIV/AIDS. "Only a comprehensive approach will generate success."

Indeed, **ESCAP**'s Kim warned that continuing to neglect the HIV/AIDS problem will result in Asia-Pacific countries experiencing a "double squeezing" of the labour force.

If this happens, the region, home to some of the world's most robust economies, would witness a drop in its working population due, first, to a steady rise in its ageing citizens, and second, to the fact that people in the most productive age brackets are the most vulnerable group HIV/AIDS.

The number of people over 65 years is currently six percent of the region's population, but that number is due to reach 10 percent in 20 years time, states a U.N. study.

Meanwhile, the region's youngest citizens are among the most vulnerable to the pandemic as HIV/AIDS enters its third decade, notes a report by **ESCAP**, 'Economic and Social Progress in Jeopardy: HIV/AIDS in the Asian and Pacific Region'.

"With over half of all new HIV infections occurring among people aged between 15 and 24 years, the Asian and Pacific region's 620 million young people are at great risk," states the report, released this week at the U.N. body's ministerial meeting.

"Especially vulnerable are young people in sex work, young IDUs (intravenous drug users), sexually abused youth, young combatants, young civilians caught up in armed conflict, street youth and orphaned youth," it reveals.

"Millions are already affected by the epidemic. Yet vast number of young people remain unaware or ignorant concerning HIV/AIDS," it adds. "The information and services that could prevent infection are often not available to, or accessible by, young people, and national strategies reflect scant regard for young people's needs and realities."

Consequently, **ESCAP** is urging government leaders up to the levels of prime ministers and presidents to take a cue from what Thailand has achieved in its struggle against the killer disease.

Currently, this South-east Asian country, which was among the first hit by HIV/AIDS in the region in the early 1980s, has an estimated 700,000 people living with the virus, according to a U.N. study.

But experts have also calculated that the number could have been dramatically higher by now - an estimated four million people with HIV/AIDS - had the Thai government in the early 1990s ignored the pandemic, according to the **ESCAP** report.

What Bangkok did, instead, was launch a high-profile, across-the-board programme to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, a campaign where the prime minister and the minister of health at that time took active part in.

ESCAP's appeal this week for greater political dynamism to deal with HIV/AIDS also comes in the wake of a scathing report released Wednesday by Human Rights Watch (HRW), which faulted China for fuelling the spread of the pandemic due to "widespread discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS".

"Many people living with HIV/AIDS have no access to health care because hospitals refuse to treat them," the New York-based rights lobby charged in its 94-page report, 'Locked Doors: The Human Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS in China'.

"Instead of receiving help for their problem, they are driven underground, making it harder" for the government to combat HIV/AIDS, the report added.

The report's findings will add to the growing concern that China's attitude towards HIV/AIDS, despite its stated official recognition of the HIV/AIDS problem, can result in Asia replacing Africa as the continent worst hit by the pandemic.

Currently, Asia's badly affected areas are India, with 3.9 million people living with HIV/AIDS, China with 800,000, the Russian Federation with 700,000, Thailand with a similar number and Burma with an estimated 500,000.

South and South-east Asia have over six million people living with the virus, while East Asia and the Pacific are home to 1.2 million people with the virus.

By the end of 2002, some 42 million people were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS globally. Sub-Saharan Africa was the worst hit, with 29.4 million people with HIV/AIDS.

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FROM THE FIELD

04 Sep 2003 10:55:00 GMT

Federation News 18/03

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - Switzerland
Website: http://www.ifrc.org

- Humanitarian logistics software goes live
- Severe renewed flooding in China
- Beating dengue in Cambodia
- Iraqi Red Crescent volunteers assist victims of Najaf car bomb
- Algerian Red Crescent prepares to relocate earthquake victims
- Global solidarity to be marked on World First Aid Day
- Governments in Asia urged to reassess HIV/AIDS policies
- Concern expressed over small island developing states

Concern expressed over small island developing states

The International Federation distributed a statement at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific this week on the vulnerability of small island developing states and other countries made vunerable by their remoteness. The Federation is involved in work being done in preparation for an international meeting on this issue in Mauritius in August 2004. "It is our hope that all Governments, and especially those in affected countries and those in a position to assist them, will look at the issues with special concern for the vulnerabilities that remoteness and isolation raise," according to the Federation statement.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST

Page(s): P. 4

Date: 5 September 2003

Summary

ESCAP DECLARATION

More needs to be done to fight Aids

Prevention strategies not good enough

Aphaluck Bhatiasevi

Despite playing a leading role in combating HIV/Aids in the region, Thailand needs to do more to raise awareness on the prevention and control of the disease among youth, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said yesterday.

San Yuenwah, Escap's chief of Health and Development Section, said "even in Thailand, where there is wide recognition of the disease, there is no room for compliance."

She said the country's 100% condom use campaign should focus more on the youth, and issues concerned with stigma and discrimination need to also be addressed.

She said so long as issues concerned with sex, sexuality, men who have sex with men, casual sex and multiple sex partners are not discussed openly, it will be difficult to address the problems.

Her comments came after the closure of the three-day annual Escap meeting, which for the first time in six decades focused on HIV/Aids.

The declaration adopted at the annual session called for an urgent increase in funds to implement the HIV prevention strategies, which include improved access to HIV preventive services and promotion of respectful and responsible sexual behaviour.

Ms Yuenwah said countries in the region need to contribute more towards the HIV/Aids fight.

"The problem right now is that the disease is at the micro level and we don't see it visibly. Unlike Sars, which was big big news because it hit people who took flights, HIV/Aids is a slow killer and has been around for a long time," she said.

Ms Yuenwan said though Thailand has one of the best anti-retroviral drugs distribution networks, it is accessible only to about 5% of the people who need the drugs.

"It's not anything to be satisfied with at this point. Even the best is not enough," she said.

Mr Kim Hak-Su, the Escap executive secretary, said if the countries did not immediately respond to the problem, the situation could become disastrous because it has a strong impact on each nation's economic growth.

He said the purpose of the three-day meeting, which also came up with a declaration of commitment on HIV/Aids, aims at seeking the highest political commitment in tackling the issue, "because somebody making an initiative at the highest level can make a very big difference."

Mr Kim said the HIV/Aids problem is more serious in South and Southeast Asia than East Asian nations.

Without naming names, he said some countries had a large number of cases but refused to admit they were in a crisis until recently.

"There is still a tendency of not telling the full story. They keep hiding information," he said, adding that this could worsen the situation which required an immediate action plan.

In another development, the World Health Organisation recently expressed concern about a recurrence of the Sars epidemic.

Considerable uncertainty surrounds the question of whether Sars might recur, perhaps according to a seasonal pattern, states a WHO press release issued on Tuesday.

The release said several respiratory illnesses remain subdued when the temperature and humidity are high and only return when it gets cooler.

The influenza bug infects about 10-20% of the population each year.

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Sunday, September 07, 2003

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Neglect of HIV-AIDS problem to undercut the economy

By Marwaan Macan-Markar

COUNTRIES across Asia and the Pacific may soon be staring at a drastic cut in their labor force—and see their economies undermined—if their leaders fail to take action to stall the deadly march of HIV/AIDS, a senior UN official in Thailand said.

This dire prediction by Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), comes at a time when the region is still to witness the commitment displayed by Thailand to confront the killer disease.

"Inertia and inaction on HIV/AIDS when we can prevent death is a crime against humanity. We must act now to increase resources for targeted interventions—protect 620 million young people in the region," Kim said in a statement released Thursday at the end of Escap's annual session for government leaders held in Thailand.

"If we don't act now, HIV/AIDS will become a social and developmental issue," he told a press conference earlier in the day. "Our accumulated economic growth will be wiped out."

The impact the pandemic will have on the region's labor force was one among many concerns Kim and other officials reiterated during last week's meeting, which began September 1.

Earlier, Festus Mogae, president of Botswana, told a group of journalists on the sidelines of the meeting that Asian countries should avoid the mistake made by African countries in "starting very late" to mount a determined response to HIV/AIDS.

"It is very important to mount serious projects now, when the prevalence rates are low," said Mogae.

"It has to be seen more than a health problem, which was one of our mistakes," added Mogae, whose country has over one-third of its population living with HIV/AIDS. "Only a comprehensive approach will generate success."

Double whammy

Indeed, Escap's Kim warned that continuing to neglect the HIV/AIDS problem will result in Asia-Pacific countries experiencing a "double squeezing" of the labor force.

If this happens, the region, home to some of the world's most robust economies, would witness a drop in its working population due, first, to a steady rise in its ageing citizens, and second, to the fact that people in the most productive age brackets are the most vulnerable group HIV/AIDS.

The number of people over 65 years is currently 6 percent of the region's population, but that number is due to reach 10 percent in 20 years time, states a UN study.

Meanwhile, the region's youngest citizens are among the most vulnerable to the pandemic as HIV/AIDS enters its third decade, notes a report by Escap, "Economic and Social Progress in Jeopardy: HIV/AIDS in the Asian and Pacific Region."

"With over half of all new HIV infections occurring among people aged between 15 and 24 years, the Asian and Pacific region's 620 million young people are at great risk," states the report, released this week at the UN body's ministerial meeting.

"Especially vulnerable are young people in sex work, young IDUs [intravenous drug users], sexually abused youth, young combatants, young civilians caught up in armed conflict, street youth and orphaned youth," it reveals.

"Millions are already affected by the epidemic. Yet vast number of young people remain unaware or ignorant concerning HIV/AIDS," it adds. "The information and services that could prevent infection are often not available to, or accessible by, young people, and national strategies reflect scant regard for young people's needs and realities."

Thailand's cue

Consequently, Escap is urging government leaders up to the levels of prime ministers and presidents to take a cue from what Thailand has achieved in its struggle against the killer disease.

Currently, Thailand, which was among the first hit by HIV/AIDS in the region in the early 1980s, has an estimated 700,000 people living with the virus, according to a UN study.

But experts have also calculated that the number could have been dramatically higher by now—an estimated four million people with HIV/AIDS—had the Thai government in the early 1990s ignored the pandemic, according to the Escap report.

What Bangkok did, instead, was launch a high-profile, across-the-board program to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, a campaign where the prime minister

and the minister of health at that time took active part in.

China's secret

Escap's appeal this week for greater political dynamism to deal with HIV/AIDS also comes in the wake of a scathing report released Wednesday by Human Rights Watch, which faulted China for fueling the spread of the pandemic due to "widespread discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS."

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The report's findings will add to the growing concern that China's attitude toward HIV/AIDS, despite its stated official recognition of the HIV/AIDS problem, can result in Asia replacing Africa as the continent worst hit by the pandemic.

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South and Southeast Asia have over six million people living with the virus, while East Asia and the Pacific are home to 1.2 million people with the virus.

By the end of 2002, some 42 million people were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS globally. Sub-Saharan Africa was the worst hit, with 29.4 million people with HIV/AIDS.◆
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29 Aug 2003, 28 Aug 2003

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Next: Mlazie donates to Kasane water affairs department ▸

Mogae's advice on AIDS impresses UNESCAP

08 September, 2003

President Festus Mogae's advice about the HIV/AIDS pandemic during the just ended United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) conference left an indelible mark in the region.

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The president returned from Bangkok, Thailand last week where he addressed delegates to the UNESCAP conference on HIV/AIDS.

The UNESCAP secretariat has described his address to the UNESCAP ministerial roundtable as an inspiration that would go a long way in assisting the Asian and Pacific region to wake up to the realities of HIV/AIDS.

At the end of the conference UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su said delegates were impressed by Mogae's advice regarding the HIV/AIDS.

Hak-Su said Mogae warned the region to avoid Africa's mistakes of inertia and inaction and rather bring the HIV/AIDS pandemic under control before it is too late.

He appreciated Mogae's advice for the region to act now as they have the capacity to overcome HIV/AIDS and for political leaders to play a crucial role in providing direction on HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and in allocating resources for effective implementation.

He said following the restructuring of UNESCAP new features were introduced such as extending invitations to heads of state to address sessions and Mogae was the first to address the forum on HIV/AIDS, which has become a development challenge to the Asian region.

Hak-Su told journalists that Mogae shared Africa's experiences in tackling HIV/AIDS and also admitted that Africa made a mistake of not addressing HIV/AIDS until it

was too late, hence his strong warning to the Asian and Pacific region.

He said the Asian region still faced the challenges of addressing stigma, expanding comprehensive responses to HIV/AIDS and assisting developing countries in the region to develop their institutional capacities and sustain their economies.

He explained that UNESCAP has adopted a number of resolutions such as the need for strong political commitment to secure an expanded and comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the region.

"If AIDS is left unchecked it will not only devastate millions of lives, but will be a huge burden on the region's health systems and soak up resources that are badly needed for social and economic development," Hak-Su said.

BOPA

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Next: Mlazie donates to Kasane water affairs department ▸

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Tuesday, 09 th September 2003

Zaki concludes visit to four SAARC countries as President's special envoy

Monday, 08 September 2003

MALE, Sept 8 (HNS) -- Planning and National Development Minister Ibrahim Hussain Zaki returned Male Saturday evening after concluding his visit to four SAARC member-countries as a special envoy of the President.

During his visit, Zaki presented letters from President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to the heads of state or government of Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

After visiting the four countries as the President's special envoy, Zaki also attended and delivered an address at the 59th Commission Session of ESCAP, which was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

During his stay in Bangkok, he called on the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia and current chairperson of ESCAP, and held discussions on some areas of national development that needed financing.

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Search

Apec leaders urged to take the lead in HIV/AIDs fight

(BANGKOK) Every prime minister and president in Asia-Pacific must take the lead i against HIV/Aids, which poses a serious threat to the region's economic prosperity a development, regional ministers were told Tuesday.

HIV/Aids must be integrated into national development planning and poverty-reducti with adequate resources, said Kim Hak-su, executive secretary of the United Nation Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

As the disease poses serious challenges to development, governments must pay m health, education, gender equality and social justice, he told the ministerial round tal 59th session yesterday.

Despite much rhetoric, national and local authorities have yet to be convinced, said special envoy of the UN secretary-general for HIV/Aids in the region.

"We have not seen the extraordinary responses needed to turn back the infection in Sadik, who advises Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Many leaders have said nothing, too few are willing to stand up, and some have bur in the illusion that HIV/Aids is not really an Asian problem, she said.

Yet if leaders fail to act promptly, the disease may threaten the region's prospects fo economic and social development, Sadik said.

Botswanan President Festus Mogae cautioned the international community against i failure of some African countries to address HIV/Aids quickly.

He said society needed to talk openly about sexuality and overcome cultural taboos the fight.

Mogae, Kim and Sadik orchestrated a call for countries in the region to unite to prev economic disaster and social disintegration that has affected countries like Botswan Africa.

Sadik said regional leaders had to tackle the stigmatisation of HIV-positive people a groups, and protect their human rights.

Countries must ensure that everyone in need of treatment is provided with medicine use of the new dispensation on the part of the World Trade Organisation by importin generic versions of HIV/Aids drugs from developing countries with pharmaceutical m she said.

National programmes must address the scourge of Aids on women and prioritise the girls and women to HIV/Aids, she added.

In some countries men's demands for sex with virgins in a bid to avoid infection has vicious trade in these girls", Sadik said.

She called for realistic policy to decriminalise "high-risk" behaviour, including drug u homosexuality and prostitution.

Kim said Escap had developed three publications on best practices in the HIV/Aids f guide for governments.

Press/Media: **BANGKOK POST**
Page(s): P. 2 (outlook)
Date: 16 September 2003

Summary



President Festus Mogae of Botswana (right) had dinner at the InterContinental Hotel recently during his visit to Thailand to attend a meeting of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Seen welcoming him is Michael Herrmann (left), the hotel's regional general manager.

2. 2003 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific

2.1 General

04/17/2003 10:44:01

SARS creates uncertainty for Asia-Pacific economies this year

by Samantha Brown ATTENTION - CLARIFIES growth downgrade in 2nd para; adds background ///

BANGKOK, April 17 (AFP) - The spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubt over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the UN's economic and social arm said Thursday.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) regional survey for 2003 launched Thursday had projected 5.4 percent growth for developing countries in the region this year but **ESCAP** last week revised the figure down to 5.0 percent due to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

"SARS will not be easy to contain and control. It will affect definitely Asia-Pacific economies, especially those with large tourism sectors," UNESCAP's executive secretary Kim Hak-Su told reporters.

The growth forecast is slightly lower than the 5.1 percent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

"There is caution. Accurate figures are impossible. It's all guesstimates... The psychological aspect is it's a very scary disease and is spreading fast," Kim said.

"People want to stay home. It's had a tremendous impact on people."

The atypical pneumonia has killed more than 160 people and infected at least 3,500 around the world, mostly in Asia.

The revised growth forecast is still much higher than 2.3 percent growth expected for the rest of the world, Kim said.

"Overall Asian economies will record higher growth than the rest of the world. Asian economies are characterised by dynamism and

resilience... We'll see how resilient they are this year," he said.

Raj Kumar, chief of **ESCAP**'s poverty and development division, said that the true impact of SARS would probably not be as bad as many were expecting.

"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary," he said.

"Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a one percent fall and they are the most severely hit."

A wave of economists' downgrades to economic growth forecasts have followed the SARS outbreak. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said earlier this week that growth in Asia, exluding Japan, this year would decline to 2.7 percent from 2.9 percent as the fallout from SARS aggravates the impact of the weakening global economy.

Kumar also noted that responding to the SARS outbreak had taught public health systems in the region how to respond to a crisis, providing potential long-term benefits.

"There are (economic) benefits as well in terms of better health systems, better public health surveillance. There's a silver lining in every shock."

Concerns over the SARS epidemic had forced **ESCAP** to postpone its ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in Bangkok, which ministers from the commission's 61 member states were to attend.

Kim said the impact of the US-led war in Iraq had been mostly confined to creating a climate of uncertainty. The biggest fear of a huge and sustained rise in oil prices had not been realised.

"This war itself is not damaging or affecting adversely the world economy because oil prices have stabilised. But uncertainty created enormous hesitation both among investors and spenders of money," he said.

The survey noted that growth in developing economies of the region was nearly two percentage points higher in 2002 compared with the previous year.

But it warned that governments needed to control their spending.

"There is no doubt that with levels of public debt exceeding 50 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) in most economies of the region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long," it said.

The report also pushed for greater corporate and financial sector reform, increased attention to multilateral trade negotiations and more spending on education, health and the environment.

sb/mlm/bro

Health-pneumonia-UN-Asia-economy
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Associated Press

04/17/2003 03:52:00

ESCAP forecasts 0.3% growth in

BC-**ESCAP**-Economy 4-17 0293 **ESCAP** forecasts 0.3% growth in 20 for Japanese economy

GENEVA, April 17 (Kyodo) _ The Japanese economy is expected to grow 0.3% this year while China is set to mark the highest growth in the Asia-Pacific region with an estimated 7.7% increase, according to a report released Thursday by a U.N. body.

The U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) said in its annual report the average growth rate of the 28 developing economies in the **ESCAP** region is forecast at 5.4%, compared with 0.5% for Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

For China, the report cited a solid increase in exports and persistently high levels of foreign investment as principal factors propping up the country's high economic growth.

But the war on Iraq and the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) were not factored into the **ESCAP** growth projections, which were made on the basis of studies conducted in February.

In a briefing on the report, an economist of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) pointed out that SARS-related factors could have a huge impact on the economies in the entire **ESCAP** region, notably Hong Kong, which is forecast to post 2.5% growth.

Hong Kong has the second largest number of reported SARS cases after mainland China, followed by Singapore, for which **ESCAP** forecasts growth of 4.2%.

The epidemic has already hurt tourism in Asia and had a negative impact on a number of economies in the region, having led to

downward revisions in growth forecasts by research bodies, financial institutions and credit-rating agencies worldwide.

Among the consequences of the Iraq war is a possible decrease in the number of workers migrating to the Middle East from other parts of Asia, the UNCTAD economist said. (PROFILE (CAT:Financial;) (CAT:Business;) (CAT:Travel;) (CAT:Labor;) (CAT:Iraq;) (SRC:KYODO;))

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Associated Press

04/17/2003 05:37:16

U.N. says hopes for Asian growth dimmed by

BC-AS-FIN--Asia-UN
U.N. says hopes for Asian growth dimmed by SARS, Iraq war
By DANIEL LOVERING=
Associated Press Writer=
ap_topic:Business;

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) _ Developing countries in Asia and the Pacific showed relatively strong economic growth in 2002, but the SARS virus and war in Iraq may threaten further expansion this year, a U.N. official said Thursday.

Regional economies grew an average of about 5 percent last year despite a global economic slump, exceeding growth in 2001 by 2 percent, said Kim Hak-su, head of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

``We have to revise our projections for 2003'' due to the threat of SARS and the possibility of unstable oil prices because of the war in Iraq, he said.

Asian countries such as Thailand are highly dependent on oil imports and therefore sensitive to fluctuations in global energy prices.

However, the region defied economic expectations and performed ``pretty well'' in 2002, Kim said at a news conference announcing the release of an annual report by **ESCAP**, the U.N.'s largest regional agency.

The expansion was prompted partly by fiscal policies that lowered interest rates and boosted the private sector in some countries, and by an upswing in regional trade driven mainly by increased demand from China, he said.

``I'm confident they (China) will record over 7 percent growth,''

Kim added. ``I'm confident China will maintain economic growth despite SARS.''

The spread of the disease known as severe acute respiratory syndrome, which has affected Hong Kong, Singapore and several other of the 18 countries monitored by **ESCAP**, could seriously damage economies that depend on tourism.

Kim said the region's hopes for economic growth were also affected by the psychological consequences of the highly contagious illness. ``It's a very scary disease and its spreading so fast,'' Kim said.

But if the deadly virus is contained soon, prospects for the region could brighten by the second half of 2003, according to some economists, he added.

He said he hoped China, where the disease originated and which has faced international criticism for concealing the extent of its spread, would be more forthcoming with public health information in the future. ``The SARS case will teach us a lesson,'' Kim said.

To promote growth, **ESCAP** has urged regional governments to reform their corporate and financial sectors while introducing trade liberalization policies and boosting productivity through improved education and health programs. (PROFILE (WS SL:BC-AS-FIN--Asia-UN; CT:f;

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BANGKOK, April 17 (Xinhua)--The Asia-Pacific region will maintain its gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2003 but have to face with downside risks, the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) said here on Thursday.

Due to various factors, the Asia-Pacific region in 2003 would probably see eased economic growth rather than the original forecast made by **ESCAP**, said the UN agency's Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su at a press conference on the annual economic and social survey of the region.

Kim noted that the 2003 prospects were conditioned by major factors including the aftermath of the Iraq war, the impact of the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the economic growth of the United States, Europe and Japan.

The war in Iraq had prolonged the uncertainty in the United States and thereby impeded strong upturn in that economy, he added.

The **ESCAP** annual survey also stressed that China last year had been ``the main engine of growth'' in intra-regional trade. But with the United States being its principal market, China's imports from **ESCAP** region might decline with the slow growth of the United States in 2003.

As to the impact of SARS, **ESCAP** said it's too early to make any precise forecast, saying that a short-term impact would be on tourism, travel and thus on hotels, restaurants and retailing. According to the annual survey, despite slowed global economic growth, the **ESCAP** region performed well in last year with the region's developing countries collectively achieving a GDP growth rate of 5.1 percent, the highest in the world in 2002.

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17 April 2003 1742 hrs (SST) 0942 hrs (GMT)

Iraq war, SARS to cut Asian economic growth: UN

The United Nations has said the war in Iraq, the SARS virus and tension on the Korean peninsula will cut nearly half a percentage point off Asian economic growth this year.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said it had revised its economic growth forecast for the region to five percent from 5.4 percent in November.

It cited lower-than-expected investor activity and an expected drop in tourism because of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

ESCAP's forecast, which does not include Japan, was based on estimates from the International Monetary Fund and the region's governments.

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"The war itself is not going to be very damaging because the oil price has stabilised, but the uncertainty until March hurt the economy because of the enormous hesitation by both investors and private consumers," ESCAP Secretary General Kim Hak-Su told a news conference.

"Now we have SARS, and we can't pin down exactly how much it will hurt."

He said SARS would hit countries dependent on tourism the most. But an expected fall in business travel would have an impact on the whole region.

UN News service

Iraq, SARS cloud UN forecast of Asia-Pacific region's economic growth

17 April – While a new United Nations report forecasts continued growth in the Asia-Pacific economies, that positive trend could be jeopardized by new domestic and global challenges.

According to Ambassador Murari Raj Sharma of Nepal, who launched the report at UN Headquarters in New York, the survey, especially forecasts for 2003, was based on data for the first three quarters of 2002. By early March of this year, neither the war in Iraq nor the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had occurred.

"The impact of these events on the forecast made in the survey is still a subject of considerable debate and uncertainty," he told a press briefing on the launch of the "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003," which was compiled by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The report highlights the performance of regional economies in the past year, provides a brief trend analysis and some projections for 2003.

The report states that despite the weakening of the global economy, the region performed surprisingly well in 2002 - 2 per cent higher than the previous year - largely due to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and low interest rates.

While the survey had projected the 5 per cent growth to continue prior to the new domestic and global developments, it is now unclear how the economy will fare this year as it is tied to the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its ripple effects, particularly on energy prices. Asia-Pacific imports 40 per cent of its energy.

Compounding matters further is the recent outbreak of SARS. In addition to the health challenges it is posing in the region, the illness is undermining the tourism and travel industry. Ambassador Sharma said there were fears that a prolonged outbreak could extend the damage beyond those two industries.

How well Asia-Pacific withstands these stormy conditions also hinges heavily on how the economies of developed countries perform, especially the United States, Japan and the European Union, which together import half of the regions export products, Ambassador Sharma said. He also stressed that there was "no consensus on how the regional economy might be affected."



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UN says Iraq war, SARS cuts Asian GDP growth

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BANGKOK, April 17 (Reuters) - War in Iraq, the deadly flu-like SARS virus and tension on the Korean peninsula will slice nearly half a percentage point off Asian economic growth this year, the United Nations said on Thursday.

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the SARS virus.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) has killed at least 160 people globally and infected more than 3,400, most of them in southern China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

ESCAP's forecast, which does not include Japan, was based on estimates from the International Monetary Fund and the region's governments.

"The war itself is not going to be very damaging because the oil price has stabilised, but the uncertainty until March hurt the economy because of the enormous hesitation by both investors and private consumers," ESCAP Secretary General Kim Hak-Su told a news conference. "Now we have SARS, and we can't pin down exactly how much it will hurt."

Kim, speaking at the launch of ESCAP's annual social and economic survey, said SARS would hit countries dependent on tourism the most. But an expected fall in business travel would have an impact on the whole region.

"The optimistic view is that SARS as a pandemic is seasonal and will be contained by June," he said.

"But SARS could be with us for longer than that and have a psychological effect. It's a very scary disease because it's spreading so fast so people want to stay home."

Tension on the Korean peninsula over concern about a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons programme, had been a major contributor to investor unease about the region, said Raj Kumar, one of the main writers of the report.

RISING DEBT RISK

Kim said economic growth in mainland China this year was seen reaching 7.5 percent, down from a

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previously forecast 7.7 percent. Hong Kong's economy would grow 2.4 percent, down from 2.5 percent, and Singapore's would grow 3.0 percent, compared with 4.2 percent expected earlier.

He said domestic demand was becoming more important for Asia's economies, but they would still suffer if their main export markets -- the United States, Europe and Japan -- did not stage an economic rebound.

"China is an engine of growth for the region," Kim said.

"But the United States is a major destination for Chinese goods, so if the U.S. economy doesn't pick up, it will mean that China won't import so many products from Asia."

Kim said government fiscal stimulus measures could not be relied upon in the medium term. He said many countries were reaching the 60 percent debt to GDP ratio regarded by many economists as a prudent limit.

He added rampant consumer spending was also racking up household debt and endangering the financial system in many countries.

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Sars Special Report
Read all the latest news about the Sars (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak in our Special Report.



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Sars rocks Asian economies

17/04/2003 13:06 - (SA)

Bangkok - The spread of the deadly Sars virus has cast doubt over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the UN's economic and social arm said Thursday.

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- Sars virus 'costing' Asia $11bn

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 launched Thursday had projected 5.4 percent growth for developing countries in the region this year but ESCAP last week revised the figure down to 5.0 percent due to the impact of severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) and the Iraq war.

"Sars will not be easy to contain and control. It will affect definitely Asia-Pacific economies, especially those with large tourism sectors," UNESCAP's executive secretary Kim Hak-Su told reporters.

The growth forecast is slightly lower than the 5.1 percent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

"There is caution. Accurate figures are impossible. It's all guesstimates... The psychological aspect is it's a very scary disease and is spreading fast," Kim said.

"People want to stay home. It's had a tremendous impact on people."

The atypical pneumonia has killed more than 160 people and infected at least 3 500 around the world, mostly in Asia.

The revised growth forecast is still much higher than 2.3 percent growth expected for the rest of the world, Kim said.

"Overall Asian economies will record higher growth than the rest of the world. Asian economies are characterised by dynamism and resilience... We'll see how resilient they are this year," he said.

Raj Kumar, chief of ESCAP's poverty and development division, said that the true impact of Sars would probably not be as bad as many were expecting.

"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary," he said.

"Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a one percent fall and they are the most severely hit."

A wave of economists' downgrades to economic growth forecasts have followed the Sars outbreak. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said earlier this week that

growth in Asia, exluding Japan, this year would decline to 2.7 percent from 2.9 percent as the fallout from Sars aggravates the impact of the weakening global economy.

Kumar also noted that responding to the Sars outbreak had taught public health systems in the region how to respond to a crisis, providing potential long-term benefits.

"There are (economic) benefits as well in terms of better health systems, better public health surveillance. There's a silver lining in every shock."

Concerns over the Sars epidemic had forced ESCAP to postpone its ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in Bangkok, which ministers from the commission's 61 member states were to attend.

Kim said the impact of the US-led war in Iraq had been mostly confined to creating a climate of uncertainty. The biggest fear of a huge and sustained rise in oil prices had not been realised.

"This war itself is not damaging or affecting adversely the world economy because oil prices have stabilised. But uncertainty created enormous hesitation both among investors and spenders of money," he said.

The survey noted that growth in developing economies of the region was nearly two percentage points higher in 2002 compared with the previous year.

But it warned that governments needed to control their spending.

"There is no doubt that with levels of public debt exceeding 50 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) in most economies of the region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long," it said.

The report also pushed for greater corporate and financial sector reform, increased attention to multilateral trade negotiations and more spending on education, health and the environment.

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UN: Asia-Pacific to maintain GDP growth despite dc risks in 2003

XINHUANET 2003-04-17 19:46:22

BANGKOK, April 17 (Xinhuanet) -- The Asia-Pacific region will its gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2003 but have to face w downside risks, the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission and the Pacific (ESCAP) said here on Thursday.

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The war in Iraq had prolonged the uncertainty in the United St thereby impeded strong upturn in that economy, he added.

The ESCAP annual survey also stressed that China last year had "the main engine of growth" in intra-regional trade. But with the States being its principal market, China's imports from ESCAP regi decline with the slow growth of the United States in 2003.

As to the impact of SARS, ESCAP said it's too early to make an forecast, saying that a short-term impact would be on tourism, tra thus on hotels, restaurants and retailing.

According to the annual survey, despite slowed global economic the ESCAP region performed well in last year with the region's dev countries collectively achieving a GDP growth rate of 5.1 percent, highest in the world in 2002. Enditem

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UPDATE 1-UN says Iraq war, SARS cuts Asian GDP growth

BANGKOK, April 17 (Reuters) - War in Iraq, the deadly flu-like SARS virus and tension on the Korean peninsula will slice nearly half a percentage point off Asian economic growth this year, the United Nations said on Thursday.

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Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) has killed at least 160 people globally and infected more than 3,400, most of them in southern China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

ESCAP's forecast, which does not include Japan, was based on estimates from the International Monetary Fund and the region's governments.

``The war itself is not going to be very damaging because the oil price has stabilised, but the uncertainty until March hurt the economy because of the enormous hesitation by both investors and private consumers,'' **ESCAP** Secretary General Kim Hak-Su told a news conference. ``Now we have SARS, and we can't pin down exactly how much it will hurt.''

Kim, speaking at the launch of **ESCAP**'s annual social and economic survey, said SARS would hit countries dependent on tourism the most. But an expected fall in business travel would have an impact on the whole region.

``The optimistic view is that SARS as a pandemic is seasonal and will be contained by June,'' he said.

``But SARS could be with us for longer than that and have a psychological effect. It's a very scary disease because it's spreading so fast so people want to stay home."

Tension on the Korean peninsula over concern about a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons programme, had been a major contributor to investor unease about the region, said Raj Kumar, one of the main writers of the report.

RISING DEBT RISK

Kim said economic growth in mainland China this year was seen reaching 7.5 percent, down from a previously forecast 7.7 percent. Hong Kong's economy would grow 2.4 percent, down from 2.5 percent, and Singapore's would grow 3.0 percent, compared with 4.2 percent expected earlier.

He said domestic demand was becoming more important for Asia's economies, but they would still suffer if their main export markets -- the United States, Europe and Japan -- did not stage an economic rebound.

``China is an engine of growth for the region," Kim said.

``But the United States is a major destination for Chinese goods, so if the U.S. economy doesn't pick up, it will mean that China won't import so many products from Asia."

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He added rampant consumer spending was also racking up household debt and endangering the financial system in many countries.

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18 Apr 2003 01:26 UTC

War Fears, SARS Impacting Asian Economic Growth

Ron Corben
Bangkok
17 Apr 2003, 12:37 UTC

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A United Nations survey says Asia-Pacific economies, especially those reliant on tourism, face lower growth rates over 2003 due to the uncertainties from the war in Iraq and the spread of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. A United Nations economic survey forecasts that Asia's economic growth will hover close to five percent this year, more than double the world average of 2.3 percent. However, growth will be slightly slower than the 5.4 percent forecast earlier.

The survey by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific says widespread geopolitical uncertainties and the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome will trim regional growth.

The annual survey released Thursday says much of the region's growth has come from domestic government spending programs as well as the strength of China's economy.

Kim Hak-Su, the U.N. executive presenting the report, says despite the SARS virus, though to have originated in southern China, the Chinese economy holds the key for overall regional growth.

"China could be the engine of the Asian

China could be the engine of the Asian-Pacific economic growth, and maybe let's say around seven percent [growth]," said Mr. Kim. "China's engine is trade export and construction. Personally I am very confident China will maintain the high economic growth despite [the impact of] SARS."

Mr. Kim says the period of uncertainty prior to the Iraq war, from late November until March, slowed investment and spending in the region more than the war itself did. Companies had feared oil prices would stay high and shipping would be disrupted. However, oil prices are falling and other fears have faded as the war winds down.

Now SARS is the big concern, as people around the world avoid travel to Asia because of the virus.

"Hong Kong, Singapore will be most affected by this SARS," he said. "Firstly, travel, tourism, restaurant and hotels ...and will go beyond that to the retail sector."

The U.N. report also stresses that governments must continue reforming their trade and financial sectors to ensure that longer-term growth is not jeopardized. The report also encourages Asian countries to continue improving education and health care, as part of their efforts to reduce poverty, and to protect the environment.

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Iraq war, SARS will cut Asian GDP growth: UN

REUTERS [THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2003 12:12:13 PM]

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"But SARS could be with us for longer than that and have a psychological effect. It's a very scary disease because it's spreading so fast so people want to stay home."

Tension on the Korean peninsula, where there has been concern about a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons programme, had been a major contributor to investor unease about the region, said Raj Kumar, one of the main writers of the report.

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Kim said economic growth in mainland China this year was seen reaching 7.5 per cent, down from a previously forecast 7.7 per cent. Hong Kong's economy would grow 2.4 per cent, down from 2.5 per cent, and Singapore's would grow 3.0 per cent, compared with 4.2 per cent expected earlier.

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Apprehension regarding SARS Dominated the Launch of the Regional Economic Survey 2003.

Bangkok, April 18: Effects of the sudden emergence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) a terminal disease, dominated the launching of the Economic survey by the UN Agency in Bangkok. It was said that the health concern has brought about global uncertainty.

Yesterday, this year's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific Economies, was launched to the media by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) headquarted in Bangkok, Thailand, which has a total membership 61 nations in the region.

Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su introduced the economic survey at a media conference held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. The theme of this year's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific was "Resilience in Challenging times."

While addressing the media persons, Kim Hak-Su told that he was in China in the latter part of the month of March and when he returned back he was on a two weeks self-imposed quarantine and stayed away from the office, as a show of solidarity with others

The Executive Secretary told that the war and the aftermath of the war are not affecting the economy of this region. He explained that this is a "short war" and this war is not affecting either the Asian or world economy. But, he added that, the period from November 2002 to the launching of the military campaign against Iraq on 20 March 2003 contributed towards lot of uncertainties, but the effects after the war was minimum.

But he said, "we don't know how much SARS would affect China, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Singapore, the countries in this region. But at present two forms of views have emerged. One is the optimistic view which says that the SARS would be contained by June this year and there will be economic growth in this region in the second half of this year."

The pessimistic view according Kim Hak-Su, is on the other hand is very detrimental to the growth of the region. The viruses, which spread by the air and is spreading fast and would be with us for a longer period and the people will continue to remain isolated and stay at home. There is a fear that it may affect other sectors of economy other than tourism related ones.

Kim Hak-Su said, "SARS has taught us that China should have come up quickly with accurate numbers."

He added, "It illustrates China's lack of recognition of the epidemic and lack of action, preferring to hide the facts."

Meanwhile, Rajkumar of the ESCAP told that there should be Public Health surveillance section with the ESCAP in the future.

While introducing the survey for the year 2003, Kim Hak-Su reminded that developing economies of the region exzceeded 2001 GDP growth by nearly 2 percentage points in 2002. Developed economies of the region also improved upon their 2001 performance in 2002, although Japan remained in recession. Over the region as a whole, inflation declined further in 2002 from an already low level in 2001. Higher GDP growth in the region was achieved partly through easier domestic monetary and fiscal policies and partly through higher intraregional trade flows.

Along with the economic and social challenges facing the region, it was urged that the Governments also have to deal with environmental problems and the environment-poverty nexus.

"While rapid economic growth is seen as a central element in achieving poverty reduction, experience shows that growth is often accompanied by environmental deterioration that hurts the poor," states the report.

Associated Press

04/18/2003 09:05:49

ESCAP REPORT: Easy credit worries UN

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Montira Narkvichien
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Fears credit-card system could implode A United Nations agency has warned Thailand over its easy credit policy, saying the country risked repeating the mistakes made by South Korea, which has seen a collapse in its credit card industry.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**Escap**), said yesterday during the launch of the agency's ``Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003'' that Thailand had implemented an easy-lending policy and an expansionary fiscal programme to stimulate the economy.

He said lending to small borrowers for consumer goods had created risks for the credit system, though the exposure remained small compared to overall commercial bank lending.

"There should be a balance to the easy-money policy," said Kim.

He said Thailand should be more cautious in its lending policy, citing the case of South Korea, where the government was forced to bail out credit card firms who had been hard hit by delinquencies.

Kim said **Escap** had revised downward its economic projections for most countries in the region, particularly for Hong Kong and Singapore, due to ``new shocks".

He was referring to the Iraq War and the outbreak of the potentially-deadly Sars virus, which are crippling economic growth in the region.

"The psychological impact [of Sars] is scary and spreading so fast . . . it has caused tremendous cut-downs in travel and in contacts with other people," Kim said.

He added that the virus would adversely affect countries for which tourism played a significant economic role.

Hong Kong and Singapore may see their economic growth slip by one full percentage point this year as a result of the war in Iraq and Sars, Kim said.

Thailand, meanwhile, will only be marginally affected, and will probably see its economic growth shrink from 4.5 to 4.2 per cent this year, the report said.

China's growth rate for this year has been revised down from 7.7 to 7.5 per cent. However, in the first quarter, China recorded an impressive 9.9-per-cent growth rate.

Escap forecast that the Asia-Pacific region this year would grow by 5 per cent, revised down from 5.4 per cent, due to a slowdown in public sector investment and wary consumer spending.

Kim said the regional economic situation would improve and ``finally make a rebound" during the second and third quarters.

But ``if the uncertainly [caused by the war] prevails for too long, we cannot pin down how much it will hurt the world economy," he

added.

Meanwhile, **Escap** Poverty and Development Division chief Raj Kumar chose to look on the brighter side of the Sars outbreak, saying ``there are losers and winners in every shock.''

At the regional level, the epidemic has called for ``better public health surveillance,'' he said.

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The Daily Star: Business Page
18 April 2003

SARS causes uncertainty for Asia-Pacific economies

AFP, Bangkok

The spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubt over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the UN's economic and social arm said Thursday.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 launched Thursday had projected 5.4 percent growth for developing countries in the region this year but ESCAP last week revised the figure down to 5.0 percent due to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

"SARS will not be easy to contain and control. It will affect definitely Asia-Pacific economies, especially those with large tourism sectors," UNESCAP's executive secretary Kim Hak-Su told reporters.

The growth forecast is slightly lower than the 5.1 percent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

"There is caution. Accurate figures are impossible. It's all guesstimates... The psychological aspect is it's a very scary disease and is spreading fast," Kim said.

"People want to stay home. It's had a tremendous impact on people."

The atypical pneumonia has killed more than 160 people and infected at least 3,500 around the world, mostly in Asia.

The revised growth forecast is still much higher than 2.3 percent growth expected for the rest of the world, Kim said.

"Overall Asian economies will record higher growth than the rest of the world. Asian economies are characterised by dynamism and resilience... We'll see how resilient they are this year," he said.

Raj Kumar, chief of ESCAP's poverty and development division, said that the true impact of SARS would probably not be as bad as many were expecting.

"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary," he said.

"Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a one percent fall and they are the most severely hit."

A wave of economists' downgrades to economic growth forecasts have followed the SARS outbreak. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said earlier this week that growth in Asia, exluding Japan, this year would decline to 2.7 percent from 2.9 percent as the fallout from SARS aggravates the impact of the weakening global economy.

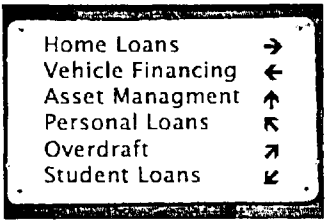
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Flu clouds Asia-Pacific economies

BANGKOK - The spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubt over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the UN's economic and social arm says.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 has revised down forecast growth for developing countries in the region to 5.0% from 5.4 percent due to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

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"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary," he said.

"Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a 1% fall and they are the most severely hit."

Kumar also noted that responding to the SARS outbreak had taught public health systems in the region how to respond to a crisis, providing potential long-term benefits.

"There are (economic) benefits as well in terms of better health systems, better public health surveillance. There's a silver lining in every shock."

Concerns over the SARS epidemic had forced ESCAP to postpone its ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in Bangkok, which ministers from the commission's 61 member states were to attend.

Kim said the impact of the US-led war in Iraq had been mostly confined to creating a climate of uncertainty. The biggest fear of a huge and sustained rise in oil prices had not been realised.

"This war itself is not damaging or affecting adversely the world economy because oil prices have stabilised. But uncertainty created enormous hesitation both among investors and spenders of money," he said.

The survey noted that growth in developing economies of the region was nearly two percentage points higher in 2002 compared with the previous year.

But it warned that governments needed to control their spending.

"There is no doubt that with levels of public debt exceeding 50 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) in most economies of the region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long," it said.

The report also pushed for greater corporate and financial sector reform, increased attention to multilateral trade negotiations and more spending on education, health and the environment.

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EDITS & COLUMNS

ESCAPing A Slowdown

Developing countries unaffected by global trends

Growth in the developing economies of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) region defies conventional wisdom that the rest of the world catches a cold when powerful developed economies sneeze. The former were in fact the "fastest-growing group of economies in the world in 2002" when the global economic recovery had petered out, according to the latest Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific brought out by Escap's secretariat. What accounts for this immunity from the worsening external environment? The Survey argues that the 5.1 per cent rate of growth of this group of countries reflected a combination of easier macroeconomic policies and growth in intra-regional trade. These developing economies are a diverse lot: India, for instance, is less integrated with the world economy, while the others like Malaysia, China and South Korea also depend on exports to the developed world. A factor of change, however, is the growing intra-regional trade which boosts growth. This includes foreign direct investment-induced componentisation, besides trade in a wider range of non-information and communications technology products and services. Clearly, Asia-Pacific integration is now an independent source of dynamism in the world economy.

COLUMNISTS

What about 2003 and beyond? For the developing economies of Escap, the "balance of probabilities" is in favour of a continued growth momentum or even a slight acceleration this year despite a lack of pick up in the global economy. But the Survey nevertheless draws attention to several imponderables in the external environment which cloud their growth prospects. The on-going impact of the Iraq showdown on energy prices is one as 40 per cent of their energy supplies comes from West Asia. The strong winds of low and fragile investor confidence buffeting world financial markets is another. A weaker US dollar is yet another. Despite these uncertainties, however, the underlying strength of economies like India, China, Malaysia and South Korea remains strong. India's growth momentum may have been temporarily arrested by severe weather disturbances, but its industrial and services economy remains buoyant. Malaysia, China and South Korea are also strongly driven by domestic demand, besides exporting to the developed world. Appropriate fiscal and monetary stimulus policies can strengthen domestic demand-driven growth, while intra-regional trade will continue to impart its own dynamism. These developing economies thus can power Escap's growth while the developed world keeps sneezing.

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MANILA, April 23 (Xinhua)--The growth of developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region may slow down in 2003 due to an array of uncertainties, said an annual report of a United Nations agency released here Wednesday.

The prospects for nearly 60 developing economies in the region are conditioned by the Iraq war and its aftermath, said the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**).

The outlook is also marred by possible faltering growth in the global

economic powers of the United States, Japan and the European Union, as well as the spread of the killer disease called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Ofelia Templo said while presenting the report.

Templo is an assistant professor of the Ateneo de Manila University, with which **ESCAP** co-launched its flagship publication.

ESCAP had forecast that the average gross domestic product (GDP) of the developing economies in the region would grow by 5.4 percent in 2003, but it said Wednesday that latest available estimates slashed the forecast to 5 percent.

Despite the weakening of the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the region achieved an average GDP growth of 5.1 percent in the year, higher than the 3.2 percent in the previous year, the report said, attributing the surprisingly good performance much to surging intraregional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

"Given the absence of any evidence of a strong pickup in the global economy, at least in the first half of 2003, sustaining growth in the region will depend primarily upon growth-stimulating domestic policies," the report said.

It warned, however, that the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long with levels of public debt exceeding 50 percent of GDP in most economies in the region.

In the case of monetary policy also, it said, as a result of falling inflation, interest rates have reached quite low levels so the scope for further reduction is limited in most countries.

It urged governments to put both fiscal and monetary policies within a medium-term framework in which ``short-term flexibility can be combined with medium-or longer-term discipline."

It also called on countries to continue the reform of corporate and financial sectors with renewed vigor to enhance investor confidence, to maintain the momentum of trade liberalization, and to provide an appropriate macroeconomic environment, realistic exchange rates and improvements in the physical infrastructure to enable firms to compete.

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Friday, April 25, 2003

SARS forces Asean governments to hold emergency economic summit

By Marwaan Macan-Markar

BANGKOK—The special summit to be held in this city by Southeast Asian leaders next week to deal with the economic consequences of SARS amplifies the rising tide of panic in the region over this deadly illness.

This crisis meeting on April 29 was urged on his peers by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong during a telephone conversation with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra this week.

The summit will provide leaders from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to "discuss experiences and formulate economic rescue measures," Thai Public Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan was quoted to have said by the Bangkok Post.

The gravity of this meeting is evident, judging from the compelling issues that have forced Asean leaders into special summits in the past. In 1978, the leaders also held a special summit after Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia.

Asean, Southeast Asia's main regional grouping, includes Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Of these countries, Singapore and Vietnam have been the worst hit by SARS. It has killed 14 and afflicted 184 in Singapore, where more than 2000 persons have been quarantined. In Vietnam, SARS has killed at least five and infected 63 but WHO officials say the danger of SARS cases entering Vietnam from China is great. SARS has become a grave global concern, as by April 22 the worldwide death toll has risen 220 (about half of these in mainland China and Hong Kong) and the number of positive cases have reached the 5,000 mark.

Beyond the health sphere, however, experts fear that SARS increasingly threatens to sap the economic health of Asean and undercut its competitive edge, including its being a hub for international tourism and regional finance. Tourism and finance are sectors most affected by fears of travel and restrictions on physical mobility.

"Over the short and medium term, the sector most vulnerable to SARS are

those related to consumer spending, like retail sales, restaurant services, tourism and travel-related sectors such as hotel occupancy and transportation," says Pradumna Rana, director of the regional economic monitoring unit at the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Foreign business people and expatriates are staying away from Hong Kong and Singapore. Media reports say many have in fact sent their families away from Hong Kong, if they have not left themselves.

"The contagious nature of SARS discourages international travel and, thereby, affects travel-related spending," he adds.

Three countries feeling the pinch most are Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand. During a recent regional tourism meeting held in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, authorities admitted that SARS had caused almost half of the expected number of tourists to cancel their bookings.

Singapore Airlines, the city-state's national carrier, is reporting that it has cut 199 flights a week due to the drop in air travel over the last weeks. Authorities also say that tourist arrivals have dropped to 50 percent in April when compared with the numbers during this period last year.

In Thailand, hotel authorities have confirmed to the media that occupancy rates in hotels had dropped to between 30 to 40 percent.

The travel and tourism sector is a central pillar of the Asean economies, which, according to the World Bank, accounts for four to five percent of the region's gross domestic product (GDP). Thailand alone gets 10 million tourists a year.

Little wonder why the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), among other international institutions, was compelled to cut its estimates of projected growth in the region owing to the impact of SARS and the war in Iraq.

All the major engines of growth in the region will feel the pinch, Escap officials stated Thursday after the launch of the "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003."

Singapore's estimated GDP growth for 2003 will drop to three percent from the previously forecast 4.2 percent for this year, while Malaysia's growth will drop to 4.5 percent from the forecast 6.3 percent, according to Escap.

Thailand, on the other hand, will see its GDP growth drop to 4.2 percent from the forecast 4.5 percent for 2003 and Vietnam's growth will drop to seven percent from the forecast 7.5 percent.

"We had to revise our projections for 2003," Kim Hak-su, Escap's executive secretary, said at the launch of the annual report of the economic performance across Asia and the Pacific. "We need to watch out how SARS can develop."

Still for all, the Escap report revealed the Asia-Pacific region had performed well last year against the global economic averages and the potential of repeating that achievement this year was plausible.

In 2002, the Escap region countries collectively registered a growth of 5.1 percent as opposed to the world average of 1.7 percent. The US economy, by contrast, had only grown by 2.4 percent in the same year.

And in 2003, after making the cuts for the impact of SARS and the conflict in Iraq, the Escap countries were expected to achieve a five-percent growth rate as opposed to the world average of 2.3 percent. The US economy, according to Escap, was expected to grow by 2.2 percent this year.

China's economy played a lead role to achieve these salutary numbers. In 2002, the Chinese economy registered a 7.9-percent growth rate and this year, even after accounting for SARS, it is expected to achieve 7.5- percent growth, according to Escap.

Consequently, economic experts say it is premature to make parallels between the economic shocks being felt in Southeast Asia due to SARS and the economic flu that swept through the region in 1997.

"The 1997 financial crisis was a very serious crisis—a currency crisis, led to a banking crisis and eventually to a full economic and social crisis," says the ADB's Rana, adding that to draw comparison is to "exaggerate" the reality.

"The threat of SARS to the economy will only become very serious if it becomes uncontrollable and starts affecting the supply side of the economy," he adds. "At this time, I don't think such an event will occur."◆
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Economy 'under threat'

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ECONOMIC growth in Australia and New Zealand is now "under threat" due to a deteriorating external environment and the regional impact from the SARS virus, a United Nations report warned.

But the report by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) remained positive the strength of domestic demand would maintain the economic momentum in the two nations.

It also warned the impact of the pneumonia-like virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) could lower regional economic growth rates by between 0.4 and 1.0 per cent over the next year.

World economic growth projections have already been marked to 2.3 per cent for 2003 from 2.8 per cent earlier.

Australia's initial growth rate forecast had been set around 3.2 per cent, but the report warns this is now under threat.

The New Zealand economy was initially expected to maintain growth at close to 2.6 per cent for 2003.

"(But) with a deteriorating external environment and other uncertainties there are risks on the downside," the report said.

The indications were already evident amid lower consumer confidence survey data and a slow pace of output growth in the second half of 2002.

But the UN report was still upbeat over the prospects.

"In Australia and New Zealand, the overall prospects for 2003 are, on balance, considered broadly positive," it said.

The report also said "domestic demand will need to grow further if the present momentum is to be sustained in the face of a weaker external environment in 2003".

Slowdown was likely from the investment and the consumption sides, with investment growth "likely to moderate as weaker equity markets dent business confidence and there is a cooling off in the booming housing sector".

Household consumption was also expected to ease as consumers looked to reduce household debt built up over recent years of heavy spending.

There was also "a question mark" overhanging unemployment "which appears to have stabilised at the rather high level of 6.0 per cent or more despite several years of robust growth," the report warned.

There were also fears the Australian dollar could face a period of volatility.

The "fluctuations in commodity prices and shifts in global financial market sentiment make the Australian dollar vulnerable to bouts of volatility".

The report said such volatility could "become a source of uncertainty and disruption in business planning and longer-term investment decision-making".

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SARS hits economic growth

By Ron Corben
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ECONOMIC growth in Australia and New Zealand is now "under threat" due to a deteriorating external environment and the regional impact from the SARS virus, a United Nations report warned.

The report by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said the impact of the pneumonia-like virus severe acute respiratory syndrome could lower regional economic growth rates by between 0.4 and 1 per cent over the next year.

The report comes as the economic impact of SARS around the world begins to bite.

In the US, some companies have stopped workers from travelling to and from Asia.

"It's creating a logistical nightmare," said chief executive Albert Sisto of Californian software firm Phoenix Technologies. "This is a huge challenge to the business process."

China, where the disease is thought to have originated, is home to important manufacturing plants for American technology companies, including many in Silicon Valley.

And with its dynamic growth, China has been among the sole bright spots in the sluggish world economy.

If the flu-like disease worsens, it could cause further havoc in Asia – slowing economic growth, interrupting production of electronics components and slowing the assembly of everything from mobile phones to laptop computers.

World economic growth projections have already been scaled back to 2.3 per cent for 2003 from earlier forecasts of 2.8 per cent.

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The indications were already evident amid lower consumer confidence survey data and a slow pace of output growth in the second half of 2002.

However, the UN said the strength of domestic demand would maintain the economic momentum of Australia and New Zealand.

"In Australia and New Zealand, the overall prospects for 2003 are, on balance, considered broadly positive," it said.

The report also said "domestic demand will need to grow further if the present momentum is to be sustained in the face of a weaker external environment in 2003".

Slowdown was likely from the investment and the consumption sides, with investment growth "likely to moderate as weaker equity markets dent business confidence and there is a cooling off in the booming housing sector".

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Australia safe from external shocks, UN body finds

April 21 2003
By Colin Kruger
Sydney

A strong Australian economy has effectively immunised itself against the "negative influences" of the external environment, including the severe acute respiritory syndrome virus, but challenges remain, according to a report by the United Nations.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said that the overall prospects for the economies "are, on balance, considered broadly positive" despite the downside risks. These include the aftermath of the war in Iraq and continued uncertainty over North Korea. Faltering growth momentum in the US and Europe and continued

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economic problems in Japan were also among the immediate risks, ESCAP said.

Local analysts were more bullish, saying that, after Iraq, the Australian stockmarket could get a boost as investors focused again on economic fundamentals, instead of geo-political tensions.

The UN report was more cautious about predicting an end to geo-political uncertainty despite a coalition victory in Iraq, but a bigger concern was the regional impact of SARS.

ESCAP noted that private sector forecasts were predicting an overall output loss of between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent for the Asia-Pacific region, with most of the loss concentrated in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand.

The report said it was too early to predict the impact of SARS with precision since the virus had yet to reach its peak, but there could be a significant rebound if the illness was contained by June this year. If the virus wasn't contained by June, however, there was the risk of its impact extending beyond tourism, leading to production declines and job losses in other sectors.

There were specific caveats for the Australian economy as well. ESCAP stressed that Australian domestic demand would need to increase if the current growth momentum was to be maintained in the face of a weakening external environment.

The report said that "such growth might not be forthcoming" with business investment and consumer consumption expected to moderate this year.

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The significant gains of the Australian dollar against the US dollar, having now consolidated at about US60¢, were also a potential problem for commodities, which trade in US dollars.

Local analysts were happier to predict a sustained turnaround now that the situation in Iraq had cleared.

Commonwealth Securities senior analyst Craig James said a "relief rally" was expected to boost the sharemarket, which had already recorded six consecutive weeks of gains.

"It is clear that the recent period of softness in the sharemarket is almost wholly attributed to the war," he said.

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UN warns on risks to growth

By Ruth Williams and Colin Kruger

SARS, conflict and household debt were among the risks that could slow Australia's resilient economic growth during 2003, a United Nations report has warned.

Australia's GDP growth rate of 3.2 per cent survived a faltering global economy in 2002 to remain among the highest of OECD countries, but the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has warned 2003 may not be as bullish.

In its annual survey of the region, UNESCAP said domestic demand should prop up the Australian economy during 2003, but a "deteriorating external environment" - already reflected in waning consumer confidence - posed a risk to Australia's economic growth.

Looking at the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCAP said SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) would "almost certainly" have a negative impact on the economies of several countries with the main impact on tourism and travel.

"If SARS becomes long lasting its impact will then extend beyond these sectors into actual production declines and job losses in other sectors," the report said.

"At the moment most private sector forecasts are predicting an overall output loss of between 0.5 and one percentage points for the region . . . mainly concentrated in Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Thailand."

The aftermath of war in Iraq, uncertainty over North Korea, faltering growth momentum in the US and continued economic problems in Japan were other immediate risks to the region's economic health.

While Australia's prospects were "on balance, considered broadly positive", the report cautioned investment growth in Australia was likely to moderate as weaker equity markets dented business confidence.

The oft-predicted end to the housing sector boom was also a risk, as was the possibility of a drop in household consumption as Australians faced up to their substantial levels of household debt "built up over several years of high spending".

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unemployment situation, which appears to have stabilised at the rather high level of 6 per cent or more despite years of robust growth," the report said.

A rising Australian dollar could also mean bad news, with the report warning it "could indicate problems with competitiveness and market share".

Fluctuating commodity prices and other factors meant the Aussie dollar was also vulnerable to volatility which could be "a source of uncertainty and disruption in business planning".

Meanwhile, the war in Iraq had taken a toll on global business sentiment by prolonging uncertainty about the state of the US economy.

"In the US there are fears now that growth may be barely positive and further monetary stimulus may be needed, perhaps as soon as May," UNESCAP said.

"In that event we could be looking at global growth hovering around 2 per cent."

The report said there were signs of renewed confidence in world stockmarkets, but it was too early to say whether it was sustainable or would result in higher capital expenditure by corporations.

However, Australian analysts were more upbeat, predicting a sustained turnaround after the end of war in Iraq.

Commonwealth Securities analyst Craig James said a "relief rally" was expected to boost the Australian sharemarket which had already recorded six consecutive weeks of gains.

Mr James believed recent weakness in the stockmarket was almost wholly attributed to war, with attention already returning to the strength of the economy and corporate earnings.

FW Holst & Co market analyst Michael Heffernan expected a "very good" second half of the year as the war in Iraq receded from the headlines and a break to the drought was confirmed.

He said the stockmarket was due for a big rise of 30 to 50 per cent which came every five years.

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Economy generally safe, says UN report

By Colin Kruger
April 21 2003

A strong Australian economy has effectively immunised itself against the "negative influences" of the external environment, including the SARS virus, but challenges remain, according to a report by the United Nations.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said that prospects for the area's economies were "on balance, considered broadly positive" despite the downside risks.

These include the aftermath of the war in Iraq, and continued uncertainty over North Korea. Faltering growth momentum in the United States and Europe and continued economic problems in Japan were also among the immediate risks, ESCAP said.

Local analysts were more bullish, saying

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Asian analysts were more bullish, saying that, after Iraq, the Australian stockmarket could get a boost as investors focus on economic fundamentals, instead of geo-political tensions.

The report was more cautious about predicting an end to geo-political uncertainty despite the coalition victory in Iraq; but a bigger concern was the regional impact of SARS.

ESCAP said that private sector forecasts were predicting an overall output loss of between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent for the Asia-Pacific, with most of the loss concentrated in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand.

The report said there could be a significant recovery if SARS were contained by June this year. If the virus wasn't contained by June, its impact could extend beyond the tourism industry in those countries and lead to production declines and job losses in other sectors.

ESCAP stressed that domestic demand would need to increase in Australia if the current growth momentum was to be maintained in the face of a weakening external environment.

The report said that "such growth might not be forthcoming" with business investment and consumer consumption expected to be moderate this year.

It also questioned the "high" level of unemployment, which has stabilised around the 6 per cent level despite several years of robust growth in Australia.

The significant gains of the Australian dollar against the US dollar - now consolidating above US60c - were also targeted as a potential problem area for the commodities export market, which is priced in US dollars.

OPEC targets $US25 price

New York exchange investigates Wall St specialists

Dawson review doesn't assist small companies

American Air deal in jeopardy

Further currency appreciation could lead to problems with Australia's export competitiveness in this area, the report said.

Local analysts were happier to predict a sustained turnaround now that the situation in Iraq had cleared.

A "relief rally" was expected to boost the sharemarket, which has already recorded six consecutive weeks of gains, said Commonwealth Securities senior analyst Craig James.

"It is clear that the recent period of softness in the sharemarket is almost wholly attributed to the war," he said.

Attention has already returned to the strength of the economy and corporate earnings, according to Mr James.

FW Holst & Co market analyst Michael Heffernan said he expected a good second half of the year as the war in Iraq receded from the headlines and the drought is confirmed to be broken.

He also said the stockmarket was due for a large rise of 30 to 50 per cent, which historically has occurred every five years.

"We haven't had a big rise on the index for 10 years, since 1993, so all the conditions are there for a very big rise."

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UNIC AUSTRALIA PRESS CLIPPINGS

Economy generally safe says UN report

The Sydney Morning Herald

smh.com.au Monday, April 21, 2003

Colin Kruger

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2.3 Bangladesh

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

Daily Star Page: 17 Date: 18 April - 2003

Bangladesh to see 5.2pc GDP growth despite war, SARS

ESCAP annual regional survey forecasts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh economy is expected to see a GDP growth of 5.2 per cent this fiscal, thanks to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, United Nations' economic and social arm forecast yesterday.

The growth prediction was made despite global uncertainties over war and a viral outbreak.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in its annual regional survey for 2003 attributed the projection also to steady agriculture and stronger export demand.

Presenting the survey to pressmen at CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka, independent think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Directive Debapriya Bhattacharya said the growth performance of Bangladesh in 2003 will largely hinge on three prime factors -- fallout of Iraq war, impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and performance of US, EU and Japan economies.

"The good news is that the war is ending with oil prices still stable, the fatal virus not yet here and the Japanese GDP growth returning to positive figure showing signs of recovery," Bhattacharya said.

These positive developments are sure to contribute to the steady growth of Bangladesh economy, he said.

The survey, titled 'Asia and Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times' released yesterday all over the world, has also revised growth forecast for developing countries in the region to 5.0 per cent from 5.4 per cent due to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

Annual inflation in Bangladesh had shown a sharp downward trend in recent years, but picked up to 2.4 per cent in 2002. The reversal of the downward trend in inflation in 2002 was partly a reflection of fiscal and monetary stringency, the survey noted.

Administered price increase for gas, electricity and petroleum and higher duties and margin requirements on commercial imports raised the prices of several goods and services.

Inflation is targeted to continue at a faster annual rate of three per cent in 2003-2005 but higher food and import prices may raise this figure, the survey stated.

A decline in import spending of 8.7 per cent in 2002, as a result of lower imports of inputs for export processing activities, reversed the strong growth in 2001. Imports of petroleum and food products, with the exception of edible oil, were generally lower, while commercial imports of consumer durable and automobiles fell significantly as imposition of margin requirements and supplementary duties lowered demand, it read.

As a result of the sharper fall in imports, the trade deficit narrowed. This, together with a substantial increase in remittance receipts, led to the current account deficit falling to 0.6 per cent of GDP in 2002, it said.

Net capital inflows into Bangladesh declined significantly in 2002 to $312 million from $580 million in the previous year. Although ODA receipts, particularly in the form of concessional loans rose slightly, inward FDI was significantly lower in 2002 and there was a net outflow of foreign portfolio investment, it said.

Foreign exchange reserves increased in 2002 to provide ten weeks import cover. Total official external debt reached 35 per cent of GDP by the end of 2002 and debt service obligations amounted to slightly less than 10 per cent of export earnings.

Survey suggested the government to speed up reform drive and curtail government expenditure and increase revenue collection.

It also acknowledges the private sector as the leader of GDP growth asking the policymakers to facilitate investment in manufacturing sector.

Jorgan Lissner, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, and Kazi Ali Reza, office-in-charge of UN Information Centre in Dhaka, were present at the launching of the survey report.

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

News Today Page: Front 18 April 2003

Concern over security of small states

News Report

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 projected a faster rate of GDP growth of 5.2 per cent for Bangladesh in 2003 as against 4.8 per cent in 2002 with some acceleration in 2004-2005.

But the growth, according to economists, mostly depends on continuation of reform measures, impact of the war on Iraq, SARS epidemic and the economic performances of the USA, EU and Japan.

Despite weakening of the global economy, the survey report conducted by the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said, developing countries in the Asia-

➤ Page 15 Col. 5

Concern over

From Page 1 Col-7

Pacific region performed surprisingly well in 2002 achieving around five per cent growth.

Held in the CIRDAP auditorium, the report launching function was addressed by UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh Jorgan Lissner, CPD executive director Debapriya Bhattacharya and Kazi Ali Reza.

Besides Iraq invasion, speakers also identified SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) as one of the major factor that might affect the economy unless steps are taken immediately.

"It might dislocate exports as buyers are shy to meet the customers at Singapore and Thailand," said Debapriya adding that it might also hamper the food processing sector and have much more impact than the Iraq war.

Most of the discussants also expressed their concern over security of small independent countries because of the Iraq war. They observed that existence of these small states had fallen under serious threat following the invasion of Iraq by a superpower that destabilised the world order based on international rules and customs.

The way the big countries are behaving has already become a threat to most of the small countries, including Bangladesh, making their sovereign entities vulnerable and unstable, they observed.

UNB adds: The document of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) was also released simultaneously in other parts of the world, indicating capable contribution of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from South Asia with strong GDP growth.

Stating the expansion in the Asia-Pacific region, which was 2 per cent higher than the 2001 rate, the report noted that it owed much to surging intraregional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

However, while indicating the challenges for the region, the UN agency said prospects for 2003 are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative "ripple effects", including those on energy prices.

The region imports 40 per cent of its energy requirements.

India and Pakistan showed some resilience against the severe droughts in 2002 — the adversities were offset through robust growth in industrial and service sectors in India, and a higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid into Pakistan as well as improved service sector performance.

But the slowdown in the economic growth in the least developed countries (LDCs) of South Asia, including Bangladesh, was largely led by a decline in the external sector.

Sharp fall in GDP expansion in Nepal, setbacks in garment exports from Bangladesh and Nepal and tourism receipts by Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal led to a fall in manufacturing and services linked to external trade.

Inflation was contained at less than 3 per cent in 2002 in the South Asian LDCs.

The report showed that merchandise exports, mainly garments, from Bangladesh declined, so was the imports associated with those exports as well as domestic consumption. Nepal also experienced the same.

The agriculture section of Bangladesh has slower growth from 3.1 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2002 following low rice production due to bad weather.

Other crops and horticulture were also affected but fisheries recovered strongly from a decline in 2001, the report pointed out.

Both the domestic savings and investment ratios remained largely unchanged in Bangladesh in 2001-2002. Private- sector investment increased to 16.1 per cent of GDP in 2002 from 15.9 per cent, but in public sector decreased slightly to 7.1 per cent from 7.3 per cent.

Regarding foreign trade and other external transactions, it said imports of Bangladesh "declined even more sharply leading to a narrower trade deficit". Merchandise exports had gone up by 12.6 per cent to reach $ 6.42 billion in 2001, but it declined over 7.6 per cent in 2002.

In the apparel exports, 14 percent increase could bring positive results due to falling prices that were responsible for a drop of almost 6 per cent in their value. Exports of frozen foods, leather, raw jute and tea also experienced a fall-off in both volume and value terms. However, export volumes and values of jute goods and agricultural products were higher last year.

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

Financial Express Page: Front Date: 18 April - 2003

External shocks may upset an upbeat GDP growth

FE Report

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Bangladesh is likely to witness an upward trend of 5.2 and 5.8 per cent in 2003 and 2004 respectively, provided the existing economic stability and reforms are maintained, said a report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"But these growth trends would largely depend on the fallout of Iraq war, impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the economic trends in the USA, Euro-zone and Japan," said Debapriya Bhattacharya while launching the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 report Thursday.

The report, bearing the theme, 'Asia-Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times' was released Thursday at a press conference at the CIRDAP auditorium in city.

Bhattacharya said the Iraq war and the SARS were not taken into account while projecting the growth trends as the report was prepared in January-February 2003.

About the GDP growth performance, the report said the aggregate production in the country expanded by an annual average of 5.6 per cent in 2000-2001 and by a slightly lower rate of 4.8 per cent in 2002.

This marginal decline was a result of falling export owing to the global economic slowdown, unfavourable climatic conditions and some demand compression resulting from fiscal and monetary tightening for stabilisation purposes, it observed.

It said that there was a slower growth in the agricultural sector, down from 3.1 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2002, as rice production suffered from adverse weather conditions.

But agriculture still remains the most important sector for the country in terms of the associated volume of domestic employment and contribution to the GDP, the report categorically observed.

It said the rate of manufacturing growth slowed down from 6.5 per cent in 2001 to 4.0 per cent in the following year, contributing to the observed decline in industrial value addition from 7.4 per cent in 2001 to 6.1 per cent in 2002.

Both the domestic savings and investment ratios remained largely unchanged in 2001-2002 and the private sector component of investment increased to 16.1 per cent of the GDP in 2002 from 15.9 per cent of GDP in 2001, the report said.

The public sector component of investment decreased slightly to 7.1 per cent of the GDP from 7.3 per cent over the corresponding period as the implementation of the development projects with lower priority was curtailed, it added.

The report said merchandise export, mainly garments from Bangladesh, declined by over 7.6 per cent in 2002 as a result of lower demand in overseas markets. Exports of frozen food, leather, raw jute and tea also experienced a fall both in volume and value.

Foreign exchange reserves increased in 2002 to provide 10 weeks of import cover, the report said, adding that the total official external debt reached 35 per cent of the GDP by the end of 2002, and debt-service obligations amounted to slightly less than 10 per cent of export earnings.

About capital inflows, the report said net capital flows into Bangladesh declined significantly in 2002 to $312 million from $580 million in the previous year.

Although total Official Development Assistance (ODA) receipts rose slightly from $1.15 billion in 2001 to $1.23 billion in 2002, it said the amount of grant aid was slightly lower from $432 million to $410 million.

Inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was worth $174 million in 2001 but was down to $65 million the following year, it said.

It said annual inflation had shown a sharp downward trend in recent years, falling from almost 9.0 per cent in 1999 to just 1.6 per cent in 2001 before making a recovery again to 2.4 per cent in 2002.

Food prices rose by only 1.2 per cent, but there was a sharp increase of 4.5 per cent in non-food prices, it added

Administered price increases for gas, electricity and petroleum led to a rise in the fuel, lighting and transport components of the consumption basket, while higher duties and margin requirements on commercial imports raised the prices of several goods and services, it pointed out.

The general wage index rose by 4.2 per cent in 2002, well above the rate of inflation, the report added.

It forecasts that inflation is likely to continue at the somewhat faster annual rate of 3.0 per cent in 2003-2005 but higher food and import prices may raise this figure.

Addressing the press conference Debapriya Bhattacharya said the government should manage the major policy issues including structural reforms, trade liberalisation and macroeconomic stability to achieve the GDP growth.

Public and private sector corporate governance is needed to maintain transparency and accountability, he said, adding that at the same time, productivity and competitiveness should be ensured.

Replying to a question, he said Bangladeshi exports largely depend on the economic situation in the USA and European Union (EU) because more than four-fifths of the total exports are destined for those markets.

Resident Representative of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Jorgen Lissner and Kazi Ali Reza were also present on the occasion.

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

The Independent Page: Back Date: 18 April – 2003

Asia-Pacific economies fared well this year

UNB, Dhaka

The Asia-Pacific bloc of global economy performed "surprisingly well" with growth of around 5 per cent this year amid weakness elsewhere in the world, but Bangladesh contributed to this growth barely with marginal decline in the GDP.

A UN report came up with the evaluation, noting that aggregate production in Bangladesh expanded by an annual average of 5.6 per cent in 2000-2001 and by a slightly lower rate of 4.8 per cent in 2002.

Fall in the export of garments, poor weather conditions and demand compression resulting from fiscal and monetary tightening were behind a slower GDP in 2002 from the level reached in the previous year.

The observations came in the UN document entitled "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" released at the CIRDAP auditorium yesterday. UNDP resident representative Jorgen Lissner presented the report.

Centre for Policy Dialogue's Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Kazi Ali Reza of UNIC were among others present on the occasion.

The document of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) was also released simultaneously in other parts of the world, indicating capable contribution of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from South Asia with strong GDP growth.

Stating the expansion in the Asia-Pacific region, which was 2 per cent higher than the 2001 rate, the report noted that it owed much to surging intraregional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

However, while indicating the challenges for the region, the UN agency said prospects for 2003 are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative "ripple effects", including those on energy prices.

The region imports 40 per cent of its energy requirements.

India and Pakistan showed some resilience against the severe droughts in 2002-the adversities were offset through robust growth in industrial and service sectors in India, and a higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid into Pakistan as well as improved service sector performance.

But the slowdown in the economic growth in the least developed countries (LDCs) of South Asia, including Bangladesh, was largely led by a decline in the external sector.

Sharp fall in GDP expansion in Nepal, setbacks in garment exports from Bangladesh and Nepal and tourism receipts by Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal led to a fall in manufacturing and services linked to external trade.

Inflation was contained at less than 3 per cent in 2002 in the South Asian LDCs.

The report showed that merchandise exports, mainly garments, from Bangladesh declined, so was the imports associated with those exports as well as domestic consumption. Nepal also experienced the same.

The agriculture section of Bangladesh has slower growth from 3.1 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2002 following low rice production due to bad weather.

Other crops and horticulture were also affected but fisheries recovered strongly from a decline in 2001, the report pointed out.

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

New Nation Page: Front Date: 18 April - 2003

6 pc GDP growth to fight poverty needed: ESCAP

Drastic fall in FDI

Staff Reporter

The net capital inflows into Bangladesh declined significantly from 580 million US dollars in 2001 to 312 million US dollars in 2002. "Although official development assistance (ODA) receipts, particularly in the form of concessional loans, rose slightly, inward foreign direct investment (FDI) was significantly lower in 2002 and there was a net outflow of foreign portfolio investment from Bangladesh."

It has been revealed by the Economic and Social Survey 2003 of ESCAP. In Bangladesh, the report was launched at a function held at the city's CIRDAP auditorium yesterday.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a local think-tank, highlighted various aspects of the report.

UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Jorgen Lissner was present on the occasion.

According to the 298-page report, total official debt of Bangladesh reached 35 per cent of GDP by the end of 2002, and debt servicing obligations amounted to slightly less than 10 per cent of the country's export earnings.

The report observes that the rates of growth in Bangladesh 'have not been adequate for sustained poverty reduction.' The higher growth needed is attainable only with continued investment inflows from external sources, both public and private.

"To achieve the goal of poverty reduction, sustained annual growth rates of 6 per cent or higher are needed, with deliberate propoor targeting of public expenditure and greater attention given to the maintenance of facilities," the report suggests.

Theme of this year's annual report of ESCAP is "Asia-Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times." ESCAP is an inter-governmental forum, having 51 full members and nine associate members. Some 60 per cent of the global population live in the ESCAP region.

The report reveals that the fiscal deficit of Bangladesh is likely to narrow further in 2003, given the government's strong commitment to curtailing expenditure and increasing revenue earnings. However, increased inflows of external grants and loans after the finalisation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) are expected to cover a somewhat wider financing gap in future.

On the other hand, the report says the essential role played by the private sector in sustained economic growth has been acknowledged in the South Asian least developed countries. "The closure of a large state-owned enterprise in 2002 is a signal that Bangladesh recognizes the need to avoid public sector engagement in manufacturing and commercial activities as part of its public investment strategies."

The report suggests that better financial intermediation is an essential prerequisite to promoting greater participation of the private sector in South Asian LDCs, where significant portions of the economically active population remains underserved. In Bangladesh, there are rooms for redirecting credit to the agriculture sector and small-scale enterprises.

Referring to the possible uncertainty of the economy, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said the country's export sectors, specially the readymade garment and food processing sectors would be badly affected due to US-led war on Iraq and recently emerged SARS (Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus.

"The prospect of Bangladesh economy would remain sluggish unless the economies of developed countries, like the United States, Japan and European Union become stronger in the days ahead since much of the country's exports go to these countries," he said.

Quoting the report, he emphasized on accelerating the country's structural reforms, specially trade liberalisation, enhancement of productivity and competitiveness and ensure macroeconomic stability.

The Daily Star
Prepared by Onirban

Business Page

Volume 3 Number 1280 Fri.
April 18, 2003

• Bangladesh to see 5.2pc GDP growth despite war, SARS
• Bangladesh may buy 100,000 tonnes of wheat from Pakistan
• SARS causes uncertainty for Asia-Pacific economies
• New WTO round deadlock looms over goods tariffs
• American Airlines averts immediate bankruptcy

Bangladesh to see 5.2pc GDP growth despite war, SARS

ESCAP annual regional survey forecasts

Star Business Report

Bangladesh economy is expected to see a GDP growth of 5.2 per cent this fiscal, thanks to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, United Nations' economic and social arm forecast yesterday.

The growth prediction was made despite global uncertainties over war and a viral outbreak.

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"The good news is that the war is ending with oil prices still stable, the fatal virus not yet here and the Japanese GDP growth returning to positive figure showing signs of recovery," Bhattacharya said.

These positive developments are sure to contribute to the steady growth of Bangladesh economy, he said.

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Administered price increase for gas, electricity and petroleum and higher duties and margin requirements on commercial imports raised the prices of several goods and services.

Inflation is targeted to continue at a faster annual rate of three per cent in 2003-2005 but higher food and

import prices may raise this figure, the survey stated.

A decline in import spending of 8.7 per cent in 2002, as a result of lower imports of inputs for export processing activities, reversed the strong growth in 2001. Imports of petroleum and food products, with the exception of edible oil, were generally lower, while commercial imports of consumer durable and automobiles fell significantly as imposition of margin requirements and supplementary duties lowered demand, it read.

As a result of the sharper fall in imports, the trade deficit narrowed. This, together with a substantial increase in remittance receipts, led to the current account deficit falling to 0.6 per cent of GDP in 2002, it said.

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Survey suggested the government to speed up reform drive and curtail government expenditure and increase revenue collection.

It also acknowledges the private sector as the leader of GDP growth asking the policymakers to facilitate investment in manufacturing sector.

Last month the grain storage agency sold 300,000 tonnes of milling wheat from the 2002 crop for export at 8,625 rupees ($149.30) a tonne to seven local buyers.

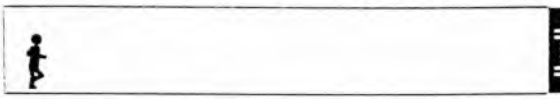
But after the shipments are made PASSCO pays back the buyers a maximum of 2,500 rupees per tonne under the government's export refund policy.

Exporters and shippers in the port city of Karachi said they had struck deals with foreign buyers to export all the purchases they had made from PASSCO last month.

Hamid Gharib, an exporter who bought 125,000 tonnes of wheat from the PASSCO, said wheat shipments to East Africa, the Philippines, Vietnam and Middle East were scheduled from April to June.

"The FOB Karachi prices quoted by the exporters are in a range of $127 to $130 per tonne," Gharib said.T

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PRESS DIGEST - Bangladesh - A 18

Reuters, 04.18.03, 12:52 AM ET

(Excerpt)

---THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

The gross domestic products (GDP) in Bangladesh is likely witness an upward trend of 5.2 and 5.8 per cent in 2003 ar respectively, provided the existing economic stability and r are maintained, said a report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

The visiting mission of the International Monetary Fund sai government should introduce floating exchange rate by ne September as a precondition for receiving loans under the Reduction Growth Facility arrangements, sources said.

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New Nation Page: Back Date: 18 April - 2003



Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya speaking at the launching ceremony of ESCAP Economic and Social Survey 2003 at the city's CIRDAP auditorium yesterday. UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Jorgen Lissner seen. —New Nation photo

UNIC Dhaka *News Clipping Service*

Ajker Kagoj Page: Back Date: 18 April - 2003

এসকাপের বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ

যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ইউরোপের ওপর নির্ভর করছে বাংলাদেশের উন্নয়ন

কাগজ প্রতিবেদক: এসকাপের আর্থ-সামাজিক জরিপ ২০০৩ প্রকাশনা অনুষ্ঠানে সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগের নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেছেন, ইরাক যুদ্ধ এবং সার্স ভাইরাস বাংলাদেশসহ এশীয়-প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোর উন্নয়নে প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে। ইরাক যুদ্ধের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ইউরোপের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নের ওপর নির্ভর করছে বাংলাদেশের উন্নয়ন। তিনি আরও বলেন, গত বছর এ অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোর অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক উন্নয়ন বেশ ভালো হয়েছে। এসব দেশের মধ্যে সবচে' ভালো করেছে ভিয়েতনাম।

আর্থ-সামাজিক জরিপ এসকাপের একটি বার্ষিক প্রকাশনা। গত এক দশকের বেশি সময় ধরে এসকাপ এটি প্রকাশ করে আসছে। এবারের মূল প্রতিপাদ্য হচ্ছে 'এশিয়া প্যাসিফিক ইকোনমিক্স : বিসাইলেন্স ইন চ্যালেঞ্জিং টাইমস'। এ বছর ফেব্রুয়ারি পর্যন্ত প্রাপ্ত হিসাব থেকে জরিপ প্রতিবেদনে যাবতীয় পরিসংখ্যান ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে। বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশেও গতকাল প্রতিবেদনটি প্রকাশ করা হয়।

সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে আয়োজিত প্রকাশনা অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন বাংলাদেশে নিযুক্ত জাতিসংঘের আবাসিক সমন্বয়ক জর্গেন লিসনার ও জাতিসংঘ তথ্য কেন্দ্রের ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা।

ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, চলতি বছরের শুরুটা ভালোই ছিল। কিন্তু সাম্প্রতিক কিছু ঘটনা পরিস্থিতি বদলে দিয়েছে। তিনি ২ পৃষ্ঠায় ৪ কলামে দেখুন

শেষের পৃষ্ঠার পর

বলেন, এশীয়-প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোর জন্য এ বছর তিনটি বিষয় মূলত নিয়ন্ত্রক হিসাবে কাজ করবে। এগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে- ইরাক যুদ্ধ, সার্স ভাইরাস এবং যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, ইউরো অঞ্চল ও জাপানের অর্থনীতি। অর্থাৎ ইরাক যুদ্ধের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে এ অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোর উন্নয়ন নির্ভর করবে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, ইউরোপ ও জাপানের অর্থনীতি কেমন উন্নয়ন হয় তার ওপর। বাংলাদেশ সম্পর্কে তিনি বলেন, গত বছর বাংলাদেশের প্রবৃদ্ধির হার আগের বছরের তুলনায় হ্রাস পায়। এর কারণ ছিল বাণিজ্যে মন্থর গতি, আবহাওয়ার কারণে কৃষিতে উৎপাদন হ্রাস ও ঋণ প্রবাহে সংকোচন। এবার বাংলাদেশসহ দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার ভালো উন্নতি হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। তবে এটা নিশ্চিত করতে হলে সামাজিক ও ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যে যেসব সুযোগ দেওয়া হয়েছে সেগুলো যাতে বাস্তবায়ন হয়- এটা খেয়াল রাখতে হবে। কারণ বিশ্ব পরিস্থিতিতে ইরাক যুদ্ধ বাংলাদেশের জন্য খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। সবচে' বড় হল যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ইউরোপের উন্নয়ন কতটা হল তার ওপর নির্ভর করছে বাংলাদেশের উন্নয়ন। এছাড়া সার্স ভাইরাস আমাদের অর্থনীতিতে কিছুটা হলেও আঘাত করতে পারে। কারণ সার্স দেশে ঢুকলে এই ভাইরাস বাংলাদেশের গার্মেন্টস শিল্প ও প্রক্রিয়াজাত খাদ্যে ছড়িয়ে পড়তে পারে। এতে অর্থনীতি মারাত্মক ক্ষতির সম্মুখিন হবে। শুধু তাই নয়, এই সার্স সারা বিশ্বে ছড়িয়ে পড়লে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতিতেও এর ক্ষতিকর প্রভাব পড়বে। ড. দেবপ্রিয় বলেন, বর্তমানে আমাদের যে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার রয়েছে সেটা দারিদ্র বিমোচনের জন্য যথেষ্ট নয়। এ জন্য কৃষি ও মাঝারি শিল্পে ঋণ প্রবাহ আরও জোরদার করা ও বৈদেশিক সাহায্য বাড়াতে হবে।

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এসকাপ-এর বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ

এ দেশে সার্সের উপস্থিতি ধরা পড়লে অর্থনীতি বিপর্যয়ের মুখে পড়বে

কাগজ প্রতিবেদক : সম্প্রতি এশিয়া ছড়িয়ে পড়া ঘাতক ব্যাধি সিভিয়ার এ্যাকিউট রেসপিরেটরি সিন্ড্রোম (সার্স)-এর উপস্থিতি এ দেশে ধরা পড়লে দেশের অর্থনীতি ভয়ঙ্কর বিপর্যয়ের মুখে পড়বে। কারণ এই ব্যাধির ফলে দেশের বস্ত্রজাত আয়ের প্রধান খাত তৈরি পোশাক, হিমায়িত চিংড়ি, পর্যটন শিল্পসহ বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে বিভিন্ন পণ্যের বাণিজ্য সংকট দেখা দেবে। এমনকি তা দেশের অর্থনীতিতে ইরাক যুদ্ধের চেয়েও মারাত্মক নেতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে।

এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলীয় অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক পরিষদ (এসকাপ)-এর বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশনা উপলক্ষে আয়োজিত এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে গতকাল বৃহস্পতিবার এ কথা বলা হয়। এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় দেশগুলোর গত বছরের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক পরিস্থিতি বর্ণনা করে ইএসসিএপি এই প্রতিবেদনটি প্রকাশ করে। সম্মেলনে প্রতিবেদনের ওপর এক আলোচনায় বলা হয়, এরমধ্যেই গত ২০০১ সালের তুলনায় গত বছর দেশের জাতীয় প্রবৃদ্ধির হার অনেক কম ছিল। এ বছর সেই হার আরো কমে যাওয়ার যথেষ্ট সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে।

গতকাল ঐ সংবাদ সম্মেলনে এসকাপের প্রকাশিত প্রতিবেদনের ওপর বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করেন দেশের বিশিষ্ট অর্থনীতিবিদ ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য। অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেন জাতিসংঘে বাংলাদেশের আবাসিক সমন্বয়কারী জর্গান লিসনার।

প্রতিবেদনে বাংলাদেশ প্রসঙ্গে বলা হয়, দেশে বাণিজ্য যেভাবে বৃদ্ধি পাওয়ার কথা ছিল সেভাবে বাড়ছে না। গত বছর থেকে ক্রমেই প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ কমে আসছে। সেই সঙ্গে হ্রাস পাচ্ছে বৈদেশিক সাহায্যের পরিমাণও। প্রতিবেদনে আরো বলা হয়, এভাবে চলতে থাকলে জাতীয় প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ভবিষ্যতে আরো নেমে আসবে। এর ফলে দেশ থেকে দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন কিছুতেই সম্ভব হবে না। এই প্রবৃদ্ধির হার কমে যাওয়ার কারণ হিসেবে রপ্তানির চেয়ে আমদানি বৃদ্ধি এবং বাণিজ্য ঘাটতিকেও দায়ী করা হয়।

প্রতিবেদনে আরো বলা হয়, দেশে রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন কারখানাগুলো বন্ধ হয়ে যাওয়ায় দেশের আর্থিক ক্ষেত্রে যাপ্তই অগ্রগতি হয়েছে। কৃষিক্ষেত্রে ঋণের পরিমাণ বাড়েনি। আবহাওয়াগত কারণে কৃষিতে উৎপাদনও কমে গেছে। আর এসবই প্রভাব ফেলেছে অর্থনীতির ওপর।

অর্থনীতির ওপর ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও সার্সের প্রভাব প্রসঙ্গে প্রতিবেদনে সংশয় প্রকাশ করা হয়। বলা হয়, ইরাক যুদ্ধের ফলে এই মুহূর্তে তেলের দাম স্থিতিশীল থাকছে। ফলে অর্থনীতির ওপর বিশ্ব পরিস্থিতির পরোক্ষ প্রভাবকেই মুখ্য বলে উল্লেখ করা হয়।

সার্স প্রসঙ্গে বলা হয়, ঘাতক এই ব্যাধিটি যদি সত্যিই বাংলাদেশে ধরা পড়ে, তবে বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে রপ্তানি বাণিজ্য বন্ধ হয়ে যাবে। সেই সঙ্গে বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন নেতিবাচক ইমেজের পাশাপাশি এটিও রাষ্ট্রের জন্য খুবই ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ হবে। প্রতিবেদনে অর্থনীতির এই সংকট থেকে উত্তরণে দেশের বাণিজ্যের কাঠামোগত সংস্কার, সুশাসন, স্বচ্ছতা বৃদ্ধি, দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনের কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ, শুল্ক হারের তারতম্য কমিয়ে আনাসহ বিভিন্ন দিকে জোর দেওয়া হয়। সম্মেলনে আরো বলা হয়, শিক্ষা ও স্বাস্থ্যের ক্ষেত্রে যতটুকু সুবিধা, তা প্রধানত দরিদ্র্য মানুষের মধ্যেই বরাদ্দ রাখতে হবে। কারণ পরিবেশ বিপর্যয়ে গরিব মানুষই বেশি পড়ে।

এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরের বিভিন্ন দেশের অর্থনীতি ও সামাজিক পরিস্থিতির ওপরও বিস্তারিত প্রতিবেদন পেশ করা হয়। এ প্রসঙ্গে বলা হয়, গত বছর এই অঞ্চলগুলোর অর্থনীতি সংক্রান্ত কার্যক্রম ছিল সন্তোষজনক। এক্ষেত্রে চীন ও ভিয়েতনামকে মডেল হিসেবে উল্লেখ করা হয়। বলা হয়, আন্তঃআঞ্চলিক বাণিজ্য প্রবাহ, মুদ্রানীতি ও কর আরোপসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়গুলো ইতিবাচক হওয়ায় গত বছর এ দেশগুলোয় প্রবৃদ্ধির হারও উঁচু পর্যায়ে ছিল।

উল্লেখ্য, সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিবেদনটি চলতি বছরের জানুয়ারি ও ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে তৈরি করা হয়েছে। প্রতিবেদনে ব্যবহৃত পরিসংখ্যানও এই সময়কালে প্রাপ্ত তথ্য থেকেই নেওয়া।

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গতকাল বৃহস্পতিবার সিরডাপ অডিটোরিয়ামে এসকাপের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক উন্নয়ন জরিপ রিপোর্ট প্রকাশ অনুষ্ঠানে ইউএন-এর আবাসিক প্রধান মি. জারগন লিসনার বক্তব্য রাখেন *-দিনকাল*

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এসকাপ-এর অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ রিপোর্ট প্রকাশ

প্রতিকূলতা সত্ত্বেও গত বছর প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনে স্বল্পোন্নত বিশ্বে বাংলাদেশ শীর্ষে

অর্থনৈতিক রিপোর্টার

এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের স্বল্পোন্নত দেশগুলো ২০০২ সালে প্রতিকূল পরিস্থিতি সত্ত্বেও আগের বছরের নিম্ন প্রবৃদ্ধির চক্র থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে তুলনামূলকভাবে উচ্চ প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করেছে। এর মধ্যে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান শীর্ষে।

এসকাপের এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ প্রতিবেদনে উপরোক্ত মন্তব্য করে বলা হয়েছে, ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও সার্স ভাইরাসের হুমকির মধ্যেও চলতি বছরে প্রবৃদ্ধির এই ধারা অব্যাহত থাকবে। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার স্বল্পোন্নত দেশগুলো হচ্ছে বাংলাদেশ, নেপাল, ভুটান ও মালদ্বীপ।

গতকাল বৃহস্পতিবার জাতিসংঘের ইকোনমিক এন্ড সোশ্যাল কমিশন ফর এশিয়া এন্ড দ্য প্যাসিফিক (এসকাপ)-এর নিয়মিত বার্ষিক রিপোর্টটি সারা পৃথিবীর মতো বাংলাদেশেও আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে প্রকাশ করা হয়।

সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে অনুষ্ঠিত প্রকাশনা অনুষ্ঠানে ইউএস রেসিডেন্স কো-অর্ডিনেটর মিঃ জরগান লিসনার ও ইউএমআইসির ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। জরিপে রিপোর্টের ওপর মূল্যায়ন প্রতিবেদন উপস্থাপন করেন সিপিডির নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য।

রিপোর্টে বাংলাদেশের অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধির হারের প্রসঙ্গে বলা হয়েছে, ২০০০-০১ অর্থবছরে যেখানে অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছিল ৫.৬ শতাংশ প্রতিকূল পরিস্থিতিতে ২০০২ অর্থবছরে হয়েছিল ৪.৮ শতাংশ।

তৈরি পোশাকের রফতানি হ্রাস, প্রতিকূল আবহাওয়া ও রাজস্ব ও মুদ্রা ব্যবস্থাপনার কঠোরতার জন্য চাহিদা শ্লথতা দেখা দেয়ায় ২০০২ অর্থবছরে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার হ্রাস পেয়েছিল।

অপরদিকে রিপোর্টে বলা হয়, কৃষি উৎপাদনের ক্রমবর্ধমান প্রবৃদ্ধি, রফতানির বর্ধিত চাহিদার কারণে ২০০৩ সালে প্রবৃদ্ধি বেড়ে ৫.২ শতাংশ হবে। পরবর্তী ২০০৪ সালে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার আরো কিছুটা বাড়বে।

রিপোর্টে বাংলাদেশের মুদ্রাস্ফীতির হারের প্রবণতা বিশ্লেষণ করে বলা হয়, সাম্প্রতিক বছরগুলোতে মুদ্রাস্ফীতির হার উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে কম ছিল। তবে ২০০২ সালে ২.৪ শতাংশ এবং সাম্প্রতি তা ৪.৫ শতাংশ হয়েছে। সাম্প্রতিক সময়ে জ্বালানি তেলের মূল্যবৃদ্ধি ও খাদ্যশস্যের দাম বেড়ে যাওয়ায় এই প্রবণতা দেখা দিয়েছে।

রফতানি পরিমাণ ও মূল্যের দিক থেকে ২০০১ সালে যথেষ্ট বৃদ্ধি পেলেও ২০০২ সালে তা ৭.৬ শতাংশ কমে যায়। রিপোর্টে বলা হয়, ২০০১ সালে দেশে সরাসরি বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ যেখানে ছিল ৫৮০ মিলিয়ন ডলার ২০০২ সালে তা কমে হয় ৩১২ মিলিয়ন ডলার।

রিপোর্টে অবশ্য সাম্প্রতিক সময়ে অর্থনৈতিক স্থিতিশীলতা জোরদার করায় সরকারের গৃহীত বেল কিছু পদক্ষেপকে খুবই ইতিবাচক বলে উল্লেখ করা হয়।

এসকাপ রিপোর্টে স্বল্পোন্নত দেশ হিসেবে ভুটান, নেপাল, মালদ্বীপের সঙ্গে তুলনাকে অন্যায্য বলে উল্লেখ করে প্রকাশনা অনুষ্ঠানে বলা হয়, অর্থনৈতিক আকার এবং সংস্কারের গুণগতমানের দিক থেকে বাকি দেশগুলোর তুলনায় বাংলাদেশ অনেক বেশি গুরুত্বের দাবিদার। অনেক ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশের সাফল্য শ্রীলংকা, ভারত, পাকিস্তানের থেকেও বেশি।

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এসকাপের রিপোর্ট প্রকাশকালে অভিমত

ইরাক যুদ্ধ নিয়মনীতিভিত্তিক বিশ্ব ব্যবস্থাকে ঝুঁকির মুখে ঠেলে দিয়েছে

অর্থনৈতিক রিপোর্টার ঃ জাতিসংঘের এশীয় ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক কমিশনের (ইউএন এসকাপ) অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক সমীক্ষা প্রতিবেদন-২০০৩ প্রকাশ উপলক্ষে আয়োজিত অনুষ্ঠানে বলা হয়েছে, ইরাকে আক্রমণের পর নিয়ম-নীতিভিত্তিক যে বিশ্ব ব্যবস্থা চলে আসছিল তা হুমকির সম্মুখীন হয়ে পড়েছে। এখন

কোন ক্ষুদ্র ২-এর পৃঃ ৫-এর কঃ দেখুন

দেশকে বড় দেশ পছন্দ না হলে সন্ত্রাসী রাষ্ট্র ঘোষণা করে সে দেশকে বাজার, বিনিয়োগ বা বাণিজ্য সুবিধা থেকে বঞ্চিত করতে পারে। এমনকি আগামী কানকুন সম্মেলনেও বড় দেশ কি বলছে না বলছে তা ক্ষুদ্র দেশগুলোর জন্য চাপ হয়ে দাঁড়াতে পারে। অনুষ্ঠানে বলা হয়, বাংলাদেশের জন্য ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও যুদ্ধ-পরবর্তী পরিস্থিতি এবং সার্সভীতি স্বল্প মেয়াদে সমস্যা সৃষ্টি করতে পারে। আর কাঙ্ক্ষিত অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করতে হলে কাঠামোগত সংস্কার অব্যাহত রাখতে হবে। গতকাল (বৃহস্পতিবার) সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে ইউএন এসকাপের এশীয় ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ-২০০৩ শীর্ষক প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজন করা হয়। এতে রিপোর্টের বিভিন্ন দিক ব্যাখ্যা করে বক্তব্য রাখেন সিপিবি'র নির্বাহী পরিচালক ও অর্থনীতিবিদ ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য। এতে বাংলাদেশে জাতিসংঘের আবাসিক সমন্বয়কারী মিঃ ইয়র্গান লিজনার ও জাতিসংঘ তথ্য কেন্দ্রের ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা বক্তৃতা করেন।

ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য প্রতিবেদনের বাংলাদেশ সংশ্লিষ্ট অংশ ব্যাখ্যা করে বলেন, ২০০৩ অর্থ বছরের জন্য ৫.২ শতাংশ প্রক্ষেপিত প্রবৃদ্ধি কৃষিখাতের স্থিতিশীল বিকাশ ও ত্বরান্বিত রফতানী চাহিদার ওপর ভিত্তি করে ২০০৪-০৫ সালে আরো বাড়তে পারে।

মূল্যস্ফীতি প্রসঙ্গে তিনি বলেন, ২০০৩-০৫ মেয়াদে মূল্যস্ফীতি ৩ শতাংশ হারে হবে বলে ধরা হলেও খাদ্য ও আমদানী পণ্যের মূল্যবৃদ্ধি এটাকে আরো ঊর্ধ্বগতি দিতে পারে।

প্রতিবেদনের উদ্ধৃতি দিয়ে ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় বলেন, ২০০২ সালে নীট মূলধন প্রবাহ আগের বছরের ৫৮ কোটি ডলার থেকে কমে ৩১ কোটি ২০ লাখ ডলারে নেমে এসেছে যদিও এডিএ সহায়তা বিশেষত রেয়াতী ঋণ এ সময়ে কিছুটা বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে। ২০০২ সালে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের হিসাব অনুযায়ী আগের বছরের চেয়ে উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে হ্রাস পেয়েছে। অবশ্য বৈদেশিক ঋণ প্রবাহ হ্রাস পাওয়ায় দায়দেনা যৌক্তিক সীমা অতিক্রম করেনি। তিনি উল্লেখ করেন, ২০০২ সাল শেষে বৈদেশিক দায়ের পরিমাণ জিডিপি'র ৩৫ শতাংশে পৌঁছে আর এ বৈদেশিক দেনা পরিশোধের অংক রফতানী আয়ের ১০ শতাংশের নিচে নেমে এসেছে। বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা বিনিময় হার বর্তমানে বাজার ভিত্তিক করার অন্তর্বর্তী পর্যায়ে রয়েছে।

প্রতিবেদন উপস্থাপনকালে বলা হয়, বাংলাদেশের টেকসই দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনের জন্য প্রবৃদ্ধির বর্তমান হার মোটেই পর্যাপ্ত নয়। উচ্চতর হারে প্রবৃদ্ধি সম্ভব হবে সরকারী ও বেসরকারী উভয় খাতের বৈদেশিক সূত্রের অব্যাহত বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমে। টেকসই দারিদ্র্য দূর করার লক্ষ্য অর্জনের জন্য দরিদ্রমুখী সরকারী ব্যয় এবং দরিদ্রদের কাছে সুযোগ-সুবিধা পৌঁছানোর ব্যবস্থা সম্বলিত ৬ শতাংশ অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি প্রয়োজন।

প্রতিবেদন উপস্থাপনকালে ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় বলেন, সরকারের ব্যয় হ্রাস এবং রাজস্ব বৃদ্ধির জোরদার অঙ্গীকারের ফলে ২০০৩ সালে রাজস্ব ঘাটতি আরো কমে যেতে পারে। অন্তর্বর্তী দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন কৌশলপত্র চূড়ান্ত হবার পর বিদেশী অনুদান ও ঋণ প্রবাহ আরো বাড়তে পারে যা ভবিষ্যৎ ব্যাপক অর্থায়নের ব্যবধান পূরণ করতে পারে।

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অর্থনীতিতে সারস ভাইরাস ইরাক যুদ্ধের চেয়ে বেশী প্রভাব ফেলবে

ইত্তেফাক রিপোর্ট ॥ রহস্যময় সারস ভাইরাস বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতির জন্য বিপর্যয় ডেকে আনতে পারে। ইরাক যুদ্ধের কারণে অর্থনীতিতে যে প্রভাব পড়বে তার চেয়ে বেশী পড়বে সারস ভাইরাসের কারণে। বাংলাদেশে সারস ভাইরাস আছে এ খবর প্রচার হলে রপ্তানি বাণিজ্যে নেতিবাচক প্রভাব পড়বে। ক্রেতারা এখানে আসবে না। গত বৃহস্পতিবার সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলীয় অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক (২য় পৃঃ ৩-এর কঃ দ্রঃ)

পরিষদ (এসকাপ)-এর অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক সমীক্ষা-২০০৩ প্রকাশনা উপলক্ষে আয়োজিত এক অনুষ্ঠানে সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়লগ (সিপিডি)-এর নির্বাহী পরিচালক ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য একথা বলেন। তিনি বলেন, বাংলাদেশে যাতে কোন সারস ভাইরাস আক্রান্ত রোগী প্রবেশ করতে না পারে সে লক্ষ্যে ব্যবস্থা নেয়া উচিত।

এসকাপ-এর রিপোর্টে বলা হয়, ২০০০-২০০১ সালে বাংলাদেশের জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি ৫ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ হলেও ২০০২ সালে তা ৪ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশে নেমে এসেছে। ২০০৩ সালে প্রবৃদ্ধি ৫ দশমিক ২ শতাংশ প্রাক্কলন করা হলেও এটি অর্জনে ব্যাপক ভিত্তিক সংস্কার কার্যক্রম চালাতে হবে। রিপোর্টে বলা হয়, বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতিতে সামনের দিনগুলোতে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি বাড়তে পারে। ২০০২ সালে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ২ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশ থাকলেও ২০০৩ সালের শেষের দিকে তা ৩ শতাংশে উন্নীত হতে পারে। তবে আমদানী ব্যয় এবং খাদ্যের দাম বাড়লে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি আরো বাড়তে পারে বলে এসকাপ মনে করছে।

রপ্তানি আয় সম্পর্কে এসকাপ বলছে, বিশ্ববাজারে মন্দা সৃষ্টি হবার ফলে রপ্তানি আয় কমেছে। দেশের প্রধান রপ্তানি পণ্য তৈরী পোশাক রপ্তানির পরিমাণ বাড়লেও রপ্তানি মূল্য ৬ শতাংশ কমেছে। হিমায়িত খাদ্য, চামড়া, কাঁচাপাট, চা রপ্তানির পরিমাণও কমেছে। তবে পাটজাতীয় পণ্য রপ্তানির পরিমাণ এসময়ে বেড়েছে।

এসকাপের রিপোর্টে আরো বলা হয়, আমদানী ব্যয় কমার ফলে বাংলাদেশের বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি কমেছে। এ সময়ে প্রবাসীদের প্রেরিত অর্থের (রেমিট্যান্স) পরিমাণও বেড়েছে। এ কারণে চলতি হিসেবে ঘাটতি জিডিপি'র শূন্য দশমিক ৬ শতাংশে দাঁড়িয়েছে। রিপোর্টে ২০০২ সালে বাংলাদেশের বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ কমে গিয়ে ৩১২ মিলিয়ন ডলার দাঁড়িয়েছে। এর আগের বছর এ বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ ছিলো ৫৮০ মিলিয়ন ডলার। রিপোর্ট উত্থাপনের পর দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, দেশের অর্থনীতিতে স্বল্প ও মধ্য মেয়াদী এ দুধরনের সঙ্কট চলছে। ইরাক যুদ্ধ, সারস ভাইরাস, জাপান, যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের দেশসমূহের মন্দা পরিস্থিতিতে বাংলাদেশ সমস্যায় পড়েছে। আবার আন্তঃঅঞ্চলীয় বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ প্রবৃদ্ধি কমে যাওয়া বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতির নেতিবাচক দিক। এসব সঙ্কট উত্তরণে তিনি কাঠামোগত সংস্কার অব্যাহত রাখা, বাণিজ্য উদারীকরণ, সামষ্টিক অর্থনীতির স্থিতিশীলতা রক্ষা করা, রাষ্ট্রীয় ও ব্যক্তিখাতকে শক্তিশালীকরণ প্রভৃতি ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের মাধ্যমে অর্থনীতিতে স্থিতিশীলতা ফিরিয়ে আনা যায়। এক প্রশ্নের জবাবে দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, যুদ্ধের কারণে বর্তমানে বিশ্ব বাণিজ্যে বিধি-বিধান হুমকির মুখে রয়েছে। এতে ছোট ছোট রাষ্ট্রগুলো অর্থনৈতিকভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হবে। এসকাপ-এর রিপোর্ট উত্থাপনকালে বাংলাদেশে জাতিসংঘের সমন্বয়কারী ইয়র্গান লিসনার এবং জাতিসংঘ তথ্য কেন্দ্রের কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

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ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও সার্স রোগের প্রকোপ অর্থনীতিতে বিপর্যয় আনতে পারে

● এসকাপ জরিপ রিপোর্টের তথ্য

যুগান্তর রিপোর্ট

ইরাক যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী পরিস্থিতি ও মারাত্মক শ্বাসকষ্টজনিত রোগ 'সার্স'-এর প্রকোপ বাংলাদেশসহ এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের ছোট ছোট দেশের অর্থনীতিকে মারাত্মক বিপর্যয়ের দিকে ঠেলে দিতে পারে। বিগত বছরের অর্থনৈতিক মন্দাভাবকে কাটিয়ে এসব দেশ চলতি বছরে সামনের দিকে অগ্রসর হলেও তাদের সাফল্য নির্ভর করছে বিশ্ব পরিস্থিতির ওপর। এই দেশগুলো মুদ্রা সংকোচন নীতি, কর বৃদ্ধি, আন্তঃঅঞ্চলীয় বাণিজ্য প্রবাহ সৃষ্টি, প্রশাসনিক ও অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার ইত্যাদি কর্মসূচির ফলে অর্থনৈতিক সূচক স্থিতিশীল অবস্থায় রয়েছে। এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় দেশগুলোর অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ-২০০৩ এর তুলনামূলক বিচারে বাংলাদেশের অর্থনৈতিক অবস্থা মোটামুটি অবস্থায় থাকলেও সাড়ে ৪ ভাগ হারে খাদ্যদ্রব্য মূল্য বৃদ্ধি একটি ব্যতিক্রম ঘটনা।

গতকাল সকালে শিরতাপ মিলনায়তনে জাতিসংঘ-এসকাপের (এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলীয় অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক পরিষদ) অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ-২০০৩ প্রকাশনা উপলক্ষে উপরোক্ত তথ্য উপস্থাপন করা হয়। দেশের বিশিষ্ট অর্থনীতিবিদ ও সিপিডি'র নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য এই জরিপ উপস্থাপন করেন। অনুষ্ঠানে বক্তব্য রাখেন জাতিসংঘের বাংলাদেশে আবাসিক সমন্বয়কারী জরগেন লিজনার ও তথ্যকেন্দ্রের ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা। ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য জরিপের তথ্য বিশ্লেষণ করে বলেন, এ অবস্থার মধ্যেও টিকে থাকতে হলে কাঠামোগত সংস্কার অব্যাহত রাখা, বাণিজ্য উদারীকরণ বহাল, উৎপাদনশীলতা ও প্রতিযোগিতা সক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধি, সামষ্টিক অর্থনৈতিক স্থিতিশীলতা অক্ষুণ্ন রাখা এবং প্রশাসনিক সুশাসন নিশ্চিত করতে হবে।

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'সার্স বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতিতে ইরাক যুদ্ধের চেয়েও মারাত্মক প্রভাব ফেলবে'

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার : এ বছর এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের দেশসমূহের অর্থনীতি ৩টি মূল বিষয় নিয়ন্ত্রণ করবে। বিষয় ৩টি হচ্ছে ইরাক যুদ্ধ, সার্স এবং আমেরিকা, ইউরোপ ও জাপানের অর্থনৈতিক অবস্থা, বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতির ক্ষেত্রেও এ ৩টি বিষয়ের ব্যাপক প্রভাব পড়বে। কারণ দেশটি তেল আমদানিনির্ভর হওয়ায় এবং মধ্যপ্রাচ্যে ব্যাপক অগ্রচলিত পণ্য রফতানি করায় ইরাক যুদ্ধে ইতিমধ্যে ক্ষতির সম্মুখীন হয়েছে। সার্স ভাইরাস বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতিতে সুদূরপ্রসারী নেতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলবে, পর্যটন শিল্প ব্যাপক ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হবে এবং গার্মেন্টসসহ সকল ধরনের রফতানি বাণিজ্যে সার্সের প্রভাব পরিলক্ষিত হবে। বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতিতে বিদেশী সাহায্যের প্রভাব কমে এলেও ২০০৩ সালের সার্বিক অর্থনীতি মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, জাপান ও ইউরোপীয় দেশগুলোর অবস্থার ওপর নির্ভর করবে। ফলে ২০০২ সালের শেষ নাগাদ রেমিটেন্স বৃদ্ধি ও বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার রিজার্ভ বাড়ানোর প্রচেষ্টার কারণে দেশের বৈদেশিক লায়েনা পরিস্থিতি কমে এখন ধারণক্ষমতার মধ্যে চলে এলেও ২০০৩ সালে ভয়াবহ পরিস্থিতি মোকাবেলার জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকতে হবে।

গতকাল সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে এশিয়া ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের দেশসমূহের আর্থ-সামাজিক জরিপ ২০০৩ প্রকাশনা উপলক্ষে আয়োজিত সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে উল্লেখিত তথ্যসমূহ জানানো হয়।

অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেছেন বাংলাদেশের জাতিসংঘ ব্যবস্থার সমন্বয়কারী ইয়র্গান লিসনার প্রকাশনাটির বিশেষ বিশেষ দিকগুলোর আনুষঙ্গিক বর্ণনা দেন। পলিসি ডায়ালগের নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রীয় ভট্টাচার্য অনুষ্ঠানে অন্যদের মধ্যে উপস্থিত ছিলেন জাতিসংঘ তথ্য কেন্দ্রের ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা।

২৯৮ পৃষ্ঠার বিশাল জরিপ কর্মের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ দিয়ে দেব প্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, জরিপটি সম্পন্ন হয়েছে ইরাক যুদ্ধের আগে, তাই ২০০৩ সালের সম্ভাব্য অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক অবস্থা হয়তো সঠিকভাবে হবে না। তবে ২০০২ সালে দেশের যে প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে তা দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনের জন্য যথেষ্ট নয়। তিনি সতর্ক করে দিয়ে বলেন, সার্স ঠেকাতে যদি সরকার ব্যর্থ হয় তাহলে ইরাক যুদ্ধের চেয়েও দেশ এর কারণে বেশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হবে।

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এসকাপ রিপোর্টে দেশে বিদেশী পুঁজির নাজুক চিত্র

সাহায্য, বিনিয়োগ ২০০২ সালে প্রায় ৫০ শতাংশ হ্রাস পেয়েছে

❑ হংকংয়ের 'সার্স' রোগ দেশের জন্য নতুন হুমকি ঃ দেবপ্রিয়

অর্থনৈতিক বার্তা পরিবেশক ঃ ইকোনোমিক অ্যান্ড সোশ্যাল কাউন্সিল ফর এশিয়া অ্যান্ড দ্য প্যাসিফিকের (এসকাপ) 'অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ ২০০৩' শীর্ষক প্রতিবেদনে বাংলাদেশে বৈদেশিক পুঁজি প্রবাহের এক নাজুক চিত্র তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। প্রতিবেদনের তথ্য অনুযায়ী সরাসরি বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই), বৈদেশিক সহায়তা, পোর্টফোলিও বিনিয়োগ সব মিলিয়ে বৈদেশিক পুঁজি প্রবাহ ২০০২ সালে তার আগের বছরের তুলনায় ৪৬ দশমিক ২০ শতাংশ হ্রাস পেয়েছে। প্রতিবেদনে দ্রুত দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনে উচ্চমাত্রায় প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনের জন্য বৈদেশিক পুঁজি প্রবাহ আরও বাড়ানো দরকার বলে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগের (সিপিডি) নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেছেন, সরকার প্রক্ষেপিত চলতি অর্থবছরের প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও তৎপরবর্তী পরিস্থিতি এবং সার্স নামক ফুসফুসের প্রদাহজনিত বিশ্বের নিউমোনিয়া চ্যালেঞ্জ হয়ে দেখা দিতে পারে।

বৃহস্পতিবার একযোগে বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের পাশাপাশি বাংলাদেশ থেকে জাতিসংঘের অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান এসকাপ রিপোর্টটি প্রকাশ করেছে। বাংলাদেশে ঢাকার সিরডাপ মিলনায়তনে আয়োজিত সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনের মাধ্যমে রিপোর্টটি প্রকাশ করা হয়। জাতিসংঘের ঢাকা অফিসের রেওয়াজ অনুযায়ী এবার সিপিডির নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য সাংবাদিকদের কাছে রিপোর্ট সম্পর্কে ব্যাখ্যা- বিশ্লেষণ উপস্থাপন করেন। এ সময় ঢাকায় জাতিসংঘের আবাসিক প্রতিনিধি ইর্ফান শিসনার ও কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

প্রতিবেদনের তথ্য অনুযায়ী বাংলাদেশে ২০০২ সালে ২০০১ সালের তুলনায় নিট বৈদেশিক পুঁজি প্রবাহ বেশ কমে গিয়েছে। নিট বৈদেশিক পুঁজি ২০০২ সালে এসেছে মাত্র ৩১ কোটি ২০ লাখ ডলার, যা ২০০১ সালে ছিল ৫৮ কোটি ডলার। অর্থাৎ একবছরে বৈদেশিক পুঁজি ২৬ কোটি ৮০ লাখ ডলার কমেছে। অবশ্য এর মধ্যে সরকারি উন্নয়ন সাহায্য সামান্য বেড়েছে। ২০০১ সালের ১শ' ১৫ কোটি ডলারের তুলনায় যা ২০০২ সালে ছিল ১শ' ২৩ কোটি ডলার। তবে অনুদান ৪৩ কোটি ২০ ডলার থেকে নেমে হয়েছে ৪১ কোটি ডলার। তবে এফডিআই বিপুল অংকে কমেছে। ২০০১ সালে এফডিআইর পরিমাণ ছিল ১৭ কোটি ৪০ লাখ ডলার, যা ২০০২ সালে দাঁড়িয়েছে মাত্র ৬ কোটি ৫০ লাখ ডলারে এবং ২০০২ সালে পোর্টফোলিও বিনিয়োগ ৬০ লাখ ডলার দেশ থেকে ফেরত গেছে।

জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি সম্পর্কে এসকাপের রিপোর্টের তথ্য হলো, ২০০১ অর্থবছরের ৫ দশমিক ৩ শতাংশ থেকে ২০০২ অর্থবছরে ৪ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশে নেমেছে, যা চলতি অর্থবছরে ৫ দশমিক ২ শতাংশ হতে পারে। অন্যদিকে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি কমের মধ্যে থাকলেও সাম্প্রতিক বছরগুলোর তুলনায় তা বাড়ছে। মুদ্রাস্ফীতি সম্পর্কে প্রতিবেদনে বলা হয়েছে, গ্যাস, বিদ্যুৎ, পেট্রোলিয়ামসহ সরকারি সেবার মূল্যবৃদ্ধি, শুল্ক বৃদ্ধি, বিভিন্ন পণ্য ও সেবার মূল্য বৃদ্ধিসহ বাণিজ্যিক আমদানিতে নিয়ন্ত্রণ আরোপের কারণে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি বেড়েছে।

দেশের সামগ্রিক পরিস্থিতি তুলে ধরে এসকাপের সুপারিশে বলা হয়েছে, প্রবৃদ্ধি হার ৬ শতাংশের ওপরে নেয়া, বৈদেশিক সাহায্য বৃদ্ধি, সামগ্রিক অর্থনৈতিক স্থিতিশীলতা, বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানো- টেকসই উন্নয়নে এসব প্রয়োজন।

ড. দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, এসকাপের রিপোর্টটি এ বছরের জানুয়ারি-ফেব্রুয়ারির দিকে প্রস্তুত করা হয়। সে সময় ইরাক যুদ্ধ শুরু হয়নি, আবার সার্স নামক রোগের প্রাদুর্ভাবও দেখা যায়নি। ফলে বাংলাদেশসহ উন্নয়নশীল দেশের অর্থনীতির চেহারা আগামীতে কি দাঁড়াবে তা এসবের মূল্যায়নে নির্ধারণ করার চেষ্টা করতে হবে। ড. দেবপ্রিয় বলেন, বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতি বিশেষ করে রপ্তানি বাণিজ্যে ইরাক যুদ্ধের চেয়ে 'সার্স' নামক বিশেষ রোগটি ক্ষতিকর প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে। বাংলাদেশের গার্মেন্টস পণ্যের ক্রেতা-বিক্রেতার সমঝোতা হংকং, সিঙ্গাপুর, ব্যাংককে হয়। সার্স রোগের কারণে এই সমঝোতা ব্যাহত হচ্ছে। এরপর এই রোগ যদি ক্রমভাবে বাংলাদেশে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে তাহলে রপ্তানির ওপর বিরূপ প্রভাব ফেলবে। তিনি আরও বলেন, দেশের অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জন করতে পারবে কিনা তা নির্ভর করছে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, ইউরোপ ও জাপানের অর্থনীতির চেহারা কি দাঁড়ায় তার ওপর। তিনি বলেন, ইরাক যুদ্ধোত্তর পরিস্থিতিতে বড় দেশের কাছ থেকে ছোট দেশের অর্থনৈতিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সুবিধা নেয়ার ক্ষেত্রে বড় ধরনের পরিবর্তন আসবে। ইরাক যুদ্ধের পর ন্যায়নীতি, সাম্য জাতিসংঘের এ মূলনীতিগুলো ভিত্তিহীন হয়ে পড়েছে। রাজনৈতিক পছন্দ-অপছন্দই বড় হয়ে দেখা দেবে।

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এসকাপের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ ২০০৩ প্রকাশ

২০০৩ সালে বাংলাদেশের প্রবৃদ্ধি ও মুদ্রাস্ফীতি উভয়ই বাড়বে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার : বিগত ২০০২ সালে বিশ্বব্যাপী অর্থনৈতিক মন্দাবস্থা সত্ত্বেও এশীয় ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের দেশগুলো মোটের দিক থেকে ভাল করেছে এবং প্রায় শতকরা ৫ ভাগ প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করেছে। স্বভাব্য ২০০২ সালে বাংলাদেশের জিডিপি পূর্ববর্তী বছরের তুলনায় হ্রাস পেলেও বর্তমান ২০০৩ সালে তা বৃদ্ধি পেয়ে ৫ দশমিক ২ শতাংশে পৌঁছার প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে। বর্তমান ২০০৩ সালে বাংলাদেশের মুদ্রাস্ফীতি বিগত বছরের চেয়ে বৃদ্ধি পেয়ে ৩ শতাংশে দাঁড়ানোর আশংকা করা হয়েছে। ২০০২ সালে বাংলাদেশ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ পূর্ববর্তী বছরের ৫৮ কোটি ডলার থেকে হ্রাস পেয়ে ৩১ কোটি ২০ লাখ ডলারে নেমেছে। এছাড়া টেকসই দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনে বাংলাদেশের প্রবৃদ্ধির হার পর্যাপ্ত নয়। তবে ইরাকে সামরিক হস্তক্ষেপ পরিহার করা গেলে এসকাপ অঞ্চলে ২০০৩ সালেও বর্তমান প্রবৃদ্ধির হার অব্যাহত থাকার আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে।

গতকাল বৃহস্পতিবার এশীয় ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক জরিপ ২০০৩-এ এতথ্য প্রকাশ করা হয়। গতকাল ঢাকায় নিরতাপ মিলনায়তনে এশীয় ও প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলীয় অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক পরিষদ (ইকনমিক এন্ড সোশ্যাল কাউন্সিল ফর এশীয়া এন্ড দ্য প্যাসিফিক- এসকাপ) আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে এ জরিপ প্রকাশ করে। এ জরিপ প্রকাশ অনুষ্ঠানে সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগের (সিপিডি)'র নির্বাহী পরিচালক ডঃ দেবপ্রিয় ভট্টাচার্য পুরো জরিপের উপর সংক্ষিপ্ত বক্তব্য এবং বিভিন্ন প্রশ্নের জবাব দেন। অনুষ্ঠানে স্বাগতম বক্তব্য দেন বাংলাদেশে জাতিসংঘের আবাসিক প্রতিনিধি মিঃ জরগান লিসনার। অন্যান্যের মধ্যে উপস্থিত ছিলেন জাতিসংঘ তথ্য কেন্দ্রের ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা কাজী আলী রেজা।

জরিপে বলা হয়, ২০০২ সালে বিশ্বব্যাপী ভূরাজনৈতিক অনিশ্চয়তা, বেসরকারী খাতে বিনিয়োগ হ্রাস সত্ত্বেও এসকাপ অঞ্চল এসব সমস্যামুক্ত। ২০০২ সালে এসকাপের উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর জিডিপির হার ছিল প্রায় ২ শতাংশ এবং উন্নত দেশগুলো ২০০১ সাল থেকে ২০০২ সালে ভাল করেছে। পুরো অঞ্চলে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি হ্রাস পেয়েছে এবং এ মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ২০০১ সাল থেকে ২০০২ সালে কম ছিল। ২০০১ সালে এসকাপের উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ছিল ৩ দশমিক ৫ এবং ২০০২ সালে তা হ্রাস পেয়ে দাঁড়ায় ২ দশমিক ১ পয়েন্ট।

জরিপে বলা হয়, ২০০১ সালে এসকাপ অঞ্চলের উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর প্রকৃত জিডিপি ছিল ৩ দশমিক ২ শতাংশ, ২০০২ সালে ৫ দশমিক ১ শতাংশ এবং ২০০৩ সালে ৫ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশে পৌঁছার প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে। ২০০৪ সালে এ জিডিপি ৫ দশমিক ৭ শতাংশে বৃদ্ধির আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে। ২০০১ সালে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত জিডিপি ছিল ৫ দশমিক ৩ শতাংশ, ২০০২ সালে ৪ দশমিক ৮ এবং ২০০৩ সালে এ জিডিপি ৫ দশমিক ২ শতাংশে পৌঁছার প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে এবং ২০০৪ সালে বাংলাদেশের জিডিপি ৫ দশমিক ৭ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধির আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে। ২০০১ সালে ভারতের জিডিপি ছিল ৫ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ এবং ২০০২ সালে ৪ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশ। ২০০৩ সালে ভারতের জিডিপি ৬ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধির প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে এবং ২০০৪ সালে এ জিডিপি ৬ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে।

২০০১ সালে ভিয়েতনামের প্রকৃত জিডিপি ছিল ৬ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ এবং ২০০২ সালে ৭ শতাংশ। ২০০৩ সালে ভিয়েতনামের জিডিপির প্রক্ষেপণ করা হয়েছে ৭ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ এবং ২০০৪ সালে ও ২০০৫ সালেও ৭ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধির আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে।

২০০৩ সালে ইরানের জিডিপি ৬ দশমিক ৭, মালয়েশিয়ার ৬ দশমিক ৩, চীনের ৭ দশমিক ৭, কাজাকিস্তানের ৮ দশমিক ৭ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধির আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে।

২০০১ সালে বাংলাদেশের মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ছিল ১ দশমিক ৬, ২০০২ সালে ২ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশ। ২০০৩ সালে বাংলাদেশের মুদ্রাস্ফীতি বৃদ্ধি পেয়ে ৩ শতাংশে পৌঁছার আশংকা করা হয়েছে প্রবণ্য ২০০৪ সালেও ৩ শতাংশ হওয়ার আশংকা করা হয়েছে।

২০০১ সালে ভারতের মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ছিল ৪ দশমিক ৩ শতাংশ এবং ২০০২ সালে ৩ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ। ২০০৩ সালে ভারতে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ৩ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশে পৌঁছার আশংকা করা হয়েছে। ২০০১ সালে শ্রীলংকার মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ছিল ১৪ দশমিক ২ এবং ২০০২ সালে ৯ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ। ২০০৩ সালে শ্রীলংকার মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ৬ দশমিক ৭ শতাংশ হওয়ার আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করা হয়েছে।

জরিপে বলা হয়, ২০০১ সালে বাংলাদেশের রফতানি বৃদ্ধি পেলেও ২০০২ সালে রফতানি ৭ দশমিক ৬ ভাগ হ্রাস পেয়েছে। হিমায়িত খাদ্য, চামড়া, কাঁচা পাট, ও চা থেকে রফতানি আয় হ্রাস পেলেও পাটজাত দ্রব্য এবং কৃষিপণ্য থেকে রফতানি আয় বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে। প্রবৃদ্ধি বৃদ্ধির জন্য সরকারী ও বেসরকারী খাতে বিনিয়োগসহ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধি করতে হবে। দারিদ্র্যবিমোচনের লক্ষ্য অর্জন করতে হলে বার্ষিক প্রবৃদ্ধি শতকরা ৬ ভাগ বা তার চেয়ে বেশী অর্জন করতে হবে।

উল্লেখ্য, প্রতি বছর এপ্রিল মাসে বিশ্বব্যাপী এ প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ করা হয়। এসকাপ জাতিসংঘের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান। এসকাপের মোট সদস্য দেশের সংখ্যা ৫১ এবং সহযোগী সদস্যদেশ ৯টি। এসকাপ গত এক দশক ধরে এ ধরনের প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ করে আসছে।

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Bangladesh Observer Page: 15 Date: 19 April - 2003

ESCAP report reveals

Dhaka contributes to marginal GDP decline

The Asia-Pacific block of global economy performed "surprisingly well" with growth of around 5 per cent this year amid weakness elsewhere in the world, but Bangladesh contributed to this growth barely with marginal decline in the GDP, reports UNB.

A UN report came up with the evaluation, noting that aggregate production in Bangladesh expanded by an annual average of 5.6 per cent in 2000-2001 and by a slightly lower rate of 4.8 per cent in 2002.

Fall in the export of garments, poor weather conditions and demand compression resulting from fiscal and monetary tightening were behind a slower GDP in 2002 from the level reached previous year.

The observations came in the UN document entitled "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" released at the CIRDAP auditorium on Thursday. UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner presented the report.

Centre for Policy Dialogue's Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Kazi Ali Reza of UNIC were among others present on the occasion.

The document of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) was also released simultaneously in other parts of the world, indicating capable contribution of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from South Asia with strong GDP growth.

Stating the expansion in the Asia-Pacific region, which was 2 per cent higher than the 2001 rate, the report noted that it owed much to surging intraregional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

However, while indicating the challenges for the region, the UN agency said prospects for 2003 are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative "ripple effects", including those on energy prices.

The region imports 40 per cent of its energy requirements.

India and Pakistan showed some resilience against the severe droughts in 2002—the adversities were offset through robust growth in industrial and service sectors in India, and a higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid into Pakistan as well as improved service sector performance.

But the slowdown in the economic growth in the least developed countries (LDCs) of South Asia, including Bangladesh, was largely led by a decline in the external sector.

Sharp fall in GDP expansion in Nepal, setbacks in garment exports from Bangladesh and Nepal and tourism receipts by Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal led to a fall in manufacturing and services linked to external trade.

Inflation was contained at less than 3 per cent in 2002 in the South Asian LDCs.

The report showed that merchandise exports, mainly garments, from Bangladesh declined, so was the imports associated with those exports as well as domestic consumption. Nepal also experienced the same.

The agriculture section of Bangladesh has slower growth from 3.1 per cent in 2001 to 2.8 per cent in 2002 following low rice production due to bad weather.

Other crops and horticulture were also affected but fisheries recovered strongly from a decline in 2001, the report pointed out.

Both the domestic savings and investment ratios remained largely unchanged in Bangladesh in 2001-2002. Private- sector investment increased to 16.1 per cent of GDP in 2002 from 15.9 per cent, but in public sector decreased slightly to 7.1 per cent from 7.3 per cent.

Regarding foreign trade and other external transactions, it said imports of Bangladesh "declined even more sharply leading to a narrower trade deficit". Merchandise exports had gone up by 12.6 per cent to reach $ 6.42 billion in 2001, but it declined over 7.6 per cent in 2002.

In the apparel exports, 14 percent increase could bring positive results due to falling prices that were responsible for a drop of almost 6 per cent in their value. Exports of frozen foods, leather, raw jute and tea also experienced a fall-off in both volume and value terms. However, export volumes and values of jute goods and agricultural products were higher last year.

In the report, the UN agency suggested major policies to be managed by LDCs, including poverty reduction, the need for faster, pro-poor economic growth, better management of public finances and an enhanced process of domestic resource mobilisation.

UNIC Dhaka News Clipping Service

News Today Page: Post-Editorial Date: 24 April - 2003

Silver lining in Gross Domestic Product?

The government in the light of a thorough discussion on the floor of the parliament, ought to take all possible steps for availing opportunities for faster economic growth that have been identified by the ESCAP, writes MR Rousseau

The United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has come up with a bit of good news for Bangladesh, so far as Bangladesh's economic outlook is concerned. The good news in brief is that the Bangladesh economy is expected to a see GDP growth rate 5.2 per cent during this fiscal—owing to the surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

The growth prediction, ESCAP pointed out, was made despite global uncertainties over the Iraq war and the viral SARS outbreak in many countries, especially in the South Asian ones. Times never looked favourable and promising for Bangladesh during the preceding fiscal and the governmental authorities here in Dhaka had actually been thinking of tightening of the belt during this period. Not that this prediction would be translated in to reality automatically. The government in Dhaka will have the steer the economy carefully and avail this opportunity of building up its image as a promising country that means business with sincerity.

The ESCAP in its annual regional survey for the year 2003 attributed the projection also to study agriculture and stronger export demand. While export demand are likely to grow and agricultural output would, as always, continue to be a factor of climatic conditions. The government, however, would almost certainly do its best to augment agricultural production and avail of the unforeseen chance to improve the economic condition of the country. The ESCAP survey had rightly, therefore, suggested that the government ought to speed up reform drive and curtail government expenditure as well as take steps to augment revenue collection. These are obvious tasks for the government, and Dhaka had begun to move along these lines since last year. The ESCAP report also acknowledged the role of the private sector as the leader of the GDP growth and urged the policy makers to facilitate investment in the manufacturing sector. The Bangladesh government does not seem to have two opinions about this and by the look of the things it sees eye to eye with the ESCAP.

Experts and distinguished economists of the country have already pointed out that the growth performance of Bangladesh during the current year would largely hinge on three factors, namely, (a) fallout of Iraq factor, (b) impact of Sever Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and (c) the performance of the US, EU and the Japanese economy. With the war in Iraq being of much shorter duration than initially apprehended and the oil prices remaining stable throughout the globe, the Japanese GDP growth returning to positive figures and showing signs of recovery the outlook has brightened up for countries like Bangladesh. Outbreak and spread of SARS, meantime, made the outlook rather uncertain for the Asia-Pacific economies.

News items emanating from Bangkok indicated that the spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubts over the economic forecasts for the Asia-pacific economies this year, but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the rest of the world. ESCAP, which had earlier projected 5.4 per cent growth for the developing countries in the region this year later revised the estimates down to 5 per cent due to the impact of the SARS and the Iraq war. The ESCAP sources clearly indicated that SARS will not be easy to contain and control and that it will definitely affect the economies of the Asia Pacific, especially those with large tourism sectors.

The growth forecast is slightly lower than 5.1 per cent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Accurate figures, however, are impossible, ESCAP cautioned. The impact of the very scary disease, which is spreading fast, looks rather difficult to predict. Things may turn out to be worse than now feared. With more than 35,000 infected by the deadly virus to-date throughout the world and the death figures rising from it, one cannot hope that things would improve soon enough. The ESCAP, however, thinks that the overall Asian economies will record higher growth than the rest of the world because these countries are characterized by dynamism and resilience. One, therefore, has reasonable grounds for hope about the performance of the Bangladesh economy during the current fiscal, provided that the socio-political situation remain favourable and natural calamities do not upset things.

Under the circumstances, the economists and analysts in Bangladesh tend to term the international developments as 'positive' ones that would surely contribute to the steady growth of the Bangladesh economy. The ESCAP survey entitled "Asia and Pacific Economies' Resilience in Challenging Times" released all over the world the other day revised, as already mentioned, the growth rate figures in view of the SARS and the Iraq war. It was noted with satisfaction that the annual inflation in Bangladesh had shown a 'sharp downward trend' in recent years, but picked up to 2.4 per cent in 2002. The reversal of the downward trend in inflation in the year 2002 was partly a reflection of fiscal and monetary stringency, it noted. This was a veritable tribute to the efficiency of the ruling government and took note of the fact that the authorities had administered price increase for gas, electricity, petroleum and higher duties and margin requirements on commercial imports—which raised prices of several goods and services. What the ESCAP report elected to refrain from commenting was the fact that the people of the country took all these rather satisfactorily and with the hope of a better time in the offing.

ESCAP estimates, however, showed that inflation is targeted to continue at a faster annual rate of three per cent in 2003-2005, but higher food and import prices may raise this figure, the ESCAP survey noted. It also took note of the fact that a decline in import spending of 8.7 per cent in 2002, as a result of lower imports of inputs for export processing activities, reversed the strong growth in 2001. Imports of petroleum and food products with the exception of edible oil were generally lower, with commercial imports of consumers' durables and automobiles fell significantly as imposition of margin requirements and supplementary duties lowered demand. It further noted that as a result of the sharper fall in imports, the trade deficit narrowed; thus together with a substantial increase in remittance receipts, led to the current deficit falling to 0.6 per cent of the GDP in 2002.

ESCAP also noted the sordid fact that net capital inflow in to Bangladesh declined significantly in 2002 to $312 million from $ 580 million in the previous year. Although ODA receipts, particularly in the form of concessional loans rose slightly, Inward FDI was significantly lower in 2002 and there was a net outflow of foreign portfolio investment. Those being the facts available on hand, the government in the light of a thorough discussion on the floor of the parliament, ought to take all possible steps for availing the opportunity that has come us by.

2.4 China

UN Report: China Boosts Economy of Asia-Pacific Region

A United Nations report issued in Beijing on Thursday says that China played a leading role in the robust economic performance of the Asia-Pacific region in 2002.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) of the United Nations Thursday issued the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 in Beijing.

The report says that, despite the downturn in the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region performed surprising well, achieving growth of around five percent during the year.

East and North-East Asia was the best performing subregion in 2002, in which China's strong growth played a leading role, said the report.

The Survey 2003 said China continued to sustain high growth in 2002, registering growth of 7.9 percent in 2002 compared to 7.3 percent in 2001, but tressed by strong expansion in fixed asset investment and exports.

The report said the fast economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region owes much to surging intraregional trade, and thanks to the strong performance of China, intraregional trade is buoyant.

According to figures released in the report, China's merchandise exports increased by almost 30 percent year-on-year during the first eight months of 2002, while imports grew by nearly seven percent.

The economic outlook of the whole region for 2003 is conditioned by several risk factors, in particular, the possibility of a military conflict in the Middle East which may lead to rising oil prices, said the report.

China's growth in 2003 are more or less the same as in 2002, and its economy is forecast to grow by 7-8 percent in 2003, with stable or lightly lower prices, the survey estimated.

(Xinhua News Agency April 18, 2003)

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Monday April 21, 12:14 PM

China Played Leading Role in Boosting Asia-Pacific Economy: Un

BEIJING, April 21 Asia Pulse - A United Nations report issued in Beijing on on April 17 says that China played a leading role in the robust economic performance of the Asia-Pacific region in 2002.

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East and North-East Asia was the best performing subregion in 2002, in which China's

04/17/2003 22:08:00

UN report: China plays leading role in boosting economy of Asia-Pacific region

Source: Comtex Global News Date: April 17, 2003

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04/19/2003 01:01:05

Chinese leader orders end to SARS cover-up

by Phil Chetwynd = (PICTURE + GRAPHIC) = ATTENTION - ADDS cases in SKorea, Guangdong trade fair ///

HONG KONG, April 18 (AFP) - China's new president has ordered health officials to stop covering up the SARS epidemic for which US authorities say a first test could be ready in days.

Hu Jintao's intervention came during an emergency Communist Party meeting following criticism around the world of China's handling of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), state media reported Friday.

He warned that the battle against SARS, which has killed at least 166 people and infected over 3,200 in some 30 countries, would be long and difficult.

Hu told government departments to "accurately report on the epidemic ... and keep the public informed," the English-language China Daily reported.

The meeting of China's elite nine-member Politburo Standing Committee "explicitly warned against the covering up of SARS cases and demanded the accurate, timely and honest reporting of the SARS situation".

The report was carried on the front page of all major Chinese newspapers, which have until now been enforcing a selective news blackout on SARS.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that in Beijing alone the number of SARS cases may be five times higher than reported, indicating China's official toll of 66 deaths and 1,461 cases may only be the tip of the iceberg.

The mystery virus -- for which there is no cure, vaccine or diagnostic test -- first emerged in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong in November but authorities failed to notify the WHO until March.

By then a sick Chinese doctor had carried the virus into neighbouring Hong Kong, setting off an epidemic in the territory that has since killed 66 people and triggered a global health crisis as SARS was carried around the world by airline passengers.

The vast majority of SARS cases are in Asia. In addition to China and Hong Kong, deaths have also been recorded in Canada (13), Singapore (13), Vietnam (5), Thailand (2) and Malaysia (1).

The worst affected country outside Asia is Canada which reported three new cases Thursday to bring the total to 306. India confirmed a first case and South Korea Friday reported two more suspect cases raising its total to six.

Scientists are battling to understand the new disease. The WHO this week pinpointed the coronavirus -- a virus family which causes the common cold -- as the cause of SARS.

The next step is to develop a diagnostic kit for the illness -- which begins with fever, a cough and shortness of breath -- and ultimately a cure.

US Secretary of Health Tommy Thompson told journalists in Rome Thursday that three tests developed by scientists at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were currently undergoing an approval process.

"That approval process is ongoing and should be done, hopefully, in a week to 10 days," Thompson said.

The Genome Institute of Singapore also said this week they hoped to produce a testing kit within days.

In a worrying development, the Hong Kong authorities confirmed Thursday that a second transmission route for the disease existed.

Initially it was believed the virus was only spread by droplets emitted by somebody coughing or sneezing, but an investigation into an outbreak at the Amoy Gardens housing estate found it was spread through the sewage system.

A sick man with diarrhoea managed to infect more than 300 people

as the virus was carried through the housing block's leaky sewage system.

The epidemic has caused huge disruption and economic losses across Asia since the WHO posted a global alert about the illness five weeks ago. In particular travel and tourism have slumped.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) regional survey for 2003 estimated the SARS virus would shave 0.4 percentage points off Asia's economic growth rate for the year.

In the latest indication of the economic impact of the epidemic, China's largest trade fair in the city of Guangzhou revealed Friday it had attracted around 7,600 representatives so far compared with over 135,000 last year.

In a bid to contain the economic fall-out and implement regionwide measures to contain the virus, 10 Southeast Asian nations said they would hold a one-day summit in Bangkok on April 29.

pch/br/rw

Health-pneumonia
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2.5 Fiji

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Fiji SUN
27 MAY 26

Fiji to rely on the building industry for growth



By SAMUELA LOANAKADAVU

An economy of Fiji's status and size and having an estimated growth rate that is more than that of Australia and New Zealand is an impressive performance.

As far as the ESCAP report (Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific) is concerned, Fiji's developing economy had a bigger real Gross Domestic Product than that of the developed economies of the other ESCAP countries.

Australia, New Zealand and Japan are expected to make a 3.2 percent, 3.6 percent and 0.3 percent economic growth respectively for 2003, while Fiji is expected to achieve a little more than five percent in the same year.

Vice-chancellor University of the South Pacific, Savenaca Siwatibau, said, "Fiji's growth rate is impressive.

"Amongst other things, Fiji would be relying on the building industry to achieve the projected growth of 5.1 percent for this year," he added.

Mr Siwatibau officiated at the launch of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific Economies 2003, titled 'Resilience in Challenging Times,' at the Laucala campus in Suva last week.

USP senior economics lecturer and well renowned economist, Dr Biman Prasad, earlier questioned how could the 5.1 percent economic growth be achieved if our two neighbouring developed countries (Australia and New Zealand) together with Japan - the second largest economy in the world - are projecting less that 2.6 percent and below.

"My argument is based on our 10 percent investment rate and the various global forces including IMF's (International Monetary Fund) latest estimates of 2.3 percent of the world's GDP," Dr Prasad said.

However, Mr Siwatibau said with good weather, an increasing tourist numbers and a better monetary policies, Fiji would help to get growth rate forecasted for this year.

As far as the building industry was concerned, more than $200 million had been been accumulated as costs of a number of high-rise buildings in Suva, including the 21-stories MH Shopping Centre, the Takayawa building, the 10-stories Hinterland project, the Suva Central Apartment office space and shopping mall project, as well as the South Pacific Games infrastructure projects.

While analysing the report, Mr Siwatibau said the ESCAP region remained largely unaffected, although the global economy lost momentum in 2002 in the face of weak investment activity in the private sector, compounded by mounting geo political uncertainties.

"Developing of the economies of the region also improved upon their 2001 GDP growth by nearly two percent points in 2002," the report said.

"Developed economies of the region also improved upon their 2001 performance in 2002, although Japan remained in recession."

Over the region as a whole, inflation declined further in 2002 from an already low level in 2001.

Higher GDP growth in the region was achieved partly through easier domestic monetary and fiscal policies and partly through higher intra-regional trade flows.



USP vice-chancellor, Savenaca Siwatibau, with UNDP co-ordinator and resident representative, Peter Williamat,at the launch of the ESCAP Report at the Lower Campus.

The lacklustre GDP performance contributed to problems in macroeconomic management.

As a result, the inflation rate went up in all the main economies except Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Despite the fact that the Pacific Island countries are away from the areas of tension, tourism displayed a mixed trend. It recovered in Fiji but not in other tourism-dependent economies.

For 2003, overall prospects are for GDP growth to exceed the performance in 2002.

The Pacific Island economies are substantially influenced by developments in Australia and New Zealand that are expected to achieve GDP growth in 2003 or close to that achieved in 2002.

Prospects are beset by an array of uncertainties, principally the threat of military action in Iraq and North Korean situation.

Assuming the large-scale military action can be avoided in Iraq, the ESCAP region should be able to sustain the current growth rate in 2003.

However, taking the economies as a whole, most of which have a narrow production and low population base, GDP stopped contracting and positive growth was attained in all economies with the exception of PNG and Vanuatu.

The most visible turnaround occurred in the Solomon Islands, where GDP grew in 2002 after experiencing a contraction of 13 percent in 2001.

04/08 '03 WED 10:08 [TX/RX NO 9251]

Island economies fail to improve

Report looks at the impact of the global economy on the region

By DEVIKA NARAYAN

IMPROVING the education and health of people is not only a goal in itself for better quality of life but also has positive impact on the economic development of a country is far-reaching.

This was highlighted in the ESCAP report, Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003: Asia-Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times.

The report - launched on Friday by University of South Pacific Vice-Chancellor Savenaca Siwatibau, which is in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund - reviewed the macroeconomic implications of the 2002-2003 global economic slowdown on various economies in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to the report economic performance of Pacific Island economies as a whole remained generally "lackluster" in 2002 with gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the range of -0.5 to 4.4 percentage points.

The reported stated even though the agricultural sector in several Pacific Island countries performed much better than 2001, it was not sufficient to reverse the pattern of low and uneven GDP growth which had characterised these small island economies in recent years.

"Fiji's economy did much better than other countries in the sub-region and grew by over four per cent in 2001 and 2002," the report pointed out.

"However, Fiji together with Solomon Islands and Vanuatu experienced some decline in export earnings in 2001."

As for the capital inflows, external debt and exchange rates, the report highlighted several pacific economies recorded capital account surpluses in 2002, mainly as a result of the inflow of foreign aid including funds in support of structural adjustment programs.

"External debt was not a major problem for most Pacific Island economies because a large proportion of their external obligations are on highly concessional terms.

"Nevertheless, external debts is on the rise in countries like Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands while Fiji has one of the highest external debt service burdens in the sub-region."

The ESCAP report emphasised the need for good governance in public and private sectors as well as the need to develop a good synergy between both sectors in the Pacific sub-region.

The report said governance issues were compounding socio-economic difficulties in several Pacific Island economies.



The report points out the need to improve health facilities in the region which it says is an economic indicator and Fiji is the exception.

"Despite the tax reform initiatives, budget deficits as a percentage of GDP have been increasing for some Pacific Island economies.

"Some countries have introduced value added tax (VAT) to boost domestic revenue but the outcome has been far from satisfactory.

"Among the casual factors for this lack of success in VAT implementation are inadequate resources committed to enforcing VAT compliance in some of these countries."

Another concern raised in the report was Pacific Island economies being easy target for money-laundering activities.

It was pointed out that money laundering was a major challenge for Pacific Island economies to address.

However, with the assistance of sub-regional organisation such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Island countries were now addressing some of these concerns.

"The chronic lack of reliable and up-to-date data on Pacific Island economies continue to be a major problem faced by these small economies despite their efforts to address it.

"The Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM) currently been developed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community was likely to assist these countries address the data problem."

The report also discussed the role of public expenditure in the provision of education and health, and the environment-poverty links and policy options.

According to the report, the provision of education and health was a key element of a policy to promote broad-based economic growth.

"The main asset of the poor was clearly their labour and both education and health services improve the productivity and earnings of workers.

"Education is considered a major remedy for many problems faced by developing countries.

"For example, high fertility rates are adding to population pressures in several countries. It is widely accepted that female education helps to lower fertility rates. Moreover, educated parents are in a better position to look after the education and health needs of their children."

Similarly, it was pointed out in the report that the linkages of health to poverty eradication and long-term economic growth were strong.

"The curses of diseases such as the HIV/AIDS could slow the economic growth of developing countries.

"Education and health are important tools to empower poor people and overcome exclusion based on gender, location and other correlates of poverty."

The public sector remains a major provider of education and health services in the developing countries of the ESCAP region.

The report highlighted several key policy issues relevant to expanding resources for education and health and improving their effectiveness and efficiency.

Some of the policy issues highlighted included the need to consider using a combination of the rights-based and the need-based approaches in public provision of education and health services.

"Owing to the limited resources available to Governments in developing countries, the universal provision of education and health services is almost impossible.

"However, basic education and primary health care command general support under rights-based approach.

"As a result, the public provisions (free or subsidised) of education and health services can respond to the broad needs of society and, more particularly, those of marginalised and disadvantaged groups."

The report also pointed out that huge financial resources were needed for expanding and improving the quality of education and health services in most countries of the region adding that resources could be obtained by shifting them from other sectors with low productivity.

It was also stated that since the most reliable and sustainable public source was tax revenue, there was a need for many countries to improve its tax administration and expand the tax base that could generate additional revenue in the future.

"Generally speaking, education and health services are provided by the public sector either free or at a nominal charge," the report said.

"Modest user charges for an improved quality of service can be introduced to reduce the burden on the public sector.

"For equity considerations, however, mechanisms need to be devised so that poor are not barred from using these services because of lack of income."

The report also stated that despite the improved coverage of education and health services in most countries, certain segments of the population have not benefited enough and access to these services had remained unevenly distributed.

"Three main groups, people living in rural and remote areas, poor people generally and women, need to be specially targeted to achieve more achieve more equitable results in this respect.

"Additional public resources should be devoted to the provision of education and health services in rural and remote areas.

"The balanced development of rural areas would also help in managing rural-to- urban migration. Within urban areas, slums and localities of poor people should be targeted for enhanced public spending on education and health."

Concern was also expressed on gender inequalities being a serious problem in many countries. It was highlighted that certain affirmative measures could help in enhancing female access to education especially in rural areas where there was a need to make parents aware of the importance of girl's education through publicity campaigns. It also recommended the need to provide girls from poor families with scholarships schemes, free textbooks and other supplies that could be used to encourage them to school.

"Enhancing the representation of women in management positions in the education and health sectors could help in looking after the concerns and needs of women more effectively."

Business

Solomons, PNG see double-digit inflation

Despite wandering into the economic wilderness in 2000, Fiji's economy has bounced back in a dramatic fashion, pushed by a combined effort of private and public sector spending. So much so, that the country was the star performer in the South Pacific region last year, as ESCAP found

Fiji an economic bright spot in Pacific region

By SOPHIE HILDEBRAND

IT TAKES more than droughts, floods, the looting of Honiara and the ongoing ethnic tensions that continue to plague the Solomon Islands to keep a good economy down.

The UN Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003, released yesterday, says Solomons and the rest of the Pacific region is growing fast now.

Fiji is the star of the show, the fastest growing economy in the South Pacific region, with a GDP growth rate of 10.2 per cent of nominal value (adjusted for inflation) and 10 per cent of gross domestic expenditure.

The UNESCAP annual study says "Solomon Islands experienced a 2.9 per cent rise in GDP following the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement in July 2000".

And it says PNG's economy is "expected to grow at 4.5 per cent in 2003 and 2004".

And it says that growth is expected to be robust as it is spurred on by a rebound in tourism in Fiji, which did not perform as previously predicted.

However, the UN-ESCAP survey warns that Fiji has to work to maintain this growth. It had to keep an eye to rebuilding the political institutions.

"The emigration of skilled and professional workers continues and this may impose some constraints on the upward growth path."

It added that this prognosis for consistent and growth was dependent on a return of investor confidence to the country and stability on the political front.

The UNESCAP survey said there continues to be room for further growth as long as certain factors were to be dealt with.

"The outlook is reasonably favourable provided that security is maintained and access to land for tourist developments is ensured," it said.

"In this context, much depends on how bodies and the related infrastructure are developed, and a fine balance must be struck between economic, although a number of current ones in the region.

Tourism arrivals in 2002, as was Papua New Guinea, are mostly due to "pent-up demand" in the area, it said in a bid to keep people in countries the region. The UNESCAP survey also "there is a reasonably high degree of uncertainty in certain



Fiji is one of the countries in the Pacific Island economies with the best growth rate in 2002



Virtual collapse by all sectors of the

is due to economic mismanagement, corruption and heavy taxes that are resulting in certain businesses to relocate offshore elsewhere".

Tourism arrivals have boosted overseas investor confidence which began to fall 2.2 per cent in 2001 and by an estimated 5 per cent in 2002.

Agriculture, which is critical to the livelihood of the rural people, grew by around 1 per cent last year, compared to the 0.1 per cent recession seen in 2001.

The survey says that the most noticeably unfavourable characteristics of Fiji's macroeconomic environment were continued political uncertainty.

"Moreover," it says, "the reluctance of banks to continue providing loans from between 12 per cent of GDP in the mid-1990s to just over 6 per cent in 2002.

"Declining levels of fiscal and private saving is severe, combined with poor performance in export earnings, as a substantial loss since 1992.

It said PNG's financial collapse would have had severe macroeconomic ramifications on neighbouring countries had it not been for the support in the form of aid loans and governmental grants.

"It also laid a body like UNESCAP must look at the last seven or so factors in economic resilience, Lydia Lukis.

The report says "a deteriorated law and order situation in international circles in the last month has had a negative impact on tourism arrivals.

It says the country's large and rapidly growing informal labour force and weak industry suffered by international events because in 2003.

The emigration of skilled and professional workers continues and this may impose some constraints on the upward growth path"

-United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003



Pacific Islanders believe that the growth last year, including Solomons, is still getting competitive

04/06 '03 WED 10:08 [TX/RX NO 0251]

2.6 India

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NEWS

Escap Too Pegs Growth Rate At 5% For India

Our Economic Bureau

New Delhi, April 17: The Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific (Escap) of the United Nations has said that growth in the Asia-Pacific region will be conditioned by the aftermath of Iraq war, impact of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and growth in the US, Japan and the European Union (EU).

indian gurus have always succeeded in USA

The Escap 2003 survey was presented on Thursday by Nagesh Kumar, director-general of the Research & Information System for the Non-aligned & Other Developing Countries. It has pegged growth in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific at 5 per cent for calender year 2003.

India's GDP growth has been pegged lower at 5.1 per cent, from the earlier 6 per cent projection, mainly because of the Iraq war and low growth in the US and the EU. China's growth is forecast at 7.5 per cent. Global growth rate has been revised from 2.8 per cent to 2.3 per cent. Growth in 2003 will be based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade, says the survey.

Monetary policy is facing difficult choices in several

it's back in fashion

economies, according to the Escap survey. "The survey underlines the failure of monetarism," Mr Kumar said.

Facilitated by lower interest rates in developed countries and lower inflation locally, most economies in the Asia-Pacific region, except one or two, were able to keep interest rates low in 2002, says the survey, adding that lower interest rates did not lead to higher credit growth. "Thus monetary easing is as circumscribed in the real world as is fiscal policy, and its stimulating effects could be greatly nullified by a deflationary psychology."

Escap has recommended the maintenance of momentum of structural reforms and commitment to trade liberalisation, enhancing of productivity and competitiveness and ensure macroeconomic stability.

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Iraq war, SARS to affect India's GDP growth: survey

PTI [THURSDAY APRIL 17, 2003 03:30:51 PM]

NEW DELHI: United Nation's economic and social survey on Thursday warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy pushing down growth prospects by almost 1.0 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

The survey brought out by UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap), earlier projected India's GDP growth at 6.0 per cent for 2003, but it revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in US, Japan and Europe.

"Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by Escap survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey here.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent.

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Iraq war will hit Indian economy: UN survey

18.30 IST 17th Apr 2003

By IndiaExpress Bureau

Iraq war and SARS will have an adverse impact on Indian economy, warned the United Nation's economic and social survey.

The survey made by UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), earlier projected India's GDP growth at 6.0 per cent for 2003. It, however, revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in US, Japan and Europe.

"ESCAP region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said

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Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by ESCAP survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey in New Delhi.

Despite the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

Global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier 2.8 per cent, while GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent.

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UN pegs India's growth at 5.1 pc

PTI [THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2003 02:19:07 PM]

NEW DELHI: A United Nations body on Thursday pegged down India's economic growth prospects to 5.1 per cent in 2003 from an earlier projection of 6.0 per cent, mainly due to impact of Iraq war, SARS and dampened growth in US and EU.

However, Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, said India's GDP may not be affected so adversely and it may post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) survey for 2003 here.

Even after the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent.

"Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

While the survey estimates made in March this year place India's GDP growth rate at 6.0 per cent, latest available estimates obtained from IMF and domestic sources put the figure at 5.1 per cent.

Among the country's neighbours, Pakistan is slated to post an economic growth of 4.5 per cent while Sri Lanka is likely to grow by 5.0 per cent, Bangladesh by 4.9 per cent and Nepal by 2.5 per cent, the survey said.

Commenting on India's performance, the Escap survey said "despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong. GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared to 5.6 per cent in 2001."

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Higher level of economic activity came from industrial and services sector, which in turn were underpinned by government spendings, measures to boost industry and infrastructure as well as liberalisation of capital and money markets, it said.

"Agricultural output contracted by 3.1 per cent in 2002 owing to wide-spread and severe drought, contributing to a decline in the share of agriculture in GDP from 23.8 to 22.2 per cent between 2000 and 2002," it said.

While lauding India's efforts to keep inflation low, post higher growth in exports and build up forex reserves at over 74 billion dollars, the survey said the country continued its economic reforms through trade liberalisation, simplication of investment regime and stepped up privatisation.

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General

Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth: Escap survey

NEW DELHI: The United Nations economic and social survey today warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy pushing down growth prospects by almost 1.0 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

The survey brought out by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap), earlier projected the country's GDP growth at 6 per cent for 2003, but it revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in the US, Japan and Europe.

Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU, the report said.

The Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) Director General, Mr Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by Escap survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent). - PTI

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Friday, Apr 18, 2003

National

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Iraq war could impact growth: U.N. survey

By Sushma Ramachandran

NEW DELHI April 17. The United Nations' annual Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific today warned that the Iraq war and its aftermath along with sluggish growth in developed economies could have an impact on the GDP growth in India during 2003. It originally forecast a growth rate of around 6 to 7 per cent from 2003 to 2005, but has revised the figure down to 5.1 per cent for the current year in view of these volatile external factors.

The report notes that sustaining growth in the region will depend primarily upon domestic policies given the absence of any evidence of a strong pick up in the global economy at least in the first half of this year, the war in Iraq and other geopolitical uncertainties.

The survey brought out by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), has revised its GDP growth projection downwards largely to the expected impact of the Iraq war as well as continuing depressed demand in the U.S., Japan and Europe.

Even after the revision in the ESCAP forecast, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam — by 7 per cent, and Fiji by 5.2 per cent. While the global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5 per cent from 5.4.

On the policy challenges for countries in the region, the survey says that the domestic demand stimulus measures have relied on a mixture of fiscal and monetary policies. However, with levels of public debt exceeding 50 per cent of the GDP in most economies of the region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long. In the case of monetary policy also, as a result of falling inflation, it says interest rates have reached quite low levels so that the scope for further reduction is limited in most countries.

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Besides, it urges that the programmes of reform of the corporate and financial sectors should continue to be implemented with renewed vigour to enhance investor confidence. It says that the levels of investment in the private sector are still below pre-1997 levels in Southeast Asia. Without a pick up in private investments, it cautions, medium term growth is likely to be jeopardised.

The survey had originally observed that the prospects in 2003 are for a pick up in the overall GDP growth rate in the South Asian countries of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, it maintained that the uncertainties remained, such as the military conflict in Iraq and this along with tentative growth in the global economy could affect export growth adversely.

In addition, the report pointed out that the South Asian region is a heavy importer of energy and higher energy prices would be a negative development for both growth and inflation in this area.

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UN pegs India's 2003 GDP growth at 5.1%

| PTI | April 17, 2003 | 13:44 IST

A United Nation's body on Thursday pegged down India's economic growth prospects to 5.1 per cent in 2003 from an earlier projection of 6.0 per cent, mainly due to the impact of Iraq war, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and dampened growth in the US and EU.

However, Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries director general, Nagesh Kumar, said India's GDP may not be affected so adversely and it may post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) survey for 2003 in New Delhi.

Even after the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

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While the survey estimates made in March this year place India's GDP growth rate at 6.0 per cent, latest available estimates obtained from International Monetary Fund and domestic sources put the figure at 5.1 per cent.

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Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth: UN

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, April 17

United Nation's economic and social survey on Thursday warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy, pushing down growth prospects by almost one per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

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Roundup: Iraq war, SARS to hit India's economic growth

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Even after the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 percent, Vietnam (7.0 percent) and Fiji (5.2 percent).

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India's GDP growth is estimated at 4.4 percent in 2002-03 as against 5.6 percent in 2001-02 due to severe drought which hit the country last year.

The government has targeted a 5.5-6.0 percent GDP growth in 2003-04.

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Roundup: Iraq war, SARS to hit India's economic growth

XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

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India's GDP to take a hit following war, SARS

Ens Economic Bureau

New Delhi, April 17: The Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific (ESCAP) of the United Nations has said that growth in the Asia-Pacific region will be conditioned by the aftermath of Iraq war, impact of severely acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and growth in the US, Japan and the EU.

ESCAP 2003 was presented by Nagesh Kumar, director-general of the Research & Information System for the non-aligned & other developing countries. It has pegged growth in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific at 5 per cent for calender year 2003.

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It has pegged India's growth at 5.1 per cent, down from the earlier 6 per cent projection, mainly because of the Iraq war and low growth in the US and EU. China's growth is forecast as highest, 7.5 per cent. Global growth rate has been revised from 2.8 per cent to 2.3 per cent. Growth in 2003 will be

NCAER forecasts 5-5.6% growth

New Delhi: National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) expects the GDP to grow by 5 to 5.6 per cent in the current fiscal. The growth rate will be influenced by the fall-out of the Iraq war on the global economy.
The quarterly review of the economy released by the NCAER on Thursday states, lower world GDP growth could pull down the economic growth rate in India to 5 per cent. The Gulf war will have adverse impact on exports, business sentiments and flow of invisibles.

Pointing out that industrial revival currently underway is sustainable, the

based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade, says the survey. Monetary policy is facing difficult choices in several economies, according to the ESCAP survey. "The survey underlines the failure of monetarism," Kumar said.

report said, "to what extent it accelerates in the coming months will depend on the revival of investment activity in the economy." The report welcomed the impetus provided by the Budget to sectors like construction, railways, health and tourism. However, it added, "the worrying factor is non-revival of investment spending, which is the key to a sustained industrial turnaround."

The downturn in investment in plant and machinery, which began since mid-1990s, continues. Moreover, the report added, for the first time since 1997-78, the investment rate fell below savings rate in 2001-02. *ENS*

Facilitated by lower interest rates in developed countries and lower inflation locally, most economies in the Asia-Pacific region, except one or two, were able to keep interest rates low in 2002, says the survey, adding that lower interest rates did not lead to higher credit growth.

"Thus monetary easing is as circumscribed in the real world as is fiscal policy, and its stimulating effects could be greatly nullified by a deflationary psychology."

ESCAP has recommended the maintenance of momentum of structural reforms and commitment to trade liberalisation, enhancing of productivity and competitiveness, ensure macroeconomic stability, and improvement in public and private sector governance. Commenting on India's performance, the ESCAP Survey says, "Despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong. GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared to 5.6 per cent in 2001."

Higher level of economic activity came from industrial and services sector, which in turn were underpinned by government spendings, measures to boost industry and infrastructure as well as liberalisation of capital and money markets, it says.

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Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth: UN

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, April 17

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"Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by Escap survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with six per cent growth," he said releasing the survey.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (seven per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to five from 5.4 per cent.

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India's external debt to be $102.3 bn till March: Survey

April 17, 2003 17:29 IST

India transformed from a moderate to low indebted country with a fall in debt-GDP ratio to 20 per cent and foreign debt was slated to be at $102.3 billion in March 2003, a United Nations survey said on Thursday.

"The debt-GDP ratio declined continuously from 38 per cent in 1991 to just over 20 per cent in 2002, and the debt-service ratio from 35 per cent in 1990 to 13.3 per cent in 2002," UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific survey said on Thursday.

Citing World Bank classification, it said, "There was also a marked improvement in the external debt position of India, which had been transformed from a moderately indebted country to a low indebted country as of 1999."

"It is estimated that India's external debt, both short and long term, will amount to around $102.3 billion at the end of March 2003," it said.

Despite the continuing weakness in global economy, Escap said, "Foreign direct investment flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent to $4.0 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalization of foreign investment policies and the removal of economic sanctions on India by US."

India's forex position strengthened as a result of higher FDI, improvement in current account balance. Forex reserves had reached an estimated $74.7 billion by the end of March 2003, compared to $54.1 billion a year ago, which is equivalent to nearly 14 months of imports.

Apart from IT boom, the Escap survey said "increase in reserves reflected higher remittances, quicker repatriation of export proceeds and non-debted inflows of capital."

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Escap lauds Indian IT sector's success

PTI [THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2003 10:49 14 PM]

NEW DELHI: India's IT industry has found a special mention in the United Nations Economic and Social Survey (Escap) which highlighted the $10 billion sales revenue and 92,000 new jobs created by the sector in a matter of just 10 years.

Terming the performance of Indian infotech industry as a "success story", the survey said the Indian government has played an important role in providing critical inputs and removing major bottlenecks in the path of software development in order to achieve the export target of $50 billion by 2008.

The government is also a major client of IT products and services in line with its effort to computerise government processes and implement e-governance application, it said.

"Indian spending on IT is currently around 1.7 per cent of the GDP and is expected to reach three per cent by 2008," the study said.

The Indian IT industry grew at an average annual rate of 50 per cent from 1991 to 2001, it said, adding, during that year, computer software and services generated over $10 billion in sales revenue, up from a mere $150 million 10 years earlier.

Expressing confidence in the projected growth of 30 per cent in 2002, the study said export revenue could reach $10 billion with the export revenue touching $7.6 billion in 2001.

Terming the goal of $50 billion by 2008 as 'ambitious', the Escap study said, by 2008, IT software and services export by that period are expected to account for 7.7 per cent of India's GDP and 35 per cent of the total exports.

The US, Canada and Latin America continue to be India's foremost computer software and service export destinations accounting for 63 per cent of its export revenue, followed by the European Union at 26 per cent, Japan at four per cent and the rest of the world at seven per cent.

"The performance of the Indian IT industry, therefore, depends largely on global economic conditions particularly the US market," it said, adding that this trend became evident in 2001 when a slowdown in the US economy had an adverse impact on the Indian IT and software and service industry.

Diversification of the market for Indian IT exports could reduce

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India' bn till

New Delhi,Thursday, April 17, 2003: India transformed from a moderate to low indebted country with a fall in Debt-GDP ratio to 20 per cent and foreign debt was slated to be at 102.3 billion dollars in March 2003, a United Nations survey said today.

"The Debt-GDP ratio declined continuously from 38 per cent in 1991 to just over 20 per cent in 2002, and the Debt-Service ratio from 35 per cent in 1990 to 13.3 per cent in 2002," UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) survey said today.

Citing World Bank classification, it said "there was also a marked improvement in the external debt position of India, which had been transformed from a moderately indebted country to a low indebted country as of 1999."

"It is estimated that India's external debt, both short and long term, will amount to around 102.3 billion dollars at the end of March 2003," it said.

Despite the continuing weakness in global economy, Escap said "foreign direct investment flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent to 4.0 billion dollars in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalisation of foreign investment policies and the removal of economic sanctions on India by US."

India's forex position strengthened as a result of higher FDI, improvement in current account balance. Forex reserves had reached an estimated 74.7 billion dollars by the end

of March 2003, compared to 54.1 billion dollars a year ago, which is equivalent to nearly 14 months of imports.

Apart from IT boom, the Escap survey said "increase in reserves reflected higher remittances, quicker repatriation of export proceeds and non-debted inflows of capital". (PTI)
17:56 IST

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THE HINDU
Business Line
INTERNET EDITION
Financial Daily from THE HINDU group of publications
Friday, Apr 18, 2003

Industry & Economy - Economy

Escap sees scope for 7% GDP growth

Our Bureau

NEW DELHI, April 17

IN a distinctly upbeat note, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) has forecast that India is likely to sustain GDP growth rate in the range of 6 to 7 per cent from 2003 to 2005.

This is, however, subject to the usual rider that barring major internal and external shocks and adverse climatic conditions, the UN body said in its annual publications released here by the Director General Research & Information System (RIS) for the non-aligned and other developing countries, Dr Nagesh Kumar.

The report released ahead of the UN body's annual meeting to be held next month said despite the continuing weakness in the global economy, FDI flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent to $4 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalization of foreign investment policies and the removal of economic sanctions on India by the United States. The bulk of FDI went into information, communication and technology activities, and engineering industries, services, electronics and electrical equipment, chemicals and allied products, food and dairy products.

There was also a marked improvement in India's external debt position, which, according to a World Bank classification, had been transformed from a ``moderately indebted country'' to a ``low indebted country'' as on 1999. The debt-to-GDP ratio declined continuously from 38 per cent in 1991 to just over 20 per cent in 2002 and the debt-service ratio from 35 per cent in 1990 to 13.3 per cent in 2002.

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Business

UN brings down India's GDP growth to 5.1 pc

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, April 17: United Nation's body on Thursday pegged down India's economic growth prospects to 5.1 per cent in 2003 from an earlier projection of 6.0 per cent, mainly due to impact of Iraq war, SARS and dampened growth in US and EU.

However, Research and Information System for non-aligned and other developing countries (RIS) Director General, Nagesh Kumar, said India's GDP may not be affected so adversely and it may post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

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"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) survey for 2003 in Delhi.

Even after the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per centfrom the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the gdp growth for the developing nations of Asia-pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent.

"ESCAP region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

While the survey estimates made in March this year place India's GDP growth rate at 6.0 per cent, latest available estimates obtained from IMF and domestic sources put the figure at 5.1 per cent.

Among the country's neighbours, Pakistan is slated to post an economic growth of 4.5 per cent while Sri Lanka is likely to grow by 5.0 per cent, Bangladesh by 4.9 per cent and Nepal by 2.5 per cent, the survey said.

Commenting on India's performance, the ESCAP survey said, "Despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong. GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared to 5.6 per cent in 2001."

Higher level of economic activity came from industrial and services sector, which in turn were underpinned by government spendings, measures to boost industry and

infrastructure as well as liberalisation of capital and money markets, it said.

"Agricultural output contracted by 3.1 per cent in 2002 owing to wide-spread and severe drought, contributing to a decline in the share of agriculture in GDP from 23.8 to 22.2 per cent between 2000 and 2002," it said.

While lauding India's efforts to keep inflation low, post higher growth in exports and build up forex reserves at over 74 billion dollars, the survey said the country continued its economic reforms through trade liberalisation, simplification of investment regime and stepped up privatisation.

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Apr 18, 2003

UN downgrades India's GDP growth to 5.1%

NEW DELHI - A United Nation's body on Thursday pegged down India's economic growth prospects to 5.1 percent in 2003 from an earlier projection of 6 percent, mainly due to impact of Iraq war, SARS and dampened growth in the United States and the European Union.

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However, Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, said India's GDP may not be affected so adversely and it may post 5.5-5.6 percent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 percent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6 percent growth," he said releasing the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) survey for 2003.

Even after the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 percent, Vietnam (7 percent) and Fiji (5.2 percent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 percent from the earlier stance of 2.8 percent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5 from 5.4 percent.

"The Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

While the survey estimates made in March this year place India's GDP growth rate at 6 percent, latest available estimates obtained from the International Monetary Fund and domestic sources put the figure at 5.1 percent.

(Asia Pulse/PTI)



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UN body projects lower GDP growth rate for India

DH News Service

NEW DELHI, April 17

The war against Iraq and growing menace of SARS will have adverse impact on the Indian economy by pushing down the GDP growth prospect by nearly one per cent to 5.1 per cent during the current year of 2003, the United Nation Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) warned.

ESCAP, which had earlier projected India's GDP growth rate at 6 per cent, in its Survey 2003 released here, revised India's growth rate downward to 5.1 per cent in the wake of Iraq war, spread of SARS and depressed demand in US, Europe and Japan.

The ESCAP report said "Asia and Pacific region performed well in 2002. The growth was based on intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and European Union."

However, Dr Nagesh Kumar, Director-General, Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries, while explaining the ESCAP survey told newspersons that Iraq war and SARS menace would not affect the Indian economy so adversely as projected by the ESCAP.

He said the Indian economy would record GDP growth rate in the range of 5.5 and 5.6 per cent during the current year.

Dr Kumar said as the Iraq war almost over there was possibility of further fall in oil prices and this might help the Indian economy to register GDP growth at the level of 6 per cent during 2003. As the ESCAP Survey shows despite the downgrading of growth prospects, India continues to be one of the fastest growing countries after China, Vietnam and Fiji. China is slated to record a 7.5 per cent GDP growth rate during 2003 followed by Vietnam seven per cent and Fiji with 5.2 per cent.

As per the ESCAP Survey, the global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier projection of 2.8 per cent and the GDP growth rate for the developing nations of the Asia Pacific region was revised downward to 5 per cent from earlier projection of 5.4 per cent.

Analysing India's economic performance the ESCAP Survey said "despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong. GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared to 5.6 per cent in 2001."

The Survey pointed out that India's higher level of economic activity came from industrial and services sector, which in turn were underpinned by government spendings, measures to boost industry and infrastructure as well as liberalisation of capital and money markets. "Agricultural output contracted by 3.1 per cent in 2002 owing to wide-spread and severe drought, contributing to a decline in the share of agriculture in GDP from 23.8 per cent to 22.2 per cent between 2000 and 2002," the Survey said.

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Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth: Escap survey

External debt to be $102.3 bn till March

NEW DELHI

UNITED Nation's economic and social survey on Thursday warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy, pushing down growth prospects by almost 1.0 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003, reports PTI.

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"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey here.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per

Hopes for Asian growth dimmed by SARS, Iraq war

BANGKOK: DEVELOPING countries in Asia and the Pacific showed relatively strong economic growth in 2002, but the SARS virus and war in Iraq may threaten further expansion this year, a UN official said on Thursday.

Regional economies grew an average of about 5 per cent last year despite a global economic slump, exceeding growth in 2001 by 2 per cent, said Kim Hak-su, head of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. "We have to revise our projections for 2003" due to the threat of SARS", he said.

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UN predicts bleak Indian growth

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ESCAP revises India's growth forecast

Business Standard

NEW DELHI, April 17. — In the wake of the Iraq war and SARS, the annual report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for 2003 (ESCAP), today revised downwards India's economic growth forecast for 2003 to 5.1 per cent against it's earlier projection of 6 per cent.

The Global Development Finance report of the World Bank has also marginally scaled down the growth projection from 5.4 per cent to 5.3 per cent.

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific report has however said the stability of Indian rupee against the US dollar, was a major strength of the economy. The rupee slipped by only 0.5 per cent against the greenback by the end of the fiscal 2002. While it lauds the the success story of Indian IT saying that spending on it is expected to reach 3 per cent of the GDP from the current 1.7 per cent by 2008, it has added that the industry depends heavily on global economic conditions, especially in the USA.

It has warned that the growth witnessed by the developing economies in the region could be adversely affected by the military action in Iraq and its negative ripple effects including those on energy prices.

The Escap report says during 2002, the Asia-Pacific region performed better than expectations and notched up a growth rate of about 5 per cent in 2002, which was 2 per cent higher than the 2001 growth rate. It said that a surge in intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing were responsible for higher growth rates in 2002.

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Spur domestic demand to sustain growth: Escap

Our Bureau
NEW DELHI, April 17

THE UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) on Thursday said sustaining economic growth in the region would depend on stimulating domestic demand, as the global economy is unlikely to show strong growth until well into 2003 or possibly later.

Reviewing the macro-economic implications of the economic slowdown in various economies in the Escap region, the annual report of the UN body said this is so since the growth stimulus from a rebound in world trade and hence, from net exports is likely to be moderate among Escap developing members over the next 12 to 18 months, it added.

However, Escap said, "It has to be recognised too that reforms are an essential, continuing process that needs to be securely anchored in a realistic framework of development and poverty reduction strategies in developing countries." As such, it urged members to speed up structural reforms to make their economies more competitive, to manage globalisation better by a deeper understanding of the interactions between international and national policies and financial markets and to continue to deepen financial markets and reduce dependence on any one source of finance for development.

It further asked them to strengthen the formulation and implementation of policies, especially prudential macro policies and to enhance the quality of governance in both the public and private sector and additionally to minimise conflicts of interest in the field of governance.

Commenting on the Doha Development Agenda, it said the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Cancun in Mexico in September should not get bogged down in discussions over procedural matters and deal constructively with substantive issues that lie at the heart of the Doha Development Agenda.

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Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

The United Nations today warned that the war in Iraq, SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU could adversely impact India's GDP growth prospects by almost one per cent in 2003.

The United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2003 released here today showed that although the survey projects India's GDP growth for 2003 at 6 per cent, latest available estimates (IMF and national) indicate that the growth rate will be 5.1 per cent.

"Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS, growth in the US, Japan and EU", the report said.

At the same time, the report noted that despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong.

"GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared with 5.6 per cent in 2001. Higher levels of economic activity came largely from the industrial and service sectors, which, in turn, were underpinned by government spending, and by measures to boost industrial production and infrastructure development as well as to liberalise capital and money markets and encourage private and foreign investment", the report said.

The report said that Pakistan was likely to post an GDP growth rate of 4.5 per cent in 2003, China 7.5 per cent, Bangladesh 4.9 per cent and Sri Lanka 5 per cent.

The world economic growth rate has been projected at 2.3 per cent. While the US is projected to clock a GDP growth rate of 2.2 per cent, Japan was likely record growth rate of 0.6 per cent and EU as a region could post 1.8 per cent GDP growth rate.

While in the short term, the war and aftermath in Iraq, SARS and faltering growth in US, Japan and EU have been identified as the main risks and challenges, in the medium term, limits to domestic growth stimulating measures and limits to intra-regional trade could be the main limiting factors.

"Maintenance of momentum of structural reform, maintenance commitment to trade liberalisation, enhance productivity and competitiveness by improving the delivery of education and health services, ensuring macro-economic stability and improvement of public and private sector governance are the main policy prescriptions of the survey.

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External debt at $102.3 b till March: Escap

New Delhi
17 APRIL

INDIA transformed from a moderate to lowly indebted country with a fall in Debt-GDP ratio to 20% and foreign debt stood at $102.3 billion in March 2003, United Nations' economic and social commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) survey said today. "The Debt-GDP ratio declined continuously from 38% in 1991 to just over 20% in 2002, and the debt-service ratio from 35% in 1990 to 13.3% in 2002," according to the survey.

Citing World Bank classification, it said, "There was also a marked improvement in the external debt position of India, which had been transformed from a moderately indebted country to a low indebted country as of 1999." "It is estimated that India's external debt, both short and long term, will amount to around 102.3 billion dollars at the end of March 2003," it said.

Despite the continuing weakness in global economy, Escap said "foreign direct investment flows into India grew by 2.4% to $4.0 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalisation of foreign investment policies and the removal of economic sanctions on India by the US."— PTI

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India's GDP to take a hit following war, SARS

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

THE Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific (ESCAP) of the United Nations has said that growth in the Asia-Pacific region will be conditioned by the aftermath of Iraq war, impact of severely acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and growth in the US, Japan and the EU.

ESCAP 2003 was presented by Nagesh Kumar, director-general of the Research & Information System for the non-aligned & other developing countries. It has pegged growth in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific at 5 per cent for calender year 2003.

It has pegged India's growth at 5.1 per cent, down from the earlier 6 per cent projection, mainly because of the Iraq war and low growth in the US and EU. China's growth is forecast as highest, 7.5 per cent. Global growth rate has been revised from 2.8 per cent to 2.3 per cent. Growth in 2003 will be based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade, says the survey. Monetary policy is facing difficult choices in several economies, according to the ESCAP survey. "The survey underlines the failure of monetarism," Kumar said.

Facilitated by lower interest rates in developed countries and lower inflation locally, most economies in the Asia-Pacific region, except one or two, were able to keep interest rates low in 2002, says the survey, adding that lower interest rates did not lead to higher credit growth. "Thus monetary easing is as circumscribed in the real world as is fiscal policy, and its stimulating effects could be greatly nullified by a deflationary psychology."

ESCAP has recommended the maintenance of momentum of structural reforms and commitment to trade liberalisation, enhancing of productivity and competitiveness, ensure macro-

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18 APR 2003

ESCAP scales down India's GDP projection

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on Thursday scaled down its projection of India's GDP (gross domestic product) growth for 2003 to 5.1 per cent from six per cent on anticipations that the Iraq war and SARS epidemic could adversely impact the Indian economy.

ESCAP released on Thursday its 2003 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific. The Survey, prepared in March, projects India's GDP growth at six per cent for 2003. But in a separate presentation made along with the release of the survey, ESCAP scaled down the growth projection to 5.1 per cent in the face of the Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in the US, Japan and Europe.

"ESCAP region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries (RIS) director-general Nagesh Kumar, who released the survey here, however, said: "Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with six per cent growth."

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (seven per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific region was revised to five per cent from 5.4 per cent.

Among India's neighbours, Pakistan is slated to post an economic growth of 4.5 per cent while Sri Lanka is likely to grow by five per cent, Bangladesh by 4.9 per cent and Nepal by 2.5 per cent.

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UN pegs India GDP growth at 5.1%

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, April 17

THE UNITED Nation's Economic and Social Survey on Thursday warned that Iraq war and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) will impact Indian economy pushing down growth prospects by almost 1.0 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

The survey brought out by UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), earlier projected India's gross domestic product growth at 6.0 per cent for 2003, but it revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in the United States, Japan and Europe.

"The ESCAP region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intraregional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in the United States, European Union and Japan," the ESCAP report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by the ESCAP survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey here.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent.

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India's growth is above world average, says study

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 17: Despite severe weather disturbances and unfavourable external factors, the growth momentum in India remained relatively strong, the first economic and social survey of Asia Pacific said on Thursday.

The survey has further said though the country's GDP expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2002 compared with 5.6 per cent in 2001, its growth still remained above the world average.

"Higher levels of economic activity came largely from the industrial and service sectors, which in turn was underpinned by government spending, and by measures to boost industrial product and infrastructure development as well as to liberalise capital and money markets and encourage private and public investment," the survey has said.

Asia-*Pacific*

On the inflation front, the survey has said that India continued to record a relative price stability with inflation around 3.5 per cent in 2002 as compared to 4.3 per cent in 2001; the huge food stocks and the previous year's bumper crop, a recovery of industrial output and greater competition from liberalised imports were contributing factors.

The survey has also painted a rosy picture for the country on the trade front with export earnings rising by 15 per cent in 2002, thus out performing the government target of 12 per cent growth.

"Despite continuing weakness in the global economy, FDI flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent, to $ 4 billion, in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvements in infrastructure, further liberalisation of foreign investment policies; and removal of economic sanctions on India by the US," the survey said.

Giving an overall outlook of the Asia and the Pacific region, the survey has said that despite weakening of the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region performed surprisingly well, achieving a growth of 5 per cent during the year.

However, the survey has raised a question mark on the growth prospects for the region in 2003 citing that the prospects of that region this year are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative ripple effects, which include energy prices.

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Escap alert on growth forecast

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 17: United Nation's Economic and Social Survey today followed the World Bank in warning that war in Iraq would impact India's economic growth, reducing GDP growth estimates for India from 6 per cent to 5.1 per cent.

The Escap (UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific) report blamed the Iraq war, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus and the depressed situation in western markets, where India sells most of its exports, for the lowered growth estimates. Despite the lowering, India, along with China and Vietnam, has been projected as the fastest growing nations in the region.

The World Bank had earlier reduced the Indian sub-continent's GDP growth projections to 5.3 per cent for the calendar year 2003. Falling exports, the attendant inflation rate and economic slow-down are being blamed for this downside.

Today's Escap report said: "The region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in the US, Japan and the EU."

Releasing the report here, Nagesh Kumar, director general of Research and Information System (RIS) for non-aligned and other developing countries, said, the Indian economy might not be affected so badly as projected by the Escap survey. It might still recover to post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6 per cent growth," he said.

The report states global economic growth rate too would be hit falling to 2.3 per cent against an earlier projection of 2.8 per cent. The Escap region as a whole would grow by 5 per cent, mainly because of strong growth likely to be posted by China at 7.5 per cent. However, the report does not explain how the Chinese economy could maintain its growth momentum despite being badly mauled by the SARS virus.

The report said key issues which India would try to solve during the year include trade liberalisation, simplification of trade and investment regime and further reductions in export and import restrictions.

It said the fact that FDI to India grew to $ 4 billion in 2002 despite weakening of the global economy, was a reflection of the ongoing improvement in infrastructure and liberalisation of foreign investment policies. The bulk of the FDI went to engineering industries, services, electronics and electrical equipment, chemicals and allied products, food and dairy products and infotech industries. The report pointed out that all this had shored up the Indian currency, giving it stability against the dollar and making investments into India attractive.

It also credited India for improving its credit ranking by turning from a moderately indebted country to low-indebted country with a fall in debt-GDP ratio from 38 per cent in 1991 to 13.3 per cent in 2002.

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Iraq war could impact growth: U.N. survey

By Sushma Ramachandran

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The United Nations' annual Economic and Social Survey for Asia and the Pacific today warned that the Iraq war and its aftermath along with sluggish growth in developed economies could have an impact on the GDP growth in India during 2003. It originally forecast a growth rate of around 6 to 7 per cent from 2003 to 2005, but has revised the figure down to 5.1 per cent for the current year in view of these volatile external factors.

The report notes that sustaining growth in the region will depend primarily upon domestic policies given the absence of any evidence of a strong pick up in the global economy at least in the first half of this year, the war in Iraq and other geopolitical uncertainties.

The survey brought out by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), has revised its GDP growth projection downwards largely to the expected impact of the Iraq war as well as continuing depressed demand in the U.S., Japan and Europe.

Even after the revision in the ESCAP forecast, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam — by 7 per cent, and Fiji by 5.2 per cent. While the global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5 per cent from 5.4.

On the policy challenges for countries in the region, the survey says that the domestic demand stimulus measures have relied on a mixture of fiscal and monetary policies. However, with levels of public debt exceeding 50 per cent of the GDP in most economies of the region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long. In the case of monetary policy also, as a result of falling inflation, it says interest rates have reached quite low levels so that the scope for further reduction is limited in most countries.

Besides, it urges that the programmes of reform of the corporate and financial sectors should continue to be implemented with renewed vigour to enhance investor confidence. It says that the levels of investment in the private sector are still below pre-1997 levels in Southeast Asia. Without a pick up in private investments, it cautions, medium term growth is likely to be jeopardised.

The survey had originally observed that the prospects in 2003 are for a pick up in the overall GDP growth rate in the South Asian countries of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, it maintained that the uncertainties remained, such as the military conflict in Iraq and this along with tentative growth in the global economy could affect export growth adversely.

In addition, the report pointed out that the South Asian region is a heavy importer of energy and higher energy prices would be a negative development for both growth and inflation in this area.

Corporate Results FY 2003

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EXIM POLICY 2002-07

Friday, April 18, 2003

UN cuts India's growth forecast to 5.1 per cent

Our Economy Bureau in New Delhi
Published : April 18, 2003

In the wake of the Iraq war and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars) scare in South East Asia, the annual report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) for 2003 today scaled down India's economic growth forecast for 2003 to 5.1 per cent from its earlier projection of 6 per cent.

The Global Development Finance report of the World Bank has also marginally scaled down the growth projection from 5.4 per cent to 5.3 per cent.

The stability of the Indian rupee against the US dollar was a major strength of the economy, the report said. The rupee slipped only 0.5 per cent against the dollar at the end of 2002-03.

The commission said by 2008 spending on the Indian information technology sector would reach 3 per cent of the GDP from the current 1.7 per cent.

However, it pointed out that the industry depended heavily on global

economic conditions, especially those in the US.

The commission warned that the growth witnessed by the developing economies in the region could be adversely affected by the war in Iraq and its ripple effects, including those on energy prices.

According to the commission's report, the Asia-Pacific region performed better than expected in 2002 and notched a growth of about 5 per cent, 2 per cent higher than its growth in 2001.

A surge in intra-regional trade, fiscal stimuli and monetary easing were responsible for the higher growth rates.

The report also said though India's GDP growth rate declined marginally to 4.4 per cent in 2002, (it was 5.6 per cent in 2001), the growth was achieved in spite of severe weather disturbances and other unfavourable factors.

The commission said despite the continuing weakness in the global economy, foreign investment flows into India rose 2.4 per cent to $4 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalisation of foreign investment policies, and removal of economic sanctions on India by the US. It also said India's growth was largely fuelled by the industrial and service sectors.

Agricultural output had declined by 3.1 per cent in 2002 due to a severe drought, which caused the sector's share in the economy to fall from 23.8

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India's growth scaled down due to Iraq, SARS

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2003 12:19:25 AM]

NEW DELHI: The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on Thursday scaled down its projection of India's GDP growth for 2003 to 5.1 per cent from 6 per cent on anticipations that the Iraq war and SARS epidemic could adversely impact the Indian economy.

ESCAP released on Thursday its 2003 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific. The Survey, prepared in March, projects India's GDP growth at 6 per cent for 2003.



But in a separate presentation made along with the release of the survey, ESCAP scaled down the growth projection to 5.1 per cent in the face of the Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in the US, Japan and Europe.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries (RIS) director-general Nagesh Kumar, who released the survey here, however, said: "Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6 per cent growth."

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific region was revised to five per cent from 5.4 per cent.

Among India's neighbours, Pakistan is slated to post an economic growth of 4.5 per cent while Sri Lanka is likely to grow by five per cent, Bangladesh by 4.9 per cent and Nepal by 2.5 per cent.

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EXIM POLICY 2002-07

Friday, April 18, 2003

NEWS UPDATES

'Iraq war, SARS to hit India's GDP growth' (1415 hrs)

United Nation's Economic and Social survey today warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy pushing down growth prospects by almost 1 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

The survey brought out by UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), earlier projected India's GDP growth at 6 per cent for 2003, but revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in US, Japan and Europe.

"ESCAP region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for non-aligned and other developing countries director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by ESCAP survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

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"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey in New Delhi.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5 from 5.4 per cent. (PTI)

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BUSINESS

Iraq war, SARS to affect India's GDP growth: survey

PTI

NEW DELHI: United Nation's economic and social survey on Thursday warned that Iraq war and SARS will impact Indian economy pushing down growth prospects by almost 1.0 per cent to 5.1 per cent in 2003.

The survey brought out by UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap), earlier projected India's GDP growth at 6.0 per cent for 2003, but it revised it downwards to 5.1 per cent in the face of Iraq war, SARS and depressed demand in US, Japan and Europe.

"Escap region performed well in 2002. Growth was based on stimulative fiscal and monetary policies and on strong intra-regional trade. However, prospects for 2003 are conditioned by war in Iraq and its aftermath, impact of SARS and growth in US, Japan and EU," the report said.

Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) director general, Nagesh Kumar, however, said Indian economy might not be affected so adversely as projected by Escap survey and could still post 5.5-5.6 per cent growth this year.

"Since the Iraq war was short, my hunch is that

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India's GDP will grow in the region of 5.5-5.6 per cent. If oil prices fall, we might end up with 6.0 per cent growth," he said releasing the survey here.

Even after the revision, India continues to be one of the fastest growing nations after China, slated to grow by 7.5 per cent, Vietnam (7.0 per cent) and Fiji (5.2 per cent).

While global growth rate has been revised to 2.3 per cent from the earlier stance of 2.8 per cent, the GDP growth for the developing nations of Asia-Pacific region was revised to 5.0 from 5.4 per cent

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India's growth projections lowered to 5.1 pc

NEW DELHI (UNI): The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 2003 on Thursday lowered the GDP forecast for India for 2003 from six per cent earlier to 5.1 per cent, primarily because of the uncertainty created due to the impact of SARS and depression of economic activity resulting from the war in Iraq.

While commending the performance of the economy in 2002, it urged the Indian Government to step up public spending in social sectors, namely education and health, and maintain the momentum of structural reforms.

The survey states that the GDP expanded at 4.4 per cent in 2002, which was laudable in view of the contraction in agricultural output by 3.1 in 2002 owing to widespread and severe drought.

The share of agriculture in GDP fell from 23.8 per cent to 22.2 per cent between 2000 and 2002. Higher levels of economic activity came largely from industrial and services sectors, which in turn were underpinned by government spending, and by measures to boost industrial production and infrastructure development as well as to liberalise capital and money markets and encourage private and foreign investment.

The survey has its theme for the issue as "Asia-Pacific Economies Resilience in Challenging Times". ESCAP is part of the United Nations system.

Briefing newspersons here on the issues covered by the survey Dr Nagesh Kumar, Director General of Research and Information Systems for the non-aligned and other developing countries said a noteworthy feature of this year's development was the relative price stability with inflation at around 3.5 per cent in 2002 compared with 4.3 per cent in 2001. The huge foodstocks from the previous year's bumper crop, a recovery of industrial output and greater competition from liberalised imports were contributory factors.

The report brings out that India recorded relatively high rates of export growth in 2002. Export earnings rose by 15 per cent by the end of the fiscal 2002, thus outperforming the government target of 12 per cent. This upsurge was due to various export-facilitating measures, the stability of the Indian rupee and strong performance in such key sectors as ready-made garments, engineering goods, chemicals, leather and leather products, minerals and ores, basic metals and petroleum products.

The share of agricultural exports declined by 12 per cent in 2002 from 20 per cent in 1996.

After a slight contraction in 2001, India experienced an estimated expansion of 12 per cent in imports in 2002. There were higher imports of edible oil, crude petroleum, export-related products and capital goods.

ESCAP says that despite the continuing weakness in the global economy, FDI flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent to four billion dollars in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure, further liberalisation of foreign investment policies and removal of economic sanctions on India by the United States. The bulk of FDI went into ICT activities, engineering industries, services and electronics and electrical equipment, chemicals and allied products, food and dairy products.

Listing the key policy issues for India, the survey says trade liberalisation, simplification of trade investment regime, and further reductions in export and import restrictions are prominent in India's economic reform programmes to boost growth and domestic and foreign investment.

"Privatisation is at the forefront of these reforms and is seen a benchmark of the government's commitment to economic reforms," Dr Kumar said.

Regarding the region, the survey says despite the weakening of the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific performed surprisingly well, achieving growth of around five per cent during the year. This expansion, which was two percentage points higher than the 2001 rate, owned much to surging inter-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

Prospects for 2003 depend on the impact of the Iraq war and the sustainability of inter-regional trade and a supportive domestic policy stance.

GDP growth in the region is still several percentage points below the pre - 1997 crisis level. This translates into fewer job opportunities and puts greater pressure on government budgets, including allocation for poverty reduction

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ESCAPing A Slowdown

Developing countries unaffected by global trends

Growth in the developing economies of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (Escap) region defies conventional wisdom that the rest of the world catches a cold when powerful developed economies sneeze. The former were in fact the "fastest-growing group of economies in the world in 2002" when the global economic recovery had petered out, according to the latest Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific brought out by Escap's secretariat. What accounts for this immunity from the worsening external environment? The Survey argues that the 5.1 per cent rate of growth of this group of countries reflected a combination of easier macroeconomic policies and growth in intra-regional trade. These developing economies are a diverse lot: India, for instance, is less integrated with the world economy, while the others like Malaysia, China and South Korea also depend on exports to the developed world. A factor of change, however, is the growing intra-regional trade which boosts growth. This includes foreign direct investment-induced componentisation, besides trade in a wider range of non-information and communications technology products and services. Clearly, Asia-Pacific integration is now an independent source of dynamism in the world economy.

What about 2003 and beyond? For the developing economies of Escap, the "balance of probabilities" is in favour of a continued growth momentum or even a slight acceleration this year despite a lack of pick up in the global economy. But the Survey nevertheless draws attention to several imponderables in the external environment which cloud their growth prospects. The on-going impact of the Iraq showdown on energy prices is one as 40 per cent of their energy supplies comes from West Asia. The strong winds of low and fragile investor confidence buffeting world financial markets is another. A weaker US dollar is yet another. Despite these uncertainties, however, the underlying strength of economies like India, China, Malaysia and South Korea remains strong. India's growth momentum may have been temporarily arrested by severe weather disturbances, but its industrial and services economy remains buoyant. Malaysia, China and South Korea are also strongly driven by domestic demand, besides exporting to the developed world. Appropriate fiscal and monetary stimulus policies can strengthen domestic demand-driven growth, while intra-regional trade will continue to impart its own dynamism. These developing economies thus can power Escap's growth while the developed world keeps sneezing.

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Escap sees 15 pc growth in exports

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: Lauding the export-facilitating measures unleashed by India, the United Nation's Economic and social commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) has estimated an export growth of 15 per cent in the country during 2002-03 as against the target of 12 per cent.

Though the share of agricultural exports declined to 12 per cent in 2002 from 20 per cent in 1996, computer software and service industry emerged as the major export earners, contributing an estimated $10 billion during the last financial year, said a report by Escap.

"This upsurge was due to various export-facilitating measures, stability of the Indian rupee and strong performance in such key sectors as ready-made garments, engineering goods, chemicals, leather and leather products, ore and minerals, basic metal and petroleum products", according to the recently released report.

It said despite the continuing weakness in the global economy, FDI flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent, to $4 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure.

Further liberalisation of foreign investment policies and removal of economic sanctions on India by the United States also helped in enhanced FDI inflow into the country, it said.

On the foreign exchange position, the report said it got strengthened both in India and its neighbour Pakistan. "The foreign exchange position of India and Pakistan strengthened as a result of higher foreign investment, improved current account balance and, specifically in the case of Pakistan, the debt-relief package from the Paris club", it said.

In Pakistan, foreign exchange reserves were on an upward trend, totalling over $9 billion in January 2003. The local currency of Pakistan appreciated by 6.8 per cent against the United States dollar in 2002, in contrast to a depreciation of almost one fifth in 2001, it said. The Escap report also lauded the social protection programmes undertaken by India in 2000-02. This included the Integrated village employment programme providing wage employment and food security in rural areas, etc.

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Monday April 21, 2:46 PM

Indian IT Industry Created 92,000 Jobs Over Ten Years

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NEW DELHI, April 21 Asia Pulse - India's IT industry has found a special mention in United Nations Economic and Social Survey [ESCAP] which highlighted the US$10 billion sales revenue and 92,000 new jobs created by the sector in a matter of just 10 years.

Terming the performance of Indian infotech industry as a "success story", the survey said the Indian government has played an important role in providing critical inputs and removing major bottlenecks in the path of software development in order to achieve the export target of US$50 billion by 2008.

The Indian government is also a major client of IT products and services in line with its effort to computerise government processes and implement e-governance application, it said.

"Indian spending on IT is currently around 1.7 per cent of GDP and

is expected to reach three per cent by 2008," the study said.

The Indian IT industry grew at an average annual rate of 50 per cent from 1991 to 2001, it said, adding during that year computer software and services generated over US$10 billion in sales revenue, up from a mere US$150 million 10 years earlier.

Expressing confidence in the projected growth of 30 per cent in 2002, the study said export revenue could reach US$10 billion with the export revenue touching US$7.6 billion in 2001.

Terming the goal of US$50 billion by 2008 as "ambitious", the Escap study said by 2008, IT software and services export by that period are expected to account 7.7 per cent of India's GDP and 35 per cent of total exports.

(PTI)m

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Monday April 21, 4:48 PM

Escap Lauds India's Export Promotion Measures

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products, ore and minerals, basic metal and petroleum products," the report said.

It said despite the continuing weakness in the global economy, FDI flows into India grew by 2.4 per cent to US$4 billion in 2002, reflecting the ongoing improvement in infrastructure.

Further liberalisation of foreign investment policies and removal of economic sanctions on India by the United States also helped in enhanced FDI inflow into the country, it said.

(PTI)

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SARS, Iraq war threaten region's economy: UN

Business and Investment - April 19, 2003

Zakki Hakim, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta

The outbreak of SARS and the negative effect of the recent war in Iraq could become a serious threat to economies in the region, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) said, while presenting its latest regional economic survey on Thursday.

For Indonesia, economic growth this year was projected to slow down to around 3.4 percent, from 3.6 percent last year.

The results of the survey were drafted in January and February, when neither war in Iraq nor the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had occurred. UNESCAP initially projected the Indonesian economy to grow more, by 4.1 percent this year, compared with the government's projection of 4 percent.

But the war and SARS could pose significant downside risks for the economies in Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP said.

"At the beginning of the year, prospects for 2003 were that gross domestic product (GDP) growth would be sustained, perhaps even with some marginal improvement over 2002. However, the war in Iraq, SARS and lower growth in the developed economies pose significant downside risks," it said in a media statement.

"The most obvious and serious risk is what happens in the aftermath of military action in Iraq," the UN said, pointing out that although the war had come to an end and its impact on Iraq's oil industry was minimal, "its political and security impact on the Middle East could be more long-lasting.

"The global economy, too, has been adversely affected by the uncertainty leading up to the war. This is unlikely to be reversed immediately upon the cessation of hostilities," it said.

A prolonged economic slowdown in the U.S., Japan and other developed economies would hurt exports from developing countries in the region and undermine business confidence.

On the impact of SARS, UNESCAP said that it was too early to predict as it could extend into the second quarter of 2003.

It said that, at the moment, the tourism, travel, hotel and retail industries were seen as the most badly affected by the disease but, "If SARS

persists for a long time, its impact will then extend beyond these sectors into actual production declines and job losses in sectors other than travel and hotels."

It added that at the moment the countries deemed to be badly affected by SARS were China (including Hong Kong), Singapore and Thailand, whose economies have large a tourism sector. The impact on Indonesia and Malaysia is seen as limited at this stage.

"If the spread of the disease is contained by June 2003, there exists, however, the possibility of a significant bounce-back in the third and fourth quarters of 2003 in the regional economy.

"The shock effect will wear off eventually and consumers will tend to spend more than they might have done otherwise. In that event the impact on output growth in 2003 could be very small."

UNESCAP said that, amid the various uncertainties, governments had to strive to sustain GDP growth by maintaining the momentum of structural reform and commitment to trade liberalization, and take measures to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

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SARS Alert: Epidemic affecting economic forecasts

AFP

BANGKOK, Apr 17: The spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubts over economic forecasts for Asia economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the U and social arm said today.

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The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 launched today, 5.4 per cent growth for developing countries in the region this year but ESCAP last week revised the figure down to 5. to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

"SARS will not be easy to contain and control. It will affect definitely Asia-Pacific economies, especially those with larg sectors," UNESCAP's executive secretary Kim Hak-Su said.

The growth forecast is slightly lower than the 5.1 per cent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia

"People want to stay home. It's had a tremendous impact on people," Kim said. The disease has killed more than 160 infected at least 3,500 around the world, mostly in Asia.

The revised growth forecast is still much higher than the 2.3 per cent growth expected for the rest of the world, Kim s

"Overall Asian economies will record higher growth than the rest of the world. Asian economies are characterised by d resilience ... We'll see how resilient they are this year," he said.

Raj Kumar, chief of ESCAP's poverty and development division, said that the true impact of SARS would probably not many were expecting.

"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary." "Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a one they are the most severely hit." A wave of economists' downgrades to economic growth forecasts have followed the S The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said earlier this week that growth in Asia, excluding Japan, this year would decl

cent from 2.9 per cent as the fallout from SARS aggravates the impact of the weakening global economy.

Concerns over the SARS epidemic had forced ESCAP to postpone its ministerial symposium scheduled for late April in ministers from the commission's 61 member states were to attend.

Kim said the impact of the US-led war in Iraq had been mostly confined to creating a climate of uncertainty. The biggı huge and sustained rise in oil prices had not been realised.

"This war itself is not damaging or affecting adversely the world economy because oil prices have stabilised. But uncei enormous hesitation both among investors and spenders of money," he said.

The survey noted that growth in developing economies of the region was nearly two percentage points higher in 2002 the previous year.

But it warned that Governments needed to control their spending.

"There is no doubt that with levels of public debt exceeding 50 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) in most ecor region, the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long," it said. — AFP



SARS ALERT



Epidemic affecting economic forecasts

BANGKOK, Thurs. — The spread of the deadly SARS virus has cast doubts over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year but growth in the region is still expected to easily outpace the rest of the world, the UN's economic and social arm said today.

The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 launched today, had projected 5.4 per cent growth for developing countries in the region this year but ESCAP last week revised the figure down to 5.0 per cent due to the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Iraq war.

"SARS will not be easy to contain and control. It will affect definitely Asia-Pacific economies, especially those with large tourism sectors," UNESCAP's executive secretary Kim Hak-Su said.

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"There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary."

"Even in Hong Kong they're forecasting just a one per cent fall and they are the most severely hit."

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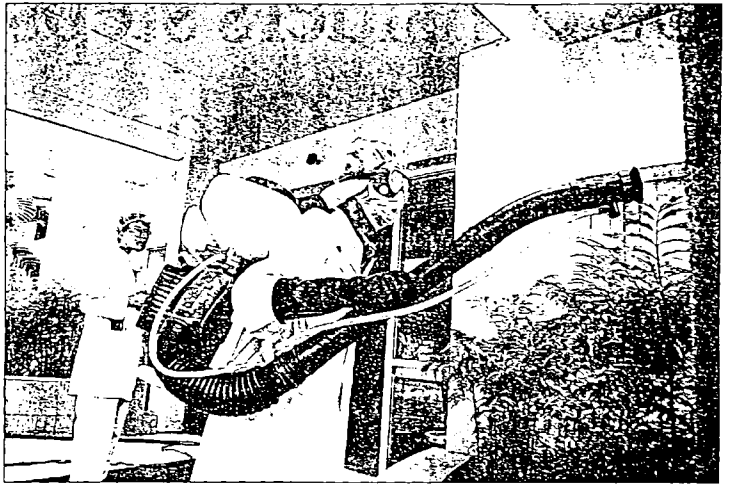
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PRECAUTION: A medical worker of the Vietnam military force spraying chemicals to decontaminate the Vietnam-France Hospital in Hanoi yesterday. The hospital, the epicentre of Vietnam's outbreak of SARS, is the only international standard facility of its kind in Hanoi and is preparing to re-open in June. — Reuters picture

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Saturday, April 19, 2003

Asia-Pac nations face challenging times this year

Developing economies of Asia-Pacific notched up real growth of two percentage points last year despite geopolitical uncertainties, but they can expect to face more challenging times this year with the unavoidable effects of the Iraq war and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) impacting economic activities.

During a press launch of the United Nation's (UN) *Economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003* in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research deputy director Dr Mohd Haflah Piei said the economic fallout from the Iraq war on the global economy aside, SARS would also cast a pall on "affected" countries such as Malaysia.

He said the illness' negative repercussions, which have hit the travel trade, could spread quickly to other sectors of the economy.

The UN survey said that the region's developing economies had performed "surprisingly well", achieving growth of about 5% last year, owing mainly to fiscal stimulus and monetary easing policies, as well as surging intra-regional trade.

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But given the absence of any evidence of a strong pick-up in the global economy so far this year, sustaining growth in the region would primarily depend on domestic policies.

Domestic demand stimulus measures have relied on a mixture of fiscal and monetary policies, but there are limitations to this. Without a take-off in private investment, medium-term growth was likely to be jeopardised, the survey said.

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Bussiness/ Economy

Nepal's economic growth expected to touch 2.5 pc in 2003

Post Report

KATHMANDU, April 17

Nepal's economic growth is forecasted to go up to 2.5 per cent in 2003 from 0.8 per cent of the previous year and further accelerate to 3.5 per cent in 2004, according to Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003.

"However, restoration of law and order, favourable weather conditions and a strong external sector, among others, are necessary for realising the recovery," states the report launched here today.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) has further projected inflation to build up to 4.5 per cent in 2003. Owing to weak domestic demand and price stability in India, inflation had remained at 2.9 per cent in 2002, a level similar to other least developed countries (LDCs) in South Asia.

Reviewing the decline in exports, the report states that recovery in exports in 2003 would be slow, especially as competition for garment exports - one of the largest exports of the country - is intensifying.

It also projects slowing of import growth, recovery in tourism, and steady rise in remittance in 2003 and hence, the improvement in current account deficit in the near-term.

Citing a deficit of US$ 77 million recorded in balance of payments (BoP) in 2002, the report states that it will attain a positive balance in 2003 with an improvement in aid disbursements.

"Monetary Policy 2002 continued to accommodate fiscal needs, while growth in the broad money supply slowed to 11.5 per

cent," it states. Weakening of loan demand, thanks to shrinking investment opportunities, dragged down the interest rate during the year, it adds.

Contrary to the moderated economic growth in the South Asian LDCs, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region performed surprisingly well, achieving growth of around 5 per cent in 2002, states the report.

The growth in developing countries has been attributed to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

However, prospects for these countries in 2003 depend on intensity of negative ripple effects of military action in Iraq including those on energy prices, extent of sustainability of enhanced intra-regional trade and supportive policy stance, according to the ESCAP report.

Referring to Nepal's growth rates trend, the report states that it has not been adequate for sustained poverty reduction. It also stresses for better and continued foreign investment inflows, both public and private, for higher growth.

"To achieve the goal of poverty reduction, sustainable annual growth rates of 6 per cent or higher is needed with deliberate pro-poor targeting of public expenditure and greater attention given to maintenance of facilities," it says.

Although the country's tax system is relatively efficient, increased security spending contributed to the current fiscal deficit and domestic borrowing. "Even as public sector reforms and fiscal transparency have much improved, more remains to be done on spending prioritisation, decentralisation and greater government accountability," it highlights.

The report identifies fiscal liabilities of public enterprises as major constraint for restructuring and privatisation efforts. It acknowledges role played by the private sector in sustained economic growth in the South Asian LDCs.

It stresses on a better financial intermediation to promoting greater private sector participation in the South Asian LDCs, where significant portions of the economically active population remains under-served.

Moreover, highlighting policy challenges in Asia-Pacific region, the report notes that fiscal consolidation must be tackled before

too long as levels of public debt of most economies of the region exceed 50 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

It stresses developing economies on pursuing reforms in the corporate and financial sector with renewed vigour to enhance investors' confidence as without a pickup in private investment medium-term growth is likely to be jeopardised.

Countries depending upon official development assistance have been asked to redouble their efforts to improve the utilisation of external assistance by drawing up realistic projects and improving their aid management structures.

Among others, governments have been recommended to provide appropriate macroeconomic environment and realistic exchange rates to enable firms to compete for markets.

"Effective and efficient utilisation of resources is important to achieve better results in the provision of health and education," states the report, further stressing the governments on building awareness to curb environmental degradation, which affects the poor adversely and disproportionately.

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NEWS FROM NEPAL AS IT HAPPENS

SPOTLIGHT VOL. 22, NO. 41, APR 25 - MAY 01 2003.

ESCAP PROJECTION

Toward Recovery

Owing to a peaceful atmosphere, the economy is moving toward recovery

By A CORRESPONDENT

The last two years had been nightmarish for the Nepalese economy. Due to the breakdown in peace and security, all factors of economy were on the downward trend. The production, supply, investment, export, import all were showing negative trends.

However, the recent figures released by the UN-Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (ESCAP) stated that Nepal's GDP growth rate, which has currently dipped down to 0.8 percent, is estimated to recover to 1.5 percent in 2003 and to accelerate to 3.5 percent by 2004.



Vegetables : Rising prices

The figures are music to the government as well as the business community. But there is a tag attached to this whole positive projection. The estimated projection will translate into reality only if the "improved law and order situation, favorable weather conditions and a strong external sector performance" will continue.

Nepal experienced a sharp fall in economic growth from an average annual growth rate of 5.3 percent in 1999-2001 to 0.8 percent in 2002, states the report released last week in the capital. According to the survey, the overall balance of payment surplus of 38 million US dollars in 2001 was reversed in 2002 when balance of payment deficit reached 77 million US dollars.

"Restructuring and privatization efforts continue to be constrained , as per the survey, by the fiscal liabilities of public enterprises. Despite increased migrant

remittances, which grew by 8 percent in 2002, the current account deficit was 6 percent of GDP," said Ram Babu Shah, national information officer of United Nations Information Center (UNIC). He, however, said that there were positive prospects ahead with slowing import growth, a recovery in tourism and a steady rise in inward remittances.

The favorable atmosphere has, over the recent period, triggered growth in the economic activities. This, in turn, has helped in the recovery of the economy that was faltering for the last two years.

The growth in industrial production, demand of consumer goods, construction materials and services and import, witnessed since the middle of the current fiscal year has helped in this recovery. The economic recovery will speed up due to the ceasefire and prospects of growth in world economy, say experts. "We have seen signs of recovery as rising demands have pushed the production," said Binod Bahadur Shrestha, acting president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The demand of consumer goods like biscuits, noodles and electronic equipment has risen by 10 percent. But the rising prices of commodities are feared to push the inflation rate. Even the ESCAP survey states that the inflation rate, presently at 2.9 percent, could climb to 4.5 percent in 2003.

The prices of essential commodities like rice, pulses and vegetables have risen by as high as 20 percent in the days after the government hiked the price of petroleum products. Traders have hiked the price of the commodities citing increased cost in their transportation and delivery. The prices of foodstuffs, fresh vegetables, fruits and readymade foods increased by 10 to 20 percent.

Traders have warned that the prices would further escalate. "This is only an initial impact. As we still have old stocks, the prices will further rise once we transport new ones," said Ganga Bahadur Manandhar, president of Nepal Retail Traders' Association. Before the hike in the price of petroleum products, the cost of transporting a truck-load of commodities was Rs.5000 to Rs.6,000 which has now increased by another Rs.2000 to Rs. 3000.The price rise is expected to put pressure on the inflation rate this year.

Besides, the current truck-strike in India could have its own toll on Nepalese economy. As the strike does not appear to end soon, it could hamper the supply of goods into Nepal and could trigger further price rises.

2.10 Pakistan

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UNHCR To Launch A Economic & Social Survey

Updated on 2003-04-17 11:51:07

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ISLAMABAD, Pakistan: Apr 17 (PNS) - United Nations Information Center (UNIC), will launch a survey entitled "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" in a press briefing on Thursday, April 17 at 11:00 am.

The theme of the survey is "Asia-Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Time" and it will be determined that how Economies in the Asia Pacific Region ESCAP, react to new shocks, says a press release issued by UNHCR here on Tuesday.

Although the global economy lost momentum in 2002 in the face of weak investment activity in the private sector compounded by mounting geopolitical uncertainties, the ESCAP region remained largely unaffected. However, in the face of continued global uncertainty such as war and health concerns, the picture is none too optimistic for 2003.

The Survey, a flagship publication of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), states that developing economies of the region exceeded 2001 GDP growth by nearly 2 percentage points in 2002.

The End.

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Pak economy shows signs of resurgence

AFP

Islamabad, April 17

Pakistan's economy showed signs of a resurgence late last year despite unprecedented drought and the fallout from the September 11 terror attacks, a United Nations report said Thursday.

"In Pakistan, a significant improvement in economic performance became visible in the final months of 2002," said a survey released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific.

It said higher export earnings and remittances from overseas Pakistani workers contributed to the country's improved economic performance.

The survey said that while the global economy weakened last year under the impact of the 2001 terror attacks in the United States, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific performed "surprisingly well" in 2002, achieving growth of about five percent, two percent higher than the previous year.

Pakistan showed some resilience against severe drought in 2002 and its gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.6 percent compared with 2.6 percent in 2001.

"GDP is targeted to grow by 4.5 percent in 2003 against 3.6 percent actual growth in 2002," the report said.

The report said Pakistan's manufacturing sector, which contributed 18 percent of GDP, suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of September 11 and higher oil prices.

"Pakistan's export earnings, which fell marginally by 0.7 percent to 9.1 billion dollars in 2002 were on track to reach the target of 10 billion dollars until the weakening of the international market in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001," it said.

Pakistan suffered from cancellations of US and European export orders, and higher freight charges, it said.

Last month the International Monetary Fund also predicted Pakistan was on track to meet its target of 4.5 percent economic growth in the year to June.

"The economic growth target of 4.5 percent is well within reach," an IMF assessment mission led by assistant director of the fund's Middle East department, Klaus Enders, said.

The mission said Pakistan's inflation was under control at less than four percent, the fiscal deficit had been contained, and all performance criteria to the end of 2002 had been met.

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Pak economy surges despite drought, Sept 11 shocks: UN

Press Trust of India
Islamabad, April 17

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"In Pakistan, a significant improvement in economic performance became visible in the final months of 2002," said a survey released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific.

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UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(*Press Clipping Service*)

Newspaper: *BUSINESS RECORDER*

Published From: *ISLAMABAD* *Date:* *18 April 2003*

Asia Pacific economies show strength despite odds

RECORDER REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Although the world economy was marred by wars, natural calamities and geo-political uncertainties, a UN sponsored survey of Asia and Pacific regions recorded "a surprising strength during the 2002".

The developing economies, including that of Pakistan, exceeded GDP growth over the previous year by two percent points and improved upon their overall performance, except, of course Japan that remained in recession.

However, it said that some signs of a return to "more robust growth" had emerged during the first half of 2002 but those dissipated due to heightening of political tensions in the region in the Middle East.

The situation contributed to increasing uncertainty and fragility of corporate balance sheets and the stock markets in not only the region but across the world experienced a third year of falling indices, it noted.

The report that was compiled before the recent American-led war against Iraq and its current threats to Syria, Iran and Korea, however cast a cloud of gloom over the economic growth for 2003. It said that intensity and duration of military action in Iraq will create negative ripples as it will increase energy prices. The region, it pointed out, imported 40 percent of its energy requirements.

However, it spoke of some chances of improvement that will depend on the sustainability of enhanced intra-regional trade and a supportive domestic policy stance. With the latter, the Survey pointed out there were risks as fiscal stimulus could not continue for too long as it could lead to an unsustainable increase in public debt.

Saying that as the GDP level was still several percentage point below the pre-1997 crisis level, there was little chance in the increase of new job opportunities that will put greater pressure on government budgets, including allocations for poverty reduction programmes.

Renowned researchers employed by the UN's Economic and Social Commission of Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) for the survey included names like Rehman Sobhan of Bangladesh, Jiahua Pan of China, Kazi Matin of the World Bank and Ashfaque Hassan Khan of Pakistan. Again prominent economist likes S M Naseem (Pakistan), Aigu Lu (China), Swapna Mukhopadhyay (India) and Leonid M Grigoriev (Russian Federation) served on the Experts Groups that finalised the report.

Commending the Survey, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan hoped the findings will help people to reach the "millennium goals." Saying that the Survey examined the links between environment and poverty as well as the policy options available in that context, its recommendations will help to ensure property rights for the poor, improve access to affordable, environmentally clear technologies and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.

The ESCAP recommended continued reforms in the corporate and financial sectors and their implementation with renewed vigour to enhance investor confidence.

It also noted that level of investment in the private sector were still below pre-1977 levels and said that without pickup in private investment, medium-term growth was likely to be jeopardized.

The Commission has also asked countries like Pakistan that were dependent upon official development assistance (ODA) needed to redouble their efforts to improve the utilization of external assistance by drawing up realistic projects for such funding and improving their aid management structures.

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(Press Clipping Service)

Newspaper: ***NATION***

Published From: ***ISLAMABAD*** *Date:* ***18 April 2003***

Economy grew in 2002 despite harsh conditions: UN

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD – The United Nations has hailed Pakistan's economic policies, saying despite the September 11 events and drought-like conditions in 2002 the economy showed resilience with marked increase in GDP.

The world body said this in its 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003,' launched here on Thursday by Director of Mehbubul Haq Human Development Centre, Sartaz Khan Qureshi at a news conference.

It said that despite harsh economic conditions Pakistan's GDP grew by 3.6 per cent as compared to the last fiscal year's 2.6 percent.

Pakistan showed some resilience against the severe drought that occurred in 2002. Apart from the GDP growth a higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid into Pakistan as well as improved performance of the services sector partly offset the poor outrun in the agriculture sector.

Pakistan has achieved significant improvement in its economy during the last financial year specially in agriculture, manufacturing, trade, exports and investment sectors, and decreasing inflation rate despite hard conditions and global situation.

The report said that agriculture was constrained by a severe drought, despite relatively good irrigation facilities and improved water management practices. A marginal decline of 0.5 per cent was recorded in the output of the major crops in 2002, compared with a contraction of almost 10 per cent in the previous year.

However, the strong performance of livestock sub-sector enabled the agriculture sector as a whole to expand by 1.4 percent. The manufacturing sector, which contributed 18 per cent to the GDP, suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of the events of September 11, 2001 and higher oil prices.

According to the report, the services sector remained robust in part owing to large increases in public administration and defence spending, it expanded by just over 5 per cent in 2002.

The inflation fell to 3.5 per cent in 2002 from 4.4 per cent in 2001 owing to the better availability of essential commodities as a result of improved production of food and non-food products and the ample stocks carried over from previous years.

About the trade performance, the report said Pakistan's export earnings, which fell marginally by 0.7 per cent to 9.1 billion dollars in fiscal 2002, were on the track to reach the target of 10 billion dollars until the weakening of international market in the aftermath of events of September 11.

The UN report said Pakistan achieved distinct improvement in its external debt profile, reflecting the country's adherence to the debt reduction and management strategy. The successful completion of IMF standby arrangement had paved the way for a medium-term IMF assistance programme and higher aid inflows from other international financial institutions.

It said that Pakistan had opened up a significant part of its economy to the private sector with various incentives offered to foreign investors, including external participation in industrial projects on a 100 per cent equity basis without any need to secure permission from the government.

The report said that despite the weakening of global economy in 2002, developing economies in the Asia—Pacific region performed surprisingly well, achieving growth of around 5 per cent during the year. "Prospects for 2003 are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative ripple effects, including those on energy prices. The region imports 40 per cent of its energy requirements," it said.

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(*Press Clipping Service*)

Newspaper: *DAILY TIMES*

Published From: *ISLAMABAD* *Date: 18 April 2003*

Pakistan's economy withstood drought, 9/11: UN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy showed signs of a resurgence late last year despite unprecedented drought and the fallout from the September 11 terror attacks, a United Nations report said Thursday.

"In Pakistan, a significant improvement in economic performance became visible in the final months of 2002," said a survey released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific.

It said higher export earnings and remittances from overseas Pakistani workers contributed to the country's improved economic performance.

The survey said that while the global economy weakened last year under the impact of the 2001 terror attacks in the United States, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific performed "surprisingly well" in 2002, achieving growth of about five percent, two percent higher than the previous year.

Pakistan showed some resilience against severe drought in 2002 and its gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.6 percent compared with 2.6 percent in 2001.

"GDP is targeted to grow by 4.5 percent in 2003 against 3.6 percent actual growth in 2002," the report said.

The report said Pakistan's manufacturing sector, which contributed 18 percent of GDP, suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of September 11 and higher oil prices.

"Pakistan's export earnings, which fell marginally by 0.7 percent to $9.1 billion in 2002 were on track to reach the target of $10 billion until the weakening of the international market in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001," it said.

Pakistan suffered from cancellations of US and European export orders, and higher freight charges, it said.

Last month the International Monetary Fund also predicted Pakistan was on track to meet its target of 4.5 percent economic growth in the year to June.

"The economic growth target of 4.5 percent is well within reach," an IMF assessment mission led by assistant director of the fund's Middle East department, Klaus Enders, said.

The mission said Pakistan's inflation was under control at less than four percent, the fiscal deficit had been contained, and all performance criteria to the end of 2002 had been met. —AFP

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(Press Clipping Service)

Newspaper: ***PAKISTAN OBSERVER***

Published From: ***ISLAMABAD*** ***Date: 18 April 2003***

UN sponsor survey marks significant improvement in Pakistan economy

ISLAMABAD—United Nation sponsored survey viewed significant improvement in Pakistan's economic performance during last three years and termed it stable due to transparent and predictable economic policies.

This was stated by Dr Sarfraz Khan Qureshi, Director, Innovative Development Strategies, while launching his survey report here Thursday at UN Information Centre.

The report titled "Asia-Pacific Economies, Resilience in Challenging Time", highlighted Pakistan's economy and improvement during the last three years.

He said that due to prudent and transparent policies confidence of private sector is restored to a large extend. He added fiscal deficit for the first time declined from 7.1 to 4.6 during 2002-3.

He said Pakistan showed some resilience against severe drought that occurred in 2002. GDP grew by 3.6 per cent as compared with 2.6 per cent in 2001. A higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid into Pakistan as well as improved performance of the services sector partly offset the poor turnout in the agriculture sector.

He said Pakistan achieved distinct improvement in its external debt profile, reflecting the country's adherence to debt reduction and management strategy.

The successful completion of IMF stand-by arrangement had paved the way for a medium-team IMF assistance programme and higher aid inflows from other international financial institutions. Moreover, Pakistan also obtained a stock re- profiling of bilateral debt from the Paris Club of creditors on generous terms.

Due to these policies domestic debt declines from 52 per cent to 43 per cent of GDP. He added that cost of financing domestic debt has also declined from 12.5 % in June 1999 to 7.5% in the end december 2002. Debt servicing as percent of total revenue has declined from 66 per cent to 44 percent in 2002-03.

He said inflation fell to 3.5 per cent in 2002 from 4.4 per cent in 2001, owing to the better availability of essential commodities as a result of improved production of food and non- food products and the ample stocks carried over from previous years.

Other stabilizing factors he said included an appreciation of the domestic currency, which lowered the costs of imported products, and concerted government efforts to monitor consumer prices and take remedial actions when needed; price stability is directly linked with the country's poverty reduction strategy.

He said that poverty and social spending has been increased from Rs. 161 billion (2002-3) to Rs.185 billion (2003-4). He added that investment too picked up from 15.3 per cent to 16.0 per cent. He added that growth also up from 3.3 % to 4.5 % during 2002-03.

Interest rates are falling. Weighted average lending rate down from 14 per cent in June 2001 to 9.36 per cent in february 2003.

He said the manufacturing sector, which contributed 18 per cent to GDP suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of the events of 11 September 2001 and higher oil prices. Value added grew by 7.6 per cent in 2001 but by only 4.4 per cent in 2002.

He added that industrial production up by 8.0 per cent during 2002-03. Stock market has remained buoyant during July- March 2002-03. KSE-100 index has increased from 1770 points to 2716 points-up by 53.4 per cent.—APP

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(Press Clipping Service)

Newspaper: *STATESMAN*

Published From: *ISLAMABAD* *Date:* *18 April 2003*

GDP up by 3.5 per cent, says UN report

Statesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's GDP grew by 3.6 per cent and the inflation came down during the last year, said the UN Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific launched here Thursday.

Briefing newsmen, director of the Mehbubul Haq Human Development Centre, Dr. Sarfraz Khan Qureshi said despite hard economic conditions Pakistan's GDP grew by 3.6 per cent as compared to the last year's 2.6 percent. Similarly, inflation fell to 3.5 per cent during the last year from 4.5 per cent in 2001 and higher flow of overseas remittances and foreign aid to the country helped improve economic performance.

The report says manufacturing sector, which contributes 18 per cent of the GDP, suffered due to September 11 events, yet this sector grew by 7.6 per cent. The agriculture sector received a setback due to continuous drought conditions but despite these conditions it has made one point four percent growth during the last year.

The report said Pakistan launched two successful major initiatives in poverty reduction, which include launching of micro-credit bank and economic-generating activities through enhanced public works activities.

The report also highlighted Prime Minister's Falahi Package announced in January this year to help the poor masses. Under this programme 2.5 million families will be provided with financial assistance each year to meet their essential needs and the federal government will spend five billion rupees on this programme during the current year.

The UN report also indicates that Pakistan achieved significant improvement in reducing debt and due to concrete measures in this regard the country was able to reprofiling of bilateral debit from the Paris Club.

Investment, especially foreign investment, has been significantly improved during the last year while exports and imports of the country have also been increased despite poor global conditions and country's foreign exchange reserves have crossed 10 billion dollars which are expected to touch 11 billion dollars by the end of this year and these are enough to meet one year's imports.

The report took notice of the "positive major shift" in the privatization and despite selling the units now the shares of the big companies like PSO and others will be floated through Stock Exchange.

Due to strict measures, the tax collection in the country has been significantly improved and 15 per cent increase in this regard has been noted.

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE, ISLAMABAD
(Press Clipping Service)

Newspaper: *THE NEWS*

Published From: *ISLAMABAD* *Date: 18 April 2003*

Pak economy shows signs of resurgence: UN survey

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy showed signs of a resurgence late last year despite unprecedented drought and the fallout from the September 11 terror attacks, a United Nations report said Thursday.

Dr Sarfraz Khan Qureshi, director Innovative Development Strategies launched the report at UN Information Centre here. The report titled "Asia-Pacific Economies, Resilience in Challenging Time", highlighted Pakistan's economy and improvement during the last three years.

"In Pakistan, a significant improvement in economic performance became visible in the final months of 2002," said a survey released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific.

It said higher export earnings and remittances from overseas Pakistani workers contributed to the country's improved economic performance.

The survey said that while the global economy weakened last year under the impact of the 2001 terror attacks in the United States, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific performed "surprisingly well" in 2002, achieving growth of about five percent, two percent higher than the previous year.

Pakistan showed some resilience against severe drought in 2002 and its gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.6 percent compared with 2.6 percent in 2001.

"GDP is targeted to grow by 4.5 percent in 2003 against 3.6 percent actual growth in 2002," the report said.

Foreign exchange reserve have crossed $ 10 billion and likely to reach $ 11 billion by the end of 2002-03. He said t. Pakistan net debt and liabilities stood at $ 37 billion in the end-June 2000 and expected to decline to $ 26 billion in three years.

Interest rates are falling. Weighted average lending rate down from 14 percent in June 2001 to 9.36 percent in February 2003. Industrial production was up by 8.0 percent during 2002-03. Stock market has remained buoyant during July-March 2002-03. KSE-100 index has increased from 1770 points to 2716 points -- up by 53.4 percent.

He said Pakistan has been the most profitable market in the world. Both exports and imports have picked up despite uncertain global environment. He added that exports are up by 20 percent and imports by 23 percent during July-March 2002-03.

Dr Sarfraz said that $ 10,340 million worth exports were recorded which will cross $ 11 billion at the end of this fiscal year.

He added that imports are up by 23 percent which is a sign of economic revival and good for revenue. Majority imports items were machinery.

About remittances, the report said it stood at $ 2.9 billion and are up by 105 percent during 2002-03. He added that remittances are likely to touched at all time high of $ 4.3 billion.

About foreign investment Dr Sarfraz said improved economic indicators are encouraging foreign investment in the country. It picked up as against $ 247 million foreign investment stood at $ 640 million in the first eight months of the current fiscal year. He said it is expected to touch $ 1.0 billion this year.

He said earnings on primary commodity exports (e.g, rice, raw cotton, fish and fruits) registered the largest contraction at almost 16 percent.

About current account, he said it turned surplus as opposed to a deficit of 5.0 percent GDP. During 2002-03 current account surplus reached $ 2.7 billion. The report said Pakistan's manufacturing sector, which contributed 18 percent of GDP, suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of September 11 and higher oil prices.

Dr Sarfraz said due to prudent and transparent policies confidence of private sector has been restored to a large extent. He said fiscal deficit for the first time declined from 7.1 to 4.6 percent during 2002-3.

The survey said Pakistan achieved distinct improvement in its external debt profile, reflecting the country's adherence to debt reduction and management strategy. The successful completion of IMF standby arrangement had paved the way for a medium-term IMF assistance programme and higher aid inflows from other international financial institutions. — APP/AFP

Gulf Daily News The voice of Bahrain

Vol XXVI NO. 29 Friday 18 April 2003 BUSINESS

Pakistan growth up despite drought and terror fallout

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"GDP is targeted to grow by 4.5pc in 2003 against 3.6pc actual growth in 2002," the report said. The report said Pakistan's manufacturing sector, which contributed 18pc of GDP,



suffered from weak global demand relating to the ripple effects of September 11 and higher oil prices.

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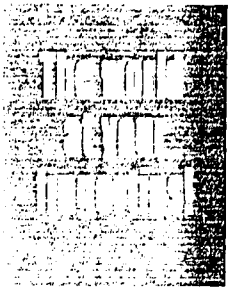
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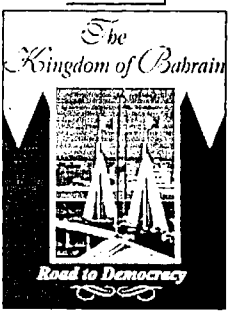
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Dhaka forecasts GDP growth despite war, SARS

By Saleem Samad

DHAKA: Bangladesh economy is expected to see a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 5.2 percent this fiscal, due to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, United Nations' economic and social arm forecast on Thursday.

The growth prediction was made despite global uncertainties over Iraq war and a viral outbreak in Asia. The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in its annual regional survey for 2003 attributed the projection also to steady agriculture and stronger export demand. Independent think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Directive Debapriya Bhattacharya said the growth performance of Bangladesh in 2003 would largely hinge on three prime factors fallout of Iraq war, impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and performance of United States, European Union and Japan economies.

The survey, titled 'Asia and Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times' released on Thursday all over the world, has also revised growth forecast for developing countries in the region to 5.0 per cent from 5.4 per cent due to the impact of SARS and the Iraq war. These positive developments are sure to contribute to the steady growth of Bangladesh economy, he said.

Annual inflation in Bangladesh had shown a sharp downward trend in recent years, but picked up to 2.4 percent in 2002. The reversal of the downward trend in inflation in 2002 was partly a reflection of fiscal and monetary stringency, the survey noted.

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Summary

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---PAKISTAN NEWS---

---ASIA AND THE PACIFIC---

IRAQ, SARS COULD UN FORECAST OF ASIA-PACIFIC REGION'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

While a new United Nations report forecasts continued growth in the Asia-Pacific economies, that positive trend could be jeopardized by new domestic and global challenges.

According to Ambassador Murari Raj Sharma of Nepal, who launched the report at UN Headquarters in New York, the survey, especially forecasts for 2003, was based on data for the first three quarters of 2002. By early March of this year, neither the war in Iraq nor the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had occurred.

"The impact of these events on the forecast made in the survey is still a subject of considerable debate and uncertainty," he told a press briefing on the launch of the "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003," which was compiled by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The report highlights the performance of regional economies in the past year, provides a brief trend analysis and some projections for 2003.

The report states that despite the weakening of the global economy, the region performed surprisingly well in 2002 - 2 per cent higher than the previous year - largely due to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and low interest rates.

While the survey had projected the 5 per cent growth to continue prior to the new domestic and global developments, it is now unclear how the economy will fare this year as it is tied to the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its ripple effects, particularly on energy prices. Asia-Pacific imports 40 per cent of its energy.

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Compounding matters further is the recent outbreak of SARS. In addition to the health challenges it is posing in the region, the illness is undermining the tourism and travel industry. Ambassador Sharma said there were fears that a prolonged outbreak could extend the damage beyond those two industries.
How well Asia-Pacific withstands these stormy conditions also hinges heavily on how the economies of developed countries perform, especially the United States, Japan and the European Union, which together import half of the regions export products, Ambassador Sharma said. He also stressed that there was "no consensus on how the regional economy might be affected."

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2.11 Philippines

Associated Press

04/23/2003 12:38:59

Asia-Pacific developing economies beset by risks: UN report

BC-UN-REPORT, sked,0507

Asia-Pacific developing economies beset by risks: UN report, XINHUA
xfdws UN-REPORT sked Emerging Markets Datafile
April 23, 2003
XINHUA
CHINA
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Asia-Pacific developing economies beset by risks: UN report, XINHUA

ASIA WorldSources, Inc. 322 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE 2ND FLOOI

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MANILA, April 23 (Xinhua)--The growth of developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region may slow down in 2003 due to an array of uncertainties, said an annual report of a United Nations agency released here Wednesday.

The prospects for nearly 60 developing economies in the region are conditioned by the Iraq war and its aftermath, said the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**).

The outlook is also marred by possible faltering growth in the global

economic powers of the United States, Japan and the European Union, as well as the spread of the killer disease called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Ofelia Templo said while presenting the report.

Templo is an assistant professor of the Ateneo de Manila University, with which **ESCAP** co-launched its flagship publication.

ESCAP had forecast that the average gross domestic product (GDP) of the developing economies in the region would grow by 5.4 percent in 2003, but it said Wednesday that latest available estimates slashed the forecast to 5 percent.

Despite the weakening of the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the region achieved an average GDP growth of 5.1 percent in the year, higher than the 3.2 percent in the previous year, the report said, attributing the surprisingly good performance much to surging intraregional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing.

"Given the absence of any evidence of a strong pickup in the global economy, at least in the first half of 2003, sustaining growth in the region will depend primarily upon growth-stimulating domestic policies," the report said.

It warned, however, that the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long with levels of public debt exceeding 50 percent of GDP in most economies in the region.

In the case of monetary policy also, it said, as a result of falling inflation, interest rates have reached quite low levels so the scope for further reduction is limited in most countries.

It urged governments to put both fiscal and monetary policies within a medium-term framework in which ``short-term flexibility can be combined with medium-or longer-term discipline."

It also called on countries to continue the reform of corporate and financial sectors with renewed vigor to enhance investor confidence, to maintain the momentum of trade liberalization, and to provide an appropriate macroeconomic environment, realistic exchange rates and improvements in the physical infrastructure to enable firms to compete.

Economic growth targets up for review

• Impact of SARS feared

• RP should market 'virus-free' status

By Eileen A. Mencias
and Dennis C. Serfino

Government will have to review its economic growth targets this year to take into account in the outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and its impact on the domestic economy.

This, as economists in the academe believe it is too early to factor the dreaded disease into their projections.

"We do have to evaluate how much SARS will affect the economy," Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said. "Exports growth last year came mainly from exports to the region. We have to assess whether it will affect our growth expectations enough."

Government has set a 4.2 to 5.2 percent growth target in its gross domestic product this year. The forecast was done before the outbreak of SARS, a pneumonia-like disease that has resulted in the deaths of 99 people in Hong Kong, a hotbed of the disease.

Economists have downscaled their forecasts for this year on the economic growth of Hong Kong and Singapore, the areas in the region hardest hit by SARS.

The Philippines' GDP expanded by 4.6 percent last year, the strongest growth since the 1997 crisis. Much of the growth was supported by exports to the region. Gross national product, or GDP plus remittances from overseas, expanded by 5.2 percent as more Filipinos found work abroad.

Silver lining

Nonetheless, Ateneo economists see business opportunities for the Philippines arising from growing investor aversion to Hong Kong and Singapore, now both struggling to contain the spread of the SARS virus.

"SARS has so much potential of producing downside risks, of pulling down growth. But it is a new development and we still don't have enough data. We are closely watching developments but as of now, it does not play in our numbers yet," said Ofelia Templo, assistant professor at Ateneo de Manila University's economics department.

Acerd's growth projection for the economy in 2003 is unchanged at 3.7 to 4.2 percent. The official government forecast is between 4.2 and 5.2 percent.

Former socioeconomic planning secretary Cielito Habito, director of the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development (Acerd), said the Philippines should take advantage of its official status as a SARS-free country by grabbing business now quickly flying out of Hong Kong and Singapore.

"We've been saying before that the Philippines can be the financial center of Asia. That just might become a reality now. I was just in Tokyo and I saw flights to Hong Kong being cancelled one by one and diverted to Manila. Businessmen don't want to go there anymore," he said.

He added, "There's an opportunity there for us somewhere although it makes us look mercenary. But that's how it works. In a sense SARS is good for us. There's a silver lining in the clouds."

Templo warned, however, that any impact of a potential SARS outbreak depends on how successful authorities are in containing the disease. She also noted that there are significant numbers of overseas Filipino workers in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Government said dampened demand from Singapore and Hong Kong may not be that big a blow in the Philippine economy because the contribution of net exports to GDP is now less than 10 percent.

"The nature of the economy is no longer as dependent on exports or the external environment," Camacho said. Even when exports shrunk by 16 percent in 2001, he said the economy still expanded.

The country's economic growth targets and policies are mapped out by the interagency Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC), chaired by the budget department.

The DBCC forecasts GDP growth at 4.2 to 5.2 percent this year while GNP growth is set at 4.5 to 5.5 percent.

No cause for concern

Templo said, however, government could be forced to expand its deficit once a SARS outbreak in the Philippines forces it to allocate more resources for health facilities and medicines.

But Habito said government's overshooting of its deficit ceiling for the first quarter is no reason for concern.

"I'm confident that government's fiscal performance is on track, in fact, on a much better track than last year, maybe because revenue performance has clearly improved," said Cielito Habito, now director of the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development.

He said government's deficit program of P202 billion for 2003 is "more realistic" than that of 2002 when the cap was initially set at P130 billion but the gap hit P213 billion by year-end.

"At the very least, we've seen growth in revenue collections over last year's numbers. Last year was an obvious decline from the previous year," Habito added.

Overspending brought government's budget deficit to P58.879 billion in the first quarter, 6.7 percent more than the P55.176 billion limit it had set for itself for the period.

Despite the El Nino phenomenon, government expects farm output to grow by 3 to 4 percent as it implements measures to mitigate the impact of the drought and raise farm yields.

Industry is forecast to grow by 3.4 to 4.4 percent this year, boosted by mining, housing and small and medium enterprises.

Services, meanwhile, is expected to grow by 5.2 to 6.2 percent, led by telecommunication, trade and private services. Policies to liberalize air transportation, and measures to boost housing should further keep services healthy.

Manila Standard, April 24, 2003

Business world
April 24, 2003

ODA-dependent nations

Asia-Pacific countries reliant on foreign assistance should improve utilization of official development assistance (ODA) funds as well as draw up projects that could be implemented, a new report released by a United Nations agency said. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2003 survey suggested that challenges involving corporate reforms, trade liberalization, globalization and security issues be addressed to promote economic growth. "Countries dependent upon ODA need to redouble their efforts to improve the utilization of external assistance by drawing up realistic projects for such funding and improving their aid management skills," the report said.

Business Star April 25, 20

Gov't urged to set aside funds to contain SARS

By TED P. TORRES

The National Government must immediately allocate sufficient resources to contain the spread of the dreaded severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), former officials of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.

The government, however, must ensure that this will not impact on the country's ballooning budget deficit, which has been scaring away investors, the NEDA officials said.

Ateneo de Manila University assistant professor and former NEDA assistant director Ofelio M. Templo said SARS is a real threat to the economy in general, and the budget deficit in particular.

"The Philippines must immediately allocate resources to effectively increase security at the points of entry such as airports and seaports," Templo said during the formal launching of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

But budgetary officials must avoid digging into the coffers at the expense of other previously allocated funds for other development projects like environment, health and education, Templo said. An uncontrolled budget deficit would again reinforce fears of lower investment prospects for the country, he added.

Meanwhile, former NEDA Director General Cielito F. Habito advised the government agencies as well as private firms to look at areas of opportunity arising from the SARS scare. Habito is a director of the prestigious Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development while Templo is a member.

Several business meetings for global and regional corporate players have been postponed or reset due to the disease spread, and not too few have relocated meetings in the Philippines and Thailand. A number in fact have been contented with tele-conferencing to avoid having to physically be in these areas.

"The Philippines had been dreaming of being a regional

Turn to C-3

Gov't urged... From C-1

business center, and we may have an opportunity with the SARS outbreak," Habito told reporters in the same event.

The same is true with the tourism industry, which should take advantage of the rerouting of foreign tourists from the two traditional destinations.

Habito and Templo both pointed out that it was too early to gauge the real impact of the SARS nightmare as there had not been clinical proof of the spread.

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UN sees RP as laggard in Southeast Asia

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ESCAP study: Port charges in Philippines lowest in Asia-Pacific

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ort rates lowest in RP — UN study

Leo C Manuel

...ates in the Philippines is ...ed on mutual exchange ...rding to a study made ...ted Nations.

...on the comparative ...y the United Nations ...and Social Commission ...nd the Pacific (Escap) ...iffs in the region, total ...s for a 3,000 20-foot ...t unit (TEU) container ...lowest in Manila based ...ahaul rates (by) ...Escap study involved 12 ports in the world including ...Kong, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

...ng exchange rates to convert ...the local currency values of port ...charges in the 12 selected ports in ...these countries, Escap found out ...that Manila's total port charges for ...3,000 TEU container ships are ...about one-sixth of the charges in ...Japan's Port of Yokohama, one-...fourth of the cost in Hong Kong, ...and nearly a third of the charges in ...Sri Lanka.

"Compared to those in Manila, port charges are higher by 33 percent in Indonesia, 60 percent in Malaysia, 80 percent in Vietnam, and 90 percent in India and Pakistan," Escap said in its evaluation.

It also took note in its study the increasing requirement for ports to be financially viable and sustainable.

The UN body, however, pointed out the red tape in almost all countries which has hampered the process of port tariff adjustments.

"In most countries including the Philippines, adjustments of port tariffs originally pass through a lengthy process requiring government approval, public hearings by...

...disagreement by port operators and...

...port modernization, but also can be problematic for port users," the study said.

Notwithstanding the UN study, however, shipping analysts have commented that the country's port industry is not that competitive when compared to other industries in the world.

They contended that since wharfage charges, handling and other ...

...neighboring Asian countries.

"The Philippine government needs to...

...at par with most countries in the region. However, it cannot raise enough resources from either [illegible] or port tariff collections," [illegible] said.

Appeals for port tariff increases have not also met stiff opposition from shipping companies, exporters and importers.

Shipping lines are also calling for a 10-percent rollback in storage/wharfage and arrastre charges in Philippine ports.

2.12 Republic of Korea

경제 > 연합뉴스 2003년 4월16일 오후 5:13

광고



아태경제사회이사회, 성장률 5.3% 전망

부실기업 퇴출, 보험업 구조조정해야 (서울=연합뉴스) 김종현기자= 유엔 아시아태평양경제사회이사회(ESCAP)는 올 해한국 경제성장률이 5.3%에 달할 것으로 전망했다.

아시아태평양경제사회이사회(이하 '아태경제사회이사회')는 16일 '2003년 경제사회조사보고서'에서 "한국경제는 미국과 일본 경제의 점진적인 회복에 힘입은 수출증가에도 불구하고 남북관계와 세계경제 불확실성 증대, 수요위축으로 5.3%의 성장을 보일 것으로 예상된다"고 밝혔다.

지난해 안정적인 통화정책과 경쟁촉진을 위한 규제완화에 힘입어 2.7%로 안정됐던 소비자물가상승률은 3.3% 수준으로 높아질 것으로 내다봤다.

아태경제사회이사회는 국내 수요 둔화에도 불구하고 원유와 원자재 가격상승,단위노동비용 상승 및 공공요금 인상으로 물가 상승률이 높아질 것이라고 설명했다.

경상수지는 지난해 약 70억달러(GDP의 1.5%)의 흑자를 낸 것으로 추정되나 올해는 상품수지 악화로 흑자폭이 축소될 것으로 전망했다.

아태경제사회이사회는 "그동안 추진돼온 기업,금융구조조정 노력이 경제의 신축성과 적응능력을 크게 제고시켰음에도 불구하고 여전히 기업의 지배구조, 투명성및책임성 면에서 개선의 여지가 있다"고 지적했다.

또 "아직 남아있는 생존 불가능 기업의 퇴출과 생존가능한 기업의 워크아웃을 통해 건강하고 수익성 있는 기업을 창출해야 할 것"이라고 촉구했다.

아울러 "정부 소유 은행의 민영화 등 금융부문의 구조조정도 당면한 중요 과제이며 비은행부문 특히 보험산업의 구조조정이 경쟁력 강화를 위해 필요하다"고 밝혔다.

(끝)<저 작 권 자(c)연 합 뉴 스. 무 단 전 재-재 배 포 금 지.>

Yonhap News

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경제 > 머니투데이 2003년 4월16일 오후 5:10

[뉴스-금융] UN ESCAP "한국 올 성장 5.3%전망"

[머니투데이] UN ESCAP(아시아태평양 경제사회이사회)는 한국경제가 올해 5.3%의 성장을 보일 것으로 전망했다.

UN ESCAP은 16일 아시아태평양 지역의 경제동향과 전망 등을 담은 2003년 경제사회조사보고서를 통해 한국경제는 2003년중 미국경제와 일본경제의 점진적인 회복에 힘입은 수출증가세의 견조한 지속에도 불구하고 남북관계와 세계경제를 둘러싼 불확실성의 증대와 국내수요의 위축으로 5.3%의 성장을 보일 것이라고 밝혔다.

또 지난해 2.7%로 안정됐던 소비자물가상승률은 올해 국내수요의 둔화에도 불구하고 원유와 원자재 가격상승, 단위노동비용 상승 및 공공요금 상승으로 3.3% 수준으로 높아질 것으로 전망했다.

또한 지난해 약 70억달러의 흑자를 기록한 경상수지는 올해 상품수지의 감소로 흑자폭이 더욱 축소될 것으로 예상했다.

UN ESCAP은 그동안 추진된 기업 및 금융구조조정 노력이 경제의 신속성과 기업의 적응능력을 크게 제고시켰음에도 불구하고 여전히 기업의 지배구조, 투명성 및 책임성 면에서 개선의 여지가 남아있다고 지적했다.

UN ESCAP은 이어 남아있는 생존불가능 기업의 퇴출과 어려움에 직면해 있지만 생존가능한 기업의 워크아웃 등을 통해 건강하고 수익성 있는 기업부문의 창출을 도모해야 할 것이라고 말했다.

또한 정부소유 은행의 민영화 등 금융부문의 구조조정도 당면하고 있는 중요한 과제라며 비은행부문 특히 보험산업의 구조조정이 경쟁력강화를 위해 필요하다고 강조했다.

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광고



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UN ESCAP, 한국 올 성장률 5.3% 예상..`사스'영향 거의 없어 (종합)

(서울=연합인포맥스) 박기수기자= UN ESCAP(아시아태평양 경제사회이사회)는 올해 한국경제는 지난해보다 위축되기는 하겠지만 전반적으로 양호한 수출 등 영향으로 5.3%의 성장을 보인 것으로 전망했다.

아울러 아시아 경제를 위축시키고 있는 사스(SARS.중증급성호흡기증후군)는 한국경제에는 별다른 영향을 미치지 않을 것으로 예상했다.

ESCAP의 이같은 성장률 전망은 이라크전에 따른 세계경기 위축과 지난달 한국은행의 하향조정 성장률(4.1%)을 감안한 것으로, 다른 예측기관들에 비해 매우 낙관적인 것이다.

16일 한은 관계자는 "지난주 한은이 성장률 전망치를 4.1%로 그게 하향조정한 것을 ESCAP쪽에 알고 있으며, 특히 사스 문제에 대해서는 우리나라가 거의 영향을 받지 않을 것으로 예상하고 있는 점이 주목할 만하다"며 "생각보다 우리 경제를 긍정적으로 보고 있는 것 같다"고 말했다.

경제사회이사회는 또 올해 소비자물가상승률이 원유와 원자재 가격상승, 난위너 등비용 및 공공요금 상승으로 3.3%에 이를 것으로 예상하고, 경상수지는 상품수지 흑자폭이 축소될 것이라며 흑자 규모는 언급하지 않았다.

ESCAP는 아울러 기업.금융 구조조정 노력이 경제의 신뢰성과 기업 경영능력을 크게 제고시켰지만 여전히 기업의 지배구조, 투명성, 책임성 등에서 개선의 여지가 남아있다고 지적하고, 경쟁력 강화를 위해 정부소유 은행의 민영화와 서비스업 등에서 구조조정이 필요하다고 강조했다.

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(끝)

2.13 Singapore

Business Times - 18 Apr 2003

UN agency scrambles to pare region's GDP figures

Escap says Sars, if unchecked, and China slowdown would be major blow for Asia-Pac

By YANG RAZALI KASSIM

(SINGAPORE) Sars is forcing even the United Nations to scramble when it comes to estimating 2003 economic growth for Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region.

Escap, the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, released its latest economic and social survey yesterday based on studies wrapped up in February.

But the impact of Sars has been such that all the estimates had to be revised two days ago - on the eve of the study's release. Escap has pared its growth estimate for Singapore from 4.2 per cent to 3 per cent after the outbreak of Sars and the US-led war on Iraq. This figure is lower than Malaysia's 4.5 per cent, Thailand's 4.2 per cent, the Philippines 4 per cent and even Indonesia's 3.4 per cent.

And it may be trimmed further to 1.5 to 2.5 per cent should the Sars outbreak not be controlled by mid-year.

'If the spread of the disease is contained by June 2003, there exists a significant bounce-back in the third and fourth quarters for the regional economies,' said Escap's spokesman for Singapore, Leon Khor, of the International Trade Institute of Singapore (ITIS). 'If there is no containment by June, the downturn might spread beyond the second and third quarters,' he told BT.

Hazel Yuen, of ITIS, which is a subsidiary of TDB Holdings, said: 'We intend to have a lower estimate of between 1.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent for Singapore.'

The Escap estimate is, however, higher than that from the Singapore government, which said yesterday that growth may slip to 0.5 to 2.5 per cent, lower than the 2 to 5 per cent previously announced.

Mr Khor said Singapore, Thailand and Hongkong are more directly affected by Sars than by the fallout from the war in Iraq because of their larger tourism sectors. The economic impact of Sars on China, however, is considered marginal at this stage.

If the health crisis goes beyond June, the impact may spread beyond the travel and tourism sectors, hitting the production sectors as well, and resulting in job losses on these fronts, he warned.

Another factor that may hit Singapore further is China's slowdown.

Intra-regional trade is losing its buoyancy this year. This is because China, as the main engine of growth, is losing steam. This in turn will hit Singapore further, aggravating the effects of Sars.

Regionally, if Sars gets out of hand and affects confidence, there will be knock-on effects

in the manufacturing sector. Eventually, further downward revisions of growth would have to be made across the region.

Apart from the impact of Sars and the aftermath of war in Iraq, another factor affecting economic prospects for 2003 is the slower growth in the three major economies of the world.

Escap has revised down projections for the US from 2.5 to 2.2 per cent, 0.9 to 0.6 per cent for Japan and 2.3 per cent to 1.8 per cent for the EU. It said sustaining growth in the region will depend on domestic policies given the absence of any evidence of a strong pick-up in the global economy - at least in the first half of 2003. Also, the world's financial markets - equities, bonds and foreign exchange - are likely to be buffeted by strong cross winds of low and fragile investor confidence.

This will be manifested in greater risk-aversion and volatility in asset prices and trading volumes. The result could be greater instability in exchange rates, revolving around a weaker US dollar and investment funds fleeing into safe havens such as precious metals, Escap said.

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Other threats to Asian growth beyond Sars

By Hugh Chow

SARS is not the only threat to economic growth in Asia this year - the fallout from the Iraq war and problems facing larger economies elsewhere will also pose significant risks to the region, says the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) in its latest annual survey which tracks economic and social issues.

Details were disclosed at a briefing by the International Trade Institute of Singapore (Itis) that helped to launch the report here. Itis is a training and business consultancy with links to International Enterprise Singapore.

The report - which surveyed 57 countries excluding Japan, Australia and New Zealand - outlined possible threats to regional growth.

These include the war in Iraq. Escap, a United Nations agency, warned of possible political instability in the volatile but oil-rich Middle East following military action.

Global economic recovery could be hampered by rising oil prices if a main source of the world's supply of crude oil is threatened.

This could aggravate the already shaky economic growth in the United States, Japan and the European Union, described by Escap as 'faltering'. The three markets not only buy most of the goods produced in Asia but are also a key source of investment.

The Escap report was completed before Sars made its full impact felt worldwide.

But Itis senior vice-president Leon Khor said it is still too early to gauge the virus' effect on the region's economies. 'Sars has still yet to peak and its main impact may extend beyond the second quarter.'

In an amendment to the original report, Escap downgraded the forecast for Singapore's economic growth to 3 per cent this year, from 4.2 per cent, to account for the Sars impact. The regional growth forecast was trimmed to 5 per cent from 5.4 per cent.

2.14 Sri Lanka

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Wednesday, 16 April 2003

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News in brief

ESCAP Survey 2003

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is now ready for launch worldwide including Sri Lanka, states the United Nations Information Centre in a Press release.

ESCAP Survey 2003 is being launched at a time when developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region performing surprisingly well having achieved growth of around 5 per cent during 2002 despite the weakening of the global economy. This has raised hopes that the region would experience a modest uplift in economic growth in 2002.

The launch of the ESCAP Survey 2003 in Sri Lanka will take place at a media briefing to be held at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday April 23 at the Conference Room in the UN Compound at 202/204 Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7. Dr Ms. Dushni Weerakoon, an Economist attached to the Institute of Policy Studies will introduce the Survey.

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Daily Mirror
24 Apr. 03

ESCAP upbeat on Lankan economy

Local economist cautions country still vulnerable to external shocks

By Yohan Perera

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) is upbeat on the prospects of Sri Lanka's socio-economic growth in 2003 as well as in the medium term on the strength of the peace process and other measures.

ESCAP's Economic Survey 2003 report released in Colombo yesterday has indicated that Sri Lanka is posting a recovery in economic and social development with an economic growth rate of 5.3% this year and reduced inflation rate of 6.7% in 2003.

While forecasting that the country's economy would grow further by 6.3% in 2005, the ESCAP report has suggested that concrete progress in the resolution of the North/East conflict will boost trade, investment and economic growth in the country.

On a regional level the ESCAP report also deals with the military action in Iraq stating that it will have a negative impact on global recovery while suggesting that higher energy prices might benefit the energy producing economies. It further says that conflicts in the Middle Eastern region have sharply restricted investment activity and tourism in an around the countries involved.

According to the report sustaining growth in the ESCAP region which has been 5% will also depend primarily on stimulating domestic demand.

Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Economist Dr. Dushni Weerakoon who addressed the launch of the report at the UNDP Office pointed out that the recovery had been due to the development in the tourist industry brought on by 17% increase of tourist arrival, market liberalization that has been gathering momentum in 2002 and high level of value added service. Though ESCAP has painted a positive picture Dr. Weerakoon cautioned that the sluggish economies in US, Europe as well as the SARS epidemic might have a negative impact on Sri Lanka's economy.



Institute of Policy Studies Economist Dr. Dushni Weerakoon (right) at the media briefing on the launch of UN's ESCAP Survey 2003 in Colombo yesterday. UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Christine Spoerel is also present. Pic by Daminda Harsha Perera.

While stating that the massive donor support would give a kick start to the economy she called for better management of it and proportionate distribution. " Sri Lanka should improve the aid utilization rate" she added.

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Ms. Christine Spoerel said that the ESCAP report is a valuable tool as it provides an overview of the macro economic situation in the ESCAP region. She further said that the report titled "Asia Pacific Economies: Resilience in Challenging Times" also addresses various issues pertinent to developing countries.

The Island, 24.04.03



Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Christine Sporel (left), and Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, an Economist attached to the Institute of Policy Studies, launching the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003. (Pic. by D. Banduwardena)

'Success of peace process will have tremendous impact on country's economy'

by Dilanthi Jayamanne

The success of the peace process will have a tremendous impact on the country's economy with the heavy expenditure on defence which contributed to the government's budget deficit in the 1990's could be reduced and sustained at a lower level, the United Nations Survey on Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2003 (ESCAP - 2003) claimed. Launching the survey yesterday at the UN office Dr. Dushni Weerakoon an Economist attached to the Institute of Policy Studies said the "cessation of hostilities would also lead to a rising influx in tourism, which is a major source of foreign exchange to the country."

Sri Lanka already has tourist facilities of an international standard.

The peace process has assisted in raising tourist arrivals by 17% in 2002, she said. "A further increase of 20% would be possible in 2003 through aggressive marketing."

Dr. Weerakoon referring to the survey pointed out that real progress in the peace process had triggered a massive overflow of aid for reconstruction, particularly in the war-torn North and East areas. Citing an example she pointed out that in November 2002 the World Bank had released US$ 31 million to Sri Lanka for this purpose. "This financial assistance was primarily to restore primary health care, repair urban water schemes, provide returning families with opportunities for income generation, employment, and build the capacity to undertake a multi-donor-funded reconstruction program in the future," she claimed.

More lending had been expected from the World Bank and other bilateral donors and other international organisations with the peace talks in progression, Dr. Ms Weerakoon said. In January 2003 the World Bank became the custodian of the funds raised through the international forums. "The funds would be administered by the Subcommittee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs."

The peace talks between the government and the LTTE produced a satisfactory outcome, ESCAP pointed out. The first round of talks in September 2002 centred around the establishment of regional autonomy, the second round of talks which was held in October brought the peace process forward with the setting up of three joint committees of the government and the LTTE to deal with economic, political and military affairs. The third round of talks which was held in December last year also assisted both parties in making another break through by the agreement to study a federal structure of government which could be the basis for a final political solution to the conflict.

The fourth round of talks addressed the details of resettlement and reconstruction in North and East areas.

"Although a major breakthrough in the key area of disarmament was not expected, the fact that the talks have reached this stage can be considered a significant step towards achieving peace and thereby enhancing a greater possibility for economic activities.

The survey pointed out that the international community too had a major role to play in sustaining the impetus of the peace process and providing reconstruction and resettlement.

DAILY DIVAINA - 25.04.2003



ආසියා පැසිෆික් කලාපීය ආර්ථික හා සමාජීය ආර්ථික කොමිසම විසින්පවු ප්‍රකාශයට පත්කරන ආසියා හා පැසිෆික් කලාපීය ආර්ථික හා සමාජ සමීක්ෂණ වාර්තාව (2003) එළි දැක්වීම 23 වැනිදා කොළඹ පිහිටි එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ කොරතුරු මධ්‍යස්ථානයේදී සිදු කෙරිණි. රූපවාහිනියෙන් දැක්වෙන්නේ ප්‍රතිපත්ති අධ්‍යයන ආයතනයේ කාර්යාධිපති ආචාර්ය දුෂ්නි වීරකෝන් මහත්මිය මෙම සමාජ සමීක්ෂණ වාර්තාව පිළිබඳ විග්‍රහ කළ අයුරුයි.

එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ සංවර්ධන වැඩපටහනේ නියෝජ්‍ය නේවාසික කළමනාකාරිණී ක්‍රිස්ටින් ස්කෝල් මහත්මියද පෙනෙන් සිටී.

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ගාමිණී නුවන් ගනේවත්ත

කාම ක්‍රියාදාමය හේතුවෙන් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සංචාරක පැමිණීම් විශාල වශයෙන් වර්ධනය වී ඇති අතර 2003 වර්ෂයේ සංචාරක පැමිණීම් ප්‍රමාණය පියවට 20 ත් වැනි ඉහළ ප්‍රතිශතයකින් වර්ධනය වනු ඇතැයි එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ ආර්ථික කොමිසම (ආසියා පැසිෆික්) 2003 වර්ෂය වෙනුවෙන් නිකුත් කළ ආසියා පැසිෆික් කලාපීය ආර්ථික හා සමීක්ෂණ වාර්තාවේ සඳහන් වන්නේ යැයි ප්‍රතිපත්ති අධ්‍යයන ආයතනයේ ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ ආචාර්ය දුෂ්නි වීරකෝන් මහත්මිය ප්‍රකාශ කළාය.

ඇය මෙම අදහස් ප්‍රකාශ කළේ 23 වැනිදා කොළඹ බෞද්ධාලෝක මාවතේ පිහිටි එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ තොරතුරු මධ්‍යස්ථානයේ දී පැවැති ප්‍රවෘත්ති සාකච්ඡාවක් අමතමිනි. එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ සංවිධානය වාර්ෂිකව ප්‍රකාශයට පත් කරන ආසියා පැසිෆික් කලාපීය ආර්ථික හා සමාජ සමීක්ෂණ වාර්තාව මෙවැනි නිල වශයෙන් එළි දක්වන ලදී. තවදුරටත් අදහස් දැක්වූ ආචාර්ය දුෂ්නි වීරකෝන් මහත්මිය මෙලෙස ප්‍රකාශ කළාය.

කාම ක්‍රියාදාමය නිසා උ/නැ ප්‍රදේශවල විශාල ආර්ථික පුනර්ජීවනයක් ඇති වී තිබෙනවා. මේ දක්වා ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ සටන් විරාමය නිසා ප්‍රාදේශීය වෙනුවෙන් වැඩකළ විශාල මුදලක් අවු වී තිබෙනවා. සංචාරක පැමිණීම් 2002 වර්ෂයේදී පියවට 17 සිට 2003 වර්ෂයේදී 20 දක්වා තවදුරටත් වර්ධනය වනු ඇතැයි මෙම ආර්ථික හා සමාජ සමීක්ෂණ වාර්තාවේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාව ගැන සඳහන් කර ඇතැයි ද ඇය ප්‍රකාශ කළාය.

ඇමෙරිකා ඉරාක ප්‍රශ්නය කෙටිකලකින් අවසන් වීම ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට වාසිදායක ලෙස වලපාන්න පුළුවන්. ඉදිරියේදී ඉරාක තෙල් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ නිෂ්පාදනය ඉහළ නියොකින්. එය තෙල් මිල ඉහළ යාමෙන් ඒකාබද්ධ වෙනුවෙන්න අවුරුදු තෙල් ආනයන පිරිවැය අඩුවීමත් එමි ප්‍රතිලාභ ශ්‍රී ලංකා ආර්ථිකයට දැනෙනු ඇතැයි ඇය ප්‍රකාශ කළාය. මාර්තුවේදී මොහොත් පමණකාලක මහා ඇතුල් තවත් නිලධාරීන් සිහිබ දෙනෙක්ම මෙම අවස්ථාවට පැමිණ සී සිටියහ.

Asia's developing economies did well in 2002

Despite the weakening of the global economy in 2002, developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region performed surprisingly well, achieving growth of around 5 per cent during the year, says ESCAP's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific for 2003.

This expansion, which was 2 percentage points higher than the 2001 rate, owed much to surging intra-regional trade, fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, noted the report released in Colombo last week but in Asia on April 17.

Here are the highlights of the report:

* Prospects for 2003 are conditioned by the intensity and duration of military action in Iraq and its negative ripple effects, including those on energy prices. The region imports 40 per cent of its energy requirements.

* Prospects also depend to a considerable extent on the sustainability of enhanced intra-regional trade and a supportive domestic policy stance. With the latter there are risks as fiscal stimulus cannot continue for too long as it can lead to an unsustainable increase in public debt.

*GDP growth in the region is still several percentage points below the pre-1997 crisis level. This translates into fewer job opportunities and puts greater pressure on government budgets, including allocations for poverty reduction.

Policy challenges

*Given the absence of any evidence of a strong pickup in the global economy, at least in the first half of 2003, the war in Iraq and other geopolitical uncertainties, sustaining growth in the region will depend primarily upon domestic policies.

*Domestic demand stimulus measures have relied on a mixture of fiscal and monetary policies. However, with levels of public debt exceeding 50 per cent of GDP in most economies of the region the question of fiscal consolidation has to be tackled in earnest before too long. In the case of monetary policy also, as a result of falling inflation, interest rates have reached quite low levels so that the scope for further reduction is limited in most countries.

* The programmes of reform of the corporate and financial sectors must continue to be implemented with renewed vigour to enhance investor confidence. It is worth noting that levels of investment in the private sector are still below pre-1997 levels in South-East Asia. Without a pickup in private investment, medium-term growth is likely to be jeopardized.

* As emphasized in the past, countries dependent upon official development assistance (ODA) need to redouble their efforts to improve the utilization of external assistance by drawing up realistic projects for such funding and improving their aid management structures.

* One of the central challenges of globalization is that countries have to compete for markets. Governments must strive to provide an appropriate macro-economic environment, realistic exchange rates and improvements in the physical infrastructure to enable firms to compete, and the firms themselves must promote innovation, improve product and service quality and become more receptive to change.

* The momentum of trade liberalization, including action in trade facilitation, should be maintained. It is widely accepted that regional trading arrangements can be a useful complement to the multilateral trading system and enhance its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the recent increase in bilateral trade agreements in the region should not serve to reduce the commitment of Governments to promote the multilateral objectives of the Doha Development Agenda.

* The current weaknesses in the global economy and concerns with security issues such as terrorism and the use of the international financial system by terrorists require significantly enhanced cooperation at the regional level in the exchange of information, intelligence and policy-making in the area of security.

* With regard to longer-term issues, the positive impact of education and health care on the well-being of individuals, and development of societies is enormous. While the public sector is still a major provider of education and health care, additional resources need to be raised using multiple channels, including the public and private sectors, communities, non-governmental organizations, bilateral donors and multilateral organizations. Moreover, the effective and efficient utilization of resources is also important to achieve better results in the provision of health and education.

* The achievement of faster economic growth is often accompanied by environmental degradation. This affects the poor adversely and disproportionately. An analysis of the linkages between the environment and poverty and the policies adopted by the Asian and Pacific countries to mitigate their adverse impacts yields important policy conclusions. Governments have to stress the building of awareness and promoting stakeholder ownership, decentralization and the maintenance of good governance for increasing the effectiveness of those environmental policies.

Risk & challenges

In the short-term:

a) The most obvious and serious risk is what happens in the aftermath of military action in Iraq. While the war in Iraq appears to be coming to an end and its impact on Iraq's oil industry minimal, its political and security impact on the Middle-East could be more long-lasting. The global economy, too, has been adversely affected by the uncertainty leading up to the war. This is unlikely to be reversed immediately upon the ending of hostilities. Indeed, growth prospects in the developed economies are presently weaker than in 2002.

b) Impact of SARS on the region

Too early to predict its eventual impact with precision. For now, SARS has still to peak; its impact could very well extend beyond Q2 of 2003.

Main impact will be on tourism and travel and thus on hotels, restaurants and retailing. If SARS becomes long-lasting its impact will then extend beyond these sectors into actual production declines and job losses in sectors other than travel and hotels.

At the moment most private sector forecasts are predicting an overall output loss of between 0.5 and 1.0 percentage points for the region. This will be mainly concentrated in Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Thailand, the economies with large tourism sectors, and to a smaller extent in Indonesia and Malaysia. Its impact on China itself is considered to be marginal at this stage.

If the spread of the disease is contained by June 2003 there, however, exists the possibility of a significant bounce-back in Q3 & Q4 of 2003 in the regional economy. Such has been the pattern of revival following a major external shock. The effects of shocks wear off eventually and consumers tend to spend more than what they might have done otherwise. In that event the impact on output growth in 2003 could be very small.

c) The faltering momentum of growth in the US and EU - despite very low interest rates - and the anaemic Japanese economy are likely to impact on export growth from, and continue to undermine business confidence in the region. The US, EU and Japan account for around one half of exports from UNESCAP developing countries. In fact, because of slow growth in the US, EU and Japan in 2003 the momentum of intra-regional trade could also slow down as some of the within-region trade is in items whose final destination is the developed countries.

On the plus side, however, there are signs of renewed confidence in the world stock markets but it is too early to say: a) whether this confidence can be sustained or b) will translate itself into higher capital expenditures by corporations.

Financial Times
27 Apr. 03

SUNDAY DIVAINA - 27-04-2003

මෙහෙම කළොත් විදේශාධාර දීමත් අනතුරේ!

ගයෙමි නුමන ගැනුමයන්ත

ඉදිරියේදී ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ලැබෙන විදේශාධාරවලින් සිකි ප්‍රයෝජන ගැනීමට නම් ලංකාවේ විදේශාධාර උපයෝජන අනුපාතය (ලැබෙන විදේශාධාරවලින් ගෙවීම් කරන ප්‍රමාණය) විසල් වශයෙන් වර්ධනය කර ගත යුතුව ඇතැයි එක්සත් ජාතීන්ගේ ආර්ථික කොමිෂන් 2003 වර්ෂය වෙනුවෙන් එළිදක්වා ඇති අයියා වැඩිපියක් කලාපීය ආර්ථික හා සමාජ ආර්තාව මෙසේ අනතුරු ඇඟවීම සිදු කර ඇත.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ලැබෙන මුළු විදේශාධාරවලින් දැනට සියයට 17 ක පමණ වැය අතර එය ඉතා පහළ මට්ටමකි. අනුපාතයක් බවද එම වාර්තාවේ දැක්වා ඇත.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ප්‍රතිපත්ති ?

2 පිටුව

මෙහෙම කළොත්

(ඊයේ දින.)

අධ්‍යක්ෂක ආචාර්ය දුෂ්නි (IPS) ආචාර්ය වීරකෝන් මහත්මිය පෙන්වා දෙන පරිදි එම වාර්තාවේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාව සම්බන්ධයෙන් මෙසේද සඳහන් කර ඇත.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ආධාර වශයෙන් පිරිනැමීමට දැනවත් එකඟතාවය පළ වී ඇති අභිවිශාල විදේශාධාර ප්‍රමාණයෙන් ඒ ආකාරයෙන්ම ලැබේ. සම්ප්‍රති ශ්‍රී ලංකාව ආර්ථික වර්ධනයේ ප්‍රබල අවදානම් වනු ඇති. එසේ වූ පදනා එම ආධාර පරිහරණය ඉතා සාර්ථකව හා නිසි පාලනයක් ඇතුව සිදු කළ යුතුව තිබේ.

විදේශාධාර සඳහා ඉල්ලුම් කිරීමේදී, ඒවා ලබා ගැනීමේදී, ඒවා භාවිතා කිරීමේදී සහ ඒවා ආපසු ගෙවීමේදී ශ්‍රී ලංකාව විසින් ගනු ලබන ප්‍රතිපත්ති නොරිසෙදේ. එබැවින් ශ්‍රී ලංකාව දිගින් කාලීන වශයෙන් ප්‍රතිවර්තන කිරීමට නම් රට පදනා ඉතා දියුණු පරිපාලනයක් සමඟම දේශසාමාන්‍ය ප්‍රජාතන්ත්‍රවාදයක් හා පැහැදිලි ප්‍රතිපත්ති අවශ්‍ය වනු ඇත.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ආර්ථිකවේග සම්බන්ධව වී දැඩිය හා විෂ්ඨිය ආකෝරකයන් පැලසිය යුතු කාර්ය භාරයක් නිර්මාණ ඉදිරිදාන් වනු ඇත්තේ එවිට පමණක් බවද එම වාර්තාව මඟින් කවුරුවත් අනතුරු අඟවා ඇත.

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DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY APRIL 29, 2003

Lanka's economy posts recovery from negative growth in 2001 - *ESCAP survey*

Daily News

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific is a United Nations publication that is handled by the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific or what is commonly known as the ESCAP Secretariat in Bangkok. Each year in its annual publication ESCAP traces the economic performance of the countries in the Asia Pacific region and devotes itself to a discussion of key issues that the Secretariat feels is of policy relevance to governments of the region.

The survey was drafted in early 2003, based on data for the first three quarters of 2002.

The report highlights that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in South Asia was much better in 2002, mainly as a result of the recovery of Sri Lanka from negative growth and high growth in Pakistan.

The survey notes that the Sri Lankan economy has posted a recovery from negative growth in 2001. GDP growth for 2002 is estimated at 3 percent , with the recovery fuelled largely by a higher level of value-added both in services and agriculture.

Both sectors had contracted in 2001 due to a severe drought and a power crisis. Recovery in the industrial sector is found to be relatively weak owing to depressed earnings of key industrial exports. Demand for garments, for example remained subdued though a slight recovery was seen in the latter part of 2002.

The GDP estimate of 3 per cent for the year is in line with what has been forecast for the country.

For the first nine months of the year, GDP growth has been 2.7 per cent. In the fourth quarter there was resurgence in the tourism and garments industry, so growth in the fourth quarter is likely to be fairly positive. For the year as a whole, GDP growth is expected to be around 3.3 per cent.

Inflationary pressure eased in 2002 with consumer prices rising at a slower rate, from over 14 per cent in 2001 to 9.6 per cent in 2002.

This has been attributed to increased supplies of domestic agricultural products, slower depreciation of the rupee and government intervention to control the prices of key commodities, including petroleum. The decline in inflation is in line with a generally low inflationary environment in most of the ESCAP countries.

The survey notes that the rate of inflation of developing economies of the ESCAP region declined from 3.6 per cent in 2001 to 2.2 per cent in 2002.

By these trends, Sri Lanka's rate of inflation is still relatively high. Even in comparison to neighbouring countries such as India and Pakistan where the rate of inflation is estimated at 3.5 per cent for both these countries, Sri Lanka's inflation rate is still on the high side. The survey notes that further progress in liberalising the domestic market, together with improved agricultural growth in 2002, could cause inflation to fall further in 2003.

Poor trade performance was an important factor that dampened aggregate economic activity last year.

Export earnings continued their second year of decline, falling by 2.4 per cent. This was however an improvement on the performance in 2001, when export earnings contracted by 12.8 per cent.

The textile and garments sector which accounts for more than 50 per cent of total export earnings contracted for the second year with earnings dropping by 4.7 per cent.

However, this was again an improvement on the performance in 2001 when garments export earnings fell by nearly 15 per cent.

The improvement was seen primarily in the second half of 2002 and indicates some signs of recovery in the industry. Tea export earnings which account for around 15 per cent of total export earnings also fell by 4.3 per cent.

In terms of export expenditure, there was a growth of 2.2 per cent compared to an overall contraction in import expenditure of nearly 15 per cent in 2001. The increase in import expenditure has been across all sectors - consumer, intermediate and investment goods imports.

The increase in import expenditure and the lacklustre performance of export earnings has contributed to a widening of the trade balance from US $ 1,157 million in 2001 to US $ 1,405 million in 2002. But overall, the external finances have been helped by improved inflows of foreign earnings from tourism, remittances and foreign investment compared to 2001. Tourist arrivals for example increased by 16 per cent in 2002 while earnings also increased by 12 per cent.

The survey points out that with a better political climate and further liberalisation planned for 2003 and 2004, the climate for investment in Sri Lanka will improve. In addition, it has a special box dealing with the issue of economic implications of the peace process, The underlying argument is that the success of the peace process will have an immense positive impact on the economy, with inflow of aid for reconstruction, tourism growth and possibility of reduction of government budget deficits as defence spending contracts.

The survey forecasts a GDP growth of 5.3 per cent for the country in 2003 which is largely in line with the official forecast of 5.5 per cent.

According to ESCAP the biggest external threat to Sri Lanka's economy is if there is a significant slowdown in the US and possibly even EU economics. That will slow the rate of recovery of the garments sector and given its dominant position in the economy there will be downside impact on GDP growth.

Daily News
29 Apr. 03
308

2.15 Switzerland

04/17/2003 03:51:55

BC-ESCAP-Economy 4-17 0293 ESCAP forecasts 0.3% growth in 2003

for Japanese economy

GENEVA, April 17 (Kyodo) The Japanese economy is expected to grow 0.3% this year while China is set to mark the highest growth in the Asia-Pacific region with an estimated 7.7% increase, according to a report released Thursday by a U.N. body.

The U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**) said in its annual report the average growth rate of the 28 developing economies in the **ESCAP** region is forecast at 5.4%, compared with 0.5% for Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

For China, the report cited a solid increase in exports and persistently high levels of foreign investment as principal factors propping up the country's high economic growth.

But the war on Iraq and the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) were not factored into the **ESCAP** growth projections, which were made on the basis of studies conducted in February.

In a briefing on the report, an economist of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) pointed out that SARS-related factors could have a huge impact on the economies in the entire **ESCAP** region, notably Hong Kong, which is forecast to post 2.5% growth.

Hong Kong has the second largest number of reported SARS cases after mainland China, followed by Singapore, for which **ESCAP** forecasts growth of 4.2%.

The epidemic has already hurt tourism in Asia and had a negative impact on a number of economies in the region, having led to downward revisions in growth forecasts by research bodies, financial institutions and credit-rating agencies worldwide.

Among the consequences of the Iraq war is a possible decrease in the number of workers migrating to the Middle East from other parts of Asia, the UNCTAD economist said.

2.16 Thailand

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 2

Press/Media: The Nation (Business)
Page(s): 1B and 4B
Date: 18 April 2003

Summary

ESCAP REPORT

Easy credit worries UN

Fears credit-card system could implode

Downward revisions

Escap's revised economic projections for the Asia and the Pacific Region

GDP growth of selected Escap economies for 2002-2003

	2002a	2003a	2003b
China	7.9	7.7	7.5
Hong Kong	1.7	2.5	2.4
India	4.4	6	5.1
Indonesia	3.2	4.1	3.4
South Korea	6.1	5.3	4.1
Malaysia	4.2	6.3	4.5
Philippines	4.6	4.6	4
Singapore	2.2	4.2	3
Thailand	4.9	4.5	4.2
Vietnam	7	7.5	7

Note: a=Survey estimates
b=Latest available estimates

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

NATION GRAPHICS

■ *Montira Narkvichien*
THE NATION

A UNITED Nations agency has warned Thailand over its easy credit policy, saying the country risked repeating the mistakes made by South Korea, which has seen a collapse in its credit card industry.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), said yesterday during the launch of the agency's "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003" that Thailand had implemented an easy-lending policy and an expansionary fiscal programme to stimulate the economy.

He said lending to small borrowers for consumer goods had created risks for the credit system, though the exposure remained small compared to overall commercial bank lending.

See Escap **[4B]**

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 2

Press/Media: **The Nation**
Page(s): 1B and 4B (Business)
Date: 18 April 2003

Summary

Escap urges caution

■ From 1B

"There should be a balance to the easy-money policy," said Kim.

He said Thailand should be more cautious in its lending policy, citing the case of South Korea, where the government was forced to bail out credit card firms who had been hard hit by delinquencies.

Kim said Escap had revised downward its economic projections for most countries in the region, particularly for Hong Kong and Singapore, due to "new shocks".

He was referring to the Iraq War and the outbreak of the potentially-deadly Sars virus, which are crippling economic growth in the region.

"The psychological impact [of Sars] is scary and spreading so fast ... it has caused tremendous cut-downs in travel and in contacts with other people," Kim said.

He added that the virus would adversely affect countries for which tourism played a significant economic role.

Hong Kong and Singapore may see their economic growth slip by one full percentage point this year as a result of the war in Iraq and Sars, Kim said.

Thailand, meanwhile, will only be marginally affected, and will probably see its economic growth shrink from 4.5 to 4.2 per cent this year, the report said.

China's growth rate for this year has been revised down from 7.7 to 7.5 per cent. However, in the first quarter, China recorded an impressive 9.9-percent growth rate.

Escap forecast that the Asia-Pacific region this year would grow by 5 per cent, revised down from 5.4 per cent, due to a slowdown in public sector investment and wary consumer spending.

Kim said the regional economic situation would improve and "finally make a rebound" during the second and third quarters.

But "if the uncertainly [caused by the war] prevails for too long, we cannot pin down how much it will hurt the world economy," he added.

Meanwhile, Escap Poverty and Development Division chief Raj Kumar chose to look on the brighter side of the Sars outbreak, saying "there are losers and winners in every shock."

At the regional level, the epidemic has called for "better public health surveillance," he said.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 2

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 1 and 4 (Business)
Date: 18 April 2003

Summary

ECONOMY

Escap cuts growth projections for 2003

Sars seen slashing up to a point from GDP

Chatrudee Theparat

The Sars epidemic and the Iraqi war are expected to cut economic growth this year to 4.2% from previous forecasts of 4.5%, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

The double impact of the virus and war would reduce overall 2003 growth for developing countries in Asia to 5% from 5.4%, said Kim Hak-su, Escap's executive secretary.

"We have to revise our projections for 2003 due to the threat of Sars and the possibility of unstable oil prices because of the war in Iraq," he said.

The agency projected Sars would cut regional growth by 0.4-1%, due to the impact on tourism and consumer spending. The projection will be revised after the impact from Sars and the war becomes more evident.

The spread of the disease could seriously damage economies that depend on tourism. However, Mr Kim said, the region's hopes for economic growth were also affected by the psychological consequences of the illness.

He said it was clear that tourism would suffer, although he added that the industry represented only a small proportion of the regional economy. The situation would be better in the second half.

He said trade would play a more significant role in those economies and could affect their economic growth in line with the decline of all major economies. Escap projected world economic growth of 2.3% this year, a drop from the previous projection of 2.8%.

However, he was confident that China's economic growth would reach 7.5% this year, which would help boost the exports of raw materials from the Southeast Asia region.

For Thailand, Mr Kim believed the government's economic stimulus spending would slow down due to budget constraints.

He suggested the government should have a more balanced policy between public expenditure and other spending measures to avoid fiscal risk.

◆ *Singapore slashes forecast* **page 4**

GDP growth estimates 2002-03

(% change)

	2002*	2003**	2003**
World	1.7	2.8	2.3
USA	-0.6	0.9	0.6
EU	1.1	2.3	1.8
China	7.9	7.7	7.5
Hong Kong	1.7	2.5	2.4
India	4.4	6.0	5.1
Indonesia	3.2	4.1	3.4
South Korea	6.1	5.3	4.1
Malaysia	4.2	6.3	4.5
Pakistan	3.6	4.5	4.5
Philippines	4.6	4.6	4.0
Singapore	2.2	4.2	3.0
Thailand	**4.9**	**4.5**	**4.2**
Vietnam	7.0	7.5	7.0

Note : * Survey estimates
**** Latest available estimates** *(IMF, national and others)*

Source: UN Escap POSTgraphics

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST
Page(s): P. 3
Date: 18 April 2003
Summary

SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

UN official shifts blame for inaction away from Beijing

China 'not guilty of deliberate cover-up'

Post reporters

China's late response to Sars stems from delayed recognition of the disease rather than any deliberate attempt to cover up its spread in the country, a senior United Nations official said here yesterday.

The Chinese authorities were slow to take corrective measures because they initially thought it would "go away," said Kim Hak-Su, the executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, who attended a conference in the country late last month.

"A lack of recognition, rather than an attempt to hide anything" was behind the late response, he added, citing Chinese officials he met during the trip.

In a similar way, he pointed out, China had not initially acknowledged the spread of Aids in the country, but later admitted to having 1 million people infected by the HIV virus.

Mr Kim made the comments while launching Escap's annual economic and social survey, and announcing revised growth figures following the war in Iraq and the outbreak of Sars.

The spread of Sars in several of Escap's 52 member states led to its decision to postpone the annual ministerial session due to take place in Bangkok. But member states' ambassadors in Bangkok will meet for preliminary talks April 24-25.

Chinese authorities only recently revealed the extent of Sars in the country although the first case occurred in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong in late November.

World Health Organisation officials reportedly are yet to gain access to China's military hospitals.

Raj Kumar, director of the health and development section in Escap's new emerging social issues division, said the Sars crisis had underlined the need for a region-wide public health surveillance system.

Mr Kim said the division currently dealt mainly with HIV-Aids but could consider setting up a surveillance system for Sars as well.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press Media: The Nation
Page(s): 2A SARS CRISIS

Date: 18 April 2003

Summary

China 'preferred to hide the facts'

China sneezed and Asia caught a cold.

A chill has swept through Asia to the West, following indications that Sars originated in China. Beijing's opaque stance on the publication of virus data has not earned the trust of the World Health Organisation (WHO), casting doubt over subsequent epidemic updates.

Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap), said yesterday during the launch of the agency's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003: "Sars has taught us that China should have come up quickly with accurate numbers."

"It illustrates Beijing's lack of recognition [of the epidemic] and lack of action, preferring to try to hide the facts," Kim said.

Meanwhile, Escap Poverty and Development Division chief Raj Kumar chose to look on the brighter side.

"We've seen a better hospital management," he said.

"We are optimistic, because the [Sars] transmission mechanism is becoming clear," Kumar said.

MONTIRA NARKVICHIEN, THE NATION

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: DAILY NEWS	Date: 18 APRIL 2003
Page(s): 13	

Thai newspaper **DAILY NEWS**, on Friday 18 April in Foreign News brief on page 13, reports the economy of Pakistan and quotes ***The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*** of UNESCAP. The report said the economic situation of Pakistan has now improved due to increased exports and the rise in the amount of money sent back by Pakistani workers abroad.

● **ศก.กระเตื้องขึ้น**

รายงานฉบับหนึ่งของสหประชาชาติ (ยูเอ็น) ระบุว่า เศรษฐกิจของปากีสถานส่งสัญญาณสดใสขึ้นเมื่อปลายปีที่แล้ว แม้ต้องเผชิญกับภาวะแห้งแล้งและความบาดหมางจากเหตุการณ์โจมตีในสหรัฐ เมื่อวันที่ 11 ก.ย. ผลการสำรวจของคณะกรรมการด้านเศรษฐกิจและสังคมแห่งเอเชีย-แปซิฟิกของยูเอ็นเผยว่า ภาวะเศรษฐกิจในปากีสถานเริ่มดีขึ้น นอกจากนี้ การส่งออกยังทำได้มากขึ้นกว่าเดิม กอปรกับมีการส่งเงินจากแรงงานต่างแดนเข้ามาช่วยส่งเสริมเศรษฐกิจของประเทศ

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: THAI RATH	Date: 18 APRIL 2003
Page(s): 8	

Thai newspaper **THAI RATH**, on Friday 18 April on Economic News page 8 reports under title " Growth of Thai Economy is 4.2 percent ", the reports quoted ***The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific which*** was launched to the media by UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su at a press conference on Thursday, 17 April 2003 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok. The focus is on Thailand's economy, which has a decreased growth from 4.5 to 4.2 in the face of continued global uncertainty such as war and health concerns, the picture is not optimistic for 2003.

ยูเอ็นชี้เศรษฐกิจไทยโต 4.2%

นายคิม ฮัค สุ เลขาธิการคณะกรรมาธิการเศรษฐกิจและสังคมสำหรับภูมิภาคเอเชียแปซิฟิก สหประชาชาติ (เอสแคป) เปิดเผยว่า เอสแคปได้ทบทวนอัตราการเติบโตเศรษฐกิจของประเทศไทยตลอดปี 2546 ลดลงจากเดิมที่คาดการณ์ไว้ 4.5% เหลือ 4.2% เนื่องจากได้รับผลกระทบจากปัจจัยของภาวะสงครามสหรัฐฯ-อิรัก โรคไข้หวัดมรณะ และภาวะเศรษฐกิจของสหรัฐฯ ญี่ปุ่นและสหภาพยุโรปที่มีแนวโน้มลดลง โดยเฉพาะปัจจัยจากโรคไข้หวัดมรณะจะมีผลต่อผลิตภัณฑ์มวลรวมในประเทศ (จีดีพี) ของแต่ละประเทศ 0.4-1% เป็นการทบทวนอัตราการขยายตัวทางเศรษฐกิจของประเทศในเอเชียแปซิฟิกใหม่ทั้งหมดพร้อมกัน โดยจากการประเมินภาพรวมเศรษฐกิจ ผลกระทบจากภาวะสงครามเป็นเพียงช่วงระยะสั้น เมื่อเทียบปัญหาของโรคไข้หวัดมรณะมีผลกระทบมากกว่า และส่งผลกระทบโดยตรงในด้านการท่องเที่ยวและอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรม

โดยปรับลดประมาณการเศรษฐกิจของโลกจากเดิม 2.8% เหลือ 2.3% ญี่ปุ่น 0.9% เหลือ 0.6% สหรัฐฯ 2.5% เหลือ 2.2% สหภาพยุโรป (อียู) 2.3% เหลือ 1.8% และของประเทศในเอเชียและแปซิฟิก 5.4% เหลือ 5.0% โดยปรับลดจีนจาก 7.7% เหลือ 7.5% ฮ่องกง 2.5% เหลือ 2.4% อินเดีย 6.0% เหลือ 5.1% อินโดนีเซีย 4.1% เหลือ 3.4% เกาหลีใต้ 5.3% เหลือ 4.1% มาเลเซีย 6.3% เหลือ 4.5% ฟิลิปปินส์ 4.6% เหลือ 4.0% สิงคโปร์ 4.2% เหลือ 3.0% มีเพียงปากีสถานยังคง 4.5% ที่เดิม

สำหรับการดำเนินนโยบายด้านเศรษฐกิจของไทยในปีนี้ จะมีข้อจำกัดในการใช้นโยบายกระตุ้นเศรษฐกิจภายในโดยวิธีใช้งบประมาณแบบขาดดุล เนื่องจากใช้มามากแล้ว ดังนั้น รัฐบาลต้องใช้นโยบายด้านอื่นๆไปพร้อมกันด้วย ส่วนด้านการค้า แม้จะมีข้อตกลงในเรื่องเขตการค้าเสรีแล้วก็ตาม แต่หลายประเทศยังไม่ปฏิบัติตามข้อตกลง ดังนั้น แต่ละประเทศต้องเร่งเพิ่มผลผลิต และเพิ่มขีดความสามารถในการแข่งขัน ทำให้เศรษฐกิจมหภาคมีความมั่นคงมากขึ้น พร้อมทั้งสร้างความโปร่งใสในภาครัฐและเอกชน.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: MATICHON	Date: 18 APRIL 2003
Page(s): 8	

Thai newspaper **MATICHON**, on Friday 18 April on Econonic News page 8 reports under title " War and Health Concerns, the Picture of Economy Is Not Too Optimistic for 2003".
The newspaper said " According to the Survey, over the world the GDP growth is only 04-1 percent. Thailand's economy exceeded only 4.2percent. Over the Asia-Pacific region , the debts are increased. Some measures to be taken by the governments are partly through the reduction of imbalance, speed up more free trade zone areas and less focus on bilateral negotiations. The newspaper quoted ***The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*** which was launched by UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su on Thursday, 17 April 2003 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok.

'เอสแคป' ชี้'สงคราม-ซาร์ส'ถล่มศก.

●ฉุด'จีดีพี'ไทยขยายตัวแค่4.2%

●แนะเร่งค้าเสรี-เลิกเจรจาทวิภาคี

'เอสแคป'เผยผลสำรวจเศรษฐกิจโลก 'สงคราม-ซาร์ส'ทุบจีดีพีแต่ละประเทศทรุด 0.4-1% ทำนายไทยขยายตัวเหลือ 4.2% ระบุภูมิภาคเอเชีย-แปซิฟิกหนี้ท่วม แนะทางออกรัฐบาลต้องลดขาดดุล เร่งเปิดเสรีการค้า ลดเจรจาทวิภาคี

นายคิม ฮัก-สู(Mr.Kim Hak-Su) เลขาธิการบริหารคณะกรรมาธิการเศรษฐกิจและสังคม ภูมิภาคเอเชีย และแปซิฟิก สหประชาชาติ(ภูเอ็นเอสแคป : UN-ESCAP) แถลงผลการสำรวจทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมของทวีปเอเชียและแปซิฟิก เรื่อง "เศรษฐกิจเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก : ความยืดหยุ่นในช่วงเวลาที่ท้าทาย" ที่ศูนย์ประชุมสหประชาชาติ กรุงเทพฯ ว่า จากผลการสำรวจการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจของประเทศในแถบเอเชียและแปซิฟิกครึ่งสุดท้ายเมื่อวันที่ 10 เมษายน 2546 พบว่า การเติบโตของจีดีพีในปี 2546 ของแต่ละประเทศลดลงจากคาดการณ์เดิม ซึ่งคาดว่าจีดีพีของโลกจะเติบโตประมาณ 2.8% เหลือเพียง 2.3% โดยประเทศเศรษฐกิจสำคัญ เช่น สหรัฐ จากเดิมคาดว่าจีดีพีจะเติบโต 2.5% เหลือ 2.2% ญี่ปุ่นจากเดิม 0.9% เหลือ 0.6% สหภาพยุโรปจากเดิม 2.3% เหลือ 1.8% และการเติบโตจีดีพีประเทศที่กำลังพัฒนาทั้งหมดจากเดิมคาดว่าจะเติบโต 5.4% เหลือเพียง 5.0% และจีนจากเดิมคาดว่าจะเติบโต 7.7% เหลือเพียง 7.5%

นายคิมกล่าวว่า สำหรับจีดีพีของประเทศในภูมิภาคเอเชียและแปซิฟิกก็ลดลงตามไปด้วย อย่างไรก็ตาม จีดีพีของประเทศในภูมิภาคเอเชียใต้และเอเชียตะวันตกเฉียงใต้ เช่น อินเดีย บังคลาเทศ ปากีสถาน ศรีลังกา ในปี 2546 จะยังคงเติบโตอยู่ในระดับสูงคือประมาณ 4.5% ซึ่งสูงกว่าเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ที่คาดว่าจะเติบโตประมาณ 4.0% อาทิ ไทยจะเติบโตประมาณ 4.2% จากเดิมคาดว่าจะเติบโต 4.5% เวียดนามคาดว่าจะเติบโต 7.0% จากเดิม 7.5% สิงคโปร์คาดว่าจะเติบโต 3.0% จากเดิม 4.2% มาเลเซียจะเติบโตเพียง 4.5% จากเดิมคาดว่า 6.3%

"จากการสำรวจพบว่าปัจจัยเสี่ยงเพิ่มเติมที่มีผลกับประมาณการทางเศรษฐกิจของโลกและประเทศต่างๆ มีสองส่วนคือ ปัจจัยระยะสั้น และปัจจัยระยะยาว โดยปัจจัยระยะสั้นมาจากสงครามระหว่างอิรักกับสหรัฐและพันธมิตร และผลที่จะเกิดขึ้นหลังการทำสงคราม การระบาดของโรคทางเดินหายใจเฉียบพลันรุนแรง หรือโรคซาร์ส ซึ่งส่งผลให้จีดีพีของแต่ละประเทศลดลง 0.4-1% จากประมาณการเดิม โดยประเทศที่พึ่งพารายได้จากการท่องเที่ยวมากจะมีผลกระทบจากซาร์สมากตามไปด้วย อย่างไรก็ตาม คาดว่าโรคนี้จะสามารถควบคุมได้ภายในเดือนมิถุนายนนี้ ซึ่งจะทำให้การขยายตัวทางเศรษฐกิจในช่วงครึ่งปีหลังของปีนี้น่าจะดีขึ้นตามไปด้วย" นายคิมกล่าว

นายคิมกล่าวว่า ส่วนปัจจัยระยะยาวคือข้อจำกัดภายในของการขยายตัวทางเศรษฐกิจของแต่ละประเทศ โดยขณะนี้ประเทศส่วนใหญ่ในภูมิภาคเอเชียและแปซิฟิกมีภาระหนี้ทั้งภายในประเทศและนอกประเทศเกินกว่า 60% ของจีดีพีแล้ว ดังนั้น รัฐบาลของประเทศดังกล่าวต้องควบคุมการจัดทำงบประมาณไม่ให้ขาดดุลมากนัก และการทำการค้าระหว่างกันกับประเทศในกลุ่มเดียวกันหรือประเทศที่อยู่ใกล้เคียงกัน จะทำให้เศรษฐกิจในภูมิภาคดีขึ้น

นายคิมกล่าวว่า ทางเลือกของรัฐบาลในภูมิภาคนี้ในการแก้ปัญหาการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจตกต่ำอยู่ต้อง มีการปฏิรูปโครงสร้างเศรษฐกิจพื้นฐานภายในประเทศ และพยายามเปิดเสรีทางการค้าให้มากขึ้น และควรลดความสำคัญในการเจรจาการค้าระดับทวิภาคี เช่น การทำเขตเสรีการค้า (เอฟทีเอ) ลง แต่ควรให้ความสำคัญกับการเจรจาการค้าระดับพหุภาคี เช่น การเจรจาการค้าในกรอบองค์การการค้าโลกรอบใหม่ ให้มากขึ้น การสร้างความสามารถในการผลิตและการแข่งขันภายในประเทศให้แข็งแกร่งขึ้น

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGE(S): 1

Press/Media: **Krungthep Turakij**
Page(s): http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/2003/04/18/pageone/index.php?news=pag1.html

Date: 18 April 2003

Summary

Thai Newspaper " **Krungthep Thurakij**", Friday 18 April 2003 reported on business and general news page under the title " UN Adjusts its Economic Forecast " by referring to ***The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*** of UNESCAP presentd by UNESCAP's Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su on Thursday, 17 April 2003 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok. The report said in the face of continued global uncertainty such as war in Iraq and SARS epidemic, the picture of world economy is not optimistic for 2003, particularly the developing economies.

ผู้นำเอเชีย เตรียมถกด่วน ดับพิษ'ซาร์ส' ฉุดศก.พัง

ยูเอ็นเอสแคปปรับลดจีดีพีไทยเหลือ4.2% ฟาร์ อีสเทิร์น คำนวณการระบาดของไวรัสซาร์ส สร้างความสูญเสียแก่เอเชีย เป็นเงินเกือบ 11,000 ล้านดอลลาร์ แต่หากรวมปัจจัยทั้งหมด อาจสูงถึง 50,000 ล้านดอลลาร์

ยูเอ็นปรับประมาณการเศรษฐกิจโลก

นายคิม ฮัก-ซู เลขาธิการบริหาร คณะกรรมาธิการเศรษฐกิจและสังคมสำหรับภูมิภาคเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก องค์การสหประชาชาติ (ยูเอ็นเอสแคป) กล่าวในการแนะนำรายงานผลการสำรวจทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมในภูมิภาคเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก ปี 2546 ว่า สถานการณ์สงครามในอิรัก และการระบาดของโรคซาร์ส ส่งผลกระทบต่อเศรษฐกิจทั่วโลก โดยเฉพาะประเทศกำลังพัฒนา

รายงานของยูเอ็นเอสแคป ประมาณว่า อัตราการเติบโตของเศรษฐกิจโลกปี 2546 จะอยู่ที่ระดับ 2.8% เพิ่มขึ้นจาก 1.7% เมื่อปีที่แล้ว แต่ผลการประเมินล่าสุดหลังโรคซาร์สระบาด คาดว่าการเติบโตอาจลดเหลือเพียง 2.3%

เศรษฐกิจสหรัฐ ซึ่งเดิมคาดว่าจะเติบโต 2.5% ในปี 2546 เพิ่มจาก 2.4% เมื่อปี 2545 ถูกปรับลดเหลือ 2.2% ขณะที่ ญี่ปุ่น การเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจมีแนวโน้มขยายตัว 0.6% จากเป้าหมายเดิม 0.9% แต่ยังเหนือกว่าเมื่อปีที่แล้ว ซึ่งเศรษฐกิจติดลบ 0.6%

สำหรับประเทศไทย ยูเอ็นเอสแคป คาดหมายการเติบโตในอัตรา 4.2% ลดลงจากการคาดหมายเบื้องต้นที่ระดับ 4.5% และต่ำกว่าปี 2545 ซึ่งเศรษฐกิจเติบโต 4.9%

ทางด้านจีน ซึ่งเป็นต้นตอของโรคซาร์ส เศรษฐกิจมีแนวโน้มขยายตัว 7.5% ลดลงจากการประมาณก่อนหน้านี้ที่ระดับ 7.7% และต่ำกว่าการเติบโต 7.9% เมื่อปี 2545 ส่วนฮ่องกง คาดว่า เศรษฐกิจจะเติบโต 2.4% ลดลงจากเป้าหมายเดิมที่ระดับ 2.5% แต่สูงกว่าอัตราการเติบโต 1.7% เมื่อปี 2545 นายคิม กล่าวอย่างมั่นใจว่า โรคซาร์สอาจควบคุมได้ภายในเดือน มิ.ย.หลังจากแคนาดา สหรัฐ และฮ่องกง สามารถถอดรหัสพันธุกรรมไวรัสโคโรนาสายพันธุ์ใหม่ที่เป็นสาเหตุของโรคร้ายนี้ได้แล้ว ดังนั้น เศรษฐกิจโลกจึงอาจปรับตัวดีขึ้นภายในไตรมาส 2-3 ของปีนี้

รายงานของยูเอ็นเอสแคป ระบุว่า ในขณะที่เศรษฐกิจโลกยังไม่มีแนวโน้มฟื้นตัวอย่างแข็งแกร่ง อย่างน้อยในช่วงครึ่งแรกของปี 2546 ประเทศแถบเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก ต้องค้ำจุนการเติบโตภายในภูมิภาค ด้วยนโยบายกระตุ้นความต้องการในประเทศ ทั้งภาคเอกชนและประชาชนทั่วไป ขณะเดียวกัน การเปิดเสรีการค้าก็เป็นอีกปัจจัยหนึ่ง ที่จะช่วยค้ำจุนการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจ ยูเอ็นเอสแคป ชี้ว่า ข้อตกลงการค้าระดับภูมิภาค เป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญในระบบการค้าหลายฝ่าย และช่วยเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพแก่การค้าเสรี แต่ข้อตกลงทวิภาคีที่เกิดขึ้นช่วงเร็วๆ นี้ ไม่ควรทำให้รัฐบาลลดความรับผิดชอบต่อการส่งเสริมการค้าหลายฝ่าย ตามข้อตกลงโด

อ่า

DOWJONES

04/18/2003 07:19:01

Thai PM Maintains '03 Econ 6% Growth Target Despite SARS

Dow Jones Business News via Dow Jones

BANGKOK (Dow Jones)--Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra Friday said he is sticking to a 6% economic growth target for Thailand this year, despite some analysts and international agencies' having cut their forecasts because of the SARS impact on tourism.

"Thai economic growth this year will reach at least 5% for sure. And, we are still setting our growth target at 6%," Thaksin told reporters.

Thaksin was responding to queries about a report by the U.N. Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, or **Escap**, which lowered its gross domestic product growth forecast for Thailand this year to 4.2% from 4.5% previously, citing the impact of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, and the Iraq war.

"We will improve what is weak and turn that into a strength to be able to achieve 6% growth target. Several economic stimulus measures will be launched to boost economic growth," Thaksin said.

He gave no details about the stimulus measures.

First-quarter GDP growth will be "impressive," Thaksin said, and will help restore confidence in the economy.

The state economic planning agency has said earlier that GDP growth in the first quarter, to be announced in June, is likely to exceed 6%.

Thaksin said an estimated export growth of 20% on year in the first quarter is a sign that Thailand still enjoys robust economic growth.

Asked if Thailand's current account would be affected by reduced

tourism revenue, Thaksin said that was unlikely because Thai exports are still posting strong growth.

Revenues from tourism contributed 6.1% to Thailand's GDP last year.

The spread of SARS - which has claimed at least 170 lives and sickened over 3,000 globally - within Thailand has so far been limited to only eight suspected cases, including two deaths.

-By Supunnabul Suwannakij, Dow Jones Newswires; 662-266-0744; supunnabul.suwannakij@dowjones.com

(END) Dow Jones Newswires

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Correction

A story headlined "Escap cuts growth projections for 2003", on page 1 of yesterday's Business section, showed a table in which US GDP growth estimates were -0.6% in 2002, an original 0.9% projection for 2003 and a revised projection of 0.6% for this year. The correct figures are 2.4% in 2002, original projections of 2.3% for 2003 and revised projections of 1.8%.

PRESS CLIPPINGS TOTAL PAGES: 1

Press/Media: BANGKOK POST Date: 30 April 2003

Page(s): P. 13

Summary

FOCUS / SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

Where there's fear there's usually profits

Too scared to venture outdoors? Rent a DVD and order in some fast-food. But only after stocking up on the traditional medicines.

CHARLES CHAW
Singapore, China Knowledge Press

There is good news among the bad headlines: The rapid and surprising growth of Sars is having positive effects on stocks such as Tong Ren Tang Technologies in Hong Kong, Tianjin Zhong Xin Pharmaceutical Group Corp in China, and Eu Yang Sang International Holdings Ltd and MedTecs International in Singapore. Western companies and investors are taking a new look at traditional Chinese medicine, as Asians turn to it during this crisis.

Eu Yang Sang manufactures a popular antiviral traditional medicine based on *kang du bu fei tang* and distributes it in Hong Kong. After the Hong Kong government announced that it would use the drug against severe acute respiratory syndrome, or Sars, Eu Yang Sang agreed to collaborate on mass production with the local Institute of Chinese Medicine. While the antiviral is pending approval in Singapore, the company has seen an increase in demand for its herbal products.

Other companies now benefiting are in the sectors of insurance, medical supplies, and health foods and supplements.

In Singapore, retail grocery and food sales have risen as people shun restaurants and other public places. After buying or renting DVD and VCD movies, families are staying home together to watch them. They are ordering more pizza and other take-away food to accompany their videos.

Transport companies such as UPS and FedEx may be getting a boost as cancellations of passenger flights limit trans-Pacific airfreight capacity. Ken Torok, president of UPS Asia Pacific, said: "We are currently working with our customers on contingencies to keep their supply chains going."

And it is not only electronics and components flowing from Asia that need additional transport, but agricultural exports from the United States and Canada. China and Hong Kong, for example, bought $321 million (13.8 billion baht) worth of grapes and oranges last year, while Taiwan imported peaches and nectarines worth $218 million (9.4 billion baht). Much of this traffic is airfreighted to prevent spoilage.

Sales of California oranges are up after Hong Kong's Li Ka-shing Foundation announced a programme to distribute one million oranges to healthcare workers (vitamin C is thought to raise immunity to Sars). Even before the Hong Kong effort was made public, Sunkist in Van Nuys, California had seen increased sales levels in Asia.

"Fear of Sars is more of a problem than Sars now, as far as international business is concerned," according to Linda Lim, professor of corporate strategy and international business at University of Michigan Business School.

Japan, a very large market in Asia, has so far escaped Sars, a recent report by the World Health Organisation indicated. So Japan, paradoxically, continues as a bright spot.

In Cairns, Australia, Chamber of Commerce president Bob Norman said fears of catching the deadly virus in Asia were forcing many travelers to spend extra time and money in Cairns. The city is a traditional departure point for overseas visitors winding up their Australia tours.

Sohu.com Inc, Sina Corp and other Chinese internet companies are selling more surgical masks, kung-fu videos, and other products as Chinese consumers shop online to protect themselves. Beijing-based Sohu recorded a 40% year-on-year jump in internet orders this month as people don't want to shop in stores. Sina sales rose, with 20% more people browsing its shopping site.

US and other firms are nervous that the virus could migrate into factories in the Pearl River Delta that are their major suppliers of light electronics, clothing, toys and sports shoes. Sars was first noticed last November in nearby Foshan, a manufacturing town 25km west of Guangzhou.

World Bank economist Maureen Lewis said: "If it moves to manufacturing all at once, that's what everybody is afraid of." She has studied the economic effects of past epidemics.

But the fact remains that it has not spread to factories in China. "We haven't seen a problem with the supply chain yet from Sars," said Molly Tuttle of the Semiconductor Industry Association in San Jose, California.

Following the firing of the minister of health and the mayor of Beijing last week, China's new openness is further good news. It shows that the China authorities at the highest level are taking Sars seriously.

Beijing's signal was unmistakable: cooperate using international standards, isolate the patients, report honestly. This goes against the age-old cultural norm of never giving bad news to the emperor, but the fledgling administration of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao made its intention clear to do things differently.

The ruling politburo, the Beijing city government, and the people's congress have ordered thousands of doses of immunity-boosting traditional medicine from Beijing's well-known Cui Yue-li TCM Research Centre. Lately the normally quiet centre has been working round the clock to produce enough to meet skyrocketing demand.

The traditional Chinese medicine business is booming in the capital. For example, at the large store of the Tongrentang Pharmacy near Tiananmen Square, hundreds of people line up every morning. The official China news agency Xinhua reported this week that consumers in Beijing alone were daily buying 100,000 bottles of anti-Sars traditional medicine.

Cui Yue-li's director, Zhang Xiaotong, recalled the yellow emperor's book on Chinese medicine, which 2,500 years ago described a fever called *wenbing* (evil heat). He said Sars was just a variant of that disease and will die down, as other diseases have in China's long history.

There is a reasonable expectation that the Sars epidemic will wane quickly, as have other similar outbreaks in the past. "The pace of Sars research has been astounding," said Dr David Heymann, executive director of the WHO Communicable Diseases Programme in Geneva. "Because of an extraordinary collaboration among laboratories from countries around the world, we now know with certainty what causes Sars."

Experts say this a major step towards finding a cure at an early date. "In a world where all national borders are porous when confronted with a microbial threat, it is in the interest of all populations for countries to share the information they may have as soon as it is available," Dr Heymann said. "In so doing, they will allow both near and distant countries, all neighbours in our globalised world, to benefit from the understanding they have gained."

Though some economists are bearish on 2003, the UN Economic and Social Committee for Asia-Pacific, or Escap, has a bullish view. At the UN office in Bangkok, executive secretary Kim Hak-Su told reporters that the revised growth forecast of 5% for Asia was still much higher than the 2.3% growth expected for the rest of the world.

Raj Kumar, chief of Escap's poverty and development division, said the true impact of Sars would probably not be as bad as expected. "There have been scary headlines but behind them, it's not scary," he said. "Even in Hong Kong, they're forecasting just a 1% fall (in economic growth) and they are the most severely hit."

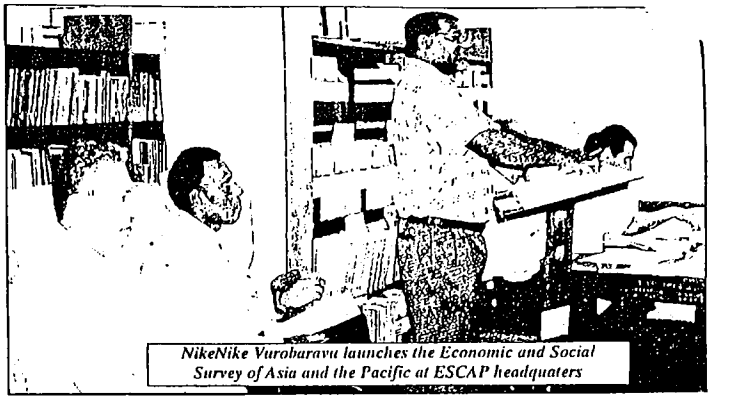
Mr Kumar said public health systems in the region had responded quickly to Sars, and this had taught them more about crisis response. This learning experience could have potential long-term benefits.

"Singapore has taken a leadership role, globally, in the fight against Sars and its approach is a model to be adopted by other countries," he said. "There are [economic] benefits as well in terms of better health systems, better public health surveillance. There's a silver lining in every shock."

◆ *Charles Chaw is president of China Knowledge Press in Singapore.* —
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2.17 Vanuatu

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific islands shows Vanuatu economy has some problems



NikeNike Vurobaravu launches the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific at ESCAP headquaters

Vanuatu Trading newspaper
18 April 2003

UNESCAP officially launched The United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003 at it's headquaters in Port Vila.

NikeNike Vurobaravu, the head of UnEscap in the Pacific, invited bankers, aid doners and government officials to the launch where comments were raised in relation to the poor performance of Vanuatu in the survey which shows that the country is battling an economic turn down.

The main points of interest raised in the report relative to the Pacific islands were as follows.

•Economic performance of Pacific island economies as a whole remained generally lackluster in 2002 with GDP growth in the range of - 0.5 to 4.4 percentage points. Even though the agricultural sector in several Pacific island countries performed much better than in 2001, this was not sufficient to reverse the pattern of low and uneven GDP growth which has characterized these recent years.

• Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu recorded GDP growth in the range of 3 to 4.4 per cent in 2002. The 3 per cent growth in Solomon Islands compares favourably with an absolute contraction averaging 14.5 per cent a year in 2000-2001, which was mainly caused by internal strife.

• Fiji's economy did much better than other countries in the sub-region and grew by over 4 per cent in 2001 and 2002.

• Meanwhile, the sharp expansion in Samoa's economy, averaging 6.7 per cent a year in 2000-2001, lost steam in 2002. GDP went up marginally by just 1 per cent, owing to irregular weather conditions and the completion of major construction activities.

• In contrast, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu recorded a contraction in total output of between 0.4 to 0.5 per cent in 2002. The contraction in Papua New Guinea was mainly due to the falling production of declines in agricultural and service sector outputs contributed to the outcome in Vanuatu.

Inflation

• Consumer prices varied in Pacific island economies in 2002. Except for Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands which showed double-digit increases in consumer prices, inflation remained largely muted at less than 6 per cent in most Pacific island economies.

• Weakening exchange rates and sluggish agricultural production pushed up inflation rates in several Pacific island economies in 2002.

Trade performance

• Available data up to the first half of 2002 indicate an improved trade performance in most Pacific island economies. The exceptions to this pattern were in Papua New Guinea and Samoa. This represented a reversal in trend in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu which experienced some decline in export earnings in in export earnings in Papua New Guinea in 2002 was mainly due to the depletion of mineral oil reserves.

• Except for Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, spending on imports in other Pacific island countries are expected to increase in 2002. The continued contraction of imports in Solomon Islands reflects the poor state of the country's economy.

Capital inflows, external debt and exchange rates

• Several Pacific island economies recorded capital account surpluses in 2002, mainly as a result of the inflow of foreign aid including funds in support of structural adjustment programmes.

• External debt is not a major problem for most Pacific island economies because a large proportion of their external obligations are on highly concessional terms. Nevertheless, external debt is on the rise in countries like Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands while Fiji debt service burdens in the sub-region.

• Several currencies in the sub-region depreciated against the currencies of major trading partners in 2002.

Key policy issues

• The importance of good governance in both the public and private sectors as well as the need to develop a good synergy between both sectors in the Pacific sub-region cannot be overemphasized. Governance issues are compounding socio-economic difficulties in several Pacific island economies.

• Despite the tax reform initiatives, budget deficits as a percentage of GDP have been increasing for some Pacific island economies. Some countries have introduced value added tax (VAT) to boost domestic revenue but the outcome has been far from satisfactory. Among the causal factors for this lack of success in VAT implementation are the inadequate resources committed to enforcing VAT compliance.

• FDI and other forms of capital inflows are necessary for economic and social development in Pacific island countries, especially given the low level of domestic savings in the sub-region. However, concerns that Pacific island economies may be easy target for money-laundering activities is a major challenge for these economies to address. With the assistance of sub-regional organization such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific island countries are now addressing some of these concerns.

• The chronic lack of reliable and up-to-date data on Pacific island economies continue to be a major problem faced by these small economies despite their efforts to address it. The Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM) currently been developed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community is likely to assist these countries address the data problem.

Copies of the survey are

2.18 Viet Nam

(Econet, Labor, HCM City Youth, People's Army, and Pioneer newspapers reported on 18 April)

Vietnam's GDP to Grow 7% This Year; ESCAP

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has revised its forecast for Vietnam's GDP growth rate down to 7% this year from its initial prediction of 7.5% due to the impact of the Iraqi war and the spread of SARS.

Vietnam, however, is still expected to rank second in the region after China, whose growth was also revised down to 7.5% for the year.

In its economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific released in Hanoi on April 17, ESCAP praised Vietnam's 7% GDP growth rate last year, stressing the strong increase in domestic demand.

The survey also attributed the substantial number of new businesses established recently to an investment boom in Vietnam. The industrial sector registered strong growth, with private and foreign-invested sectors leading the field. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector was affected by adverse weather conditions while trade disputes affected fisheries. Growth in the service sector was due to a boom in tourism.

The survey noted Vietnam's export revenues recovered in 2002, particularly in the second half, registering yearly growth of 5.2%. This was attributed to strong commodity prices and increased exports to the US.

Foreign capital was also a driving force for economic growth in Vietnam last year, ESCAP said. Disbursement of inward foreign direct investment stood at around $2.1 billion a year between 2000-2002 while ODA committed in this period was $5.82 billion, of which over 90% has been disbursed.

The survey also revealed that the country's official reserves increased from $3.4 billion in 2000 to approximately $4 billion in 2002.

By the end of 2002, the country's outstanding external debt had stood at roughly $13.3 billion, representing 37% of its GDP and 84% of its export value. However, most of the debt is on concessional terms and enjoys low interest rates. International economic analysts said this external debt is controllable.

UNDP economist Robert Glofcheski, however, warned Vietnam about being too reliant on foreign sources for capital for the country's development, which could lead to a crisis like recent seen in Argentina. He urged the Vietnamese Government to further boost exports in order to earn more foreign currencies.

While admitting that Vietnam has made rapid progresses in market-

oriented reforms and poverty reduction as well as in labor market conditions, ESCAP complained that the reform of State-owned enterprises is slow. Inflation is going up and it is predicted to reach 5% this year due to devaluation of the Vietnamese dong.

ESCAP also emphasized that inconsistent policies for investors and cumbersome administrative procedures will be a disadvantage for the country in attracting local and foreign investment.

UN - ESCAP
LAUNCH OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY
OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
LỄ CÔNG BỐ BÁO CÁO PHÁT TRIỂN KINH TẾ - XÃ
CHÂU Á - THÁI BÌNH DƯƠNG
HÀ NỘI, 17/04/2003

UN - ESCAP
LAUNCH OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY
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CHÂU Á - THÁI BÌNH DƯƠNG
/2003
JORDAN RYAN
LE LUONG MINH

LE LUONG MINH

Việt Nam tăng trưởng nhanh thứ 2 châu Á

Theo báo cáo được Cơ quan Phát triển Liên hợp quốc (UNDP) phối hợp với Ủy ban Kinh tế xã hội khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương (ESCAP) công bố chiều hôm qua (17-4) tại Hà Nội, tăng trưởng kinh tế của VN năm 2003 sẽ là 7%, xếp thứ hai trong khu vực sau Trung Quốc (7,5%).

Ông Lê Lương Minh -quyền Vụ trưởng Vụ Hợp tác kinh tế đa biên (Bộ Ngoại giao) và là thư ký ban soạn thảo báo cáo cho hay, năm 2003, tăng trưởng kinh tế của châu Á gặp phải một số cản trở như chiến tranh tại Iraq, bệnh dịch SARS và môi trường kinh tế xấu đi tại Mỹ, Nhật Bản và châu Âu. Chính vì vậy, tốc độ tăng trưởng của hầu hết các nước sẽ sụt giảm so với năm 2002. "Trước

Xem tiếp trang 9

Việt Nam...

Tiếp theo trang 1

đây, ban soạn thảo dự kiến tăng trưởng kinh tế của Trung Quốc và VN lần lượt là 7,7 và 7,5% trong năm 2003, nhưng nay đã phải điều chỉnh lại cho phù hợp với thực tế", ông Minh nói.

Ông Robert Glofcheski, nhà kinh tế của UNDP tại VN cho biết, thương mại nội vùng đang là vấn đề sống còn đối với các nước trong khu vực. Ông Glofcheski còn nhận định, thúc đẩy đầu tư cả trong và ngoài nước sẽ giúp các nước châu Á, đặc biệt là VN, hồi phục đà tăng trưởng.

Báo cáo này, mang tên "châu Á - Thái Bình Dương: Đứng vững trước thử thách", là hoạt động thường niên của Ủy ban kinh tế xã hội khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương sẽ cung cấp các số liệu kinh tế cập nhật mới nhất về khu vực và đưa ra các dự báo về tăng trưởng, lạm phát, thương mại, khuyến nghị chính sách...●

(Theo VN Express)

Nguoi Lao Dong, 18.04.2003

ĐÁNH GIÁ CỦA ESCAP VỀ TÌNH HÌNH KINH TẾ - XÃ HỘI VIỆT NAM

Kinh tế tư nhân dẫn đầu về tốc độ tăng trưởng

MÔI TRƯỜNG ĐẦU TƯ.- Thủ tục rườm rà, bộ máy hành chính cồng kềnh, thiếu thông tin cung cấp cho nhà đầu tư... làm ảnh hưởng thu hút đầu tư

Chiều 17-4-2003, Chương trình Phát triển của LHQ (UNDP) đã công bố Báo cáo điều tra về nền kinh tế - xã hội khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương năm 2003 do Ủy ban Kinh tế và Xã hội của LHQ khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương (ESCAP) thực hiện.

2003: GDP của Việt Nam dự kiến tăng 7%

ESCAP đưa ra dự báo, năm 2003, triển vọng phát triển của khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương phụ thuộc rất nhiều vào cuộc chiến Iraq và những hậu quả của nó; tác động của dịch viêm đường hô hấp cấp (SARS) và tình hình tăng trưởng ở Hoa Kỳ, Nhật Bản và Liên minh châu Âu (EU). Năm 2003, dự kiến mức tăng trưởng GDP tại một số nền kinh tế là: Trung Quốc 7,5%, Hồng Kông 2,5%, Hàn Quốc 4,1%, Singapore 3%, Thái Lan 4,2% và Việt Nam là 7%...

Tại Việt Nam, theo ESCAP, **cầu nội địa tăng mạnh đã trở thành nguyên nhân thúc đẩy việc tăng GDP, đạt 7% vào năm 2002**. Mức tăng trưởng trong ngành công nghiệp tăng mạnh, đặc biệt nhờ các mặt hàng liên quan tới tiêu dùng và hàng may mặc xuất khẩu sang Mỹ. Khu vực tư nhân và khu vực có vốn đầu tư nước ngoài hiện đang dẫn đầu về tốc độ tăng trưởng.

Thâm hụt tài chính và công nợ có thể tăng

Đề cập đến các vấn đề về chính sách, báo cáo của ESCAP cho rằng, Việt Nam đã đạt được tiến bộ đáng kể trong lĩnh vực giảm nghèo và tình hình thị trường lao động đã được cải thiện. Tiến bộ của các cuộc cải tổ theo hướng thị trường trong chính sách thương mại là rất nhanh, tuy nhiên gần đây lại có những biểu hiện thụt lùi trong các chính sách liên quan đến xe máy và xe du lịch. ESCAP cũng dự báo khả năng thâm hụt tài chính và các khoản công nợ của Việt Nam sẽ tăng trong tương lai gần do cần nhiều vốn hơn cho hoạt động giảm nghèo và công cuộc cải cách.



Doanh nghiệp tư nhân T-Silk sản xuất hàng mỹ nghệ đất nung xuất khẩu
Ảnh: N.HỮU

Trả lời các nhà báo, ông Robert Glofcheski, chuyên viên kinh tế trưởng thường trú của UNDP, cho rằng năm 2003, tỉ lệ tăng trưởng của Việt Nam sẽ giảm khoảng 0,5%. Nguyên nhân là các nhà đầu tư nước ngoài chưa mặn mà lắm với việc đầu tư vào thị trường này. Lý do: **chưa có một sự rõ ràng, nhất quán về chính sách cũng như pháp lý đối với các nhà đầu tư, thủ tục rườm rà, bộ máy hành chính cồng kềnh, sự bất trắc của hệ thống ngân hàng**, khả năng sử dụng công nghệ thông tin, thiếu thông tin cung cấp cho các nhà đầu tư... Nếu cải thiện môi trường đầu tư, con số đầu tư của nước ngoài vào Việt Nam chắc chắn không phải là hơn 2 tỉ USD/năm như hiện nay.

Về ảnh hưởng của dịch SARS đối với nền kinh tế Việt Nam, ông Lê Lương Minh, quyền Vụ trưởng Vụ Hợp tác kinh tế đa biên, Bộ Ngoại giao, cho rằng chưa thể lường hết những tác động tiêu cực căn bệnh này gây ra, nhất là đối với ngành hàng không, du lịch và đi lại buôn bán.

LAN ANH

Tuoi Tre, 18.04.2003

VN tiếp tục tăng trưởng cao trong những năm tới

Các triển vọng kinh tế của VN được đánh giá khá lạc quan trong báo cáo điều tra kinh tế - xã hội khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương do Ủy ban Kinh tế xã hội châu Á - Thái Bình Dương của Liên Hiệp Quốc (ESCAP) công bố ngày 17-4.

Các chuyên gia kinh tế của ESCAP nhận định VN dự kiến đạt mức tăng trưởng GDP 7,5% trong năm 2003, đứng thứ hai trong khu vực châu Á và mức tăng trưởng này sẽ là bền vững đến năm 2005. Như vậy so với con số ước tính của ESCAP về tăng trưởng GDP của VN năm 2002 là 7,0%, tăng trưởng năm nay của VN cao hơn năm ngoái 0,5%, một thành tựu vượt lên trên Trung Quốc khi nước này dự kiến bị sụt giảm GDP 0,2% vào năm nay và không thể vượt mức 7,9% trong những năm tới.

Lý giải nguyên nhân thúc đẩy tăng GDP của VN, ESCAP cho rằng nhu cầu nội địa của VN tăng mạnh và được hỗ trợ bởi các chính sách tài chính và tiền tệ thông thoáng khiến đà tăng trưởng phục hồi. Ngoài ra, số đáng kể các doanh nghiệp mới thành lập gần đây cũng đóng góp có ý nghĩa vào việc đầu tư tăng mạnh. Như các năm trước, khu vực tư nhân và khu vực có vốn đầu tư nước ngoài vẫn dẫn đầu về tốc độ tăng trưởng trong ngành công nghiệp, đặc biệt là nhờ các mặt hàng liên quan tới tiêu dùng và hàng may mặc xuất khẩu sang Mỹ. Du lịch và thương mại của VN trong năm qua cũng được các chuyên gia Liên Hiệp Quốc (LHQ) đánh giá rất cao với việc khách du lịch vào VN tăng mạnh và thu nhập từ xuất khẩu phục hồi, đạt mức tăng trưởng cả năm 2002 là 5,2%.

ESCAP cũng chỉ rõ các khoản ngoại hối đang đóng vai trò quan trọng hơn ở VN và ước tính đạt khoảng 2 tỉ USD năm 2002. Việc giải ngân FDI từ bên ngoài vào VN tương đối ổn định, đạt khoảng 2,1 tỉ USD/năm trong giai đoạn 2000-2002. Đặc biệt, các nguồn vốn ODA đóng vai trò đáng kể với số vốn cam kết 5,52 tỉ USD trong cùng giai đoạn và mức giải ngân đã đạt tới 90%. Tuy nhiên, chuyên gia kinh tế của UNDP Robert Glofcheski đã cảnh báo rằng việc phụ thuộc quá nhiều vào các nguồn vốn nước ngoài có thể dẫn đến một kịch bản khủng hoảng như ở Argentina. "Chúng ta hãy nhìn bài học từ Argentina. Tôi cho rằng VN vẫn rất cần phải chú trọng vào các khoản đầu tư và tiết kiệm trong nước mặc dù tỏ ra là hấp thu tốt ODA và FDI. Bên cạnh đó, VN cũng cần phải nỗ lực tăng xuất khẩu hơn nữa để có các nguồn thu ngoại tệ của riêng mình" - ông R. Glofcheski nói tại cuộc họp công bố báo cáo ở Hà Nội. Khảo sát của ESCAP cho biết VN hiện có khoảng 4 tỉ USD dự trữ chính thức.



Công ty Acqui Tia Sáng Hải Phòng vừa hoàn thành đơn hàng sản xuất 35.000 bình Acqui miễn bảo dưỡng xuất khẩu sang Cộng hòa Czech - Ảnh: TTXVN

Báo cáo của ESCAP năm nay cũng không bỏ qua các yếu tố thời sự đang ảnh hưởng tới kinh tế toàn cầu. "Mặc dù năm 2002 khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương hoạt động tốt nhưng triển vọng trong năm 2003 lại phụ thuộc rất nhiều vào cuộc chiến Iraq và hậu quả của nó, tác động của dịch SARS và tình hình tăng trưởng ở Mỹ, Nhật Bản và EU" - báo cáo viết. Theo ông Lê Lương Minh, quyền vụ trưởng kinh tế đa phương của Bộ Ngoại giao, các nghiên cứu mới nhất cho thấy quí 2 năm nay các nền kinh tế Hong Kong, Trung Quốc, Singapore có thể suy giảm 0,2 - 0,7%.

Nhưng các yếu tố ảnh hưởng tới triển vọng kinh tế của VN năm tới lại có vẻ như nằm ngoài các chuyện thời sự trên. Các gợi ý của ESCAP đưa ra cho VN để cập chủ yếu tới các vấn đề chính sách. ESCAP đánh giá tiến bộ của các cuộc cải tổ theo hướng thị trường trong chính sách thương mại là rất nhanh, ngoại trừ các biểu hiện thụt lùi trong các chính sách liên quan đến xe máy và xe du lịch. Bên cạnh đó, việc cải cách các xí nghiệp quốc doanh đã bị chậm lại do phía các nhà quản lý và công nhân chưa sẵn sàng cộng với gánh nặng nợ nần của các xí nghiệp này. Để vượt qua những trở ngại này, ESCAP kêu gọi các nước đang phát triển, trong đó có VN, tiếp tục duy trì động lực của cuộc cải cách cơ cấu, tiếp tục các cam kết về tự do hóa thương mại, nâng cao năng suất và sự cạnh tranh song song với tăng cường công tác quản trị trong khu vực nhà nước và tư nhân.

"Dịch SARS có thể ảnh hưởng đôi chút đến giao dịch thương mại giữa VN và Trung Quốc. Nhưng nếu như các vấn đề về minh bạch luật pháp cộng với việc cải thiện mạnh mẽ hơn môi trường đầu tư của VN, tôi tin rằng GDP của VN sẽ còn tăng trưởng ở mức đáng ngạc nhiên hơn nữa" - ông R. Glofcheski kết luận.

CẨM HÀ

Ha Noi Moi, 18.04.2003

Kết quả điều tra KT-XH châu Á - Thái Bình Dương năm 2003

(HNM) - Chiều 17-4, tại trụ sở Chương trình Phát triển Liên hợp quốc (UNDP), Ủy ban Kinh tế và Xã hội của Liên hợp quốc khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương (ESCAP) đã công bố "Báo cáo điều tra về kinh tế - xã hội khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương năm 2003". Đề cập đến Việt Nam, báo cáo nhấn mạnh, cầu nội địa tăng là nguyên nhân thúc đẩy việc tăng GDP của Việt Nam đạt 7% trong năm 2002, số doanh nghiệp mới thành lập gần đây đã đóng góp tích cực trong việc thúc đẩy đầu tư. Nhờ các mặt hàng liên quan tới tiêu dùng và hàng may mặc xuất khẩu sang Mỹ nên mức tăng trưởng trong ngành công nghiệp tăng mạnh, nhất là khu vực tư nhân và khu vực có vốn đầu tư nước ngoài. Việt Nam đã đạt được tiến bộ đáng kể trong lĩnh vực xóa đói giảm nghèo và tình hình thị trường lao động đã được cải thiện. Tiến bộ của các cuộc cải tổ theo hướng thị trường trong chính sách thương mại là rất nhanh. Việc Việt Nam mở cửa khu vực dịch vụ theo các hiệp định thương mại sẽ có tác động lớn đối với ngành ngân hàng, lĩnh vực đang có những tiến triển trong quá trình cải cách...

Tại cuộc họp báo, đại diện của ESCAP cũng nêu rõ những rủi ro, thách thức mà khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương đang phải đối mặt. Đó là cuộc chiến tranh I-rắc và hậu quả của nó; việc hoành hành của căn bệnh viêm đường hô hấp cấp (SARS) đang đe dọa tốc độ tăng trưởng kinh tế của các quốc gia; ảnh hưởng của sự tăng trưởng không ổn định ở Hoa Kỳ, Nhật Bản và Liên minh châu Âu (EU).

THANH HẢI

Ha Noi Moi, 18.04.2003 - vietlan.vcf

Vietnam News, 19.04.2003

UN body predicts 7% growth for Việt Nam

HÀ NỘI — Việt Nam's economy will grow by 7 per cent this year, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP, has forecast.

In its economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific released in Hà Nội this week, ESCAP praised Việt Nam's 7 per cent GDP growth rate last year, pointing to the strong increase in domestic demand.

According to the survey, the substantial number of new businesses established recently has contributed significantly to an investment boom in Việt Nam. The industrial sector registered strong growth, especially consumption-related products and garment exports to the US.

Private and foreign-investment sectors led the growth. However, agriculture was affected by adverse weather conditions, while trade disputes affected fisheries. The tourism boom fuelled the growth in services.

FDI flows were relatively stable in recent years, at around US$2.1 billion a year between 2000-02. ODA committed in this period was $5.82 billion, over 90 per cent of which has been brought in.

The survey pointed to a recovery in Việt Nam's exports in 2002, particularly in the second half, which grew 5.2 per cent year-on-year, mainly due to strong commodity prices and increased exports to the US.

The country's forex reserves increased from $3.4 billion in 2000 to approximately $4 billion in 2002.

By the end of 2002, the country's outstanding external debt stood at around $13.3 billion, representing 37 per cent of its GDP and 84 per cent of its annual exports.

However, with most of the debts being soft loans, enjoying low interest rates, economists said the situation was under control.

ESCAP said Việt Nam has made rapid progress in market-oriented reforms and poverty reduction, and labour market conditions. However, reform of State-owned enterprises has been slow.

Inflation is going up and is predicted to reach 5 per cent this year due to devaluation of the Vietnamese *đồng*.

ESCAP also warned that policies not uniform for all investors and cumbersome administrative procedures will detract from the country's ability to attract domestic and foreign investment. — VNS

ESCAP dự báo năm 2003

Việt Nam sẽ đạt mức tăng trưởng GDP 7%

Do ảnh hưởng của cuộc chiến Iraq và nạn dịch SARS, các chuyên gia Uỷ ban Kinh tế xã hội khu vực châu Á- Thái Bình Dương (ESCAP) và Quỹ tiền tệ quốc tế (IMF) đã điều chỉnh dự đoán về mức tăng trưởng GDP của Việt Nam (VN) trong năm 2003 từ mức 7,5% xuống còn 7%. Mức tăng trưởng của Trung Quốc cũng được điều chỉnh từ 7,7% xuống 7,5%; Hàn Quốc: 5,3% xuống 4,1%; Nhật Bản: 0,9% xuống 0,6%; Mỹ: 2,5% xuống 2,2% và EU: 2,3% xuống 1,8%. Trên phạm vi toàn thế giới, mức tăng trưởng dự kiến sẽ là 2,3%, thấp hơn 0,5% so với dự kiến ban đầu.

Theo báo cáo thường niên của ESCAP vừa được công bố ngày 17/4 vừa qua, dự kiến mức lạm phát của VN tăng lên mức 5% trong năm 2003 do tiền đồng mất giá nhanh. Đồng tiền VN liên tục mất giá so với đồng đô la Mỹ từ năm 1997 và tốc độ mất giá trong năm 2002 tuy đã giảm nhưng vẫn ở mức 2,1%. Dự kiến, VN có khả năng sẽ tăng thâm hụt tài chính và các khoản nợ công trong tương lai gần vì do cần nhiều vốn cho hoạt động giảm nghèo và công cuộc cải cách. Tuy nhiên, tình hình nợ nước ngoài của VN được xem là khá khả quan vì khoản nợ này trong năm 2002 chỉ khoảng 13,3 tỉ, chiếm 37% GDP và hầu hết số nợ này được hưởng điều kiện ưu đãi và có lãi suất thấp.

Ngoài ra, báo cáo của ESCAP cũng lưu ý VN về một số vấn đề như: chính sách liên quan tới xe gắn máy và xe du lịch; sự chậm trễ của tiến trình cải cách DN Nhà nước và tỷ lệ nghèo cao ở các vùng nông thôn.

Bình Châu - Hồng Sơn

Gia Đình & Xã hội, 19.04.03

VOVNEWS

Society

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SARS preventive measures enhanced nationwide



Doctors at Tropical Medicine Institute examine X-ray films to give proper remedies to SARS patients

The Ministry of Health has asked the Government to ensure that any emigrant as tourist entering Vietnam from areas with a high risk of SARS must prepare a health status declaration when they apply for an entry visa. The Ministry suggested that Vietnam Airlines should provide masks to passengers and crew members on all the flights. It asked the northern border province of Quang Ninh to postpone the Ha Long Tourism Week due to worries over SARS. The festival is scheduled to open next Friday.

A report released by the Ministry of Health on Friday says there are only 10 remaining SARS patients being treated at the Bach Mai Hospital's Institute for Clinical Research in Tropical Diseases. Nine of the patients have shown positive signs of recovery, and one patient still has to use the respirator.

HCM City has taken urgent preventive measures to curb SARS. The municipal People's Committee has asked all precincts and districts to establish steering committees for SARS prevention. These committees will coordinate with district People's Committees, health centers, police and Red Cross agencies to devise preventive measures.

The Municipal External Relations Department has

been assigned to provide information on SARS development for diplomatic corps, and requested all foreign businesses located in the city to follow preventive measures.

The municipal Health Department, the Southern Civil Aviation Authority, Customs Office, and Police at border gates have closely coordinated to curb the possible outbreak of SARS at airport, ports and terminals. Up to now, no SARS cases have been detected in HCM City.

The Health Department of central coastal Phu Yen province has completed training on SARS prevention for 90 provincial doctors and medical workers. Training courses will continue for medical workers at a grassroots level until April 20. No SARS cases have been reported in Phu Yen so far.
The People's Committee of southern Vinh Long province has also earmarked over US$30,000 for the provincial health sector to buy protective equipment, chemicals, and medicine.

The Japanese newspaper, Yomiuri, on April 19, says ASEAN countries seem to control the outbreak of the disease. The newspaper cites Vietnam as typical example in controlling the disease. It quotes the WHO representative in Hanoi, Pascale Brudon, as saying the disease would be eliminated in the country if no new cases are found in the next two weeks.

All ten ASEAN leaders will meet at a summit on SARS in Bangkok later this month to exchange technical assistance and information on treating patients.
The spread of the SARS virus has cast doubt over economic forecasts for Asia-Pacific economies this year. The growth forecast is slightly lower than the 5.1 percent growth posted last year by developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
The UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regional survey for 2003 has revised down the forecast growth for developing countries in the region to 5 percent from 5.4 percent due to the impact of SARS.

VOVNEWS

Economics

58 QuanSu - Hanoi Tel: (84-4) 9344231 Fax: (84-4) 9344230 Email: vovnews@hn.vnn.vn

ESCAP confident of Vietnam's sustainable growth

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has forecast that Vietnam will achieve a GDP growth rate of 7 percent this year.

In its economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific released in Hanoi on Thursday, ESCAP praised Vietnam's 7-percent GDP growth rate last year, stressing the strong increase in domestic demand.

According to the survey, the substantial number of new businesses established recently has contributed significantly to an investment boom in Vietnam. The industrial sector registered a strong growth, particularly thanks to consumption-related products and garments exported to the US. Of the economic sectors, private and foreign-invested led the growth.

Meanwhile, the agricultural sector was affected by adverse weather conditions while trade disputes affected the fisheries. Growth in the services sector was due to a boom in tourism.

Disbursement of inward foreign direct investment has been relatively stable in recent years, at around US$2.1 billion a year between 2000-2002. ODA committed in this period was US$5.82 billion, of which over 90 percent has been disbursed.

Vietnam's export revenues, the survey noted, recovered in 2002, particularly in the second half, registering a yearly growth of 5.2 per cent. This was attributed to strong commodity prices and increased exports to the US. The country's official reserves increased from US$3.4 billion in 2000 to approximately US$4 billionin 2002.

By the end of 2002, the country's outstanding external

debt had stood at roughly US$13.3 billion, representing 37 percent of its GDP and 84 percent of its export value. However, most of the debt is on concessional terms and enjoys low interest rates. International economic analysts said this external debt is controllable.

ESCAP said Vietnam has made rapid progresses in market-oriented reforms and poverty reduction as well as in labour market conditions.

However, the reform of State-owned enterprises is slow. Inflation is going up and it is predicted to reach 5 percent this year due to devaluation of the Vietnamese dong.

ESCAP also underscored the fact that policies which were not uniform for investors and cumbersome administrative procedures will be disadvantages for the country in attracting local and foreign investment.

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Thoi bao kinh te
21.04.2003

Năm 2003, tăng trưởng GDP 7%

Đó là kết quả của Báo cáo điều tra về KT - XH khu vực châu Á -TBD năm 2003, do Uỷ ban KT - XH của LHQ khu vực châu Á - TBD (ESCAP) công bố ngày 17/4/2003.

■ Theo báo cáo, mức tăng trưởng GDP mà Việt Nam đạt được 7% của năm 2002, là do cầu nội địa tăng mạnh. Một số lớn các DN mới thành lập đã đóng góp đáng kể vào việc gia tăng đầu tư. Ngành công nghiệp tăng trưởng mạnh, đặc biệt nhờ các mặt hàng liên quan tới tiêu dùng và hàng may mặc XK sang Mỹ. Khu vực tư nhân và khu vực có vốn ĐTNN dẫn đầu về tốc độ tăng trưởng. Trong năm 2003, dự kiến GDP sẽ tăng ở mức 7,5% khi tình hình kinh tế toàn cầu được cải thiện và cơ hội do Hiệp định thương mại Việt - Mỹ đem lại. Nhưng theo con số ước tính, tốc độ tăng trưởng của VN giảm ít nhất 0,5% và mức tăng sẽ là 7%. Tính đến cuối năm 2002, nợ nước ngoài của VN dự tính khoảng 13,3 tỷ USD, tăng 1,2 tỷ USD so với năm 2000. Tuy nhiên, hầu hết số nợ này được hưởng các điều kiện ưu đãi và có lãi suất thấp.

Theo ông Robert Glofcheski, chuyên viên kinh tế thường trú của UNDP tại VN, mức nợ nước ngoài của VN có thể quản lý được. VN đã đạt được tiến bộ đáng kể trong cải cách theo hướng thị trường, xoá đói giảm nghèo. Song, tỷ lệ nghèo vẫn cao ở các vùng nông thôn. Việc cải cách các DN quốc doanh đang bị chậm lại, lạm phát tăng và dự kiến sẽ là 5% trong năm 2003 do VND mất giá nhanh. Chính sách thiếu nhất quán đối với nhà đầu tư, các thủ tục hành chính rườm rà sẽ là những khó khăn trong việc thu hút vốn đầu tư trong và ngoài nước.

H.LINH

Tien Phong, 21.04.03

UNDP dự báo tăng trưởng GDP của Việt Nam năm 2003

Chiều 17/4, Chương trình Phát triển Liên Hợp Quốc (UNDP) đã công bố bản báo cáo điều tra kinh tế xã hội khu vực châu Á-Thái Bình Dương. UNDP cho biết mặc dù kinh tế toàn cầu bị suy yếu trong năm 2002, nhưng các nền kinh tế khu vực châu Á-Thái Bình Dương hoạt động tốt đến ngạc nhiên, đạt mức tăng trưởng khoảng 5% (tăng 2% so với 2001). Riêng với Việt Nam, UNDP đánh giá cầu nội địa là nguyên nhân thúc việc tăng GDP của Việt Nam đạt 7% trong năm 2002. Số lượng doanh nghiệp mới thành lập đóng góp có ý nghĩa vào việc đầu tư tăng mạnh. Ngành công nghiệp, đặc biệt là các mặt hàng tiêu dùng và may mặc xuất khẩu sang Mỹ tăng trưởng mạnh. Thu nhập từ xuất khẩu phục hồi đặc biệt từ nửa cuối 2002 sau khi giảm mạnh trong năm 2001, nguyên

(Xem tiếp trang 16)

UNDP DỰ BÁO...

(Tiếp theo trang 1)

nhân chính là do giá hàng hóa cao và việc tăng xuất khẩu sang thị trường Mỹ.

UNDP nhận xét tiến bộ của các cuộc cải tổ theo hướng thị trường trong chính sách thương mại của Việt Nam rất nhanh. Tuy nhiên gần đây có biểu hiện thụt lùi trong chính sách liên quan đến xe máy và xe du lịch. Dự kiến lạm phát sẽ tiếp tục tăng lên đến mức 5% trong năm 2003 do đồng tiền Việt Nam mất giá nhanh. Từ 1997, đồng tiền Việt Nam liên tục mất giá so với đô la Mỹ mặc dù năm 2002 tốc độ mất giá giảm xuống mức 2,1%. Các đầu UNDP nhận định khi tình hình kinh tế toàn cầu được cải thiện và các cơ hội do Hiệp định thương mại Việt-Mỹ đem lại được khai thác tốt hơn, Việt Nam có thể đạt mức tăng GDP 7,5%. Nhưng trước ả hưởng của cuộc chiến Iraq dịch SARS, dự kiến GDP của Vi Nam sẽ là 7% trong năm nu UNDP nhấn mạnh điểm tích c nhất của Việt Nam là sự ổn địn chính trị và kinh tế vĩ mô, đặc bi là môi trường an ninh rất tốt. Vi Nam cần phát huy nội lực, tă cường tiết kiệm trong nước, th hút thêm đầu tư nước ngoài vi chú trọng vào chất lượng đầu t để phát triển bền vững. L

GDP set to spite global fears

By VIR staff

DESPITE uncertainties over the war in Iraq and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Vietnam is poised to be one of only a few fast-growing economies in the region, a United Nations report said.

The country is expected to generate an annual gross domestic product (GDP) of 7 per cent in 2003, down from the previous estimate of 7.5 per cent but still second only to China, according to a report from the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Region (ESCAP) which was released last week.

> *For developing ESCAP economies, the lower estimates are primarily the result of the combined impact of SARS and weaker global growth which intra-regional trade may not be able to off-set*

"For developing ESCAP economies, the lower estimates are primarily the result of the combined impact of SARS and weaker global growth which intra-regional trade may not be able to off-set," the report said.

The Vietnamese economy during the first quarter of this year recorded a GDP growth of 6.88 per cent compared to its whole-year target of 7-7.5 per cent, according to government data.

The economic outlook for Vietnam was expected to improve in the second half of this year in line with global economic conditions and as the opportunities presented by the trade agreement with the US were more fully exploited.

Rapid progress has been made on Vietnam socialist oriented market-economy reforms, the report said.

Economic experts said Vietnam should try to increase non-oil revenues and find a replacement for tariff revenue lost through trade liberalisation.

The UN Development Programme's chief economist in Vietnam, Robert Glofcheski, said for Vietnam "the best way to offset this (external uncertainty) is to increase domestic certainty for investors, especially domestic investors".



The report predicted Vietnam's GDP would come second only to China

The ESCAP report is contrary to International Monetary Fund (IMF) predictions earlier this month.

The IMF expected the country's GDP would climb from 5.8 per cent last year to 6.2 per cent this year and 7.0 per cent in 2004.

The ESCAP report advised governments striving to sustain GDP growth to maintain the momentum of structural reform and maintain their commitment to trade liberalisation.

The report said countries should also take measures to enhance productivity and competitiveness and focus on health and education as a way of improving productivity and reducing poverty.

Vietnam Investment Review
21-27.04.2003

Thương Mại, 22.04.03

GDP của Việt Nam ít bị ảnh hưởng bởi SARS và chiến tranh Irắc

Việt Nam vẫn giữ được mức tăng trưởng tổng sản phẩm nội địa (GDP) là 7% trong năm 2003, tương đương với mức đạt được năm 2002 và đứng thứ hai về đà tăng trưởng trong năm nay ở khu vực Châu Á và Thái Bình Dương sau Trung Quốc.

(Xem tiếp trang 5)

GDP của Việt Nam...

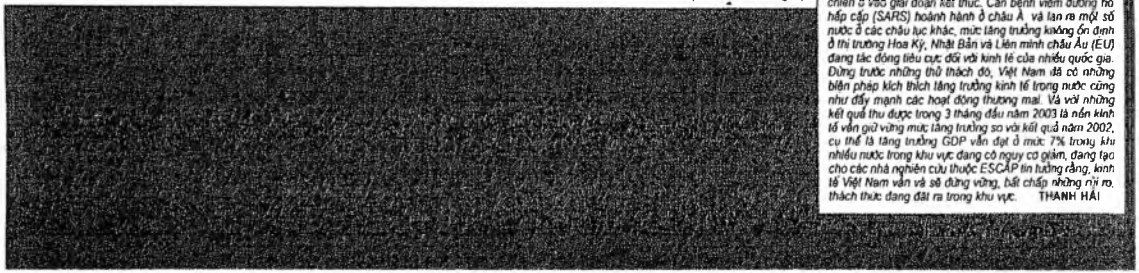
(Tiếp theo trang 1)

Đó là dự báo do Ủy ban Kinh tế Xã hội khu vực châu Á-Thái Bình Dương của Liên Hiệp Quốc (ESCAP) đưa ra trong Báo cáo điều tra kinh tế - xã hội của khu vực này, vừa được UNDP công bố ngày 17/4. Mức tăng trưởng 7% trên được đưa ra sau khi xem xét và ước đoán các thiệt hại về kinh tế và xã hội do SARS và chiến tranh Irắc mang lại. Hai sự kiện này đã làm mức tăng trưởng GDP năm nay của Việt Nam giảm 0,5% so với dự đoán đầu năm. **T.M**

ESCAP: Việt Nam vẫn đứng vững trước những thách thức

TRONG bối cảnh kinh tế khu vực có nhiều biến động, song được sự quan tâm, đầu tư đặc biệt của Chính phủ, sự nỗ lực tìm tòi con đường phát triển của các công ty, các tổ chức kinh tế... nên trong năm 2002, kinh tế Việt Nam đã tạo được những bước phát triển ổn định. Dựa trên kết quả điều tra thực tế tại Việt Nam, những thông tin của Quỹ tiền tệ quốc tế (IMF) cung cấp... Ủy ban Kinh tế và xã hội của Liên hợp quốc khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương (ESCAP) đã công bố (ngày 17-4) kết quả điều tra trong khu vực năm 2003, theo đó mức tăng trưởng GDP của Việt Nam trong năm 2002-2003 chỉ xếp sau Trung Quốc, đã đạt 7% vào năm 2002 và dự báo sẽ tiếp tục tăng trong năm 2003. Có được điều này, theo các chuyên gia đánh giá, là do nhu cầu nội địa của Việt Nam tăng mạnh, nhiều doanh nghiệp mới được thành lập và đi vào hoạt động đã góp phần không nhỏ thu hút vốn đầu tư nước ngoài. Thêm nữa, mức tăng trưởng trong ngành công nghiệp, đặc biệt là đẩy mạnh việc xuất khẩu các mặt hàng tiêu dùng, may mặc sang thị trường Mỹ, du lịch, dịch vụ phát triển... trong năm qua là những yếu tố chính góp phần quan trọng thúc đẩy nền kinh tế đất nước. Trong lĩnh vực thương mại, sau khi giảm mạnh trong năm 2001, thương mại của chúng ta đã dần phục hồi, cải thiện đáng kể những thu nhập từ xuất khẩu, dẫn đến sự tăng trưởng, đưa mức tăng trưởng cả năm 2002 là 5,2%. Các khoản ngoại hối đang trở nên quan trọng ở Việt Nam và ước đạt khoảng 2 tỉ USD năm 2002. Việc giải ngân FDI từ bên ngoài vào tương đối ổn định, với 2,1 tỉ USD/năm trong giai đoạn 2000-2002. Chiến dịch kể là các nguồn vốn ODA với số vốn cam kết đạt khoảng 5,82 tỉ USD cho giai đoạn 2000-2002, trong đó hơn 90% đã được giải ngân. Dự trữ chính thức tăng 3,4 tỉ USD năm 2000 lên khoảng 4 tỉ USD năm 2002.

(Xem tiếp trang 4)

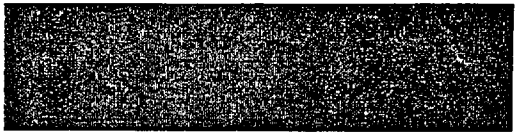


ESCAP... *(Tiếp theo trang 8)*

Một điều cần nhắc đến trong thắng lợi của Việt Nam trên lĩnh vực kinh tế, đó là Chính phủ đã cải thiện đáng kể các vấn đề về chính sách, tạo ra một môi trường thuận lợi, hấp dẫn cho các nhà đầu tư nước ngoài. Việt Nam đã đạt được những tiến bộ cụ thể trong lĩnh vực xoa đói giảm nghèo, việc đầu tư cho các lĩnh vực giáo dục được đẩy mạnh, dẫn đến những cải thiện rõ rệt đối với tình hình thị trường lao động. Tiến bộ trong chính sách thương mại của nước ta được ESCAP đánh giá là rất nhanh; việc mở cửa khu vực dịch vụ ở Việt Nam theo các hiệp định thương mại đã có tác động lớn đối với ngành ngân hàng, lĩnh vực đang có những tiến triển trong quá trình phát triển.

Bước vào năm 2003, những biến động của tình hình thế giới, khu vực đang là trở ngại cho Việt Nam thực đẩy nhịp độ tăng trưởng. Cụ thể là cuộc chiến tranh I-rắc do nhà cầm quyền Mỹ phát động đang gây nên những biến động mạnh đối với thị trường dầu mỏ, ngay cả khi cuộc chiến ở vào giai đoạn kết thúc. Căn bệnh viêm đường hô hấp cấp (SARS) hoành hành ở châu Á và lan ra một số nước ở các châu lục khác, mức tăng trưởng không ổn định ở thị trường Hoa Kỳ, Nhật Bản và Liên minh châu Âu (EU) đang tác động tiêu cực đối với kinh tế của nhiều quốc gia. Dứng trước những thử thách đó, Việt Nam đã có những biện pháp kích thích tăng trưởng kinh tế trong nước cũng như đẩy mạnh các hoạt động thương mại. Và với những kết quả thu được trong 3 tháng đầu năm 2003 là nền kinh tế vẫn giữ vững mức tăng trưởng so với kết quả năm 2002, cụ thể là tăng trưởng GDP vẫn đạt ở mức 7% trong khi nhiều nước trong khu vực đang có nguy cơ giảm, đang tạo cho các nhà nghiên cứu thuộc ESCAP tin tưởng rằng, kinh tế Việt Nam vẫn và sẽ đứng vững, bất chấp những rủi ro, thách thức đang đặt ra trong khu vực. THANH HẢI

Ha Noi Moi, 23.04.03



International

Tuesday April 22, 11:48 AM

Vietnam's Economy to Increase by 7 PCT This Year: Escap

HANOI, April 22 Asia Pulse - Vietnam's economy will grow by 7 per cent this year, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP, has forecast.

In its economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific released in Hanoi late last week, ESCAP praised Vietnam's 7 per cent GDP growth rate last year, pointing to the strong increase in domestic demand.

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According to the survey, the substantial number of new businesses established recently has contributed significantly to an investment boom in Vietnam. The industrial sector registered strong growth, especially consumption-related products and garment exports to the US.

Private and foreign-investment
sectors led the growth. However, agriculture was affected by adverse weather conditions, while trade disputes affected fisheries. The tourism boom fuelled the growth in services.

FDI flows were relatively stable in recent years, at around US$2.1 billion a year between 2000-02. ODA committed in this period was $5.82 billion, over 90 per cent of which has been brought in.

The survey pointed to a recovery in Vietnam's exports in 2002, particularly in the second half, which grew 5.2 per cent year-on-year, mainly due to strong commodity prices and increased exports to the US.

The country's forex reserves increased from $3.4 billion in 2000 to approximately $4 billion in 2002.

By the end of 2002, the country's outstanding external debt stood at around $13.3 billion, representing 37 per cent of its GDP and 84 per cent of its annual exports.

However, with most of the debts being soft loans, enjoying low interest rates, economists said the situation was under control.

ESCAP said Vietnam has made rapid progress in market-oriented reforms and poverty reduction, and labour market conditions. However, reform of State-owned enterprises has been slow.

Inflation is going up and is predicted to reach 5 per cent this year due to devaluation of the Vietnamese dong.

ESCAP also warned that policies not uniform for all investors and cumbersome administrative procedures will detract from the country's ability to attract domestic and foreign investment.

(VNA)

Vietnam Economic News, 29.04.2003

Stable and Positive Economic Growth

ESCAP's report on the socio-economic situation in the Asia - Pacific region gives optimistic predictions about Vietnam's economic prospects.

By Ha Cam

In a report published on April 17, experts from the Economic and Social Committee of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) guess that Vietnam can reach a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7.5 percent in 2003, the second highest level in Asia. They also say this rate can be maintained until 2005. Compared with ESCAP's prediction about the country's GDP growth in 2002 (17 percent), the level for this year was actually 0.5 percent higher. Meanwhile, that of China is forecasted to reduce by 0.2 percent this year and will not exceed 7.9 percent in the forthcoming years.

Explaining the reason behind its predictions, ESCAP said that Vietnam's demand has strongly increased and is supported by open and transparent financial and monetary policies. Those are positive factors for economy growth. Last year, export revenue recovered from previous fluctuations, meeting a growth rate of 9.8 percent. In addition, a large number of newly established enterprises have significantly contributed to investment development. In recent years, private and foreign-run sectors have taken the lead in industrial growth rate due to their pre-dominance in consumer goods production as well as exports of textile-garments, especially to the US. ESCAP also highlighted Vietnam's performance in trade and tourism in 2002. It praised the country for having welcomed a huge number of foreign visitors.

ESCAP also pointed out that the role of foreign capital is increasing in Vietnam. Last year, it hit about $2 billion. Disbursement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is quite stable, worth approximately $2.1 billion per year in the period of 2000 - 2002. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is substancial with a committed figure of $5.52 billion in the same period, 90 percent of it being disbursed. Nevertheless, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) economic expert, Robert Glofcheski, warned that excessive dependence on foreign capital could lead to a crisis similar to the one currently happening in Argentina. "Let's see what will be the lessons drawn from the Argentinean crisis. I think Vietnam still need to give more importance to local investment and savings although it absorbs well ODA and FDI. Vietnam also needs to increase its exports in order to have its own sources of income in foreign currencies," he said at a press conference in Ha Noi, on the occasion of the release of the report. ESCAP's surveys reveals that Vietnam currently has about $4 billion of official reserve.



Photo: Ngu Nghi

Vietnam can reach a growth rate of 7.5 percent in 2003

ESCAP's report also addresses the recent events that are influencing the global economy. "Although the Asia - Pacific region did well in 2002, prospects for 2003 largely depend on the consequences of the Iraq war, on the influences of SARS as well as on economic trends in the US, Japan and the EU (European Union)," the report states. Le Luong Minh, executive head of the Multilateral Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that according to latest researches, the economies of Hong Kong, China and Singapore could loose 0.2 to 0.7 percent in the second quarter this year.

However, the factors affecting Vietnam's economic prospects for next year do not seem to relate to the above events. ESCAP's suggests that, in the case of Vietnam, these are mainly matters related to policy that influence economic development. The committee globally praised Vietnam for the progresses it made in refonning its trade policy towards a free market economy, at the exclusion of policies on motorbikes and touring cars. Apart from that, the renovation of State-owned enterprises has slowed down because managers and workers have yet to be ready to share the debt burdens of those enterprises. To overcome these obstacles, ESCAP calls for all developing countries, including Vietnam, to sustain their motivation for structural reform, pursue their commitment to trade liberalization, productivity improvement and competitiveness along with strengthening management in the private and State-owned sectors. ■



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