

The Indian Express, 1 October 2008

Pirates release Malaysian tankers after ransom paid

KUALA LUMPUR: Somali pirates have released two Malaysian Oil tankers and their crews in exchange for ransom a month after hijacking the vessels, a shipping company official said on Tuesday. "A ransom was paid for both the ships. We delivered the money with the help of the Malaysian navy. It was cash on delivery," Mohamad Hassan Marican, chairman of state-controlled MISC Bhd which owns the ships, told reporters.

The Economic Times, 1 October 2008

India-ASEAN to sign trade pact on Dec 18: Ramesh

NEW DELHI: India and the 10-nation ASEAN will sign around December 18 this year the Free Trade Agreement in goods, negotiations for which have been wrapped up, Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh said today. "We will formally be signing the FTA with ASEAN around December 18," Ramesh said at a seminar on ASEAN-India FTA organised by think-tank RIS and the Asian Development Bank.

International Herald Tribune, 1 October 2008

Outspoken Singapore dissident dies

OBITUARY: Joshua B. Jeyaretnam, the opposition politician whose outspokenness and persistence made him Singapore's leading dissident, died Tuesday of a heart attack, family members said. At the age of 82, recently freed from bankruptcy, Jeyaretnam was preparing another run for Parliament, where he had broken the governing party's monopoly by winning the first opposition seat in 1981.

International Herald Tribune, 1 October 2008

Monks stage protest march in Myanmar

YANGON: About 100 Buddhist monks in a western Myanmar city staged a peaceful protest march to mark the anniversary of the bloody crackdown last year on pro-democracy demonstrators. Meanwhile, in the country's biggest city, Yangon, recently released political prisoners helped celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the party led by the detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The police and other security personnel kept a close watch Saturday on the headquarters of the party, the National League for Democracy.

The Jakarta Post, 1 October 2008

Army senses systematic effort to revive communism

JAKARTA: The country's armed forces are sensing various systematic attempts to revive the ideology of its defunct archenemy, Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Speaking at a prayer gathering to commemorate national heroes who died in a coup attempt allegedly involving the party on Sept. 30, 1965, army chief Gen. Agustadi Sasongko Purnomo said the threat was becoming more real.

The Times of India, 3 October 2008

UN calls for the release of Myanmar's political prisoners

GENEVA: The new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called for the release of Myanmar's political prisoners on Thursday as she launched a 'justice and dignity' week for detainees around the world. "We believe that there are still 2,000 political prisoners in Myanmar," said Pillay in her first press conference since taking office.

The Economic Times, 3 October 2008

Engineering goods exporters eye Asean market

KOLKATA: On the heels of an economic crisis getting intensified in the US and Europe, Indian engineering goods exporters are looking towards the Asean for driving up exports from the country. The exporters' body is especially counting on the potential of expanding trade with the region since it accounts for nearly 30% of India's engineering goods exports.

The Jakarta Post, 3 October 2008

Indonesia urges UN to abolish abuse of veto right

Indonesia addressed the United Nations' General Assembly on Saturday demanding a democratization of the Security Council through and end to abuse of veto right by members. Representing the republic at the general assembly, Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said veto right abuse would cripple the function of the council as a whole. He said that past failures of the council in addressing threat to global peace were because the council had not been democratic enough.

Viet Nam News, 3 October 2008

Draft resolutions clarify WTO commitments

Since Viet Nam joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on January 11, 2007, many issues relating to the clarity and implementation of investment commitments have arisen. The first big issue is that WTO commitments and domestic legislation provide different conditions for some business sectors- and are silent about some other business sectors. For instance, both sets of rules provide no guidance when foreign investors want to invest in multiple-sector projects subject to different business conditions and limits on foreign ownership.

The New Straits Times, 3 October 2008

Briefing for BN on transition

KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he would be meeting the coalition's other members "as soon as possible" to explain the Umno leadership transition plan. "We have nothing to hide. We will have a session. People will speak and we will listen to what they say," he said during the cabinet open house at the Putra World Trade Centre on Wednesday.

The Times of India, 6 October 2008

Bangkok governor re-elected for four years

BANGKOK: The governor of Thailand's capital Bangkok has been re-elected, officials said on Monday, after a colourful election race marred by fisticuffs and tragedy. Apirak Kosayodhin, deputy head of the opposition Democrat Party, got nearly 46 per cent of Sunday's vote in the city to win another four-year term, the city administration announced.

International Herald Tribune, 6 October 2008

Protest yields to lethargy in Myanmar

NEW DELHI: Myanmar is a country of uncommon beauty, full of dilapidated colonial structures slowly crumbling amid the damp swelter of the tropics, each surface and crevice losing ground to the organic pastels of mosses and molds. At night, on low stools beneath the crowded umbrellas of Yangon's center-city tea shops, men sit closely and strum loud acoustic folk melodies, their songs filled with tradition rather than protest. Usually, the only things exploding are the stall piles of papayas, pineapples and mangoes in the heat.

International Herald Tribune, 6 October 2008

Thai protest leader arrested

BANGKOK: The police arrested on Sunday the leader of a group of anti-government protesters who have occupied the grounds of the Thai prime minister's office here for more than a month. Chamlong Srimuang, who faces charges of insurrection and inciting unrest, was detained early Sunday immediately after casting his vote in the Bangkok gubernatorial election.

Viet Nam News, 6 October 2008

Viet Nam ready to return saved Indonesian sailors

HA NOI: Border guards and authorities in central Da Nang City are rushing to return seven Indonesian sailors to their homeland. A ship from Naval Force Zone 3, HQ629, on Thursday successfully reached the Indonesian ship Yinson Power No 2, after receiving a distress call during Storm Mekkhala, and pulled the vessel to Da Nang Bay with 8 sailors on board. One sailor died before the rescue operation.

The Manila Times, 6 October 2008

Rogue MILF dwindling in numbers

Renegade Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) groups are continuously losing their men because of the relentless operations being conducted by the military and the failure of MILF commanders to deliver their promises. Armed Forces Public Information Chief Ernesto Torres said many rogue MILF fighters have become frustrated and have abandoned their commanders, because the things promised to them were not delivered. The rogue MILF commanders he was referring to are Umbra Kato, Abduraman Macapaar and Solaiman Pangalian.

The Times of India, 7 October 2008

Thai police fire teargas against crowd

BANGKOK: Police fired teargas canisters on Tuesday at several thousand demonstrators trying to bar lawmakers from Parliament, injuring dozens of them and heating up a political crisis that has gripped the country for six weeks. Reporters at the scene heard sounds of gunfire, but police Maj. Gen. Viboon Bangthamai said that only teargas was being used against the crowd in Bangkok.

The Asian Age, 7 October 2008

Thaksin files for asylum in UK

LONDON: Ousted Thai PM Tha-ksin Shinaw-atra has applied for political asylum in Britain, where he has spent most of his time since being forced out of office two years ago, officials said on Monday. The home office said Mr Thaksin applied for asylum when he flew into Britain in early August, breaking his bail conditions in a corruption case in Thailand. "He applied for asylum pretty much when he landed and so did his wife," a spokesman said.

International Herald Tribune, 7 October 2008

Islamic group gains power in Indonesia

JAKARTA: In a sign of its growing prominence, Indonesia's Council of Ulemas moved its headquarters from the basement of a major mosque here into an expensive new office tower in the heart of downtown. The council was established in 1975 as a quasi-governmental body of Muslim scholars by Suharto, the country's leader for three decades, partly as a tool to keep politically minded Islamic organizations in check. But in the decade since the dictator's fall, the group - whose leaders have increasingly espoused a radical form of Islam - has worked to establish itself as an assertive political force.

The Manila Times, 7 October 2008

RP urged to consider nuclear power

The energy panel of the Congressional Commission on Science, Technology and Engineering (Comste), urged Monday that the Philippines re-explore seriously the nuclear power option and clean coal technology to lessen its dependence on fossil fuel-driven energy mix that has become more expensive.

Bangkok Post, 7 October 2008

EU optimistic about Thailand pact for next year

BRUSSELS : A European Union trade negotiator has expressed optimism that Brunei, Singapore and Thailand could sign separate trade pacts before the present trade commissioner's mandate expires in October next year. Renate Nikolay, a member of EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson's cabinet, said that ideally, she expected the three Asean members to finish exchanging offers for goods to be covered by the pact by next month. That would pave the way for further discussions between Mr Mandelson and his Asean counterparts in December at the sidelines of the Asean summit in Bangkok.

International Herald Tribune, 8 October 2008

1 dead and hundreds injured in Thai protests

BANGKOK: In a day of street battles that left one person dead and nearly 400 people injured, antigovernment protesters surrounded the Parliament building on Tuesday, trapping hundreds of

lawmakers inside throughout the afternoon. Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat escaped over a back fence in the morning after delivering a policy address. But other lawmakers were unable to leave for more than five hours, when the police dispersed the protesters with volleys of tear gas.

The Jakarta Post, 8 October 2008

Indonesia stock index tumbles 10 percent

JAKARTA: Indonesia's benchmark stock index has plunged 10 percent on fears about the global financial crisis, prompting officials to halt trading. The benchmark JSX index sank 168.1 points, or 10.4 percent to 1,451.67 points on Wednesday. The decline was driven by huge drops in commodities stocks. The index has fallen more than 20 percent in three days.

The Jakarta Post, 8 October 2008

Malaysian leader tipped to step down in March

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's embattled prime minister was expected to make an announcement Wednesday that he will step down in March rather than face a rebellion by his ruling party, a media report said. The announcement is expected to come after Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi meets the policy-making body of the 13-party ruling National Front later Wednesday, said the influential Malaysian Insider news Web site.

The Manila Times, 8 October 2008

Govt considers halting military push vs. MILF

The government may consider suspending military operations in southern Philippines and resuming peace negotiations with separatist rebels there, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Tuesday. He cited renewed calls from some sectors for the continuation of the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). He did not name the sectors, except that they come from Mindanao.

Viet Nam News, 8 October 2008

Viet Nam, Cambodia agree on co-operation, border marking

DA NANG: Viet Nam and Cambodia have agreed to focus on co-operating in areas that the two countries are good at while continuing to speed up work on border markers. This was decided at the tenth meeting of the Viet Nam-Cambodia Joint Committee for Economic, Cultural, Scientific and Technological Co-operation held in Da Nang City yesterday.

The Times of India, 13 October 2008

Seven killed in Myanmar bus explosion

YANGON: Seven passengers were killed and one was injured when a bus exploded in Myanmar's main city Yangon early Monday morning, a police official said. The blast occurred at 2:30 am (Sunday 2000 GMT) as the bus headed north through the city, said the police official who did not wish to be named.

The Times of India, 13 October 2008

Philippine president faces new impeachment attempt

MANILA: Opponents of the Philippine president filed a new impeachment complaint against her Monday over alleged corruption, vote-rigging and other crimes, but the government predicted the bid would fail like three previous attempts. The new complaint consolidates previous and new allegations of corruption and constitutional and human rights violations against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, said key complainant Jose de Venecia III. The new allegations include charges of misconduct in a proposed telecommunications deal involving Chinese company ZTE Corp.

International Herald Tribune, 13 October 2008

In Thai protests, a divide between urban and rural

BAN HUAY CHAN, Thailand: When he was a young man, Damneun Pangsopha worked for a while in a doll factory in the big city, Bangkok, and he did not like it. "They think differently from the people here in Isaan," he said, referring to the rural heartland of Thailand's northeast. "In Bangkok

it's all work and pressure, work and pressure. Not like here, where life is slower. Fish in the river, rice in the field."

The Jakarta Post, 13 October 2008

Malaysian leader seeks reform in ruling coalition

KUALA LUMPUR: In an effort to boost its popularity after massive losses in a general election early this year, Malaysia's prime minister has proposed reforming the ruling National Front coalition to allow multiethnic membership, local media reported Sunday. The National Front, which has ruled Malaysia since independence in 1957, is made up of 13 parties representing Malaysia's different ethnic groups, including Malays, Chinese and Indians. Currently, membership in the National Front can only be obtained by belonging to one of the ethnic-based parties.

The Straits Times, 13 October 2008

Cambodia, Thailand resume talks

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia and Thailand on Monday resumed talks on their simmering border spat, following a skirmish between troops near an ancient temple earlier this month. Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong and his Thai counterpart Sompong Amornviwat met in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh with the aim of resolving the border dispute.

The Indian Express, 14 October 2008

Rs 70 lakh grant announced for ethnic Indians in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: India announced Rs 70 lakh as additional grant for a corpus scholarship fund to aid the minority ethnic Indian community in Malaysia. India's Minister for Overseas Affairs Vyalar Ravi, currently on an official visit here, announced the grant to Indian Scholarship and Trust Fund, which will offer scholarships to meritorious and deserving students belonging to the minority community in the country.

The Times of India, 14 October 2008

Thailand troops will not leave Cambodian border: Minister

BANGKOK: Thailand soldiers will not leave a disputed stretch of the border with Cambodia despite an ultimatum from Phnom Penh for them to withdraw by midday on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Sompong Amornvivat said. "We are in our homeland. How can they expect us to leave our home?" he said in reply to a question from a reporter.

The Economic Times, 14 October 2008

ASEAN expects China, India to keep mining afloat amid recession

MANILA: Mineral exporters in Southeast Asia expect China and India to sustain demand amid a looming recession in developed countries, officials and industry executives said on Monday. "The world will not stop operations," Filipino Natural Resources Secretary Joselito Atienza told reporters.

International Herald Tribune, 14 October 2008

Legendary Aceh leader returns to a tense province

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia: When the founder of Aceh Province's now-disbanded separatist group returned home after 30 years of self-imposed exile in Sweden, he brought a message of peace to a part of Indonesia that is still tense despite a settlement signed more than three years ago. Thousands of former combatants descended upon the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, over the weekend to see Hasan di Tiro, 83, a man who for many of them had existed only through heroic stories passed down from older generations. They came from hundreds of kilometers away, hanging off flatbed trucks, buses and cars, waving the red and black flags of Partai Aceh, the peacetime political vehicle of the Free Aceh Movement.

Vietnam News, 14 October 2008

Viet Nam, Australia move closer together

HA NOI : Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung begins his official visit to Australia today. Prior to this significant event marking 35 years of Viet Nam-Australia relations, a Viet Nam News Agency

reporter spoke with Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. Smith affirmed that bilateral relations can be expanded in many areas, and he praised Viet Nam's current renewal process and Government policies which focus on sustainable growth. Here are excerpts from the exclusive interview.

TheTimes of India, 14 October 2008

Thailand troops will not leave Cambodian border: Minister

BANGKOK: Thailand soldiers will not leave a disputed stretch of the border with Cambodia despite an ultimatum from Phnom Penh for them to withdraw by midday on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Sompong Amornvivat said. "We are in our homeland. How can they expect us to leave our home?" he said in reply to a question from a reporter. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said on Monday the Thai troops should leave within 24 hours or his forces would turn the area into a "death zone".

The Times of India, 15 October 2008

Malaysia ex-king must pay debt in landmark trial

UALA LUMPUR, Malaysia: A Malaysian court ordered the country's former king on Wednesday to settle a \$1m debt to a bank in a landmark verdict that ended a centuries-old tradition shielding the country's royal sultans from legal prosecution. The case brought by Standard Chartered Bank against Tuanku Jaafar Tuanku Abdul Rahman was the first trial involving a Malaysian monarch since a 1993 constitutional amendment dissolved the immunity of state rulers from criminal and civil lawsuits.

The Manila Times, 15 October 2008

Military concludes the NPA likely source of landmines Muslim rebels are using

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Philippine soldiers disarmed Tuesday two powerful roadside bombs planted by suspected Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels in Maguindanao, officials said. The explosives, assembled from 90mm and 80mm mortar bombs, were left on a highway near the village of Magaslong in Datu Piang town where military patrols frequently pass. "Members of the army's explosive ordnance team disarmed the improvise explosives believed planted by MILF rebels," said Major Armand Rico, regional army spokesman.

Viet Nam News, 15 October 2008

PM Dung calls for more Australian investment

MELBOURNE: Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has called for more investment from Australia and pledged to further administrative reform to create a more transparent and convenient environment for foreign investors. "The Vietnamese Government will continue perfecting policies to ensure that the market economy operates in accordance with international practice and will focus investment on infrastructure and human resources to assure sustainable development," the PM told a business forum in Melbourne yesterday during his official visit to Australia.

The Jakarta Post, 15 October 2008

Philippine Muslim rebels to take case to UN

MANILA: Muslim rebels in the Philippines said Wednesday they will take their case to the U.N. and Islamic nations after the Supreme Court threw out a proposed deal with the government to boost their autonomy. The court on Tuesday declared unconstitutional the draft accord to grant minority Muslims expanded self-rule in their southern homeland in a bid to end decades of separatist rebellion. Violence in the southern Mindanao region flared up in August, leaving nearly 100 dead and half a million displaced, after Christian politicians protested the planned signing of the accord and rebels went on a bloody rampage. The government then abandoned the deal, suspended peace talks and launched an offensive to punish three rebel commanders blamed for the attacks.

The New Straits Times, 15 October 2008

Malaysia and Vietnam agree to strengthen information cooperation

NANNING, China: Malaysia and Vietnam today agreed on ways to strengthen cooperation in the media and information fields. This followed a bilateral meeting between Information Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek and Vietnam's Minister of Information and Communication, Le Doan Hop,

on the sidelines of the Asean-China Ministers Responsible for Information Conference here. Ahmad Shabery told his counterpart that Malaysia hoped to get more information and visuals from Vietnam to have a better idea of its Asean neighbour.

The Jakarta Post, 16 October 2008

Singapore guarantees US\$102 billion of deposits

SINGAPORE: Singapore said Thursday it will guarantee S\$150 billion (US\$102 billion) of foreign currency bank deposits for more than two years after regional finance rival Hong Kong moved to protect its deposits earlier this week. The government committed S\$150 billion of its reserves to guarantee all dollar deposits of individual and nonbank customers of banks, financial companies and merchant banks until December 31, 2010, the Finance Ministry and central bank said in a joint statement. "The announcement by a few jurisdictions in the region of government guarantees for bank deposits has set off a dynamic that puts pressure on other jurisdictions," the statement said. "This is why although Singapore's banking system continues to be sound, the government has decided to take precautionary action to avoid an erosion of banks' deposit base."

The Jakarta Post, 16 October 2008

Thailand-Cambodia agree to joint border patrols

BAGKOK: A Thai military official says Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to joint patrols at a disputed border to reduce tension that a day earlier erupted into a deadly gunbattle. Thai army spokesman Col. Sansern Kaewkumnerd said the two sides agreed that joint patrols could "reduce chances of a misunderstanding that could lead to another clash." The agreement came during talks between military commanders from both countries a day after the clash between troops at a disputed border killed at least two Cambodian soldiers and wounded 10 from both sides.

The Manila Times, 16 October 2008

Asean, China, WB take up 'standby' fund

East Asian finance ministers are discussing a Philippine plan for a fund to help neighbors facing severe liquidity problems during the credit crisis, President Gloria Arroyo said on Wednesday. The discussions took place on the sidelines of the annual International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank meetings in Washington, she added. According to President Arroyo, the meeting was also attended by representatives from the IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank. "They reached an understanding to establish a standby facility to assist Asean countries [which] have severe liquidity problems," she said in a speech to local government officials in Manila.

Asia Times, 16 October 2008

Thailand and Cambodia open fire

Fighting erupted between Thai and Cambodian soldiers on Wednesday in a disputed border area surrounding the 11th-century Preah Vihear temple. Both sides claim the other shot first in the latest flare-up in a dispute that broke in July. Wednesday's fighting occurred near Phu Makhwa mountain, known to Cambodians as Veal Antri, the same location of another brief firefight between Thai and Cambodian troops on October 3. Three soldiers were wounded in that skirmish. Another two Thai soldiers were wounded by landmines in the area on October 5, which Thai officials have claimed were planted illegally in Thai territory by the Cambodians.

The New Straits Times, 16 October 2008

Malaysia and Vietnam agree to strengthen information cooperation

NANNING, China: Malaysia and Vietnam today agreed on ways to strengthen cooperation in the media and information fields. This followed a bilateral meeting between Information Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek and Vietnam's Minister of Information and Communication, Le Doan Hop, on the sidelines of the Asean-China Ministers Responsible for Information Conference here. Ahmad Shabery told his counterpart that Malaysia hoped to get more information and visuals from Vietnam to have a better idea of its Asean neighbour. There was a lot that Malaysians could learn from Vietnam's long history of civilisation and culture, he said.

The Jakarta Post, 17 October 2008

Malaysia considers mediating in neighbors' dispute

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is considering a mediation role in the border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia that has killed two soldiers and led to fears of outright war. Foreign Minister Rais Yatim will try to get Cabinet approval Friday to visit Cambodia and Thailand, where fighting erupted between the Southeast Asian neighbors over land surrounding the centuries-old Preah Vihear temple, said Rais' aide, who declined to be named citing policy. "As a friendly neighbor to both countries, we must do all we can to prevent the situation from getting out of hand," Rais was quoted as saying Thursday by the national news agency Bernama

The Times of India, 17 October 2008

Thai PM rejects pressure to quit as thousands rally in Bangkok

BANGKOK: Thailand's prime minister Somchai Wongsawat rejected pressure to resign on Friday, as thousands of anti-government demonstrators marched in protest at last week's deadly street clashes. Police hung back by the roadside as some 5,000 supporters of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) marched down a busy Bangkok street carrying pictures of Somchai emblazoned with the word "murderer".

The Jakarta Post, 17 October 2008

Thai PM says he won't resign

BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat says he will stay in power despite growing calls for his resignation in the wake of a deadly confrontation between police and protesters last week. Somchai told a 20-minute press conference Friday that he had no plans to step down. "The government cannot just abandon its work and responsibility," he said. Thousands of anti-government protesters marched through the streets of Bangkok earlier Friday calling for his resignation.

The Manila Times, 17 October 2008

Military air strike kills 13 MILF rebels in Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Military aircrafts bombed suspected hideouts of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels in Mindanao and reported that at least a dozen people were killed. Major Randolph Cabangbang, spokesman of the Eastern Mindanao Command headquarters, said the air strike Wednesday killed at least 13 rebels under MILF leader Ameril Kato in the village of Andavit in Maguindanao's Datu Piang town. "At least 13 rebels were killed in the air strikes," Cabangbang told The Manila Times.

Asia Times, 17 October 2008

Temple tiff teeters towards war

BANGKOK: The latest gunfire and two deaths along the disputed Thai-Cambodian border threaten to escalate into open warfare between these two Buddhist countries, pitting Bangkok's United States-trained military against some of the late Pol Pot's former Khmer Rouge forces. Thailand is a non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military ally of the US, and is bigger, wealthier and better armed with US F-16 warplanes and Blackhawk helicopters, compared to Cambodia. But on the ground, Cambodian soldiers are perceived as tougher jungle fighters after decades of guerrilla war amid that country's horrific "killing fields".

International Herald Tribune, 20 October 2008

Coup fears grow as Bangkok boils

BANGKOK: Bangkok was on edge this weekend after the army chief told the prime minister on nationwide television that he must resign and the prime minister - in office for just a month - said he was too busy to step down. The demand by the army chief, General Anupong Paochinda, came Thursday, when he blamed the government for a violent crackdown on protesters and said, "You cannot be above the pools of blood." His words raised worries of a military coup. But Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat brushed them aside, saying he still had a job to do, and turned his attention to Thailand's other, simultaneous crisis, the threat of a border war with Cambodia.

Viet Nam News, 20 October 2008

PM heads to China on first official visit

HA NOI : Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his wife begin an official visit to China today, which will last from October 20-23, at the invitation of Premier Wen Jiabao and his wife. PM Dung will also attend the seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 7), taking place in Beijing from October 24 to 25. This is Dung's first visit to China as Prime Minister. At present, co-operation between the two countries is being expanded the most in areas including economy, trade, investment, agriculture, fisheries, science and technology, transport, health care, construction, education and training, culture, sports and tourism.

The Times of India, 20 October 2008

Protest calls for ouster of Thai premier

BANGKOK, Thailand: Thousands of anti-government protesters marched through the streets of Bangkok on Monday, calling the prime minister a "murderer" and demanding he resign over the violent quashing of a previous rally. The demonstrators have stepped up their protests against Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat since a protest outside parliament October 7 ended in a violent confrontation with police that left one demonstrator dead and hundreds of others injured.

Asia Times, 20 October 2008

Enemies turn allies in temple battle

PREAH VIHEAR and PHNOM PENH: Comrade Neak Vong spent nearly two decades fighting against the Cambodian government. Now, he and other former Khmer Rouge soldiers are fighting on behalf of their former adversary in what some fear could escalate into a full-blown war with neighboring Thailand over claims to ancient temples and their surrounding territories. Along the Thai-Cambodia border, where fighting broke out on October 15 between Thai and Cambodian troops, loyalties have blurred as longtime enemies fight for the same cause. Ten years after a nearly two-decade civil war between the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian government ended, military generals from both sides have picked up their weapons in a standoff with Thailand.

Bankok Post, 20 October 2008

Triple tension

Anti- and pro-government groups appear to be on a collision course, with the possibility of violent clashes in Bangkok when the verdict in the Ratchadaphisek land case against Thaksin Shinawatra and his wife is handed down tomorrow. A highly placed source at the Special Branch Police office said police received information that three different groups will mobilise their supporters in Bangkok over the next few days.

The Jakarta Post, 21 October 2008

Russia, ASEAN launch new commitment

JAKARTA: Russia and ASEAN committed to establish a joint project to enhance relations between the regions with a fund of US\$500,000 during two recent meetings in Saint-Petersburg. The 6th Meeting of the Russia-ASEAN Joint Planning and Management Committee and the 7th Meeting of the Russia-ASEAN Joint Cooperation Committee were attended by representatives from the Russian government, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN secretariat. "The meetings were convened to implement a roadmap to promote cooperation in areas covering culture, tourism, energy and disaster management between Russia and ASEAN, which was adopted during the ASEAN post-ministerial conference session with Russia on July 23 in Singapore," the release said.

Bangkok Post, 21 October 2008

Somchai to meet Hun Sen in China

The prime ministers of Cambodia and Thailand plan to hold talks in Beijing after a long-running border dispute escalated into a deadly shoot-out last week, a Cambodian official said yesterday. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen expects to meet Thai premier Somchai Wongsawat on the sidelines of a meeting between leaders of Asian and European nations on Friday and Saturday.

"During his stay in Beijing, the prime minister will bilaterally meet with the Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao and we have planned to meet with the Thai prime minister as well," Hun Sen's advisor Sri Thamrong said.

Bangkok Post, 21 October 2008

Export market to experience increased havoc

HA NOI : Officials and exporters are calling for adjustments to the 18 per cent targeted export growth rate for 2009, as negative impacts of the global financial crisis mount. Exporting to the world market in general, and the US in particular, will be very difficult next year, predicts Pham The Dung, the director of import and export at the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT). Export volume is expected to decrease, and prices of goods are also forecast to slide in 2009, adds Dung.

The Manila Times, 21 October 2008

Asian nations to tackle crisis fund in Manila meeting

Senior officials from Asian nations will meet in Manila next month to mull a proposal from the Philippines for an emergency fund to help the region weather the financial crisis, the country's Finance chief said Monday. Filipino officials met in Washington, D.C. earlier this month with finance ministers from the Asean bloc plus Japan, South Korea and China to seek agreement on the standby fund, Secretary Margarito Teves added. The ministers agreed at one of several meetings, organized with the World Bank, to hold a "technical working group meeting in Manila" on the standby fund that would help Asian nations with liquidity problems, he said.

The Times of India, 22 October 2008

Indonesia court rejects Bali bombers' appeal

JAKARTA: An Indonesian court rejected on Tuesday an appeal by three Islamic militants on death row for the 2002 Bali bombings challenging the country's method of executing convicts by firing squad. The three men - Imam Samudra, Amrozi and Mukhlas, also known as Ali Ghufron - lodged the legal challenge in August, saying execution by firing squad was inhumane. The head of the constitutional court in Jakarta rejected their appeal, saying there is no method of execution that is painless.

The Asian Age, 22 October 2008

Thaksin sentenced to 2 years for corruption

BANGKOK: Oct. 21. A Thai court found former Prime Minister Tha-ksin Shina-watra guilty of a corruption charge and sentenced him on Tuesday to two years in prison, adding a new twist to the country's paralysing political crisis. The verdict was the first against the country's former leader since he was ousted in a 2006 military coup after being accused of corruption and abuse of power. The court's ruling was greeted with excitement by the political movement trying to force out the current government, which they accuse of being controlled by Thaksin. Raucous cheers erupted among several thousand members of the People's Alliance for Democracy, which has occupied the grounds of the Prime Minister's offices since last August.

The Straits Times, 22 October 2008

Rais relays message to Somchai

BANGKOK : FOREIGN Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim met Thai Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat today to relay a message from Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi suggesting that Thailand and Cambodia de-escalate strained relations between them and avoid an armed conflict. Dr Rais, who arrived here yesterday, met Mr Somchai at the premier's office at the Don Muang Airport before meeting his Thai counterpart and deputy prime minister Sompong Amornvivat at the same location. Last Friday, the Malaysian cabinet decided that the prime minister send a message to his Thai counterpart in the Asean spirit as any military conflict between Thailand and Cambodia would have consequences on the region.

Viet Nam News, 22 October 2008

PM aims to bring trade with Chinese province up to \$1b

HA NOI : Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said in Hainan, China, yesterday that he would like to see two-way trade between the Chinese province and Viet Nam rise fourfold by 2010 - from about US\$260 million last year to \$1 billion. The Prime Minister was attending a Viet Nam-China business forum opened in Hainan Province yesterday as part of his four-day official visit to China. The PM said the forum, which drew representatives from more than 400 businesses from both nations, provided a venue for business people to exchange information on commerce and investment mechanism.

The Asian Age, 23 October 2008

Protesters throw shoes at Thai PM

BANGKOK: Oct. 22: A crowd of angry protesters threw shoes and plastic bottles at the Thai Prime Minister's entourage after cornering him in an underground parking lot on Wednesday. He escaped unharmed. Mr Somchai Wongsawat's security agents and the police shielded him and hustled him into a waiting car, which sped off in a motorcade. The protest was staged by more than 100 employees of the state-owned telecom operator TOT during a visit by Mr Wongsawat to their headquarters outside the capital, Bangkok. "It was not a serious protest," Mr Wongsawat later told reporters. He described the incident as a "colourful protest." It marked the first time in Thailand's months of political crisis that state employees have come into direct confrontation with the Prime Minister. It was not, however, the first time that Mr Wongsawat has had to make a quick getaway. On October 7, Mr Wongsawat escaped a violent protest outside Parliament by climbing over a back fence to safety. The riot police outside the building fired tear gas to disperse rowdy protesters, leaving hundreds injured and two dead.

The Economic Times, 23 October 2008

China, Singapore sign free-trade pact: officials

BEIJING: China and Singapore signed a free-trade agreement in Beijing on Thursday, capping two years of negotiations, officials said. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the signing ceremony in Beijing, with Singapore hailing the deal as an economic boon for the Southeast Asian city-state. "China is one of the largest and fastest growing markets in the world," the Singaporean government said in a statement. "The agreement will enhance Singapore companies' access to the vast Chinese market and further boost our excellent bilateral trade and investment relations."

The Jakarta Post, 23 October 2008

SBY, Hu Jintao to discuss Tangguh gas contract

JAKARTA: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will meet his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao to renegotiate a gas export deal Thursday morning, Antara news agency reported. The controversial Tangguh liquefied natural gas (LNG) contract was penned by Indonesia and China's Fujian province in 2002 under the administration of then Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri. The arrangement called for Tangguh field to begin supplying LNG to Fujian in 2009 for a period of 25 years, but has been criticized for stipulating a fixed LNG selling price, rather than a progressive rate, which is commonly used in gas deals to ensure selling rates remain consistent with fluctuating global prices.

The Straits Times, 23 October 2008

Thailand, Cambodia meet

SIEM REAP (Cambodia): THAI and Cambodian military officials met Thursday in an attempt to defuse tensions over a border dispute that briefly erupted into deadly clashes last week. The meeting between the mid-level officials in Cambodia's northwestern tourist hub Siem Reap is meant to pave the way for talks between senior military commanders on Friday. The talks are aimed at calming a simmering territorial dispute over land near the ancient Preah Vihear temple, which broke into a firefight that killed one Thai and three Cambodian soldiers on October 15.

The Straits Times, 23 October 2008

Mahathir sees no end to crisis

FORMER Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad, the leader who steered Malaysia through the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, said that the current global turmoil is far from ending and will soon spread to the region's export-dependent economies, in an interview with Bloomberg News. 'The worst is not over yet. We do not even understand what is happening,' Tun Dr Mahathir, who stepped down as prime minister in 2003, said in a Bloomberg Television interview yesterday in Putrajaya, Malaysia. 'Asian countries are going to feel the pinch of a world where the market has collapsed.'

The Jakarta Post, 24 October 2008

Govt denies Cabinet cracking

JAKARTA: The government has brushed aside claims there is a conflict among Cabinet members that has placed the position Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati in jeopardy, in relation with her handling of companies hammered by the recent stock market dive. As reported earlier by The Jakarta Post, sources say attempts are underway to unseat Mulyani for her stern moves to safeguard the state budget and reportedly reject government assistance to rescue a business empire struggling to deal with the impact of its plummeting share prices.

Bangkok Post, 24 October 2008

With fears of another coup rife, PM heads to Beijing

Despite widespread rumours of another military coup, Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat has left the country on a trip to Beijing, apparently confident that that it is only idle speculation. But coup fears are rife and it is just a matter of time before the tanks are again on the streets of Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University political analyst Panitan Wattanayagorn said yesterday. The rumours have been intensifying since army chief Gen Anupong Paojinda went on national television last week to urge Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat to resign over the violent suppression of People's Alliance for Democracy protesters by police on Oct 7. He was accompanied by the chiefs of the navy, air force and police force.

The Manila Times, 24 October 2008

Mindanao unrest strains Army funds

The Philippine military offensive against Muslim separatists is starting to put a strain on the Army's finances, an official said Thursday. Fuel and ammunition alone have cost P600 million (\$12.5 million) since the operation began in August on the southern island of Mindanao. Congress has already agreed to increase the military budget for 2009 by \$42 million to \$1.642 billion (P78.7 billion) to cover the operation. "The war has become very expensive," said Lt. Gen. Cardozo Luna, the overall commander for the offensive against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels.

Viet Nam News, 24 October 2008

Viet Nam, China pledge to deepen bilateral relations

BEIJING : Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung met Chinese government and state leaders here yesterday to discuss measures to deepen bilateral co-operation. After a red-carpet welcome, PM Dung and his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao shared satisfaction at sound developments in all areas of bilateral relations and discussed measures to promote a co-operative partnership. Premier Wen described Prime Minister Dung's official visit as an important event furthering the comprehensive, strategic and co-operative partnership under the motto of "friendly neighbourliness, comprehensive co-operation, long-lasting stability and looking towards the future" and in the spirit of "good neighbours, good friends, good comrades and good partners"

The Straits Times, 24 October 2008

Asean backs rice action plan

MANILA: SOUTH-EAST Asian nations on Friday supported a rice action plan for the region, including boosting yields, using new technology and policy reforms in response to the rice price crisis early this year. The measures were presented by the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) during a meeting in Hanoi with officials of the 10-nation Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean), IRRI said in a statement. It said Asean ministers unanimously endorsed the plan. Asean includes the world's two largest rice exporters, Thailand and Vietnam, as

well as the biggest importer, the Philippines.

The Asian Age, 27 October 2008

Malay PM asks Indians to renounce extremism

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia's leader urged the country's minority ethnic Indians on Sunday to renounce "extremist groups" that he said threaten national unity. Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's comments, in which he also promised to address complaints of discrimination, came three days after the police arrested a dozen members of a banned ethnic Indian rights group. Indians are the smallest of Malaysia's major ethnic groups, accounting for 8 per cent of the country's 27 million people, and are typically at the bottom rung of Malaysia's social ladder. Muslim Malays account for 60 per cent and ethnic Chinese 25 per cent. In a message marking the Hindu celebration of Diwali, or Deepavali as it is known here, Mr Badawi called for unity and understanding among Malaysia's three main ethnic groups.

The Economic Times, 27 October 2008

Malaysia to scrap \$657 mn Eurocopter order: Report

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has decided to axe a controversial \$657 mn military helicopter order in the government's first major budget cutbacks since the global financial crisis, an influential news website reported on Sunday. "The Eurocopter deal is off due to the bleak economic times ahead," the Malaysian Insider said, quoting an unidentified source. It said Finance Minister Najib Razak decided at the weekend to scrap the contract for 12 EC725 helicopters awarded to the European helicopter maker following a review of state spending.

The Jakarta Post, 27 October 2008

Indonesian firm wins \$630 m contract in China-ASEAN Expo

An Indonesian company participating in the fifth China Asean Expo (CAEXPO) in Nanning has won a contract worth US\$630 million to supply China with food products. CAEXPO vice secretary general Li Jinzao announced the news at the closing ceremony of the exposition on Saturday at the capital of the autonomous province of Guangxi as quoted by kompas.com. However, he did not disclose the name of the company. Jinzao said the fifth expo recorded total trade transactions worth \$1.6 billion between China and ASEAN countries.

Bangkok Post, 27 October 2008

Special budget to fight slump

The government has set aside a budget of 1.22 trillion baht to cushion the impact of the financial meltdown in the United States and Europe, Deputy Prime Minister Olarn Chaipravat said yesterday. The fund was among a raft of measures unveiled by the deputy prime minister in the government's first weekly address to the public on the NBT channel. It said about 450 billion baht would be offered in the form of credit to small- and medium-sized enterprises and small-scale farmers, and another 110 billion baht to shore up the plunging Stock Exchange of Thailand

Viet Nam News, 27 October 2008

President in Russia to promote several high-level agreements

HA NOI: President Nguyen Minh Triet is visiting Russia until Wednesday to further consolidate the understanding, trust, and strategic partnership between the two countries. During the visit, which is at the invitation of the Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, President Triet is scheduled to work alongside Russian leaders on measures to promote the implementation of a number of high-level agreements. In addition, a range of new agreements and deals between the two countries are expected to be inked during the visit. Russia has a high regard of Viet Nam's position in the Asia-Pacific region, as stated in its new foreign policy.

International Herald Tribune, 29 October 2008

Reform keeps Indonesian military in check

JAKARTA: While the Indonesian military marks its 63rd anniversary in typically grand fashion this month, it is also quietly recognizing another milestone - 10 years of reform. By all accounts, the

Indonesian military of today looks very different from the one presided over by Suharto, Indonesia's former ruler, who used it during his 32 years in power to quell dissent and extend control throughout this sprawling archipelago. Almost immediately after the removal of Suharto in 1998, civilian leaders set out to strip the military of its vast power. Members of the military were removed from legislative bodies and business enterprises. In a broad effort to remake Indonesia's political landscape, the military's "dual-function" - a role promoted by Suharto that called on the military to act both as a defense force against external enemies and an internal enforcer of government policies - was eliminated.

Bangkok Post, 29 October 2008

Split over violence

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