

The Economic Times, 1 July 2007

### **India signs trans-Asian railways pact**

UNITED NATIONS: India has signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Trans-Asian Railways along with Bangladesh to strengthen rail linkages in the region, especially with South Asian countries and boost trade between Asia and Europe. The agreement was signed here Friday by J.P. Batra, chairman of the Railway Board, Indian Railways, on behalf of India. With India and Bangladesh signing the agreement, 20 countries have become signatories of the pact. The 18 other countries had signed the pact at Busan, South Korea in November 2006...

The Jakarta Post, 1 July 2007

### **Maluku incident proves separatists still pose threat: legislators**

JAKARTA (Antara): An incident in Maluku occurring when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited Ambon (Maluku's provincial capital) last week showed that a separatist group still posed a serious threat on the unitary state of Indonesia, a legislator has said. The remarks were made by members of the House of Representatives (DPR)'s Commission I, Yuddy Crisnandy (Golkar), Effendy Choirie (National Awakening Party) and Chairman of the National Mandate Party faction at DPR Zulkifli Hasan here over the weekend...

The Hindu, 1 July 2007

### **Yechury briefs Singapore leaders**

SINGAPORE: Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury on Saturday concluded a five-day visit to the City-State under its Distinguished Visitors Programme. The first non-governmental communist leader to be invited under the programme, Mr. Yechury briefed the Singapore leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar and Foreign Minister George Yeo, on India's current political situation and foreign policy trends.

The Jakarta Post, 1 July 2007

### **'Govt must purge separatism'**

The Indonesian government should take harsh action against all separatist movements after a group of people tried to wave the South Maluku Republic (RMS) flag in front of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the Maluku provincial capital of Ambon on Friday, said Islamic leader Din Syamsuddin. RMS is a separatist movement with Christianity as its base. In the Republic of Indonesia it is a criminal offense to show support for any separatist movement. It is also a criminal offense to raise or wave in public a separatist flag -- even in a private home...

Business Standard, 2 July 2007

### **Tata Steel loses out in Vietnam takeover battle**

Tata Steel has lost the bidding battle for Vietnam's Vinausteel and SSE Steel after losing a vote on the resolution for its sale and purchase agreement by Vietnam Industrial Investments (VII), the parent company of the two steel makers. VII informed the Australian Securities Exchange - the company is listed on the Australian stock exchange - that the resolution on the sale and purchase agreement was lost on a poll vote by shareholders at its annual meeting on June 29. Tata Steel's Singapore subsidiary NatSteel was to acquire 100 per cent in SSE Steel and 70 per cent in Vinausteel. The transactions were to be completed by June...

Bangkok Post, 2 July 2007

### **Crude palm oil prices hit 9-year highs**

Rising global awareness of biofuel has propelled crude palm oil prices to nine-year highs, said industry experts. Crude palm oil prices would no longer follow the agricultural product price index because it is now considered an energy crop, said Suriya Ayachanun, an adviser to Chumporn Palm Oil Plc, the country's largest palm oil producer. Recent crude palm oil price trends have moved in the same direction as Brent crude.

Channel NewsAsia, 2 July 2007

### **ASEAN's 40th anniversary plans aim at connecting citizens**

SINGAPORE: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) celebrates its 40th anniversary this year with the theme "One ASEAN at the heart of Dynamic Asia". Its Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong said a key objective of the celebrations is to enhance people-to-people ties and community building. Although the anniversary falls on 8 August, the month of July sets in motion preparations for the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the handover of the chairmanship to Singapore.

The Economic Times, 2 July 2007

### **Indo-Thai trade to touch \$10 bn in 3 years**

**Add to Clippings**  
KOLKATA: Bilateral trade between India and Thailand was expected to touch \$10 billion in the next three years from the current \$3.4 billion, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trade of Thailand Somkiat Anuras said on Monday. The volume of two-way trade would touch \$4 billion in the current financial year, Anuras told reporters on the sidelines of a seminar on 'Emerging opportunities post FTA' organised by FICCI here. He said bilateral trade would get a boost once the free trade agreement (FTA) between India and Thailand was signed...

Business Standard, 3 July 2007

### **Thai fruit firm eyes India**

The country's fruits and vegetables retail segment has caught up the fancy of international companies even as domestic companies such as Bharti and the Tatas tie up with global firms for supply of farm produce. Best Fruit Company, a Thailand-based fruit exporter, which currently supplies to Reliance Retail, is scouting for a joint venture partner here to enter the fresh fruit supply chain. The \$40-million company exports fruits such as logan, lychee, sweet tamarind, sweet mandarin and ginger to 15 countries...

The Financial Express, 3 July 2007

### **Asia calls for IMF-model regional fund**

MANILA, JUL 2 : Asian countries put the humiliation of the 1997 financial crisis behind them on Monday, arguing they were in a better position to deal with the sort of meltdown that crippled the region a decade ago. Taking a swipe against the powerful Western-dominated global lenders such as the International Monetary Fund, Thailand's finance minister called for Asia to take more control of its economic destiny by setting up a monetary fund to promote exchange rate stability...

The Financial Express, 3 July 2007

### **Govt plans to slash customs duty in step with Asean rates**

NEW DELHI, JUL 2: The government will further cut customs tariffs to get them closer to the duty rates of the Asean. It plans to not only to cut down the present peak rate of 10%, but will also reduce duty on raw materials and intermediaries below the present rates of 5% and 7.5%. At present, India has an average industrial tariff of 9.4%, which is much higher than the Asean's average rates. The Philippines has an average industrial tariff of 6.3%, Indonesia 6.9% and Malaysia 8.4%...

The Financial Express, 3 July 2007

### **Thailand offers to export natural rubber at a lower duty**

KOLKATA, JUL 2 : Thailand wants to reduce the number of items on India's negative or exclusion list, and start exporting natural rubber & rubber products at a lower duty, following the visit of its prime minister, Surayud Chulanont, to India. According to Poksak Nilubol, advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, Thailand, there are 489 odd items on the negative or exclusion list of India, while the Thai list has 312. Present at a seminar organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Poksak said, "We are committed to conclude the negotiations for the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries as soon as possible"...

The Financial Express, 3 July 2007

### **PTC to invest Rs 1,500 cr in Indonesian coal company**

MUMBAI, JUL 2: PTC India, which enjoys more than 70% share in India's power trading market, proposes to invest over Rs 1,500 crore for acquisition of equity in an Indonesian coal mining company with a strategic partner. The acquisition would help procure 15 million tonnes of coal

annually. It would also fulfill the coal requirement of projects with the generation capacity of 5,000 mw. Of the over Rs 1,500 crore, PTC India's investment would be close to Rs 500-700 crore. PTC has already entered into power purchase agreement with the developers of 7,000 mw power projects. Coal procured from Indonesia would be used in these projects with a capacity of 5,000 mw...

Channel NewsAsia, 3 July 2007

#### **Thailand looks back at lessons from Asian financial crisis**

BANGKOK: Exports have been the driving force behind Thailand's steady recovery from the 1997 regional economic crash of epic proportions known as the Asian Financial Crisis, rising from 40 percent to the present 60 percent of the economy. Today, Thailand has US\$65 billion in foreign currency reserves, versus a total foreign debt of US\$50 billion. Since the crisis, the Thai government has changed a number of regulations, resulting in a more stable economic environment...

Channel NewsAsia, 3 July 2007

#### **Thailand to extend emergency rule in Muslim south**

BANGKOK: Thailand will extend a state of emergency in its southern provinces, a government official said on Monday, as separatist violence in the Muslim-majority region continues to claim lives almost daily. The controversial state of emergency, which gives wide-ranging powers to security forces, would be extended by three months from July 19, said Pongpayom Vasaphuti, a senior official from the Ministry of Interior. "We need to further extend the expiring emergency rule in the deep south," he told reporters. The law covers the three worst-affected provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, as well as some districts of nearby Songkhla province...

The Jakarta Post, 3 July 2007

#### **Risks still lurk despite Asia's bounce from financial crisis: ADB**

MANILA(AP): Asia faces risks of new financial shocks despite its remarkable recovery from the 1997-98 financial crisis, and regional cooperation is vital to keep the region strong, Asian Development Bank officials said Monday. Speaking on the 10th anniversary of the crippling financial meltdown, Haruhiko Kuroda, president of the bank, said that countries affected by the crisis have fortified their economic foundations, put in place reforms and accelerated economic regional cooperation...

Mint, 3 July 2007

#### **Malaysian trade with South-South countries rising**

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia's trade with South-South countries totalled \$87.5 billion (3.50,000 crore) or 30% of the country's global trade last year compared with \$72.4 billion in 2005, International Trade and Industry Minister Rafidah Aziz has said. This included exports which rose 20.9% to \$44.7 billion from \$37 billion and imports which increased 21.1% to \$42.9.1 billion from \$35.4 billion, she said in her keynote address at the familiarization programme for officials of investment promotion agencies from the South-South countries...

Business Standard, 4 July 2007

#### **Thailand keen on FTA**

As the governments of Thailand and India are working on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries, a 30 member Thai Business delegation comprising representatives from both governmental and private sectors is in India to explore and strengthen future trade and investment avenues. Thailand hopes to increase the number of zero duty trade products from 82 products now, advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, Poksak Nilubol, said. "FTA will open up doors for two-way trade", he commented. Currently there are three mutual trade lists between the two countries. Under a normal list, 80 per cent of the items traded were covered...

The Financial Express, 4 July 2007

#### **India, Vietnam set to boost trade ties**

NEW DELHI, JUL 3: To boost bilateral trade relations, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung is arriving here on Wednesday. He will be accompanied by a 163-member delegation

comprising ministers, leaders of various provinces and 80 businessmen. The three-day visit will take off from Kolkata, where the Vietnamese leader is expected to visit the Tata Steel complex in Jamshedpur and also meet Essar Group honchos. Vu Quang Diem, Vietnam's ambassador to India, expressed hope that his leader's trip would improve the investment climate. While China is rising, India is emerging, Vietnam is booming, he said...

The Indian Express, 4 July 2007

### **Vietnam PM's visit begins today**

India and Vietnam will sign three agreements for cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and culture during the visit of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to India beginning Wednesday. The visiting Prime Minister will hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh after which the two countries will sign an MoU on July 6, on cooperation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, cultural exchange programme and a work plan in agriculture. He is being accompanied by a 186-member delegation comprising ministers, Government officials, businessmen and political leaders...

Bangkok Post, 4 July 2007

### **Baht strongest in a decade**

The baht jumped to a 10-year high yesterday at 34.25 to the US dollar in local trade thanks to continued foreign inflows. In the offshore market, the baht was quoted as high as 31.7. Rates between the local and offshore market have been split since last December due to the Bank of Thailand's 30% reserve rule on inflows and other capital controls. Central bank officials yesterday said the currency was appreciating in line with others in the region

Channel NewsAsia, 4 July 2007

### **Indonesian carriers get IATA help to meet global safety standards**

JAKARTA : Indonesia has joined a programme set up by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in a bid to help its carriers meet global safety standards, a spokesman said Wednesday. Indonesia's mushrooming airline industry has suffered repeated fatal accidents in recent years - including two major ones this year alone - prompting international censure. Under the programme, IATA will assist carriers in preparing for its Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) by holding seminars to raise awareness of best practices, providing "gap analysis", or advising them on what they must do to meet standards, and safety training, IATA spokesman Albert Tjoeng said...

Mizzima News, 4 July 2007

### **China builds bridges with Burmese ethnic ceasefire groups**

In a calculated move to mount pressure on an obdurate Burmese military junta, China has begun to meet border based Burmese ethnic ceasefire armed groups, sources on the Sino-Burmese border told Mizzima. The Chinese interest in building bridges with the armed ethnic outfits, albeit centres on its economic compulsions. China would want the Sino-Burma border to be free of strife so that it can use Burma as a major trade gateway. Renewed armed conflict between the rebel ethnic outfits and the Burma Army will only jeopardize China's ambitious economic growth. Chinese officials met two armed rebel groups last month and plans to meet other groups this month, according to the source, who requested anonymity.

The Financial Express, 5 July 2007

### **Vietnam to lend full support to Tata Steel: Dung**

JAMSHEDPUR, JUL 4 : The Vietnamese government will make conditions favourable for Tata Steel to execute a 4.5 million tonne joint venture project in that country 'smoothly and speedily.' Tata Steel and Vietnam Steel Corp (VSC), after negotiations for over a year, on May 29 signed a memorandum of understanding in Hanoi for a 4.5 mt steel plant. The steel complex is to come up in Vietnam's Ha Tinh province, in phases over a 10-year period. Tata Steel will also have a 30% stake in the Thach Khe Iron Ore Joint Stock Company, which will undertake mining operations in the Thach Khe iron ore mine...

The Financial Express, 5 July 2007

### **Thai curry and Indian palates**

With the WTO's Doha Round heading nowhere, what are the options for India? Signing bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) is one option, but the recent experience in negotiating these with Thailand and Japan indicate serious pitfalls ahead. Bilateralism is no Promised Land, as India is encountering major difficulties in concluding FTAs with both, especially with regard to safeguards that ensure that third countries do not exploit the deals...

Business Standard, 5 July 2007

### **Tata Steel eyes limestone import from Vietnam**

Tata Steel, which recently lost a bid to acquire Vietnam's Vinaasteel and SSE Steel, is exploring the possibilities of importing limestone from that country for its steel plants. "We are looking at the possibilities of importing quality limestone from Vietnam, which will help bring down the freight cost of the raw material as the country is close to India," a Tata group official said here today. The official, however, said the proposal was at an initial stage and no decision had been taken. Currently, Tata Steel imports limestone, which is used in the steel-making process, from West Asia...

The Economic Times, 5 July 2007

### **Vietnam says ready for FTA with India**

MUMBAI: The Vietnamese government on Thursday said it was open to the idea of signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India. "We are ready to sign an FTA with India," Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said while delivering the keynote address at India-Vietnam Business Forum meet here. Inviting Indian industrialists to invest in Vietnam, Dung said his country would prove to be a safe and efficient destination for Indian investors. Two-way trade between India and Vietnam has increased by 20-30 per cent a year since 2001 and in recent months, major Indian conglomerates such as Essar and the Tata Group have invested in Vietnam.

The Hindu, 5 July 2007

### **Vietnam PM identifies sectors for co-operation**

KOLKATA: Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of Vietnam said that trade, education, science and technology were some of the areas which could be tapped for further co-operation between Vietnam and India. Making Kolkata his first stop-over during his four-day maiden visit, he said his people remember the support given during the struggle for national independence. He mentioned the Bengali slogan 'Your name, my name is the name Vietnam' coined in West Bengal during those times and also noted that a road had been named after Ho Chi Minh in Kolkata...

The Financial Express, 6 July 2007

### **Vietnam open to bilateral FTA**

MUMBAI, JUL 5: Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung expressed support for India's 'Look East' policy, and also for India's engagement with ASEAN, of which Vietnam was a member country. He mentioned the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which India was negotiating with ASEAN, where he assured India of all support from Vietnam. He further added that Vietnam was also open to a bilateral FTA with India. Nguyen Tan Dung was speaking at the investors conference jointly organised on Thursday by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)...

Business Standard, 6 July 2007

### **Thailand to buy generic Plavix drug from India**

Thailand is ordering 2 million doses of generic Plavix from India after failing to win large enough discounts for the blood-thinner made by Bristol-Myers-Squibb and Sanofi-Aventis SA. As many as four Indian drugmakers are vying for the contract, Vichai Chokevivat, chairman of the Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (Thailand), told reporters in Bangkok today. The supplies would help to meet Thailand's demand for between 4 million and 5 million Plavix tablets a year and cut the cost of treating the country's poorest heart-disease patients, he said...

The Hindu, 6 July 2007

### **Vietnam PM supports India's "Look East" policy**

MUMBAI: India is among the top ten investor countries in Vietnam but still Indian investments in Vietnam were lower than potential, according to Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Addressing a function organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), the Vietnamese premier, while acknowledging the investments made by the Tatas and the Essar Group in Vietnam, said his visit was aimed at consolidating the existing relationship between India and Vietnam by continuing to work together, as also to ensure that the relationship remains strong and vibrant in the future...

The Hindu, 6 July 2007

### **Aptech signs MoU with FPT of Vietnam**

CHENNAI: Aptech has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IT corporation FPT of Vietnam to open 20 IT and multimedia training centres there by 2008. According to a release, the company expects the total revenue of education business in Vietnam for the three-year period (2007-09) to be over \$30 million.

The Economic Times, 7 July 2007

### **Temasek holds on to ICICI stake; others' share dips**

MUMBAI: POST-ITS Rs 17,500-crore follow on issue, Temasek has maintained its stake in ICICI Bank while a host of existing investors, including Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC), have seen their percentage shareholding fall. ICICI Bank, which will further raise Rs 2,625 crore as a green shoe option, is planning a \$1.5-billion debt mop-up from the international loan market this year. Institutions like Temasek and LIC, which had put in around \$2 billion bids each, were among the biggest investors in the bank's recent domestic issue. However, Temasek had put in an application in the ADR issue too. Before the fresh issue, Temasek, through Allamanda Investments, had a 7.37% stake...

The Financial Express, 7 July 2007

### **US needs fast-track trade authority to reach deal: Malaysia**

JUL 6 : A trade deal between the US and Malaysia, its 10th largest trading partner, will fail without fast-track status that would bypass Congressional scrutiny, Malaysia's trade minister Rafidah Aziz said. Malaysia and the US are in negotiations for a pact that officials say could double trade by 2010. Talks, which began in 2006 and were initially scheduled to be concluded by June, have stumbled over the Southeast Asian nation's unwillingness to deal on its affirmative action policies...

The Financial Express, 7 July 2007

### **Vietnam to trigger fall global pepper prices**

KOCHI, JUL 6 : Pepper prices are likely to fall in the coming days with Vietnam showing signs of selling at lower levels, traders said. Vietnamese pepper has become cheaper in the past few days and the prices may ease further. Vietnam has about 40,000 tonne of the commodity left in the nation and willingness to sell at lower levels would naturally depress the market, traders said. Vietnam, the largest producer of pepper has been selling at a comparatively higher price for the last six months contrary to their usual nature and has shipped lesser quantities compared to last year...

The Economic Times, 8 July 2007

### **Cambodian PM Hun Sen arrives**

NEW DELHI: Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen arrived here on Sunday on a three-day state visit that is expected to see economic, energy and cultural ties between the two countries intensify. Foreign Minister Hor Namhong, Defence Minister Tea Banh and Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh are accompanying Hun Sen in his first trip to India in seven years. Building upon their historical and cultural ties, India and Cambodia, a member of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), are expected to sign a clutch of agreements in areas of energy, defence and culture...

Channel NewsAsia, 8 July 2007

### **New ASEAN Charter will ensure effective implementation of plans**

SINGAPORE : The meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers later this month will be going through an important document which aims to strengthen the ten-member grouping's cohesion to meet the challenges ahead. This is the ASEAN Charter which Secretary General Ong Keng Yong says will advance the grouping's affairs in several areas. The final Charter is due to be tabled during the ASEAN Leaders Summit in Singapore in November. The process to conceptualise the ASEAN Charter began at the Leaders' Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2005...

The Financial Express, 8 July 2007

### **Going beyond the Ganga-Mekong connection**

"The youth can do wonders both in India and Vietnam. When many of the countries in the rest of the world are ageing, our two countries have a huge young population," points out Bui Thi Thanh Tam, deputy director-general, Vietnam Northern Food Corporation (Vinafood 1). Part of the business delegation accompanying Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on his three-day visit to India, Thanh Tam believes that the enthusiasm and creativity of the youth can do marvels in driving the two countries onto the path of prosperity. "Nearly 70% of the Vietnamese people are young. This is a great resource which, if used rightly, can change how the world perceives us. I would think the same is true of India"...

Viet Nam News, 8 July 2007

### **Viet Nam, India issue joint declaration**

HA NOI - Viet Nam and India have agreed to establish a new strategic partnership as part of relations, according to a joint declaration signed in New Delhi yesterday during Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's State visit to India from that ended yesterday. In the agreement, Prime Minister Dung and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that India-Viet Nam relations had been extremely friendly and cordial since the foundations were laid by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Nehru more than 50 years ago. They also mentioned satisfactory results during an earlier meeting in the Philippines this past January 2007 regarding the ASEAN Summit...

Viet Nam News, 8 July 2007

### **India, nation plan to boost strong strategic partnership**

New Delhi - Vietnamese and Indian Prime Ministers agreed to officially establish a strategic partnership between the two countries at their talks in New Delhi yesterday. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh noted that the strategic partnership marked a new breakthrough in bilateral relations and pave the way for the two countries' all-faceted co-operation to expand further...

Business Standard, 8 July 2007

### **Reliance-led consortium wins bid for tallest tower in SE Asia**

Reliance Energy led-consortium has emerged the successful bidder for the Rs 6,400 crore business district project proposed in Hyderabad by the state-owned Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC). The project includes a 450-metre, 100-plus storied tower, supposed to be the tallest structure in South East Asia, scheduled to be completed in three years. The entire project is expected to be completed in five years. So far the tallest tower being built by Shapoorji Pallonji group in Mumbai is about 80-storied tall. The entire business district project will have a built up areas of about 11 million sq ft of office and commercial space, according to a Reliance official...

The Financial Express, 9 July 2007

### **Vietnam ready to cast the net in seafood sector**

NEW DELHI, JUL 8: In a run-up to the talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) between India and Vietnam, the Vietnamese seafood industry has suggested that they be allowed to fish in the Bay of Bengal. They have also said that they would like to invest in Indian seafood sector. Vietnam's Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung during his visit to India last week had proposed an FTA between the two countries. He has also asked for similar favourable terms for investment by Vietnamese companies in India. Dung led an 80-member strong business delegation to India...

Business Standard, 9 July 2007

### **Singapore unit plans health laboratory chain**

Healthcare Management International (HCMI) Education, a Singapore-based health care professional recruitment network, is planning to invest \$10 million in the next two to three years over 'allied health care services' in India. The institute will open about six laboratories altogether in major metros across the country to prepare Indian nurses and other paramedical professionals for placement in the US. The centres are expected provide online review services, apart from practical training for clearing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for entry-level nursing practice and National Physical Therapist Examination (NPTE) for physiotherapy practice licences in the US...

The Jakarta Post, 9 July 2007

### **Singapore, Indonesia told to renegotiate defense agreement**

Singapore and Indonesia should renegotiate the defense cooperation agreement following criticism that it benefited the city state, analysts have suggested. In the renegotiation process, the two countries should focus on implementing arrangements to explain the details of the agreement so that it would be applicable and fair to both countries, international law expert at the University of Indonesia Hikmahanto Juwana said Sunday...

The Jakarta Post, 9 July 2007

### **Indonesia-Singapore relations: Strained again?**

Relations between Indonesia and Singapore are again unsettled, as happens occasionally. This is caused by emotional and historical baggage, as well as differences in political systems and governance. This has been especially true since Indonesia opened up its political system in 1998. The different sizes of the countries and stages of development also play a role. The emotional and historical baggage are partly jealousy, partly racial...

The Economic Times, 9 July 2007

### **Singapore Air may sell Virgin Atlantic stake**

LONDON: Singapore Airlines is reviewing the future of its stake in Virgin Atlantic in a move that could lead to a 1 billion pound (\$2 billion) sale or initial public offering, the Daily Telegraph said on Monday. The newspaper, without citing sources, said the Singapore-based carrier was in the early stages of examining options for its 49 per cent stake in British entrepreneur Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic. Singapore Airlines and Virgin Atlantic could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Economic Times, 10 July 2007

### **Singapore economy grows at fastest pace in 2 yrs**

SINGAPORE: Singapore's economy grew at the fastest pace in two years as soaring demand for apartments and offices spurred construction. Stocks surged to a record. Gross domestic product expanded an annualized 12.8 per cent in the three months ended June, up from a revised 8.5 per cent in the first quarter, the trade ministry said today. Growth exceeded all forecasts by economists surveyed by media. Construction increased the most in a decade, reflecting success in attracting companies including Citigroup Inc and Daiwa Securities Group Inc to expand operations or set up new ones...

The Financial Express, 10 July 2007

### **Thai baht at 10-year high**

SINGAPORE, JUL 9 : Most Asian currencies gained against the dollar on Monday as funds flowed into the region's stock markets, with the Thai baht hitting another 10-year high. The baht firmed as far as \$33.85 in the domestic market, up about 0.5% from late Asian trade on Friday. The currency has risen nearly 1.9% over the past week. The Malaysian ringgit rose as far as \$3.44, up almost a third of a percent from late Asian trade on Friday as most Asian currencies strengthened in step with the region's stock markets...

Viet Nam News, 10 July 2007

### **India to become a top partner: PM**

HA NOI - India would become one of Viet Nam's most important partners in a variety of fields, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said. In an interview with the Vietnam News Agency, the PM discussed the results of his official visit to India drawing special attention to the landmark Joint Declaration signed by the two leaders. "This is a significant event, marking a breakthrough in relations between the two sides, opening the path for a wide and diversified development of bilateral ties in politics, economy, culture, education, in addition to national defence, science and technology..."

The Jakarta Post, 10 July 2007

### **Aceh party GAM flag use upsets government**

The government denied Monday that it had given the go-ahead for ex-members of the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to use the flag of the former rebel group as symbol for a local political party. Vice President Jusuf Kalla further rejected claims that the government had agreed to the establishment of a local party in Aceh based on the former rebel group. "We didn't agree to it at all... Malik Mahmud did say that to me, but there was no approval given," Kalla told reporters Monday during his inspection of the Indonesian soccer squad while it was warming up for the 2007 Asia Cup...

The Hindu, 10 July 2007

### **Cambodian PM cuts short visit**

NEW DELHI: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen cut short his visit to India due to protocol in the wake of the death of the former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. After senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) failed to convince their Cambodian counterparts about their inability to observe the ceremonial part of the programme, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee made an attempt to meet Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong on Sunday...

Hindustan Times, 10 July 2007

### **3,000 people flee spewing Indonesian volcano**

Some 3,000 people have fled the slopes of an Indonesian volcano after it spewed ash, smoke and other volcanic debris, a local official said on Tuesday. "Up until Tuesday, some 3,000 people from eight villages on the slopes of Gamkonora have left their homes for safer grounds," said Penta Libela, the deputy district chief of West Halamahera on the island where the volcano lies. Mount Gamkonora, about 2,700 kilometres (1,600 miles) northeast of the Indonesian capital Jakarta, was on Monday placed on a level three alert, one level below the top warning which signals an imminent eruption...

Business Standard, 11 July 2007

### **'S'pore not the right place for Indian B-schools'**

Professor Christopher Earley says the National university of Singapore is in talks with B-schools in India to strengthen its presence. Professor Christopher Earley, the Dean of National University of Singapore (NUS), believes Indian B-schools should not target Singapore as an education marketplace. Given that Singapore has a very competitive environment and is a small place with a population of just about four million, it is not suitable for Indian institutes to generate business...

Business Standard, 11 July 2007

### **Miners exit Indonesia on export ban move**

Indian mining and trading firms operating in Indonesia are gradually exiting the island nation, with that country contemplating a ban on iron ore exports. Indian miners have set up their operations in Indonesia, owing to its proximity to China, the biggest consumer of iron ore. Five Indian companies, including three based in Bangalore, have mining and trading operations in Indonesia. Three of them have already initiated the process of exiting that country. Indonesia does not rank among the top-10 iron ore producers in the world. However, its proximity to China makes the country an attractive

destination for Indian mining companies, which have supply contracts with Chinese steel mills...

The Jakarta Post, 11 July 2007

### **Australia's Howard defends Indonesia terror warning**

SYDNEY, Australia (AP): Australia's Prime Minister John Howard on Monday defended warnings from his government that a terrorist attack in Indonesia may be imminent, despite there being no direct intelligence that the chances of a strike had increased. The Foreign Affairs Department reissued a travel advisory to Indonesia on Sunday, warning Australians to rethink travel to the Southeast Asian country because of the threat of terrorist attacks. The advisory did not raise the threat level for attacks...

The Jakarta Post, 11 July 2007

### **New bill hoped to energize power sector competition**

After liberalizing the oil and gas sector, the government now plans to do the same in the power sector, with a bill allowing new players to compete with state utility PT PLN in electricity generation, distribution and transmission. Under article 10(2) of the latest version of the electrical power bill, local government-owned and private-sector firms will be allowed to enter the sector so as to help ensure sustainable electricity supplies throughout the country for the first time. The bill, if approved by the House of Representatives, will effectively end the monopoly held by PLN for decades over the country's electricity sector...

The Jakarta Post, 11 July 2007

### **Asia-Pacific nations told to improve human rights promotion, protection**

Countries in the Asia Pacific are being told to establish sub-regional human rights mechanisms to improve rights promotion and protection, given the failure to reach regional consensus on the issue. "Reaching consensus over the establishment of a human rights mechanism to cover a region stretching from West Asia to the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean remains challenging," United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said Tuesday...

The Times of India, 11 July 2007

### **Asian Parliamentary assembly approves Asian Monetary Fund**

TEHRAN: The Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) has approved the establishment of the Asian Monetary Fund, aimed at boosting Asian economies. All participating delegations, with the exception of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, approved the paper presented jointly by South Korea and the Philippines for the fund's establishment, said Kuwaiti legislator Dr Waleed Al-Tabtabai...

Business Standard, 12 July 2007

### **Vietnam, Indonesia form alliance to curb volatility in pepper**

Vietnam, the largest pepper exporter in the world, has joined hands with Indonesia for a strategic alliance in order to curb high volatility in the global market. Together, both countries account for 45 per cent of the total global supply. In a meeting held in Jakarta on Monday, representatives of Vietnamese and Indonesian Pepper Associations had decided to set up a joint working committee to improve marketing, quality and supply of pepper. Although Brazil had shown a keen interest in forming a cartel with Indonesia and Vietnam earlier, the country had participated in the meeting along with China...

Viet Nam News, 12 July 2007

### **IT industry leaps forward, but fierce competition looms**

HCM CITY - The information technology (IT) industry in Viet Nam has made remarkable gains and will continue to attract foreign investment in the near future, Dr. Le Truong Tung, chairman of HCM City Computer Association said in opening remarks at the Viet Nam ICT Outlook 2007 (VIO) conference yesterday. In his report, Tung said that the IT industry will grow exponentially with the presence of international companies such as Microsoft, Intel, IBM, Google and Ebay and the government's lowering of taxes on digital equipment in the near future, a stipulation of joining the World Trade Organisation...

Bangkok Post, 12 July 2007

### **Capital inflows keep baht strong**

The baht continued to appreciate yesterday on the back of capital inflows into the stock market even as the central bank yesterday warned local banks and exporters against currency speculation. The baht traded as high as 33.18 to the US dollar before closing at 33.32, compared with Tuesday's close of 33.45. Tarisa Watanagase, the Bank of Thailand's governor, said the baht continued to strengthen on foreign equity inflows, but dollar sales by exporters had eased...

Hindustan Times, 12 July 2007

### **Ship carrying 60 people missing in Indonesia**

A passenger ship carrying 60 people disappeared in eastern Indonesia after reporting engine failure in stormy seas, a port official said on Wednesday. A baby's body was found drifting in nearby waters along with several survivors. The KM Wahai Star was on a regular voyage from Buru island to Ambon, the capital of Maluku province, when it lost contact just before midnight on Tuesday, said Karim Tuanaya, acting head of the local port authority...

Hindustan Times, 12 July 2007

### **Dengue fever claims 57 lives in Malaysia**

The outbreak of dengue fever has claimed 57 lives in Malaysia, media reported on Thursday. The health ministry has spent over 10 million ringgit (little less than \$3 million) since 2004 on dengue fever prevention and control measures, The Star said. Most of the money was spent on chemicals including pesticides and larvicides, fogging machines, personal protection apparatus, educational tools and conducting training programmes, said Auk Lee Kah Choon, parliamentary secretary of the health ministry...

Hindustan Times, 12 July 2007

### **14 marines killed in fighting with militants**

At least 14 marines were killed and 10 of them beheaded in a fight with Muslim militants in southern Philippines, the military said on Wednesday. Nine marines were also wounded in the nine-hour clash Tuesday in Tipo-Tipo town in Basilan province, 900 km south of Manila. Brigadier General Ramiro Alivio, marine brigade commander in Basilan, said 10 marines who went missing after the firefight were found dead early on Wednesday...

Mint, 12 July 2007

### **UN sees Myanmar making progress towards democracy**

New Delhi: Myanmar's military junta is taking slow but positive steps towards democracy and development and an Asian consensus is building to push Yangon further in that direction, a top UN envoy said on Thursday (12 July). Ibrahim Gambari, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Adviser on Myanmar, was speaking during a two-day visit to India, his second stop on a three-nation tour aimed at bolstering that consensus. He also plans to visit the Southeast Asian nation in September to encourage the new 'openness and cooperation' of the military regime...

The Financial Express, 13 July 2007

### **Cheap rubber imports under Indo-Thai FTA to hurt SSI units**

MUMBAI, JUL 12: Thousands of SSI rubber goods manufacturing units in the country may face stiff competition against cheaper imports of natural rubber and its products from Thailand with preferential tariff set under proposed Indo-Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Union commerce ministry is working closely on the finalisation of the FTA between India and Thailand. It is expected that the government may keep natural rubber out of the purview of FTA which was earlier being considered for inclusion in FTA...

Business Standard, 13 July 2007

### **Indonesian invite for Tata Steel**

The Indonesian government has invited Tata Steel and Arcelor Mittal to take part in the privatisation

process through which the government is selling 35 per cent in PT Krakatau Steel. Confirming this, sources said talks are at a preliminary stage. A spokesperson for Tata Steel, the world's sixth largest steel maker, said the company has not approached anyone to acquire a stake in Krakatau Steel...

Business Standard, 13 July 2007

### **India grabs 2nd slot in Asia-Pacific rankings**

India has ousted Taiwan from the second spot in the Asia-Pacific private equity rankings in the first half of calendar 2007, according to Thomson Financial. The average PE deal size in BRIC countries this year, as per Thomson Financial, increased to \$52 million from \$46.4 million from the same period last year. In Asia-Pacific, India beat Taiwan to rank second in terms of the value of deals. Australia tops the chart with PE deals worth \$12,353.4 million, followed by India at \$2,433 million. Taiwan saw investments of \$1,901.7 million, while Singapore saw private equity investments of \$1473.2 million. China was ranked fifth with deals worth \$678.7 million...

Business Standard, 13 July 2007

### **Baht stays put at 10-year high**

Thailand's baht was little changed, holding at the highest in almost a decade, after the government said measures to ease currency gains aren't intended to curb overseas equity inflows. Government bonds fell. The baht swung between gains and losses before Finance Minister Chalongphob Sussangkarn told reporters in Bangkok that the government plans to increase domestic borrowing to help ease pressure on the currency to strength. Officials will not impose new capital controls, he said. The baht held at 33.33 per dollar in onshore trading as of 5:20 p.m. in Bangkok, from 33.34 yesterday, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. In the offshore market, the baht fell 0.2 percent to 30.80...

Channel NewsAsia, 13 July 2007

### **Nalanda Mentor Group holds inaugural meeting in Singapore**

SINGAPORE: The Nalanda Mentor Group is holding its inaugural meeting in Singapore from Friday until Sunday (13 to 15 July). The group is established by the Indian government and is chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen. It will discuss international cooperation, governance structure and funding for Nalanda University. Group members, who include Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo, will visit the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM). ACM will host the Nalanda Exhibition on Buddhism in Asia in conjunction with the East Asia Summit in November...

Channel NewsAsia, 13 July 2007

### **Singapore's Chief of Defence Force visits Indonesia**

SINGAPORE: Singapore's Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant-General (LG) Desmond Kuek, is on a two-day (12 and 13 July) introductory visit to Indonesia. The visit is hosted by the Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesian National Defence Forces, ACM Djoko Suyanto. The Defence Ministry said they had good discussions on the wide range of interactions between the two armed forces. It added that Singapore looks forward to further enhancing the mutually beneficial cooperation. During the visit, General Kuek called on the Defence Minister, Dr Juwono Sudarsono...

Mint, 13 July 2007

### **Beijing is trying to win allies in S-E Asia using soft power**

DILI, East Timor: It looks like a pleasant place to conduct affairs of state, a broad, palm-fringed compound by the side of the sea with reflecting pools, a rock garden and fluttering flags. It is the future foreign ministry of East Timor, as depicted on a large billboard at the gate of a construction site-and it is a gift from the Chinese government. Together with a new presidential palace that is also being built by the Chinese, it will be one of the most impressive buildings in this low-rise capital...

Channel NewsAsia, 14 July 2007

### **Mentor Group for ancient Nalanda University meets in Singapore**

SINGAPORE : India may be an economic powerhouse, but soon the country could also become an intellectual centre in Asia. Work is underway to re-establish the ancient Nalanda University in Bihar,

India. And the Nalanda Mentor Group overseeing the project is meeting in Singapore to chart the road ahead for the university. The 11-member group will steer the direction of Nalanda University from the past, to the present and future. Singapore's Foreign Minister George Yeo is a member of the group...

Channel NewsAsia, 14 July 2007

### **Thai PM vows to curb soaring baht**

BANGKOK : Thailand's army-backed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont on Friday vowed to tackle the volatile baht, which hit 10-year highs against the dollar, but downplayed its impact on the economy. "The government will try to stabilise the baht so as not to allow it to fluctuate to the unacceptable level," Surayud told reporters without elaborating further. Driven by massive capital inflows, the baht has continued to hit fresh 10-year highs against the dollar, raising concern over weak profits among Thai exporters. Exports are the key driver of the Thai economy...

The Jakarta Post, 14 July 2007

### **RI, RP to press for regional protection of migrant workers**

With thousands of their citizens facing abuse in Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines have agreed to press for a legally binding agreement on the protection of migrant workers among Association of Southeast Asian Nations members. During the fourth bilateral joint commission meeting to discuss all areas of cooperation between both countries here Friday, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda and his Philippine counterpart Alberto Romulo signed an agreement that will serve as solid basis for comprehensive cooperation, including a commitment to push for an ASEAN migrant workers convention...

The Jakarta Post, 14 July 2007

### **Indonesia wants voting, sanctions in ASEAN charter**

With several members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations still resisting the inclusion of voting and sanctions mechanisms into the grouping's much-awaited charter, Indonesia said Friday that both elements should part of the document. Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda said that the eminent persons group (EPG)'s recommendations, which were approved by leaders in at the ASEAN summit in Cebu in January, include the possibility of voting on several matters and non-compliance measures...

Business Standard, 15 July 2007

### **Thai gems all set to glitter**

Thailand and India are working towards improving bilateral trade in the gems and jewellery segment. Thailand, known for its coloured gemstones, is keen to make its presence felt in India, where the market is responding positively to gemstone-studded jewellery. Industry sources indicated that Indian and Thai industry bodies were exploring various opportunities and might form a separate entity to promote the trade. Similarly, the Indian jewellery industry is optimistic that the ongoing India-Thailand FTA talks would consider gems and jewellery when they extend the early harvest list for the treaty...

Channel NewsAsia, 15 July 2007

### **ASEAN should strengthen cohesiveness, says former Secretary-General**

SINGAPORE: A former ASEAN Secretary-General hopes the grouping will develop more cohesiveness as it marks its 40th anniversary this year. This will then help ASEAN countries better tackle problems like communicable diseases, says Mr Rodolfo Severino in interview with Channel NewsAsia. From military exercises involving ASEAN countries to a gathering of students from the region - these are just some of the ongoing exchanges to foster better understanding as neighbours...

Channel NewsAsia, 15 July 2007

### **Philippine military says closing in on militants**

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines : The Philippine military said Saturday it was closing in on Islamic extremists who ambushed and killed 14 marines this week in the nation's volatile south. But

President Gloria Arroyo said the hunt for the Muslim militants would not affect peace talks with their separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF.) "We will run after those who killed our marines but we will not run away from the peace talks," Arroyo said in a statement...

Channel NewsAsia, 15 July 2007

### **Indonesia's new investment stance: a confusing step forward?**

JAKARTA : Indonesia's new list of foreign investment limits by sector has caused head-scratching among investors. But analysts and the government say that despite confusion, it is a step towards untangling the infamous bureaucracy of Southeast Asia's largest economy. Indonesia is seeking to court foreign investment, with leaders insisting they are addressing concerns about entrenched corruption, red tape and legal uncertainty so the sprawling and unclear list immediately raised eyebrows...

The Economic Times, 16 July 2007

### **Indian carriers can fly to Malaysia**

NEW DELHI: India and Malaysia have agreed to allow air carriers from both the countries to fly to more destinations in each other's territories besides agreeing to an open sky policy on air cargo services. After two-day deliberations between civil aviation officials of the two nations, wherein the Indian delegation was led by Civil Aviation Secretary Ashok Chawla, both the countries signed an MoU allowing the carriers to operate between 18 destinations between India and Malaysia...

Channel NewsAsia, 16 July 2007

### **Myanmar to resume charter talks**

YANGON: Myanmar's military rulers on Wednesday are set to open what they say will be the last round of talks on a new constitution, which analysts criticise as a tool to tighten the military-ruled government's grip on power. The military's hand-picked delegates at the National Convention have been meeting on and off since 1993 to draft the guidelines of a new charter, purportedly the first step on the generals' "road map" to democracy. But the military-ruled government has laid out no timeline for eventual elections, and analysts say the charter itself will serve only to formalise the military's role in government

Channel NewsAsia, 16 July 2007

### **S'pore looking forward to work with Malaysia to liberalise air services**

SINGAPORE: Singapore is looking forward to meeting with Malaysia soon to work towards liberalising air services between the two countries. A Transport Ministry spokesman said Singapore hopes to be able to liberalise the Air Services Agreement with Malaysia ahead of ASEAN's commitment to lift all restrictions on passenger flights between ASEAN capitals by 2008. The spokesman was responding to media queries on a statement made by Malaysia's Transport Minister on Monday...

Mint, 17 July 2007

### **India-Myanmar helicopter sale 'threatens' EU's arms sales ban**

London: A European Union (EU) arms embargo on Myanmar is under threat from an Indian project to sell an attack helicopter to the military regime, Amnesty International said in a report on Monday. The London-based rights group said France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Italy and Britain provide components and technology for the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), potentially flouting the 19-year-old ban on arms sales. Its report, titled "Indian helicopters for Myanmar: making a mockery of the EU arms embargo", was compiled by European and international non-governmental organizations, including Saferworld, which works to prevent armed violence...

The Economic Times, 17 July 2007

### **India, Malaysia agree to operate more bilateral flights**

NEW DELHI: Flight connectivity between India and Malaysia is all set to improve with both countries agreeing to enhance bilateral landing rights and allow designation of any number of airlines to utilise these rights. An Indian delegation led by civil aviation secretary Ashok Chawla

signed an MoU with Malaysia recently, said a statement on Monday. The agreement is significant since Malaysia was on collision course with India on bilateral landing rights...

The Financial Express, 17 July 2007

### **Vietnam plans to let expatriates own property**

HANOI, JUL 16 : Vietnam plans to allow expatriates to buy and sell houses to attract foreign investment to the sector, boosting an economy already growing at a rate of 8 % a year, real estate dealers said on Monday. The Ministry of Construction plans to let foreigners - many of whom are executives in foreign-invested companies - who will stay in the Southeast Asian country for a year to buy and own one house per person for 50 years...

Bangkok Post, 17 July 2007

### **PM orders watch on hedge funds**

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont has ordered the Bank of Thailand to keep a close eye on hedge funds, warning that their movement could have an impact on the baht's appreciation. The premier made the request at Monday's economic meeting attended by members of the Finance and Banking committee and representatives from the Federation of Thai Industries. Concerns were raised about how business operators are suffering under the baht's movement before a list of recommendations were finally drawn up to help these businesses

Bangkok Post, 17 July 2007

### **Private sector offers baht plan**

A tripartite private-sector committee from the Federation of Thai Industries, the Thai Chamber of Commerce and the Thai Bankers' Association has recommended seven short-term measures for the government to implement to ease the impact of the baht surge...

The Jakarta Post, 17 July 2007

### **Parties want lower electoral threshold**

Eight religious-based political parties are demanding the government lower the electoral threshold from three percent to two percent in the new legislative election bill to allow the existence of small parties in the forthcoming election. Article 9 in Law 12/2003 on the legislative election stipulates parties participating in the coming general election must have at least 3 percent of current House membership and at least 4 percent of current regional council membership in 50 percent of the total number of provinces or 50 percent of the total number of cities...

Business Standard, 18 July 2007

### **Baht, Rupiah take a knock**

Thailand's baht fell, snapping a 13-day rally that brought it near a decade high, as Finance Minister Chalongphob Sussangkarn said the nation is considering allowing exporters to hold foreign currency revenue for longer. Chalongphob's comments came after Governor Tarisa Watanagase said yesterday the central bank will propose new measures to limit currency fluctuations...

The Financial Express, 18 July 2007

### **GAIL to pull out of Myanmar block**

NEW DELHI, JUL 17: State-owned GAIL (India) Ltd has decided to withdraw its participation in the A-7 offshore exploration block on the Rakhaine coast in Myanmar. GAIL had signed an agreement with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) in December last year to pick up a 30% stake in this exploration block. While the official reasons cited by GAIL for this withdrawal is that block A-7 does not fit into its E&P portfolio, sources revealed that it was actually to do with the recent decision of the Myanmar government to sell its gas from to other offshore blocks (A1 and A3) to China even as two national oil and gas companies from India held a 30% stake in both these blocks. On the other hand, China has no equity stakes in these blocks...

The Jakarta Post, 18 July 2007

### **House enacts new energy law, hopes to encourage sustainability**

The House of Representatives has enacted a new Energy Law that is aimed at securing sustainable energy supplies, and promoting energy conservation and the use of renewable energy resources. In a plenary session Tuesday, all 10 House factions agreed by acclamation to enact the new law. The legislation was initiated by the House, and had been under discussion by the House's energy commission with the government, the private sector and other stakeholders since 2006...

The Jakarta Post, 18 July 2007

### **Court move opens up free speech**

The Constitutional Court struck down on Tuesday articles in the Criminal Code banning speeches and writing expressing hostility toward or inciting hatred of the government, calling the centuries-old rulings detrimental to democracy. The verdict arrived after the court also scrapped in December three articles that ruled burning pictures of the president and vice president and mocking them in public were crimes...

Channel NewsAsia, 18 July 2007

### **Singapore cuts 2007 trade forecasts as key exports slow in June**

SINGAPORE - Singapore on Tuesday cut its 2007 trade growth forecasts as key exports grew at a slower 1.2 percent in June, dragged down by a continued slump in electronics exports. Overall trade growth projections for 2007 were revised downwards to 5.0 to 7.0 percent from 8.0 to 10 percent due to sustained declines in electronics shipments and a weaker-than-expected trade performance so far this year, International Enterprise Singapore (IE Singapore) said...

The Financial Express, 19 July 2007

### **India, Asean seek to wrap up FTA talks by July-end**

NEW DELHI, JUL 18: With tariff cut on edible oil being one of the main unresolved issues, India and Asean are entering into two crucial meetings, including one on Friday, hoping to wrap up their talks on the proposed Free Trade Agreement in goods by this month-end. Talks on inking a pact on services and investments will follow the FTA. "The senior economic officials' meeting on Friday in Vietnam and that of the Trade Negotiation panel in Cambodia from July 23-26 will be crucial. There are several issues to be finalised," an official told FE...

Business Standard, 19 July 2007

### **Electra looks for greener pastures in S-E Asia**

Due to overheating in valuations of companies in India, private equity player Electra Partners is focussing more on investments in South-East Asia, John Levack, managing director of Electra Partners Asia, said. Talking to mediapersons on the sidelines of Zensar Technologies' AGM, Levack said: "We will focus more on investments in the Philippines, Thailand and may also consider China." Electra has invested \$150 million in Asia and India has received over 50 per cent of this. The high valuation of companies in India, he said, "was a temporary phenomenon, with too much money chasing few good deals"...

Bangkok Post, 19 July 2007

### **Burma heroes remembered**

Rangoon (dpa) - Burma on Thursday marked the 60th anniversary of the assassination of independence hero Aung San and eight other "martyrs" with a military band and wreath-laying, but minus Aung San's daughter who remained under house arrest for the solemn event. "Martyrs' Day," a national holiday to mark the killing on July 19, 1947 of nine of Burma's independence-era leaders, was commemorated at the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Rangoon where wreathes were laid by government officials and relatives of the victims...

Bangkok Post, 19 July 2007

### **Political party ban lifted**

The Thai National Legislative Assembly on Wednesday lifted a military ban on political party activities, paving the way for campaigning to kick off for a general election expected at the end of the year. The military-appointed NLA voted 149 to 4 in favour of scrapping junta Announcement

Number 15 that forbade political parties from engaging in public activities in the aftermath of the Sept 19 coup that toppled the government of prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra...

The Jakarta Post, 19 July 2007

### **Muslim women's group takes on corruption**

Concern over corruption has led a community-based association of Muslim women to introduce an initiative to fight graft starting from their own homes. "In addition to pursuing religious knowledge, Muslim mothers also need to develop a sense of awareness and concern over what's happening around them in society," Nurul Hidayati, spokeswoman of the Jakarta chapter of Islamic study group Majelis Taklim Salimah, said during a discussion Wednesday...

Channel NewsAsia, 20 July 2007

### **ASEAN meeting to focus on Charter, regional integration: George Yeo**

SINGAPORE: ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Manila next weekend will focus their attention on two big continuing tasks. One of them is: improve ASEAN integration and take stock of ties with dialogue partners to enhance the regional architecture. Work on the ASEAN Charter will also feature prominently at the meeting. A complete draft of the 10-member grouping's Charter will be presented to the foreign ministers when the annual meeting kicks off on July 29...

The Jakarta Post, 20 July 2007

### **RI, China exploring possibility of joint maritime operations**

JAKARTA (Antara): The Indonesian and Chinese governments are exploring possibilities of conducting joint maritime operations as a follow-up to the strategic partnership agreement signed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, in 2005, a Chinese official said. "The cooperation will be part of efforts to create regional peace and security," Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia Chen Shiqiu said Thursday. Chen made the statement after a meeting with the chief of Indonesia's Maritime Security Coordinating Board (Bakorkamla) Vice Admiral Djoko Sumaryono

The Jakarta Post, 20 July 2007

### **Indonesia wants nuclear power plant despite quake fears**

JAKARTA(AP): Indonesia is determined to build a nuclear power plant by 2017 despite fears prompted by the damage an earthquake caused to a Japanese reactor earlier this week, a government official said Thursday. "We installed a seismograph at the Muria Peninsula a long time ago, and the results are quite stable," Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Purnomo Yusgiantoro said, referring to the designated site for the nuclear power plant...

Channel NewsAsia, 20 July 2007

### **Thailand promotes use of biodiesel to reduce dependency on oil imports**

BANGKOK: Thailand is trying to find ways to reduce its costly dependency on oil imports. Next year, the government will make it mandatory for all diesel powered vehicles to use two-percent biodiesel fuel. The country consumes energy equivalent to 1.9 million barrels of oil per day, and its total energy imports are valued at 11 percent of the GDP. With this demand expected to grow five percent annually, finding and using alternative fuels has become a priority...

The Financial Express, 20 July 2007

### **Indonesia enacts law to force cos to spend on social work**

Indonesia's Parliament today amended a law that will force companies to spend on social work programmes such as environment protection and retraining unemployed workers. The revised Limited Liability Company Law requires businesses "that have natural resource-based activities and companies that aren't in the natural resources business, yet their activities affect the environment," to set aside funds to meet obligations to the community, according to the law...

Business Standard, 21 July 2007

### **Reviving Nalanda**

If basics are ignored, Nalanda-II may well go the way of Santiniketan. Judging by last week's confabulations in Singapore, the \$1 billion Nalanda Mark II project is going great guns. But I am still not sure whether it's meant to be a temple of higher learning, a money-making investment or an exercise in soft power to strengthen ties with China and Japan, draw Australasia closer and provide a cultural focal point for ASEAN and East Asia Summit countries...

Viet Nam News, 21 July 2007

#### **Govt upbeat on economic picture**

HA NOI - Viet Nam recorded a 7.87 per cent increase in GDP over the first six months of this year, said Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung at the first session of the 12th National Assembly on Thursday. In a report reviewing the implementation of the country's socio-economic plan since January, Hung said the growth rate was the highest rate recorded during this period in five years. Hung listed seven major achievements as the driving forces behind Viet Nam's economic success...

Viet Nam News, 21 July 2007

#### **Viet Nam ranks 4th in global retail market allure**

HA NOI - Viet Nam dropped a place to fourth in an AT Kearney Group survey that measures the most attractive retail markets in the world. The country ranked behind India, Russia and China on the Global Retail Development Index (GRDI). "Although Viet Nam fell one place to number four on the 2007 index, it remains very attractive as one of the fastest growing economies in Asia," AT Kearney wrote in its report released earlier this month. "This country joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2006 and is proving a tempting target for global retailers"...

Channel NewsAsia, 21 July 2007

#### **MM Lee to visit Indonesia July 22-27**

SINGAPORE: Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew is visiting Jakarta from Sunday until Friday (22 - 27 July). He will attend a Citibank's "Legacies of Leadership" event. While in Jakarta, the Minister Mentor will meet with Indonesian political and parliamentary leaders and the business community. Mr Lee will also be delivering an address at the Yayasan Indonesia Forum "Vision 2030"...

Channel NewsAsia, 22 July 2007

#### **Preparations for ASEAN summit in Singapore making progress: George Yeo**

SINGAPORE : Preparations are in progress for the forthcoming ASEAN Summit which will be held in Singapore in November. Speaking to Channel NewsAsia ahead of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila next weekend, Foreign Minister George Yeo says, as the grouping celebrates its 40th anniversary, one challenge is to make it and its work better known to its people, especially the younger generation...

Channel NewsAsia, 22 July 2007

#### **Singapore and Malaysian officials meet for discussions on IDR**

Nearly three months after announcing the Joint Ministerial Committee on the Iskandar Development Region (IDR), ministers and senior officials from Singapore and Malaysia met for discussions in Johor Bahru on Sunday evening. However, their first official meeting will take place at the Pulau Springs Resort in Johor Bahru on Monday afternoon. Singapore's National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan joined his Malaysian counterpart Effendi Norwawi for dinner...

Channel NewsAsia, 22 July 2007

#### **Arroyo's State of the Nation address likely to focus on Philippine economy**

MANILA : Philippine President Gloria Arroyo will be delivering her seventh State of the Nation address on Monday and she is expected to highlight the country's rosy economic performance. Towards a more vibrant Philippine economy: this is likely to be President Arroyo's message as she delivers her seventh State of the Nation Address on Monday...

Mint, 23 July 2007

### **India's share growing in Asia-Pacific PE market**

Fund-raising may have hit a slow patch in the Indian private equity (PE) market, but India-based deals look set to dominate deal-making in the Asia-Pacific PE markets this year. Four out of the top 10 deals concluded by investors in the region in the first six months of 2007 were from India, against three for all of last year. The four deals totalled \$449.69 million (Rs1,812 crore) and the deal sizes ranged between \$72 million and \$176 million, according to the US financial information services provider Thomson Financial...

Mint, 23 July 2007

### **India, Singapore see eye-to-eye on bank access**

New Delhi: India and Singapore are in the final stages of closing a deal that has delayed the overseas ambitions of the State Bank of India Ltd (SBI) and ICICI Bank Ltd for almost two years and also slowed the expansion plans of Singapore's top bank, DBS Bank, in India. Authorities in India have now agreed to allow DBS Bank to open eight new branches in India, provided ICICI Bank and SBI are given the qualifying full bank (QFB) status by Singapore. This will allow the Indian banks to open up to 25 branches or ATM locations in Singapore. The new branches will increase the strength of DBS Bank's branch network in India to 10...

Channel NewsAsia, 23 July 2007

### **Thai arrests in Muslim south ease violence but raise worries**

YALA, Thailand: Thai authorities have arrested more than 350 people this month in a crackdown on separatist insurgents that has raised new concerns about the treatment of suspects in the Muslim-majority south. The crackdown has left residents in the region along the Malaysian border grateful that violence has eased, but worried about the fate of the detainees, who are mostly being held at military bases...

The Jakarta Post, 23 July 2007

### **Ten years after the Asian financial crisis: New challenges?**

Ten years after the crisis, the big question is whether we have now become better prepared to face a financial shock. Have we learned enough from the crisis to improve on our weaknesses, especially in the financial field, and are we able to prevent another crisis in the future? In some countries, including Indonesia, the crisis has not been fully overcome in terms of unemployment and poverty. Even on the political front some lingering weaknesses are being felt. Only China, Singapore, Vietnam and, recently, Hong Kong are exuberant economically...

The Jakarta Post, 23 July 2007

### **China, Southeast Asian countries on track to free trade pact, ASEAN official says**

SINGAPORE (AP): Southeast Asian nations and China are on track to establishing a free trade pact with just a number of details to be ironed out, a senior ASEAN official said Monday. "We are on track on (the) ASEAN-China" free trade area, said Ong Keng Yong, secretary-general of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Trade between China and ASEAN, expanding by nearly 40 percent a year, is likely to exceed US\$200 billion a year by 2008, two years before the free trade area is due to be established in 2010...

Burma News International, 24 July 2007

### **ASEAN Charter to pressure junta**

Ahead of its unveiling at this weekend's ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Manila, ASEAN's top diplomat has promised that the organization's Charter will increase pressure on Burma to undertake political reform. Singaporean Ong Keng Yong, Secretary General of ASEAN, on Monday told reporters in Singapore that the much awaited ASEAN Charter will "stress responsibility and obligation of membership." This, it is hoped, will prod Naypyidaw's generals to political reform...

Burma News International, 24 July 2007

### **Hectic activity prior to Mandalay-Moreh bus service**

For the early inauguration of the Moreh-Mandalay bus service, the Centre has asked the Manipur

government to give it an update of the condition 'Moreh-Mandalay' highway. The bus service will be between India's border town Moreh and Burma's second largest city Mandalay. Indian Union Ministry of External Affairs, Home Affairs and Surface Transport have sought a report on the condition of the road as well as the potential of the bus service. They also asked us about security on the Imphal-Moreh sector of the highway," an official source said...

Channel NewsAsia, 24 July 2007

### **Malaysia's economic zones have edge over Indonesia's: MM Lee**

JAKARTA: Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew says if the island republic helps both Malaysia and Indonesia to develop Special Economic Zones, it will pay equal attention to both projects. But he noted that with their differing political structures, Malaysia currently has the edge in this area. "Legacies of Leadership" was the theme at a forum in Jakarta organised by Citibank...

Channel NewsAsia, 24 July 2007

### **India is next new frontier for S'pore waste & water treatment firms**

SINGAPORE : India is seen as the next frontier for Singapore's water and waste treatment companies looking to expand their regional footprint beyond China. And already, efforts are being made to help facilitate their access into the market. While Singapore's water and waste management companies are expanding rapidly into China and the Middle East, India is a market that some firms are starting to look at...

Channel NewsAsia, 24 July 2007

### **Nguyen Minh Triet re-elected Vietnam president**

HANOI : Vietnam's new National Assembly on Tuesday overwhelmingly re-elected President Nguyen Minh Triet, seen as an advocate of sweeping economic reforms, as head of the communist state, officials said. Triet, 64, took nearly 99 percent of the vote in the parliament, failing to win just six of a possible 493 votes, a National Assembly official told AFP. Triet, the former party chief in southern Ho Chi Minh City, was first appointed to the post last year. He is a party loyalist but has voiced support for speeding up a two-decade-old process of market reforms...

Burma News International, 25 July 2007

### **Burma's Construction Minister headed for Dhaka**

Burma's Minister for Construction, Major General Saw Tun, will arrive in Dhaka on July 26 to sign several agreements between Bangladesh and Burma, said Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad Chowdhury at a press briefing yesterday. Dr. Chowdhury announced this after the Burmese delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister, U Kyaw Thu held meetings with him in the Foreign Ministry office in Dhaka yesterday evening. Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister is currently in Dhaka leading a four-member team to discuss several bilateral issues with Bangladesh counterparts...

Channel NewsAsia, 25 July 2007

### **ASEAN says Rice no-show understandable**

MANILA: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations denied on Wednesday the US decision not to send its top diplomat to a regional meeting in Manila was a deliberate snub. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will instead be replaced by her deputy, John Negroponte. It is the second time she has scrapped a meeting with regional diplomats. But ASEAN believes relations with Washington remain strong, and that Rice's decision will not affect that, said Philippine Marciano Paynor, the head of the meeting's organising committee...

Channel NewsAsia, 25 July 2007

### **Thousands flee to avoid feared clash in southern Philippines**

MANILA: Almost 6,000 people have fled their homes in the southern Philippines to avoid a feared clash between Muslim rebels and soldiers hunting for the killers of 14 Marines, officials said on Wednesday. The residents of five villages near the town of Al-Bakra on Basilan island have sought safe haven as the military took positions for a possible assault on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the civil defence office here said. Thousands of troops are ready to go after the MILF

following an ambush on Marines in Basilan on July 10 that left 14 marines dead...

Channel NewsAsia, 25 July 2007

### **Thousands take part in tsunami drill on Thai coast**

PHUKET, Thailand: Rescuers on speedboats plucked tourists out of the sea and sirens blared on Thailand's sun-drenched beaches on Wednesday in the first full-scale test of the country's tsunami warning system. Thousands of residents and foreign tourists took part in the hour-long drill, in which rescuers saved "victims" while sunbathers fled the white sands of Phuket's famed Patong Beach to move to higher ground inland. Phuket and five nearby seaside provinces were hit by the deadly Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, which killed 5,400 people in Thailand alone ??? half of them foreign holidaymakers...

Channel NewsAsia, 25 July 2007

### **Nguyen Tan Dung re-elected Vietnam prime minister**

HANOI : Vietnam's new National Assembly on Wednesday re-elected Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who has won praise for his tough stance on corruption and support of economic reforms, an official said. An official of the national assembly's office confirmed the approval to AFP, but could not provide the voting results. The online VNExpress newspaper said Dung won nearly 97 percent of votes by the 493 members of the national assembly...

The Jakarta Post, 25 July 2007

### **Indonesia, South Korea sign preliminary deal to develop nuclear power plant**

JAKARTA(AP): An Indonesian company signed a preliminary agreement with Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Corp. to jointly develop Indonesia's first nuclear power plant, a government official said Wednesday. Indonesia, which desperately needs new sources of electricity to meet rising demand, wants to develop the plant on Java island despite concerns by environmental groups that country's frequent earthquakes makes nuclear power unsafe. Waryono Karno, secretary general at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Corp. inked the deal with Indonesia's PT Medco Energi International at meeting in Korea...

Business Standard, 26 July 2007

### **Pune to be manufacturing hub for JCB in Asia**

Earth moving and construction equipment company JCB India Ltd commenced the manufacture of three new heavy machines at its facility in Talegaon near Pune to meet the growing demands for the domestic market and the export market. "Pune will be the export manufacturing hub for Indonesia and Malaysia, and eventually even West Asia," said Vipin Sondhi, managing director, JCB India Ltd. The company also plans to start exporting its backhoes manufactured at Ballabgarh, Haryana by 2008, he added. Presently, JCB meets the demands in these markets through its facilities in the UK...

The Economic Times, 26 July 2007

### **S'pore central bank alarms price hike**

SINGAPORE: Singapore's central bank on Wednesday said, it is increasingly concerned about rising prices, citing a property boom that has prompted commercial banks to lend aggressively to homeowners and real estate developers. In its annual report, the Monetary Authority of Singapore reiterated its 2007 economic growth forecast of 5-7%, which it said would be driven by the transport engineering, biomedical, and service sectors...

Channel NewsAsia, 26 July 2007

### **Singapore's MM Lee optimistic about Indonesia's growth in next two years**

JAKARTA : Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew is optimistic about Indonesia's economic growth prospects in the next two years. But he said after its next presidential elections in 2009, Indonesia must pick up the pace and grow as fast as Vietnam. The Minister Mentor made this assessment after meeting Indonesia's vice president in Jakarta. This is MM Lee's second visit to Jakarta in two years...

Business Standard, 27 July 2007

### **Malay on a platter**

Malaysian restaurant chain Awana Group is starting its journey to promote authentic and exotic Malay cuisine in India from Hyderabad. The group is set to launch its first Malaysian fine dining restaurant in the country in the city on July 28, with plans to launch eight more such restaurants in the country by 2010. Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Eddie Lim, managing director of Awana, said the company was firming up plans to open two more restaurants - one each in Mumbai and Delhi - in the next two years...

Hindustan Times, 27 July 2007

### **Landslide kills 20 in Indonesia**

At least 20 people have been killed and 52 are missing after a landslide, triggered by heavy rain in Sulawesi province in eastern Indonesia, officials said in Jakarta on Tuesday. The disaster in Batu Bare and Tomboyali districts in Marowali regency destroyed over 100 houses and disrupted the transport network, said the Disaster Management Agency...

The Jakarta Post, 27 July 2007

### **Myanmar opposes human rights body in Southeast Asia, diplomats say**

MANILA(AP): Myanmar has objected to a proposal to create a regional human rights body under a landmark charter being drafted by Southeast Asian countries, two diplomats said Friday. The proposal, backed by more liberal countries such as the Philippines, is among the few remaining contentious issues holding up completion of a charter for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the diplomats said. The Southeast Asian diplomats, who were helping draft the charter, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters...

The Jakarta Post, 27 July 2007

### **ADB says China should avoid drastic policies to curb growth, raises emerging Asia forecast**

HONG KONG (AP): The Chinese government should avoid introducing drastic tightening measures to curb its rapid economic growth and take a gradual approach, the Asian Development Bank said Thursday. The bank also raised its forecast for China's economic growth this year to 11 percent from 9.5 percent, partly due to increased public spending linked to the 2008 Beijing Olympics...

Channel NewsAsia, 27 July 2007

### **Thai PM says baht is stabilising, for now**

BANGKOK: Thailand's military-installed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said on Friday that the Thai currency was stabilising after a period of rapid gains but warned of more fluctuations to come. "Currently, we are able to keep the baht stable but given the recent fluctuation, we cannot say what the range of the exchange rate would be exactly," Surayud said. "At least, it is likely that we can stabilise the baht this week and next," he told reporters after the meeting the finance minister and the central bank governor...

Burma News International, 27 July 2007

### **Burma Construction Minister to sign road deal today**

Major General Saw Tun, Burma's Minister for Construction will sign an agreement today on the construction of the 25-kilometre road link connecting Bangladesh and Burma. The Minister arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit to sign the agreement with Bangladesh to construct the direct road link. Bangladesh Communication Adviser, Major General (retired) MA Matin welcomed Major General Saw Tun at the Zia International Airport yesterday afternoon...

Business Standard, 28 July 2007

### **Currencies in Asia feel the heat**

Asian currencies fell sharply on Friday on concern that the deterioration in the US housing market could raise credit costs and put a brake on the global economy. The Australian dollar, the Indian rupee, the Indonesian rupiah and the Philippine peso were among the biggest losers as risk-averse investors moved to less volatile assets. The Japanese yen was the region's sole gainer as investors

unwound carry trades, whereby they borrow in low-yielding currencies such as the yen for investment in other currencies or markets with higher yields. That drove the yen to a three-month high against the dollar and a six-week peak versus the euro...

The Economic Times, 28 July 2007

### **Temasek's leading lady bets on Barclays**

SINGAPORE: One of Ho Ching's colleagues once said it was her willingness to take risks, not her family ties, that won the prime minister's wife her top job at Temasek Holdings with a mandate to shake up Singapore's state investor. That penchant for risk-taking came to the fore this week with Temasek's unexpected GBP2.1 billion investment in UK bank Barclays, which is locked in an increasingly costly bidding war for ABN AMRO in what would be the world's biggest bank take-over...

The Hindu, 28 July 2007

### **Sri Lanka in ARF**

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has become a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the country's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama will lead the country's first delegation to the ARF meet scheduled to be held in Manila on August 1 and 2. Last month, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar announced the ARF's decision to admit Sri Lanka into its fold. Bangladesh joined the ARF earlier this year...

The Financial Express, 28 July 2007

### **Asia faces challenges from capital flows**

Bangkok, July 28: Asia's emerging economies are struggling to find ways of coping with adverse market volatility arising from fast flows of global capital, Bank of Thailand Governor Tarisa Watanagase said on Saturday. Senior officials from South East Asian central banks meeting in Bangkok, hoped to seek the views of the International Monetary Fund on how to adjust policies in response to recent volatile capital flows experienced in the region, Tarisa said in a speech to regional central bankers. "The increased volatility has posed challenges to central banks in maintaining monetary and financial stability," the governor said...

The Jakarta Post, 28 July 2007

### **RI, Australia to decide on a free trade agreement in 2008**

JAKARTA (Antara): Indonesia and Australia will decide in 2008 whether they will conclude a free trade agreement (FTA) after conducting a joint feasibility study starting in August 2007. On Friday, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Australian Prime Minister John Howard during a meeting in Bali have agreed to conduct a joint feasibility study to evaluate free trade agreement between Indonesia, ASEAN and New Zealand. The study is expected to serve as a valuable reference and produce recommendations the two countries may need in deciding their moves before the middle of 2008...

Channel NewsAsia, 29 July 2007

### **ASEAN can achieve economic community by 2015 if members are resolute**

SINGAPORE: ASEAN can achieve an economic community by 2015 - five years ahead of its 2020 target if its ten members remain resolute, said diplomats and business leaders. Through air links and people-to-people exchanges, the ASEAN countries, with over S\$1 trillion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), have worked together on many levels. And to further utilise its group strength, it wants to form an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. Zhang Xiaokang, Chinese Ambassador to Singapore, said: "I think it's important because unity always means strength..."

Channel NewsAsia, 29 July 2007

### **China's influence over ASEAN likely to grow with Rice's absence**

MANILA: Foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) have arrived in Manila for the 40th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. A wide range of issues are on the agenda, including one which will allow citizens from member states to seek help from the embassies of other

member states. As ministers from the ten ASEAN members and their dialogue partners arrive in the Philippines, members of a high-level task force are working over-time to finish the first draft of a landmark ASEAN charter...

Channel NewsAsia, 29 July 2007

### **ASEAN delegates arrive in Manila for 40th annual meeting**

MANILA : On the eve of its first-ever charter, aimed at changing the way it deals with everything from human rights to Asia's economy, ASEAN finds itself at a crossroads on its 40th birthday, analysts say. The bloc's foreign ministers are set to approve the charter when they begin meeting in Manila on Monday, clearing the way for its formal adoption at the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit later this year. But the sharp and lingering disagreements over core issues could point to trouble ahead...

The Economic Times, 30 July 2007

### **Asean's efforts on rights body fail**

MANILA: Southeast Asian diplomats have failed to reach full agreement on creation of a human rights commission under a landmark charter they are drafting, a diplomat said on Sunday. Military-ruled Myanmar, which has been condemned for its dismal human rights record, has objected to any mention of a human rights commission in the charter being drafted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Diplomats in an Asean task force writing the charter will submit a draft including formation of a human rights commission to the bloc's foreign ministers at their annual meeting in Manila on Monday, a diplomat on the task force said...

Channel NewsAsia, 30 July 2007

### **ASEAN opens talks to approve historic charter**

MANILA - Southeast Asian nations opened talks here Monday to approve a historic charter to bind the region's half billion people closer together, with new agreements on everything from tourism to terrorism. Facing increased competition from China and India, and threats from militant insurgencies bubbling across the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plans to create a fully integrated economic zone by 2015. But lingering disputes over human rights, and the group's long tradition of keeping out of each other's internal affairs, have left key issues unresolved before the charter is formally adopted later this year

The Manila Times, 30 July 2007

### **Asean sets road map**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations headed into a week of security and political talks Sunday looking to seal a landmark cooperation deal but sharply divided on how to tackle human-rights abuses - and each other. Despite two years of work, the 10-nation Asean failed to hammer out agreement on a proposed human-rights commission as part of a new charter that the group will approve this week and formally adopt later in the year. Diplomats said strong opposition from military-ruled Myanmar, a bane of the Asean and a target of international criticism and sanctions, helped scuttle the commission...

Channel NewsAsia, 30 July 2007

### **Malaysia launches massive northern development plan**

Malaysia - Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Monday launched a 51-billion-dollar development masterplan to spur economic growth and reduce poverty in northern Peninsula Malaysia. The Northern Corridor Economic Region (Northern Corridor) is a government initiative to boost the economy and raise income levels in the northern states of Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak over 18 years...

Channel NewsAsia, 30 July 2007

### **ASEAN urged to make progress on trade deals**

MANILA - Southeast Asia must ratify free trade deals with China and South Korea, and make progress on a similar accord with Japan, as the bloc prepares its own free-trade zone, the Philippines

said Monday. At a key meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Philippine President Gloria Arroyo urged the bloc to make progress on those deals as it tries to meet a 2015 target for an ASEAN free-trade zone. "We are actively strengthening our economic linkages not only within the region but also with our dialogue partners," she said in her opening address to the gathering...

Channel NewsAsia, 30 July 2007

#### **ASEAN urges nuclear powers to back treaty**

MANILA : Southeast Asian nations on Sunday urged the world's nuclear powers to sign on to a regional treaty aimed at keeping their corner of the world free of atomic weapons. Ahead of the Asian security summit, the 10-country Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) said the five nuclear powers that are permanent UN Security Council members should sign a protocol to the treaty. The call came as ASEAN approved a plan to strengthen safeguards against proliferation as part of its review of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone treaty, 10 years after it came into force...

The Hindu, 31 July 2007

#### **Rise of China, India raises Asia's prospects: Arroyo**

MANILA: The "rise of China and India - the two most populated countries in the world as global economic powerhouses has opened a lot of opportunities and challenges for all the countries in the [East Asian] region." This was a theme that Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo emphasised, inaugurating the 40th ministerial meeting of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Manila on Monday...

Channel NewsAsia, 31 July 2007

#### **ASEAN ministers agree to set up human rights commission**

MANILA : In a major step forward in their meeting in Manila, ASEAN's foreign ministers have agreed to include provisions for setting up a human rights commission in the ASEAN Charter. Singapore's Foreign Minister George Yeo says he expects any outstanding issues about the Charter to be resolved when they meet again on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September. The foreign ministers have a busy day of meetings on Monday after the formal opening ceremony presided by Philippine President Gloria Arroyo...

Channel NewsAsia, 31 July 2007

#### **ASEAN Charter likely to be signed at Singapore meeting: George Yeo**

SINGAPORE : Foreign Minister George Yeo has said he is optimistic that the final ASEAN Charter will be signed when the group meets in Singapore later this year. Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila, Mr Yeo said the foreign ministers had a very good meeting on Monday morning and the spirit of cooperation and the determination to move forward was evident. He added that the ministers have agreed to set up a human rights body under the provisions of the ASEAN Charter. Mr Yeo said that this was agreed upon with consensus...

The Manila Times, 31 July 2007

#### **GMA to Asean ministers: Ratify deals with China, Korea fast**

Southeast Asia must ratify free-trade deals with China and South Korea, and make progress on a similar accord with Japan, as the bloc prepares its own free-trade zone, President Arroyo told the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Monday in her keynote speech at the opening rites of the 40th Asean Ministerial Meeting at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). The President pointed out that deepening integration on that level would mean completing and eventually forging the individual free-trade agreements the Asean is currently working out with the so-called Plus Three countries

The Financial Express, 31 July 2007

#### **India growing but living standards still poor**

Manila, July 31: Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore households enjoy the highest living standards in

the Asia-Pacific while those in emerging powerhouses China and India remain poor, according to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) survey Tuesday. The poll measured the "actual final consumption of households" of 23 Asian economies to determine their well-being and living standards. The final measure includes items purchased as well as those supplied by governments, such as education and health care...

The Economic Times, 31 July 2007

**IMF chief warns of globalisation risks**

manila, July 31: The head of the International Monetary Fund warned on Tuesday that global investment and growth prospects were at risk from a dramatic rise in private equity buy-outs and threats posed by financial globalisation. Rodrigo Rato said the trouble in the US subprime housing market was an example of such risks and called for a fresh look at lenders' underwriting standards and more borrower education...