

**ADB: 2% decline for Thai economy**  
**Bangkok Post, 1 April 2009**

The Thai economy is likely to contract 2% this year before growing 3% next year, as Asia grapples with the weakest economic environment it has seen in decades, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Jean Pierre Verbiest, the ADB's Thailand country director, said the Thai economy could fare worse than the forecast if the global economic recovery took longer than expected. The outcomes of the measures by the United States to solve its financial crisis will remain a wildcard for the global economic outlook, he said.

**Exports down by 36.86 % YOY in February**  
**The Jakarta Post, 1 April 2009**

Indonesia's export performance in February dropped by 36.86 percent in terms of value compared to the same period last year, the Central Statistics Agency reported on Wednesday. Agency head Rusman Heriawan said the total value of exports within the month reached US\$7.08 billion or down by 1.02 percent compared to a month earlier. Rusman said within the first two months of the year, the total value of exports had dropped by 34.5 percent compared to the same period last year.

**GMR eyes Southeast Asia energy deals**  
**The Financial Express, 1 April 2009**

Singapore: GMR Infrastructure said on Wednesday it had hired a former Temasek official to head a new office in Singapore that will focus on power projects in Southeast Asia. Ng Quek Peng, the Singapore state investor's former managing director for portfolio management, will oversee GMR's existing operations in Southeast Asia and Australia as well as seek new investment opportunities in the region.

**Asean backs US, British measures**  
**Bangkok Post, 2 April 2009**

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is expected to support the financial stimulus measures proposed by United States President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in a speech on Thursday to the G20 preliminary meeting in London. In an advance copy of a speech to be delivered as chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Mr Abhisit says he backs the measures even though France and Germany oppose them. Many Asean member countries rely on exports and want the G20 meeting to support protectionist measures, Mr Abhisit says.

**RI gets \$140m fund for infrastructure from ADB**  
**The Jakarta Post, 2 April 2009**

Indonesia has secured US\$140 million in investment from the ADB to support the development of infrastructure projects. The Asian Development Bank said Wednesday that these investment funds will go to the government-backed Indonesian Infrastructure Financing Facility (IIF) to support "urgent" infrastructure development in Indonesia, adding that infrastructure is highly important to boost the economy. IIF is expected to start operations in May, with 30 percent of the stakes contributed by the government and the rest coming from the World Bank, ADB and other international financial institutions.

**Nazib Razak to be sworn in as Malaysia's sixth PM on Friday**  
**The Times of India, 2 April 2009**

KUALA LUMPUR: The King, Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, has given his consent for Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak to be sworn in as Malaysia's sixth prime minister on Friday, the chief secretary to the government, Mohamed Sidek Hassan, said. In a statement issued last night from the national administrative capital Putrajaya, near here, he said Tuanku Mizan had also consented to grant an audience to current Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib Thursday when Abdullah will relinquish the post and seek consent for Najib to be appointed as the new prime minister.

**M'sia Feb exports fall 15.9%**  
**The Straits Times, 3 April 2009**

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's February exports dropped 15.9 per cent year-on-year, according to official data released on Friday. The trade ministry said in a statement that exports fell to RM39.59 billion (S\$16.5 billion) from a year ago while imports plunged 27.3 per cent year-on-year in February. The total trade was worth RM67.2 billion, a decrease of 21 per cent from a year ago, but Malaysia did manage to record a trade surplus of RM11.97 billion for the month.

**Dutch firm to put up BPO venture**  
**The Manila Times, 3 April 2009**

A DUTCH company is putting up a business process outsourcing (BPO) company in the Philippines through a joint venture with a local player. In a statement, the Board of Investments (BOI) said it awarded tax and other incentives to WNS Philippines Inc., which qualified a new information technology export service firm. WNS Philippines is 65-percent owned by WNS Global Services Netherlands Cooperative UA, with Advanced Contact Solutions Inc. holding the remaining 35 percent equity. The venture will cost P188 million.

**Thailand's negative outlook poised to improve**  
**Bangkok Post, 3 April 2009**

Thailand's sovereign ratings outlook may improve in the near future, says the Public Debt Management Office. The three major ratings agencies currently maintain a negative outlook on Thailand's sovereign ratings. Standard and Poor's and Fitch Ratings have BBB+ and Moody's with Baa1. Ratings play a pivotal role in setting prices on both the public and private sectors' new debt issues. Negative outlooks indicate the risk of a possible ratings downgrade due to deteriorating credit fundamentals - slowing economic growth and the impact of the global recession in Thailand's case. But Thailand's outlook could be revised to "stable" as some indicators have improved, said PDMO director-general Pongpanu Svetarundra.

**Thai, Cambodia troops clash near disputed temple**  
**Hindustan Times, 3 April 2009**

Thai and Cambodian soldiers exchanged rifle and rocket fire on their disputed border near an ancient Hindu temple on Friday, but there were no reports of casualties, officials from both countries said. "The armed clash began when Thai soldiers entered Cambodian territory. We fired rockets at the Thai soldiers," Cambodia's government spokesman Phay Siphon told Reuters. In Bangkok, Thai Major General Kanok NetraKaveysana confirmed there had been a brief firefight early in the morning, but he had no reports of wounded or dead.

**Direct Langkawi-S'pore flights**  
**The Straits Times, 4 April 2009**

SUNGAI PETANI: THE Government has approved direct flights between Langkawi and Singapore which will take off soon. Transport Minister Ong Tee Keat said the move

would boost Langkawi's economy, especially the tourism sector. 'We will leave it to AirAsia to access the situation and decide on the number and frequency of the flights between the two destinations,' he told reporters after a dialogue with Chinese non-governmental organisations at the Federation of Sungai Petani Chinese Associations office here Saturday.

**5 million households no longer depend on kerosene this year**  
**The Jakarta Post, 4 April 2009**

More than 5.3 million households across the country have abandoned daily dependence on kerosene having already joined the kerosene-to-liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) conversion program during the first three months of this year. Spokesperson for state oil and gas company Pertamina, Anang Rizkani Noor, stated Friday that the figure so far reflects the number of packages of three-kilogram LPG canisters and gas stoves distributed free in the provinces including South Sumatra, West Java, Banten, Kepulauan Seribu (the "Thousand Islands" in Jakarta bay), Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi as part of the implementation of the conversion program.

**Troops on alert after Cambodia-Thai border clash**  
**Hindustan Times, 4 April 2009**

Troops on both sides of the Cambodian-Thai border were on alert today after gunbattles near a disputed temple left at least two soldiers dead, a Cambodian official said. The mood was tense after the firefight on Friday, which was the biggest flare-up for months in a bitter feud over territory near the ancient temple. "The situation at the border is quiet now and back to normal," a Cambodian commander named Yem Pem said, adding that troops were on "24-hour alert." Soldiers exchanged rocket, machine gun and mortar fire yesterday, damaging the staircase of the 11th-century Preah Vihear temple, following a brief skirmish earlier in the day, officials said.

**More job losses expected**  
**The Straits Times, 5 April 2009**

Unemployment and retrenchment rates in the first three months of this year are likely to be higher than in the last three months of last year, Manpower Minister Gan Kim Yong said on Sunday. Speaking to reporters ahead of the release of the first quarter's figures this month, he said the economy was not out of the woods. He also noted that more retrenchment notices went out in the first quarter than in the previous one. In the last quarter of last year, unemployment was 3.7 per cent for Singaporeans, up slightly from the 3.3 per cent from the third quarter. If laid-off foreigners are included, the number of people retrenched in the last quarter of last year was 7,500, three times more than the quarter before.

**End Thai 'aristocracy'**  
**The Straits Times, 5 April 2009**

BANGKOK: Protesters called on Sunday for a mass demonstration in the Thai capital to force the government from power, just days before Asian leaders are to arrive in the kingdom for a key regional summit. Thousands of protesters have encircled the prime minister's office since March 26 in the biggest challenge yet to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's three-month-old government. The crowd has dwindled since the first week but usually swells to about 5,000 people at night when supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra gather to hear the deposed leader address them via video link.

**Foreign-invested firms need support**

## **Viet Nam News, 6 April 2009**

HA NOI: Foreign-invested enterprises are urging the Vietnamese Government to improve infrastructure and streamline customs procedures to better support them in overcoming the impacts of the global economic crisis. They have also petitioned for tax reduction and exemptions and simplification of tax procedures, as well as for better export policies to help remove obstacles to production and export. Representatives from 200 foreign-invested firms made those proposals in a meeting with Ministry of Industry and Trade officials in Ha Noi late last week.

## **PetroVietnam sees earnings fall**

### **Viet Nam News, 6 April 2009**

HA NOI: PetroVietnam reported revenues of just VND52.2 trillion (US\$2.98 billion) in the first quarter this year, 20 per cent lower than in the same period last year, mostly due to lower global oil prices, PetroVietnam deputy director Phung Dinh Thuc told a press conference in Ha Noi last Friday. The group earned about \$1.45 billion from exporting 4.3 million tonnes of crude oil during the period, with oil prices averaging just \$45 per barrel, a drop of \$55 from last year's price peaks, Thuc said.

## **Thai PM rejects snap polls**

### **The Manila Times, 6 April 2009**

BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva on Sunday rejected calls by protesters to hold snap elections, saying that the kingdom was not politically stable enough to go to the polls yet. Thousands of demonstrators loyal to ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra have surrounded Abhisit's offices in Bangkok since March 26 to press him to dissolve his fragile three-month-old government. Thaksin, who was ousted in a coup in 2006 and remains in exile to avoid a jail term for corruption, has urged his supporters across the country to attend a mass rally in Bangkok on Wednesday.

## **Security fencing a growth sector during tough times**

### **Bangkok Post, 6 April 2009**

While most businesses these days are hurting, some could still emerge as winners during a time of crisis. One sector with potential is security, given the rise in job losses and crime. Security fences in particular can provide business operators and house owners better protection from unwanted access. Wasp Perimeter Security Systems Co, a pioneer of electric security fences in Thailand, has projected sales to increase by 30% this year with 200 new customers, which would equal sales for the past three years.

## **Nath to represent India at ASEAN Summit**

### **Business Standard, 6 April 2009**

Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath will represent the country at the ASEAN-India and the East Asia Summit in Thailand on April 11 and 12, but New Delhi and the 10-nation south east Asia trading bloc are still away from signing the much-delayed Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Nath will represent Prime Minister Manmoham Singh at the two meetings at Pattaya in Thailand as "India would be looking forward in various

cooperation initiatives with ASEAN, including FTA..." a Commerce Ministry statement said today. Though negotiations on the market-opening trade pact were completed in August 2008, it could not be signed as differences on duty cuts and market protection for certain items, particularly relating to agriculture, cropped up later.

### **Malaysia votes in key by-elections**

**Hindustan Times, 7 April 2009**

Malaysians on Tuesday voted in key by-elections for a parliamentary and two state assembly seats including in a constituency where both ruling and opposition parties have fielded ethnic Indian candidates, a contest seen as a test for new Premier Najib Tun Razak's popularity. The ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional, had fared miserably in last year's March general elections led by the then premier Abdullah Badawi, who agreed to step down after his UMNO party lost its two thirds seats in Parliament and hung on to power with a thin majority.

### **Origin Security in tech tie-up with Malaysia's De Tag**

**The Economic Times, 7 April 2009**

CHENNAI: Chennai-based Origin Security Systems (OSS) has been importing tags and antenna, used by retailers to prevent garment thefts, from De Tag Industry of Malaysia. With 1,000 plus installations in mid-sized and big retail outlets across the country, the firm is said to have built enough confidence for foraying into manufacturing.

The firm is gearing up to roll out the locally made antennas from May 15 from its electronics manufacturing plant, near the city.

### **Progress made in border talks**

**The Straits Times, 7 April 2009**

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia): Cambodian and Thai negotiators said on Tuesday they had made progress in efforts to resolve a border stand-off near an ancient temple which last week flared into deadly gunbattles. Three Thai troops were killed following clashes on Friday between the neighbouring countries over disputed land around the 11th-century Preah Vihear temple, the deadliest fighting for six months in a long-running feud.

### **US provides over \$1b for RI airline upgrades**

**The Jakarta Post, 7 April 2009**

The United States Export-Import Bank approved more than US\$1 billion in financing for Indonesian airlines to improve passenger fleets, generate business and create jobs in Indonesia and throughout the region. In a press statement in Jakarta on Monday, the US Embassy said the financing was made possible after the ratification and implementation of the Cape Town Treaty, which allows Indonesian airlines to save millions of dollars in financing costs. "This financing allows Indonesian-registered companies to gain very competitive rates and favorable credit similar to the most advanced countries in the world," said US Ambassador Cameron R. Hume.

### **Tens of thousands rally against Thai PM**

**The Times of India, 8 April 2009**

BANGKOK: Tens of thousands of protesters rallied in Bangkok today in their biggest bid yet to topple premier Abhisit Vejjajiva, sparking fears of a violent new twist to Thailand's political crisis. Security forces guarded key government locations as supporters of fugitive former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra massed here, one day after activists spiked tensions by attacking Abhisit's car and smashing a window.

Police said around 40,000 red-clad protesters chanting "Bring Thaksin back, Abhisit get out!" had gathered outside Abhisit's office in the capital, where demonstrators have been staging a sit-in for the last two weeks.

### **Reforms, growth at stake**

#### **The Straits Times, 8 April 2009**

JAKARTA: Indonesians vote on Thursday in the first of two elections that will determine whether South-east Asia's biggest economy pushes ahead with key reforms to attract much-needed investment, create jobs, and revive growth.

The parliamentary election is the forerunner for the more important presidential vote on July 8, when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's first directly elected leader, is expected to run for, and win, a second five-year term.

### **Trans-Asia to step up**

#### **The Manila Times, 8 April 2009**

Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp. (TA Oil) and its joint venture partner NorAsian Energy Ltd. are set to conduct additional exploration activities in a prospective petroleum block in offshore Central Visayas. In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, TA Oil said the companies have decided to enter into the second sub-phase of their exploration program for service contract (SC) 69 in the Visayan basin. "The consortium will send the formal notice to this effect to the Department of Energy [DOE] soonest," Raymundo Reyes, TA Oil vice president for exploration, said.

### **12 domestic gas sales contracts signed**

#### **The Jakarta Post, 8 April 2009**

Domestic demand for natural gas has sharply increased as government boosts gas utilization projects, with the latest signing of 12 natural gas sales agreements between state oil and gas company Pertamina and its business partners on Tuesday. BP Migas deputy chairman for financial economy and marketing Djoko Harsono said demand for natural gas would continue to increase between 7 to 8 percent per year. "Demand has sharply increased in the latest five years. We predict demand would be 4.2 billion cubic feet (BCF) per day in 2014," he said.

### **Australia, NZ to start cutting tariffs on VN imports**

#### **Viet Nam News, 9 April 2009**

HA NOI: Viet Nam had a lot to gain in terms of access to the Australian and New Zealand markets, Australian Ambassador to Viet Nam Allaster Cox said on the sidelines of a press briefing in Ha Noi yesterday. The briefing was held to discuss the free trade agreement signed by Australia and New Zealand to cut their import tariff on Vietnamese products by 85 percent and 96.4 percent, respectively, by 2010 before granting Viet Nam a complete tariff exemption by 2020.

### **S'pore, Libya ink 2 pacts**

#### **The Straits Times, 9 April 2009**

Singapore and Libya signed two agreements to foster trade and protect investments, signifying the growing economic relations between the two countries, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) said in a statement on Thursday. The Investment Guarantee Agreement (IGA) and the Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income (DTC) were signed on Wednesday in Tripoli by Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Education, Mr S Iswaran and Dr Mohammed Ali Al Huwayeg, Secretary of the Libyan

General People's Committee for Industry, Economy and Trade.

**Indonesia,Thailand: Asia's most corrupt**  
**Bangkok Post, 9 April 2009**

SINGAPORE: Indonesia and Thailand are perceived as Asia's most corrupt economies, with last year's cellar-dweller the Philippines making a marked improvement, an annual survey of foreign business executives shows. Singapore and Hong Kong retained their rankings as the region's least corrupt economies, although there are concerns about private-sector fraud, according to the survey by the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (Perc). Despite the negative perception of Indonesia, Perc noted ``there has been a real headway in fighting the problem'' under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who is seeking re-election in July's presidential polls.

**Thai PM refuses to resign despite mass rally**  
**Hindustan Times, 9 April 2009**

Embattled Thai premier Abhisit Vejjajiva on Thursday refused to resign, urging protesters massing for a second day in Bangkok not to be manipulated by ousted former leader Thaksin Shinawatra. More than 100,000 demonstrators gathered in the capital on Wednesday where they surrounded the residence of a key royal aide whom they accuse of orchestrating the military coup that toppled Thaksin in 2006. Police said about 25,000 protesters were left early Thursday, camped outside the house of Prem Tinsulanonda, the top adviser to the king, as well as at Abhisit's office and Bangkok's Royal Plaza. "It's not right to yield to a group that is making a loud noise or using force," Abhisit told a local television station.

**Indonesia votes in general election**  
**Indian Express, 9 April 2009**

Jakarta: Indonesians began voting on Thursday in only the third general election since the fall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998, in a poll that will decide who can run for president in July. Suharto's resignation amid protests and financial ruin after three decades in power heralded the start of the "Reformasi" era of political change, and today's vote is seen as another key test for Indonesia's young democracy. "Our polling stations are now open for the Indonesian elections. We are waiting for voters to arrive," said electoral official Enos, of Timika, Papua.

**UN chief to Laos on rare visit**  
**The Straits Times, 10 April 2009**

HANOI: United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is due to arrive in Laos late Friday, 50 years after a UN boss last made a full visit to the country, one of Asia's poorest. He was to hold talks with leaders of the communist government and would open a new UN headquarters in the capital, Vientiane, a UN press release said. Javier Perez de Cuellar made a stopover in Vientiane 24 years ago when he was UN secretary general but the first - and last - full visit by a UN chief came in November 1959 when Dag Hammarskjold visited, UN officials said.

**US-Asean companies devoted to region**  
**Bangkok Post, 10 April 2009**

PATTAYA: American companies operating in Asean remain committed to Thailand and the region and are continuing to search for new business opportunities, according to the Washington-based US-Asean Business Council. Council members yesterday also showed support for Thailand's move to push forward regional integration of financial and capital markets. "In spite of the current global crisis, we are still committed to doing business in the region and are looking for additional opportunities here if they

are available," said senior director Marc Mealy following a meeting with Asean finance ministers yesterday.

### **JSL mulls making Indonesia, a manufacturing hub**

**The Economic Times, 10 April 2009**

NEW DELHI: Ratan Jindal led JSL (formerly known as Jindal Stainless) is planning to make Indonesia a manufacturing hub to supply stainless steel products in the South-East Asian region, a top company executive said. JSL has doubled the capacity of its Indonesian stainless steel plant to 1.5 lakh tonne and intends to export 70% of the produce to ASEAN countries. "Since ASEAN countries receive tariff benefits by exporting within the region, our Indonesian plant will primarily serve the demand of countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand. We may also export some products to the US and Chinese market in the future," said JSL director NC Mathur. The Indonesian plant was acquired by the Indian firm in 2004.

### **Aircel to make \$5 bn investments in 3 years**

**Business Standard, 10 April 2009**

Aircel Cellular, in which Malaysian telecom major Maxis Communications holds 70 per cent stake, will invest another \$5 billion in the next three years in the country. The GSM service provider today started operations in Mumbai, putting to rest speculation on plans to acquire the city's oldest mobile company, Loop Mobile. "We have planned \$5 bn investment for financial years 2010, 2011 and 2012 for expansion of operations. We are planning to commence operations in five additional circles. A good amount of investment will be made in existing circles also," said Chief Operating Officer Gurdeep Singh. The company, which commenced operations in December 2003, had invested a total of \$5 bn till date, he added.

### **Asian leaders react to chaos**

**The Straits Times, 11 April 2009**

PATTAYA, Thailand: ASIAN leaders reacted with sympathy and dismay to the cancellation of a regional summit in Thailand - and with a degree of relief over escaping safely after anti-government protesters smashed into the venue. Leaders attending the East Asia Summit were evacuated by helicopter from the seaside city of Pattaya to a nearby military airport, while some delegates were whisked away on navy boats. 'What can we say?' said Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis. 'It had to be postponed because it was no longer comfortable and convenient for the heads of state to be meeting because of the chaos.'

### **India-ASEAN trade talks in deep freeze**

**Bangkok Post, 11 April 2009**

With the recession worsening and many countries resorting to raising import tariffs to protect domestic industries, a trade deal between India and Asean remains on a shaky ground. A senior federal government official said the June 1 deadline for eliminating duties on more than 4,000 products traded between the two sides will need to be rescheduled. India is not ready to sign the deal as per the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) in April due to the upcoming general elections, said the official. The implementation of tariff cuts will now be postponed by more than a month, depending on when the new government decides to sign the pact.

### **Businesses expect stronger coalition**

**The Jakarta Post, 11 April 2009**

Businesspeople have called for a stronger coalition among political parties to smoothen the crucial passage of much-needed economic policies. The demand came in

the wake of Thursday's legislative elections that are likely to see incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono extend his term for a second round. Yudhoyono's Democratic Party secured 20.4 percent votes, based on a partial count compiled by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI). The official results will be released May 9. "We are going to face a major challenges, such as unemployment, during this global [economic] crisis. To overcome such challenges, we need a strong political coalition to ensure fast delivery of any economic policies," M.S. Hidayat, chairman of the Indonesian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Kadin), said Friday.

### **US\$10b fund for SE-Asia**

#### **The Straits Times, 12 April 2009**

BEIJING: China had planned to announce a \$10 billion infrastructure investment fund and offer credit to neighbours at a cancelled weekend summit of Asian leaders in Thailand, its foreign minister said. Anti-government protestors forced the cancellation of the summit in Pattaya after they swarmed into the summit venue. In an interview with state media on a flight back to China, Foreign minister Yang Jiechi avoided direct criticism of the Thai government while detailing measures that Chinese premier Wen Jiabao had planned to offer at the summit.

### **Total chaos in Bangkok**

#### **The Straits Times, 12 April 2009**

BANGKOK: Tanks and armoured vehicles rumbled across Bangkok on Sunday as Thai premier Abhisit Vejjajiva cracked down on protesters leading the most serious challenge yet to his four-month rule. One day after wrecking a summit of Asian leaders, demonstrators fired into the air and attacked his convoy as he was being driven away from the interior ministry where he had minutes earlier imposed a state of emergency in Bangkok. Mr Abhisit said he was safe and unhurt after the incident, and called for calm while threatening the use of force to restore order.

### **Summit collapse to cost B200bn**

#### **Bangkok Post, 12 April 2009**

The collapse of the Asean summit meeting yesterday is expected to cause 200 billion baht of damage to the country's tourism sector, according to the Tourism Council of Thailand. The degree of damage is no less than what the airport seizure by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) caused late last year, said Kongkrit Hiranyakij, the council president. He said the incident was bound to impact negatively on tourism not only in Pattaya, but countrywide, because it indicates the Thai government's failure to implement efficient security measures to protect foreign leaders. Mr Kongkrit said the 10 Asean countries and the other six nations \_ China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand \_ participating at the summit account for 60% of the tourists travelling to Thailand annually, or around 8.5 million people.

### **7th Asean-India summit postponed; Nath, Pillai airlifted to safety**

#### **The Financial Express, 13 April 2009**

New Delhi: Commerce minister Kamal Nath and commerce secretary GK Pillai were among the top officials air-lifted to safety in a special helicopter from resort town of Pattaya, Thailand, after over a thousand anti-government protesters broke the glass doors to storm the convention hall where a summit of Asean leaders was to take place. As a result of the violence, the 7th Asean-India summit—to discuss solutions to the global financial crisis from South East Asean countries and the signing of the proposed India-Asean Free Trade Agreement as well as the India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement—was postponed

**Postponement of summits can impede ASEAN's work: Malaysian PM**  
**Business Standard, 13 April 2009**

Postponement of the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand due to anti-government protests could impede the good work of a regional grouping like ASEAN, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak has said. The postponement could delay the benefits of closer integration for hundreds of millions living and working in Southeast Asia, Najib said in his blog. Najib, who had flown to Pattaya to attend the ASEAN meeting, had to cut short the visit when Thailand declared emergency in Pattaya after thousands of anti-government protesters stormed the venue of the meetings and forced their cancellation. "It was unfortunate that my meetings were cancelled one after the other as leaders could not leave or enter the conference venue. Luckily, with the assistance of the Thai armed forces and police, we made it safely to the airport en route home," said Najib, who returned to Malaysia later.

**Thai soldiers clash with protesters, 68 wounded**  
**Hindustan Times, 13 April 2009**

At least 68 people were wounded when soldiers and anti-government protesters clashed in Bangkok early on Monday, 14 hours after the Thai prime minister declared a state of emergency in the capital city. The clash occurred around 4.30 am on Monday when some 300 so-called red-shirt protesters used a seized bus to crash into soldiers stationed at Din Daeng District in north Bangkok, Army spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd said. Soldiers fired warning shots in the air and used teargas to disperse the protesters after failing to persuade the protesters to stop, Sansern said.

**S'pore GDP may shrink 9%**  
**The Straits Times, 14 April 2009**

More gloom is expected ahead for the Singapore economy as the global recession cuts deeper into its manufacturing and export sectors. The Government on Tuesday lowered the 2009 economic growth forecast for the third time. It now expects the economy to shrink 6 to 9 per cent from a 2 to 5 per cent contraction previously. The downgrade was due to a 'sharp deterioration' in the first quarter and 'weak global outlook for the rest of the year', said a Ministry of Trade and Industry statement. The official forecast was first revised on Jan 2 when the range of -1 to 2 per cent was changed to -2 to 1 per cent. Three weeks later, it was revised to -2 to -5 per cent.

**Korn: GDP decline worse after riots**  
**Bangkok Post, 14 April 2009**

The GDP for 2009 would decline beyond the -2.5% to -3.0% earlier expected because of the rioting by the red-shirt group, Finance Minister Korn Chatikavanij said on Tuesday. Mr Korn said the Ministry of Finance would revise its GDP growth estimate for the year as it was certain that tourism and exports would fall as a consequence of the unrest. The minister said the government would now need to redouble its efforts on the economy, but it would continue to push forward. He planned to clarify the government's investment schemes and the country's economic potential with investors and foreign agencies at the coming meetings of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Asea+3 finance ministers' meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

**Singapore, Malaysia add air travel destinations**  
**The Jakarta Post, 14 April 2009**

Singapore and Malaysia have agreed to increase air travel between the two Southeast Asian neighbours amid a regional slump in tourism. Under the new agreement, carriers from both countries may operate between Singapore and six new destinations in

Malaysia - Ipoh, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Malacca, Sandakan, and Tawau, Singapore's Transport Ministry said in a statement Tuesday. It also allows for more flights to Panang, Langkawi, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu, the ministry said.

### **Philippines loaned \$60m**

**The Straits Times, 15 April 2009**

MANILA: The World Bank said on Wednesday it will lend US\$40 million (S\$60 million) to the Philippines to provide electricity to rural areas. The loan will help bring electricity to 10,000 homes in the most isolated and impoverished parts of the archipelago, particularly in the troubled southern island of Mindanao, the multi-lateral lending agency said in a statement. Part of the funds will also be used for tapping renewable energy sources such as small hydroelectric and biomass projects, it said.

### **66% of Filipinos oppose 'Cha-cha'**

**The Manila Times, 15 April 2009**

Two out of three—or about 66 percent—of voting-age Filipinos are against Charter change if the amendments would allow President Gloria Arroyo to stay in office beyond 2010, according to a new nationwide survey. The figure, as reported by the Social Weather Stations (SWS), is almost similar to the result of its October 2008 survey that showed that 64 percent opposed Charter change—“Cha-cha”—for the same reason.

### **Trade financing decline reflects slump in exports**

**Bangkok Post, 15 April 2009**

Trade finance volume is expected to fall 20% this year in line with the decline in the country's exports, say local bankers. Piti Tantakasem, chief wholesale banking officer of TMB Bank, said trade finance volume fell 20% in the first quarter from the year before as exports and imports shrank sharply with the global economic downturn. The decline in international financing transactions would have a significant impact on overall loan growth for the banking sector, he said. Most analysts expect lending to be flat this year for local banks, as lenders take a more defensive stance on credit risk amid the downturn.

### **Newmont seeks deal with SOEs ministry**

**The Jakarta Post, 15 April 2009**

The State Ministry of State Enterprises has been in intensive talks with the US Newmont Mining Corp. over its obligatory local divestment of shares. State Minister for State Enterprises Sofyan Djalil said Tuesday that there were intensive talks going on between PT Newmont Pacific Nusantara president director Martiono Hadianto and deputy minister for mining, strategic industry, energy and telecommunication Sahala Lumban Gaol over the obligatory divestment of shares in the local subsidiary of the giant copper and gold mining firm PT Newmont Nusa Tenggara (NNT). “But I have not yet received any reports from Sahala on the details of their discussions,” he said.

### **Thailand's Thaksin down but not out: Analysts**

**Hindustan Times, 15 April 2009**

Thaksin Shinawatra suffered a setback after Thailand broke up protests by his supporters, but the fugitive former premier will continue to loom large over the country's politics, analysts say. They say Thaksin is more isolated than ever after authorities arrested protest leaders loyal to him and issued an arrest warrant for the exiled tycoon for inciting days of unrest that left two dead and 123 injured. But while his calls for “revolution” fell flat when protesters melted away in the face of a military crackdown, Thailand's deep and enduring social problems mean that many will

continue to regard him as a potential saviour.

**Asean Summit in Phuket in June : PM**  
**AsiaOne, 22 April 2009**

The Asean summit with six dialogue partners from Asia and the Pacific has been tentatively scheduled for June in the resort island of Phuket, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said yesterday...

**Brunei 39th In Global Competitiveness**  
**Bru Direct, 22 April 2009**

Bandar Seri Begawan - Brunei made it to the Global Competitiveness Report for 2008-2009, published by the World Economic Forum, for the first time and stood at 39th position globally, buoyed by its strong macroeconomic stability, where it ranks second internationally, thanks to its high government surplus and the complete absence of public debt...

**Asian EMs see glimmer of hope**  
**The Financial Times, 22 April 2009**

The outlook for share, currency and bond markets in emerging Asia is "less bleak" than for those in other regions, the Asian Development Bank said on Tuesday...

**Thai parliament meets for reconciliation talks**  
**The Hindu, 22 April 2009**

Bangkok (AP): Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva on Wednesday called for an end to the violence that has battered Thailand's image and divided society, saying emergency rule will remain in Bangkok until the threat of violence is gone.

**Seeking Investors, Malaysia Eases Affirmative-Action Policy**  
**Wall Street Journal, 22 April 2009**

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak announced a significant relaxation of the multiracial country's longstanding affirmative-action policies in a bid to lure foreign investors and accelerate its recovery from the global economic slump.

**Indonesia orders ICRC out of Papua over jail visits**  
**Reuters, 23 April 2009**

JAKARTA, April 23 (Reuters) - Indonesia has ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to leave the politically sensitive Papua region after its officials visited separatists in jail, the foreign ministry said.

**Exploring New Air Routes To Strengthen Indonesia-Malaysia Ties**  
**Bernama, 23 April 2009**

JAKARTA, -- Malaysia and Indonesia will explore the opening of new air routes between the two countries and landing rights for Malaysia's airline companies in some Indonesian cities.

**Indonesia nabs terror suspect**  
**The Straits Times, 24 April 2009**

JAKARTA - AN ISLAMIC extremist accused of murdering a Christian professor in 2004 has been arrested in Indonesia, police said on Friday.

**Thailand's Prime Minister Lifts State of Emergency**  
**Washington Post, 24 April 2009**

Thailand's besieged prime minister lifted a state of emergency in Bangkok early today, announcing his decision in parliament after a late-night debate on violent anti-government street protests, the Reuters news agency reported.

**Malaysia: Premier to Investigate Human Trafficking Accusation**  
**New York Times, 26 April 2009**

The prime minister promised Friday to investigate a report by American lawmakers saying that thousands of Myanmar refugees were handed over to traffickers and ended up working in Thai brothels...

**End of security crackdown prompts Thai protest**  
**ABC News, 26 April 2009**

Thousands of supporters of ousted Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra have held their first anti-Government rally since their protests earlier this month turned violent and were forcibly stopped by the Army.

**PD's victory expected to bring major changes to Sumatra**  
**The Jakarta Post, 27 April 2009**

The emergence of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Democratic Party as the clear winner of the recent legislative elections, has given rise to hopes of rapid major changes in the resources-rich Sumatra Island.

**ASEAN Secretariat: ASEAN ready to deal with swine flu**  
**Xinhua, 27 April 2009**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are currently better prepared to deal with the potential spread of the swine flu because they had experiences in their fight against the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza outbreaks, according to a press statement released by the ASEAN Secretariat on Monday.

**Asean Summit Likely In Third Week Of June**  
**Bernama, 27 April 2009**

The aborted Asean + 6 Summit is likely to be held at the end of May or third week of June in Phuket, as host Thailand and the Asean Secretariat try to fix a date that could accommodate the busy schedule of Leaders of the 16 participating countries.

**ADB: Climate Change to Hurt Southeast Asia**  
**Wall Street Journal, 28 April 2009**

Economic damage from climate change will hit Southeast Asia harder than other regions and seriously jeopardize production of rice, the world's most important food crop, according to a report by the Asian Development Bank.

**Thai militant attacks intensify**  
**BBC News, 28 April 2009**

Nine people have died in the past 24 hours in a wave of attacks by suspected Islamic militants in southern Thailand.

**Singaporean Gets 18 Years For Leading Terrorist Group**  
**Jakarta Globe, 29 April 2009**

A Singaporean terrorism suspect was found guilty and sentenced to 18 years in jail on Tuesday for leading a group that vowed to wage jihad against "the enemies of Islam," concluding a marathon trial that convicted 10 members of the so-called Palembang terrorist group.