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Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



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## Contents

### ***Editor's Note***

### **Country Profile**

Cambodia

Indonesia

Lao Peoples Democratic Republic

### **Commentary**

Assessing ASEAN's Efforts to Combat Transnational  
Crime

*Riddhi Shah*

### **Book Review**

India and New Zealand in a Rising Asia

*Udai Bhanu Singh*

### **Photo Essay**

A Field visit to Thailand and Myanmar

*Sampa Kundu*

### **News Track**

ASEAN

ASEAN-India

Cambodia

Indonesia

Laos

Malaysia

Myanmar

Papua New Guinea

Philippines

Singapore

Thailand

Vietnam

Australia

Fiji

New Zealand

### **Important Upcoming ASEAN Events**

The month of July presented a packed calendar for ASEAN. August was no less hectic. There were more than 40 meetings in July and over 30 meetings in August at different venues (most in ASEAN capitals, some in China). This included the 45th AMM/PMCs/19th ARF, ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting-- in July, and the 10th EAS Forum in August. But it was the absence of a joint statement at the end of the 45th Ministerial Meeting at Phnom Penh that left observers wondering whether ASEAN was losing its direction. The question of leadership of ASEAN has once again become important. If the ASEAN leadership is not considered to be strong and Cambodia is seen to be too overawed by China, then it does not bode well for the organisation. Some have even begun to say that a series of 'weak' chairs-Cambodia in 2012, Brunei in 2013 and Myanmar in 2014 will make ASEAN and ASEAN-led structures (including EAS) vulnerable to activism by China. However, some counter developments raise hope: the US pivot to Asia, the heightened engagement by the West of a Myanmar in transition, the inclusion of the US and Russia in an expanded EAS, besides indications to the effect that the next ASEAN Secretary General's post would be held by Vietnam's deputy Foreign Minister Le Luong Minh. These are viewed as positive trends which could assist in the evolution of a stable security architecture in Asia

Attention continued to be focussed on the most vulnerable of ASEAN countries, that is, Myanmar. This potential tiger continued to democratise and engage with neighbouring countries. One of its two Vice Presidents, Tin Aung Myint Oo, tendered his resignation, ostensibly on health grounds in July to pave the way for induction of a new Vice President. Following the visit of Indian Prime Minister in May, Myanmar sent a parliamentary delegation to India to study its parliamentary procedures and in the following month (Aug 1-8) the C-in-C of its armed forces, Vice Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, was in India to strengthen military ties. Myanmar's President Thein Sein paid a visit to Thailand (22-24 July) to discuss the opening of four border checkpoints and the Dawei port and SEZ project. The optimistic outlook was further reinforced by the return of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank to Myanmar.

Closer maritime cooperation was emphasized by the regional countries as the South China sea dispute continued to threaten the peace and Vietnam regretted the failure of the Phnom Penh meetings to issue a joint statement. It brought Indonesia and Australia together as Australian PM Julia Gillard met Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in July to discuss enhanced maritime cooperation. That increased uncertainties were behind the military modernization in the region could be seen in Philippines' approval of a clutch of new defence contracts. While the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton came out in support of the South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC), India reiterated its position that freedom of navigation must be ensured and (maritime) disputes resolved "as per international laws".

**Udai Bhanu Singh**

# CAMBODIA



**Capital:** Phnom Penh

**Language:** Khmer

**Currency:** Riel (KHR)

**Geography:**

Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, between Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos

**Total Area:** 181,035 sq km

**Land:** 176,515 sq km

**Water:** 4,520 sq km

**Political System:**

Chief of state: King Norodom Sihamoni (since 29 October 2004)

Head of government: Prime Minister Hun Sen (since 14 January 1985) (co-prime minister from 1993 to 1997); Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Men Sam An (since 25 September 2008); Deputy Prime Ministers SAR Kheng (since 3 February 1992); Sok An, Tea Bang, Hor Namhong, Nhek Bunchhay (since 16 July 2004); Bin Chhin (since 5 September 2007); Keat Chhon, Yim Chhai LY (since 24 September 2008); Ke Kimyan (since 12 March 2009)

**Government Type:**

Multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy.

**Constitution:**

Promulgated on 21 September 1993. Assembly-bicameral, consists of the Senate (61 seats; 2 members appointed by the monarch, 2 elected by the National Assembly, and 57 elected by parliamentarians and commune councils; and the National Assembly (123 seats).

**Cabinet:** Council of Ministers named by the prime minister and appointed by the monarch.

**Elections:** the king chosen by a Royal Throne Council from among all eligible males of royal descent; following legislative elections, a member of the majority party or majority coalition named prime minister by the Chairman of the National Assembly and appointed by the king.

**Supreme Court:**

Supreme Council of the Magistracy (provided for in the constitution and formed in December 1997); Supreme Court (and lower courts) exercises judicial authority.

**Society:**

Total Population: 14,952,665 (July 2012 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Khmer 90%, Vietnamese 5%, Chinese 1%, other 4%

**Religions:**

Buddhist (official) 96.4%, Muslim 2.1%, other 1.3%, unspecified 0.2% (1998 census)

**Economy:**

GDP PPP

US\$32.95 billion (2011 est.)

US\$30.91 billion (2010 est.)

US\$29.17 billion (2009 est.)

GDP PPP (Per capita)

US\$2,300 (2011 est.)

US\$2,200 (2010 est.)

US\$2,100 (2009 est.)

GDP Real Growth Rate:

6.7% (2011 est.)

6% (2010 est.)

-2% (2009 est.)

### **Defence:**

Military expenditure:

3% of GDP (2005 est.)

Disputes: Preah Vihar temple issue with Thailand. Cambodia accuses Vietnam of a wide variety of illicit cross-border activities; progress on a joint development area with Vietnam is hampered by an unresolved dispute over sovereignty of offshore islands.

### **Foreign Policy:**

Cambodia is the current Chair of ASEAN, and has diplomatic relations with all major countries including the US, China, Japan and India. It's an active member of several organizations of the world, which includes the UN, ASEAN, WTO etc. So far as disputes are concerned it has disputes regarding offshore islands and sections of the boundary with Vietnam. Parts of Cambodia's border with Thailand are indefinite, and the maritime boundary with Thailand is not clearly defined. Cambodia- Thailand relations have suffered a lot because of the boundary dispute regarding Preah Vihar temple, which led to clashes along the border in 2011.

### **Relations with India:**

India-Cambodia bilateral relations are warm and cordial. In the 1950s, India was associated with International Control Commission on Indo-China. After the collapse of Khmer Rouge regime, India recognized the new government and opened its Embassy in Phnom Penh in 1981 when much of the world shunned Cambodia. India was one of the original contributors to UN de-mining operations in Cambodia.

India and Cambodia cooperate in a number of multilateral and regional foras. Cambodia has consistently supported India's candidature in the UN and other international organizations. PM Hun Sen formally declared his country's open support in favour of India for permanent membership of the UNSC at the South Summit Conference in Havana in April 2000. Cambodia has played a pivotal role in achieving the goal of the ASEAN-India Summit, held for the first time in Phnom Penh in November 2002. Cambodia supported India within the ASEAN for participation in the first East Asia Summit meeting held in December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. Within ASEAN, Cambodia's interaction with India has enhanced substantially since July 2009 when Cambodia took over as Country Coordinator for India for a three years period. India will be hosting ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in December 2012 under the Cambodian Presidency of the ASEAN.

### **Sources:**

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=50042447>

# INDONESIA

Area: 1,904,569 sq km

Capital City: Jakarta

Number of Provinces: 30

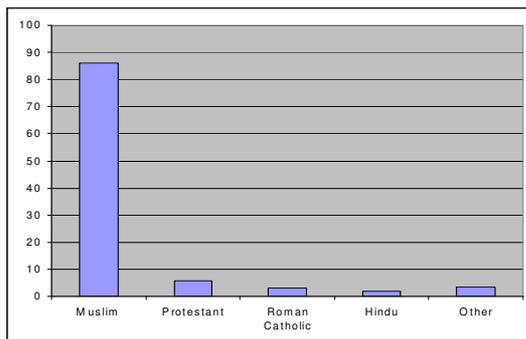
Special Regions: 2

Head of the State and Government: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

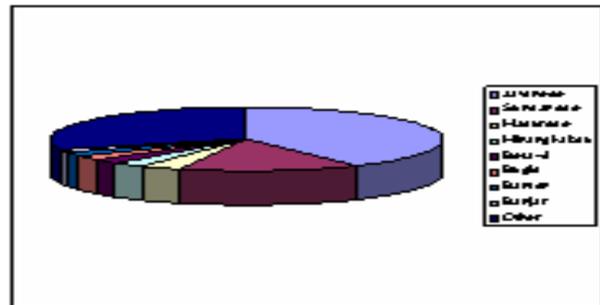
System of Government: Republic

Estimated Resident Population (2012 Estimate): 248,216,193

## Religious Composition in Percentage<sup>1</sup> (2000 Census)



## Ethnic Composition in Percentage<sup>2</sup> (2000 Census)



Currency: Indonesian Rupiah

GDP (2011 Estimate): \$1.139 trillion

GDP Growth Rate (2011 Estimate): 6.5%

Inflation (2011 Estimate): 5.7%

Unemployment (2011 Estimate): 6.6%

GDP Per Capita (2011 Estimate): \$4,700

Military Expenditure (2010): \$ 6009 million

**Border Disputes:** Land Border and maritime boundaries with Timor-Leste yet to be delimited;

Maritime and EEZ Boundary yet to be settled with Australia; Involved in a maritime dispute with Australia over Ashmore Reef; involved in a maritime dispute with Malaysia over the Tanjung Datu and Camar Wulan border area in Borneo and the maritime boundary in the

Ambalat oil block in the Celebes Sea; maritime boundary yet to be determined with Singapore over areas north of Indonesia's Batam Island.

Part of the Following International Organizations and Treaties: ADB, APEC, APM, ARF, ASEAN, BIS, BTWC, CICA

(observer), CP, CTBT, D-8, DLU (special partner), EAS, FAO, G-15, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, ICSID, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), IPU, ISA, ISESCO, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, KP, MIGA, NAM, NPT, NTBT, OIC, OPCW, PIF (partner), UN, UNCLOS, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFCC, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO<sup>3</sup>

### Indonesia – India Relations:

India and Indonesia have shared close cultural and commercial contact since the past two millennia. Eight head of state/government visits have taken place between the two nations since 2000. The latest Indonesian President to visit India was President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2011. The two countries have signed a Defence

Cooperation Agreement in 2001, a MOU on combating international terrorism in 2004 (a Joint Working Group on Counter – Terrorism has been set up under the MOU) and a Joint Declaration on Establishing a Strategic Partnership in 2005. The last meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter – Terrorism was held in December 13-14, 2011 in Semarang, Indonesia. On 25 – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012, the 19<sup>th</sup> India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) was held in North Sumatera. While Indonesia is India's second largest trading partner in ASEAN, India is the largest buyer of crude oil from Indonesia. Bilateral trade between the two countries rose from \$ US 6.2 billion in 2006 to \$ US 17.65 billion in 2011-12.

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"The World Fact Book", *Central Intelligence Agency*, Last Updated: 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html>>, Accessed on: 22 August 2012.

<sup>1</sup> "Indonesian Demographics Profile 2012", *indexmundi*, last updated on: 19 July 2012, <[http://www.indexmundi.com/indonesia/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/indonesia/demographics_profile.html)>, Accessed on: 22 August 2012

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Cahoon, "Indonesia", *WorldStatesmen.org*, 2000, <<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Indonesia.htm>>, Accessed on: 22 August 2012.

# LAO PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



**Capital:** Vientiane

**Language(s):** Lao (official), French, English, various ethnic languages.

**Currency:** LAK (Lao Kip)

**Geography:**

**Location:** Southeastern Asia, northeast of Thailand, west of Vietnam

**Total area:** 236,800 sq km

**Land:** 230,800 sq km

**Water:** 6,000 sq km

Coastline: No (landlocked)

Political System:

**Chief of state:** resident Lt. Gen. Choummali Saignason (since 8 June 2006); Vice President Boun-gnang Volachit (since 8 June 2006).

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong (since 24 December 2010); First Deputy Prime Minister Maj. Gen. ASANG Laoli (since May 2002), Prime Ministers Maj. Gen. Douangchai Phichit (since 8 June 2006), Somsavat Lengsavat (since 26 February

1998), and Thongloun Sisoulit (since 27 March 2001)

**Government Type:** Communist state

**Constitution:**

Promulgated 14 August 1991; amended in 2003.

**Cabinet:** Ministers appointed by president, approved by National Assembly.

**Elections:** president and vice president elected by National Assembly for five-year terms; election last held on 30 April 2011 (next to be held in 2016); prime minister nominated by the president and elected by the National Assembly for five-year term.

Society:

**Total population:** 6,586,266 (July 2012 est.)

**Ethnic groups:** Lao 55%, Khmou 11%, Hmong 8%, other (over 100 minor ethnic groups) 26% (2005 census).

**Religions:** Buddhist 67%, Christian 1.5%, other and unspecified 31.5% (2005 census).

**Economy:**

GDP Real Growth Rate:

8.3% (2011 est.)

GDP PPP:

\$17.66 billion (2011 est.)

\$16.31 billion (2010 est.)

\$15.11 billion (2009 est.)

GDP PPP (Per Capita):

US\$2,700 (2011 est.)

US\$ 2,500 (2010 est.)

US\$2,400 (2009 est.)

**Unemployment:** 2.5% (2009 est.)

**Inflation:** 7.6% (2011 est.) 6% (2010 est.)

### **Defence:**

Military expenditure: 0.5% of GDP (2006).

### **Relations with India:**

Diplomatic relations between India and the Government of Laos were established in February 1956. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Laos, a number of high-level visits have taken place between the two countries which include visits by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru to Laos in 1954 and by the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad in 1956 followed by the visit of Prince Souphanouvong, commonly known as the Red Prince to India in 1975. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India visited Laos in 2002. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India visited Laos in 2004. In recent times, the President of the Lao PDR H.E. Mr. Choummaly Sayasone visited India in August 2008. The President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil paid a State visit to Laos in September 2010.

The 55th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was celebrated during February 2011- February 2012. The First Foreign Office Consultations between India and Lao PDR were held in Vientiane on May

2, 2012. The Indian side was led by Shri Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East) and the Laotian side was led by Mr. Bounkeut Sangsomsak, Vice Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR.

India's bilateral trade with Laos was US\$ 9.52 million in 2008-09 with exports at US\$ 9.00 million and imports at US\$0.52 million. Trade dramatically escalated to \$37 million in 2009-10. The trade balance which had been overwhelmingly in favour of India turned towards Lao. This development stems primarily from India's purchase of copper ores and concentrates of \$19.7 million from Lao. India's exports have increased on account of surge in sales of electrical and electronic equipment and pharma products to Lao. However, during 2010-11, the exports reduced to US\$ 14.06 million while imports were practically non-existent at US\$ 0.22 million. The Top five exports to Laos include electrical and electronic equipment, articles of iron and steel, pharmaceuticals and boilers and machinery.

### **Sources:**

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Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India: [http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?](http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=500415293)

[id=500415293](http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=500415293)

# Assessing ASEAN's Efforts to Combat Transnational Crime

Riddhi Shah\*

The United Nation's Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the annual turnover of transnational organized criminal activities such as drug trafficking, illegal arms trade and the smuggling of immigrants is \$ 870 billion annually and believes that organized crime groups earn round about \$ 250 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> Both India and Southeast Asia struggle with an array of transnational security threats. The social, human and economic repercussions of terrorism along with transnational crime are not limited to the borders on any single state and the two have become a cause of grave concern for India. This is not only because of the repercussions each has in their own right but also because the two have developed links with each other.

The beginning of ASEAN's fight against

transnational crime can be traced back to the Declaration of the ASEAN Concord of 24 February 1976.<sup>2</sup> The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) is the highest policy making body in ASEAN for cooperation to combat transnational crime.<sup>3</sup> It convenes once every two years to coordinate activities of other relevant bodies established within the ASEAN framework for combating transnational crime.<sup>4</sup> The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) emerged from ASEAN's post-ministerial conferences in 1994.<sup>5</sup> Currently, work plans under ARF have been established in the areas of counterterrorism and transnational crime, disaster relief, maritime security and non-proliferation and disarmament<sup>6</sup>.

The ASEAN Senior Officials on Drugs Matters (ASOD) was founded in 1984 and deals with preventive drug education, treatment and rehabilitation, enforcement and research.<sup>7</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> "New UN campaign highlights financial and social costs of transnational organized crime", *UN News Centre*, 16 July 2012, <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42480&Cr=Drugs&Cr1=>>, Accessed on: 23 August 2012.
  - <sup>2</sup> S. Pushpanathan, "Combating Transnational Crime in ASEAN", 7<sup>th</sup> *ACPF World Conference on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, 23 – 26 November 1999, Available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/2823.htm>>, Accessed on: 27 August 2012.
  - <sup>3</sup> ASEAN, "Evolving towards ASEAN 2015: ASEAN Annual Report 2011-2012", *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, June 2012, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, pg. 31, Available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/documents/annual%20report%202011-2012.pdf>>, Accessed on: 28 August 2012.
  - <sup>4</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime", *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, last updated: 2009, Available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/16133.htm>>, Accessed on: 28 August 2012.
  - <sup>5</sup> Simon Sheldon, "ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume. 30, Number. 2, August 2004, pg. 278 , Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41220507>>, Accessed on: 28 August 2012.
  - <sup>6</sup> ASEAN, "Evolving towards ASEAN 2015: ASEAN Annual Report 2011-2012", pg. 32.
  - <sup>7</sup> S Pushpanathan, "Combating Transnational Crime in ASEAN".

ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting (AFMM) and the ASEAN Chiefs of National Police (ASEANAPOL) are the other important members in the ASEAN fight against transnational crime. The AFMM has signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation to combat trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic drugs; and to assist joint efforts in anti-smuggling and customs control while ASEANAPOL manages the enforcement and preventive aspects of cooperation against transnational crime.<sup>8</sup> The ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) has been the latest body introduced by ASEAN to combat transnational crime.

The convention entered into force on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2011. It provides a framework for regional cooperation to counter, prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms. It also aims at deepening cooperation among the enforcement agencies of its member nations in counter terrorism.<sup>9</sup> In theory, ASEAN seems to have founded procedures and decision making rules that present all the stakeholders within a government with a voice. However, reality does not reflect theory. Regional security actions in Southeast Asia despite the presence of ASEAN are even now largely dominated by bilateral treaties.<sup>10</sup> Ironically, internal

conflicts and issues between member nations have been one of the chief impediments in efforts to combat transnational crime at the regional level by ASEAN. ARF, created to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region through building mutual trust has been unable to achieve any of its objectives.”

The prime reason being that ARF is not a collective security arrangement or designed to resolve regional disputes.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, since it was not designed to be a collective security arrangement, the forum has neither adopted a mandate for itself and/or the chair to undertake preventive diplomacy that would help resolve disputes or a mandate to monitor compliance of voluntary commitments made by the ARF member countries on matters related to transnational crime and counterterrorism.<sup>13,14</sup> ARF is based on ASEAN’s principles of “unanimous consensus decision-making” and the “non-interference principle”. This has hindered ARF’s efforts<sup>15</sup>

The principle of non-interference directly prevents ARF from practicing preventive diplomacy, which in turn hinders resolving of issues between neighboring states in Southeast Asia. Similarly, ASEAN’s principle of complete consensus has also blocked progress on preventive diplomacy. Even though ARF countries have reached a general agreement on

<sup>8</sup> S Pushpanathan, “Combating Transnational Crime in ASEAN”.

<sup>9</sup> ASEAN, “ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism”, *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, undated, Available at < <http://www.aseansec.org/19250.htm>>, Accessed on: 07 September 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Sheldon, “ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community”, pg. 266, 288.

<sup>11</sup> Domnik Heller, “The Relevance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) for Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume. 27, No. 1, April 2005, pg. 129, Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798723>>, Accessed on: 29 August 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Sheldon, “ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community”, pg. 279.

<sup>13</sup> Rodolfo C. Severino, *ASEAN*, Southeast Asia Background Series No. 10, Singapore: ISEAS Publications. 2008, pg. 29.

<sup>14</sup> “ASEAN Regional Forum”, *Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation*.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Sheldon, “ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community”, pg. 279.

modest preventive diplomacy related measure, serious disagreement still prevails among the members over the good offices or mediation role of the chair in regional conflicts. ASEAN and China have objected to this idea, arguing that such powers would mean and entail interference in the internal affairs.<sup>16</sup>

The 1976 Declaration of ASEAN Concord had envisaged an ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement Treaties (MLATs) and an ASEAN Extradition Treaty.<sup>17</sup> MLATs generally involve the right to summon witnesses, obligation to produce evidence and issuing of search warrants among other things. An Extradition Treaty obliges the country in which a suspected or convicted criminal may have taken refuge to deliver him to the nation in whose jurisdiction the crime may have been committed. MLATs and Extradition Treaties together could be instrumental in increasing, easing and regularizing judicial assistance and procedures between countries.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, ratification of the agreement and the treaty would result in

effective law enforcement cooperation at the regional level.<sup>19</sup> Regrettably, the Association of Southeast Asian Countries does not hold a great track record for working seriously towards its obligations and commitments; and both the agreement and the treaty are still in the process of being framed.<sup>20,21</sup> Incongruous with this scenario in the Southeast Asia is the fact that most countries in this region have signed bilateral Extradition Treaties with the United States.<sup>22</sup>

ASEAN's failure to combat transnational crime at the regional level is, moreover, partly a result of domestic factors that include corruption, vested interests and lack of resources. There is a preponderance of socio-economic problems in Southeast Asia. Rampant poverty amongst the local populace; and poorly financed enforcement agencies at the national level have not only undermined attempts to control organized crime at the domestic level but have also restricted ASEAN's ability to tackle them.<sup>23</sup> Exacerbating the pressure on the limited resources in these countries are their substantial sea territories that are inadequately secured and patrolled.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Takeshi Yuzawa, "The Evolution of Preventive Diplomacy in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Problems and Prospects", *Asian Survey*, Volume. 46, No. 5, September/October 2006, pg. 794, Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2006.46.5.785>, Accessed on: 29 August 2012.

<sup>17</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism", *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, last updated: 2009, Available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/19250.htm>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, "Drug-Free ASEAN 2015: Status and Recommendations", pg. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ralf Emmers, "The Threat of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia: Drug Trafficking, Human Smuggling and Trafficking and Sea Piracy", pg.11.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Sheldon, "ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community", pg. 271.

<sup>21</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism", *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, last updated: 2009, Available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/19250.htm>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Ralf Emmers, "The Threat of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia: Drug Trafficking, Human Smuggling and Trafficking and Sea Piracy", pg.11.

<sup>23</sup> Ralf Emmers, "ASEAN and the Securitization of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia", *The Pacific Review*, Volume. 16, Number. 3, 2003, pg. 431.

<sup>24</sup> John F. Bradford, "The Growing Prospects for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia", *Naval War College Review* [Online], Volume. 58, Number. 3, 2005, pg. 78, Available at <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a522808.pdf>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia are the only countries in Southeast Asia that have been able to develop their domestic capabilities to adequately secure their maritime areas.<sup>25,26</sup> Since resilience at the national levels is low, initiatives adopted at multi-lateral levels were/are bound to be feeble.<sup>27</sup> Lastly but very significantly, although ASEAN seems to be committed to combating transnational crime, the focus of the organization has shifted to other areas. Issues such as the South China Sea and economic regional integration through the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 have taken precedence over transnational crime.

At the moment, when it comes to combating transnational crime ASEAN is merely playing a rhetorical and political role. With escalating hazards and risks from environmental challenges, financial restrains and transnational crime, there has been a rising pressure for ASEAN nations to work together and even calls for modification to the “ASEAN way”. However, one must look at the issue objectively. The principle of non-interference and non-use of force were embedded in ASEAN to primarily restrict neighbours from interfering in a country’s internal affairs and perhaps adding to the

unrest in the country. It is also important to remember that most of the nations in Southeast Asia are socially, politically and economically weak.

Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia are even weaker than the original six members and are still at the early stages of nation-building. Thus their main concern becomes of maintaining peace and stability within themselves. Since the dominant threats are domestic, ASEAN’s approach to security is based on the doctrine of regional resilience that is “*passive, inward-looking and non-militaristic in nature*”, in direct contrast to Western notion of collective defence that aims to deter attack from outside powers by maintaining and developing military capability.<sup>28</sup> Yet, true regional security entails the involvement of a state in the domestic affairs of its neighbour.<sup>29</sup> Many countries in Southeast Asia have realised this fact and have become more flexible in their attitudes towards “non-interference”.

Surin Pitsuwan, the former Foreign Minister of Thailand had suggested adopting an approach of “flexible engagement” in 1998. However this approach did not appeal to the other members and “flexible engagement” was replaced by “enhanced interaction”. Under this approach member states were allowed to comment on the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pg. 78-79.

<sup>26</sup> Ralf Emmers, “Comprehensive Security and Resilience in Southeast Asia: ASEAN’s Approach to Terrorism and Sea Piracy”, *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies* [Online], Working Paper Series Number. 132, pg. 10, Available at <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a522808.pdf>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pg. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Hiro Katsumata, “Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia: The Case for Strict Adherence to the “ASEAN Way”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume. 25, Number. 1, April 2003, pp. 104 – 121.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Sheldon, “ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community”, pg. 268.

domestic affairs of another state but did not go any further than that. The new policy has brought about notable change to how the principle of “non-interference is applied and interpreted and is reflected in the regional affairs. For instance, Myanmar’s domestic matters were discussed at the international forum set up by ASEAN in 2003; the association at the eleventh summit in 2005 openly pressured Myanmar on reforming its political system and even sent an investigative team; and lastly the member states had collectively demanded that Myanmar release the political prisoners at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ministerial meeting in 2009.<sup>30</sup>

A paradigm shift is required over the questions of national sovereignty and non-intervention to develop deeper multilateral cooperation against transnational crime and oppose restrictions over these principles.<sup>31</sup> By adopting an approach that is in sync and not opposed to its principles, it is possible for ASEAN to overcome its merely rhetorical role in the combat against transnational crime and play a more active part in regional security without compromising on its principles. ASEAN has over the years deliberately ‘securitized’ the issue of transnational crime. It speaks of transnational crime as a peril and a

hazard to the state and regional security, to state sovereignty, to the rule of law, to the moral foundations and structure of the region and lastly to economic development.<sup>32</sup>

By doing so, transnational crime became a domain of the military forces instead of the state police forces, leading to a direct contradiction with ASEAN’s chief principles. ASEAN must de-securitize the issue and re-criminalize what are essentially criminal activities. By bringing the police force into play over the military, the issue of sovereignty, the chief concern of ASEAN nations, will remain uncontested. Additionally, ASEAN already has an institution in place for cooperation between various national police forces that is conspicuously absent for that of the military armed forces. ASEANPOL currently is only “*a forum for regional enforcement agencies to meet annually and discuss police matters*”.<sup>33</sup>

Re-criminalizing the issue would bring the ASEANPOL into the limelight and thus necessitate an enhancement of the institution and demand a more active role in combating transnational crime.<sup>34</sup> Pursuing re-criminalization would also mean enhancing the judicial processes at the national level. Nations that do not have laws to deal with transnational crime such as Indonesia, in the long run will have no choice but to introduce the required laws. Securitizing transnational crime may have worked in other regions of the globe but in

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<sup>30</sup> Mieke Molthof, “ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Interference”, *e-International Relations*, 8 February 2012, Available at <<http://www.e-ir.info/2012/02/08/asean-and-the-principle-of-non-interference/>>, Accessed on: 06 September 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Ralf Emmers, “The Threat of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia: Drug Trafficking, Human Smuggling and Trafficking and Sea Piracy”, pg.11.

<sup>32</sup> Ralf Emmers, “ASEAN and the Securitization of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia”, pg. 426.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pg. 436

<sup>34</sup> See Ralf Emmers, “ASEAN and the Securitization of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia”, pp. 419 – 438.

Southeast Asia, the approach comes in direct conflict with the regional principles. We have been led to believe that a choice must be made between the “ASEAN Way” and adequately addressing the issue of

transnational crime. This however is not the case and it is possible to create a *middle path* and an “ASEAN Way” of combating transnational crime.

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**Man Mohini Kaul and Vibhanshu Shekhar, eds, *India and New Zealand in a Rising Asia: Issues and Perspectives*, Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 201, Rs. 895, ISBN 978-81-827-46527.**

**Udai Bhanu Singh**

**India and New Zealand in a Rising Asia** edited by Man Mohini Kaul and Vibhanshu Shekhar is a compilation of contributions by 14 academics from all over India writing on New Zealand's relations with India and other dimensions of New Zealand's foreign relations and culture. While Prof. Kaul is an established well known Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific expert who teaches at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr Vibhanshu Shekhar is a prominent young Southeast Asia expert working with the Indian Council of World Affairs.

Half the book (six chapters) are devoted to topics dealing directly with India-New Zealand issues. The remaining six chapters deal with New Zealand's other relationships and its other interests (multiculturalism) and national concerns (terrorism).

Man Mohini Kaul in her chapter on 'India in New Zealand's Asia policy' notes that New Zealand's foreign policy has a special emphasis on India due to a convergence of strategic and economic interest. India and New Zealand share a common bond in Commonwealth links, democracy and multiculturalism. Bilateral relations with the New Zealand Navy have been on the mend. They have participated in the MILAN exercises and Indian ships, conversely have visited New Zealand. There are common interests in the security of the Indian Ocean. New Zealand appointed a Defence Advisor to India in June 2011. Both have an interest in disaster management. In the economic

arena, bilateral trade was \$1.25 billion. They participate in common multilateral forums and have an interest in shaping the evolving regional security and economic architecture. New Zealand is active in the Pacific, while India has an interest in Fiji owing to the large Indian diaspora presence.

New Zealand's links with Southeast Asian countries can be seen in the FPDA (1977) and the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA which New Zealand and Australia jointly signed with ASEAN in 2009. Kaul points out: "Evidently, New Zealand's relations with China have evolved faster than they have with India." Mix of realism and pragmatism can be seen here. It was the first OECD country to sign FTA with China. As an instance of the difference in Foreign policy outlook between India and New Zealand, Kaul cites Wellington's delay in signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) with ASEAN (New Zealand signed it in 2005 while India had signed it two years before, in 2003)

Rupakjyoti Borah's chapter on "India's Engagement with New Zealand: What Ails the Relationship?" is an account of how the relationship has been improving over the years. It is largely positive and only a small section is devoted to the ailment. A modification in the title could have more faithfully reflected the contents of the chapter.

Vibhanshu Shekhar gives a broad overview of New Zealand's foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He explains how it has Asianized in the last twenty years and how domestic and international factors were responsible. China, and lately India have begun to engage New Zealand's attention in recent years. Shekhar maintains that the South Pacific remains the

focus area and Australia and the US the principal strategic partners. Anushree Chakraborty provides a perspective on New Zealand's relations with China. While New Zealand seeks to derive economic and strategic mileage from its ties with China's it is wary of antagonizing it in any way. Aware of the challenges ahead, it is engaging other powers including India. Ruth Rhea Khan in her chapter on 'Re-engagement with the United States', notes that notwithstanding some differences (ANZUS for instance) the two countries realise the importance of each other and are committed to cooperate in order to deal with current challenges. This was attested to by the visit of US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in November 2011 and signing of the Wellington Declaration and joining of the Trans Pacific Trade Partnership in Nov 2011. Amit Singh in his chapter on South China Sea Dispute knits together the US factor and the China factor while maintaining that "India cannot isolate itself from the dispute especially after Beijing denounced plans by an Indian company to develop oil fields in the SCS."

Man Mohini Kaul and Amrita Dey examine the factors that have propelled New Zealand closer to Southeast Asia, especially in the post-Cold War period—first in the economic domain and then in the security domain. There is an inner churning taking place in New Zealand—"it is going through an identity crisis of sorts", the result appears to be positive for the growth of the relationship.

Ganganath Jha writing on the Indian diaspora (105,000 in a population of 4.2 million) in New Zealand observes how its White Paper of 1991 introduced a change in its policy towards Asia and how its policy was qualitatively different from that of Australia. GVK Reddy and PKM Reddy's

chapter on Multiculturalism in New Zealand uses Canadian multiculturalism as a benchmark to evaluate how genuine the former is. Their conclusion is a scathing critique of 'multicultural New Zealand' and point out how Indians (among others) face discrimination in New Zealand.

Nabeel A Mancheri's chapter on India-New Zealand economic relations sees great potential once the comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) is signed. China already has established a growth trajectory in economic ties, with trade amounting to \$10 billion. The author has used World Bank and UN trade data to explore the immense potential that exists. Mancheri also hints that a similar potential exists in the services trade.

Tridib Chakraborti and Mohor Chakravorty deal with the place of India and New Zealand in the process of East Asian Community building. They trace the trials and tribulations encountered in the evolution of the multilateral process through the entire gamut of APEC, the ASEAN+3 framework, ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). The ASEAN States and Japan were of the view that inclusion of India and countries like Australia and New Zealand would serve to "constrain Beijing's regional assertions through diplomatic engagement..." Later the EAS expanded with the inclusion of US and Russia as members. This further reinforced the India-New Zealand relationship.

Renu Sharma explains the New Zealand way of tackling terrorism as reliance on effective international rule achieved by multilateral, regional and bilateral engagements.

The editors of this book have successfully brought together writings on a relationship that is little known and often neglected. By placing the India-New Zealand relationship in the larger context of a network of relationship with major powers and around specific issues it provides an interesting read for the layman and the expert alike.

# A Field visit to Thailand and Myanmar

Sampa Kundu\*

September 7, 2012

'My first trip abroad!' was my reaction when my forthcoming field trip to Bangkok and Yangon was confirmed. I had studied about Thailand during my M.Phil Dissertation and Myanmar is very much a part of my doctoral thesis. Not surprisingly, I was enthusiastic and mesmerized by the thought of my very first field trip outside India. The next two and half months were gone in a snap of the fingers and there I was, finally, at the Suvarabhumi International Airport, Bangkok. My trip schedule was tight schedule but each day was filled with new experiences and learning.



Thanon Phahurat- Area Inhabited by Substantial Number of Indian Descendants



A View of Khao San Road

My hotel was in the vicinity of Khao San Road in Bangkok. The everyday life in Khao San Road begins at seven in the evening, when most of the other shopping complexes such as the electronics market (Pantip Plaza), Gems Gallery and India Emporium close down. Khao San Road is famous for having lots of budget hotels, hundreds of road side food trolleys selling noodles, locally called 'Pad Thai' or 'Pod

Thai' and fish and chicken fries in different forms alongside numerous shops offering fashionable clothes and accessories. These, of course, are very cheap, at least for visitors belonging to western countries.



Pantip Plaza, Thailand's Most Famous Electronics market

Thailand is one of the popular tourist destinations across Asia and receives millions of tourists every year and the citizens are completely aware of the potential of their country has to develop further. Some even want Thailand to become a lead country in tourism in the regional and sub-regional cooperation initiatives. They believe and often argue that Thailand has established itself as an international tourism attraction in the region and she has numerous lessons to offer her partners for developing into an international tourism destination. To be honest, Thailand has preserved its history, nurtured the present and welcomed the future.



India Emporium

An afternoon in the course of my travels was spent in ThanonPhahurat, an area mostly inhabited by the Indian migrants and their descendants. Small shops of Indian spices, dresses, electronic products, restaurants offering Indian food and a shopping complex named "India Emporium" dominated the view of ThanonPhahurat. The Indians in Bangkok, as I found during my

study, are not in a very influential position economically and politically, but are doing well and are happy. Thailand has a substantial number of Myanmarese refugees and I found two of them working in the same hotel where I stayed. Both had come to Thailand long back and had only recently gotten joint passports from the two governments. They can now go to Myanmar legally. I met another Myanmarese girl, selling garments at a market in Bangkok. She was married to a Nepali boy, whose family has also migrated to Thailand in search of a better livelihood.



A Girl Selling Thai Red Tea and Coffee



Aung Saan Bogyoke market, Yangon is famous for gems, jewellery and teak and wood products

On the eighth day of my visit, I travelled to Yangon, at an hour's distance by air from Bangkok. Yangon, the former capital of Myanmar is not as bright and stunning as Bangkok, but bears all the signs of becoming a future hub of tourism. In Yangon, I preferred to stay downtown, hoping to gain an experience of British colonial times. From my hotel, I could see a mosque, a church and a pagoda facing each other. Substantial numbers of Indians inhabit the area. According to them, Yangon still has two to four per cent of Indian population. I met two Myanmarese Indians in Yangon and with a shock discovered that both use two names- an Indian name used by their

families and an official name, predominantly Burmese-Buddhist, that is registered in their national identity card. They say, they have no other choice since the government in Myanmar is yet not quite positive about the remaining Indian descendants in the country.

Not everything I found about Yangon was sad. Yangon receives lots of tourists including many from the neighbouring Southeast Asian nations and Myanmar students on the other hand are going abroad for advanced education. Most taxi drivers speak good English. Although it is not that visible, the country is undergoing several changes not only politically and economically but also socially. These changes are surely going to bear fruits of development. I met a young researchers' team at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industries and all of them were highly excited about the rapid economic changes in Myanmar. They have been extremely busy these days because they welcome foreign investors' team in each alternative day.



A Regular view of Yangon

The teachers at the University are feeling good about the positive changes in their country and government as well. When asked about China and India, they quickly replied China is important because of investments, but India too is important because of the close historical and religious ties between the two countries. India must be quick to to develop intra-regional Buddhist tourism and people-to-people contact with Myanmar and neighbours. India's role in development of

soft-skills in Myanmar has been highly appreciated in the official circles of Myanmar and they want India to invest more in developing her North-eastern region so that business and trade opportunities across the border can be enhanced. Additionally, they also want India to be a more proactive and prompt in delivering and implementing the projects. On the way to Yangon International Airport, I saw some 50 monks crossing the road in a queue. This discipline, coordination and cooperation are something that today's Myanmar can cherish and re-learn to be a hub of business and trade in the region once again.



Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar's most famous and largest Pagoda(COVER PHOTO).jpg

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(I am thankful to JNU, New Delhi for giving me this opportunity to travel to Bangkok and Yangon on a field trip.)

Note: All photographs are taken by the author

## ASEAN

### Initial Planning Conference held in Gadong

The Initial Planning Conference (IPC) for the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine Exercise (ADMM-Plus HADR and MM Ex) was held on the 28 August 2012 in Gadong, Brunei Darussalam along with the Co-Chairs of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (ADMM-Plus EWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Military Medicine (MM), namely Vietnam, China, Singapore and Japan. The meeting aimed at reaching an understanding on the general overview and preliminary planning details of the exercise. This will be followed by a meeting involving all ASEAN nations on the 2nd ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise (2nd AHX) that will be hosted by Brunei next year. The ADMM-Plus HADR and the MM Ex will be

the first exercise to be held under the ADMM-Plus mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

### Speechless at the 45<sup>th</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nation's (ASEAN) Ministerial Meetings

In an unprecedented development, ASEAN ministers failed to issue a joint communiqué during the 45<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 9th July 2012.<sup>2,3</sup> The impasse occurred after attempts by Philippines to raise the issue of the dispute in the South China Sea were blocked by Cambodia.<sup>4</sup> This was not the only disturbing development to take place in the meeting. The ten member nations of ASEAN approved the code of conduct to prevent armed conflict in the South China Seas to only back away at the later stages of the meeting in the face of forceful Chinese objections.<sup>5,6</sup> ASEAN's failure to issue a joint communiqué is being looked upon as a blow to its credibility and coherence in Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup>

ASEAN had even agreed to a six-point statement that covered the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties on the South China Sea issue.<sup>8</sup> Shockingly, China

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- <sup>1</sup> "ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Today", *Borneo Post*, 28 August 2012, available on <<<http://www.theborneopost.com/2012/08/28/asean-defence-ministers-meeting-today/>>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012.
  - <sup>2</sup> "China, US widen Asean rifts", *The Bangkok Post*, 27 July 2012, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/304496/asean-rifts-widen-as-china-us-rivalry-grows>>, Accessed on: 3 August 2012.
  - <sup>3</sup> "45th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting kicks off", *China Daily.com*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2012, <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-07/09/content\\_15561089.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-07/09/content_15561089.htm)>, Accessed on: 03 August 2012.
  - <sup>4</sup> "Despite dismay at ASEAN, PHL to pursue Code of Conduct in West PHL Sea", *GMA News*, 15 July 2012, <<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/265504/news/nation/despite-dismay-at-asean-phl-to-pursue-code-of-conduct-in-west-phl-sea>>, Accessed on: 03 July 2012.
  - <sup>5</sup> "ASEAN agrees on rules for South China Sea conduct", *Zee News*, 10 July 2012, <[http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/asean-agrees-on-rules-for-south-china-sea-conduct\\_786521.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/asean-agrees-on-rules-for-south-china-sea-conduct_786521.html)>, Accessed on: 03 August 2012.
  - <sup>6</sup> "Asean drops the Code of Conduct issue", *MIZZIMA*, 13 July 2012, <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/7518-asean-drops-the-code-of-conduct-issue.html>>, Accessed on: 03 July 2012.
  - <sup>7</sup> "China, US widen Asean rifts", *The Bangkok Post*.
  - <sup>8</sup> "ASEAN principles in accord with China's policy on S. China Sea settlement", *ChinaDaily.com*, 22 July 2012, <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/22/content\\_15606251.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/22/content_15606251.htm)>, Accessed on: 03 August 2012.

around the same time revealed plans to open a military garrison in the disputed Sansha Islands, rocking the already precarious balance in the South China Sea.<sup>9</sup>

## ASEAN-India

### INS Sudarshini to Tour ASEAN Nations

INS Sudarshini, India's second sailing ship will embark on a visit to all ASEAN countries in an effort to strengthen India's relations with ASEAN. The voyage is meant to commemorate twenty years of dialogue partnership and ten years of summit-level partnership with ASEAN. The mission has been envisaged by PM Manmohan Singh and will be flagged off by Defence Minister A. K. Antony on 15 September 2012. The ship will call on the following ports: Padang, Bali, Manado (Indonesia), Port Muara (Brunei), Cebu, Manila (Phillipines), Da Nang (Vietnam), Sihanoukville (Cambodia), Bangkok (Thailand), Singapore, Port Klang (Malaysia), Phuket (Thailand) and Yangon (Myanmar). The personnel on board will take part in seminars, share their experiences and participate in joint exercises at each port.<sup>10</sup>

### India Invited to Join ASEAN Regional Economic Partnership

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong accompanied by Singapore Parliament Speaker Micheal Palmer, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat and other senior officials visited India from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The talks focused on the intensification of trade, investment and greater collaboration in the context of global economic slowdown and celebrated the increase in bilateral trade from \$9 billion to \$22 billion and in investment from \$1.3 billion to \$17.15 billion from Singapore after ratification of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement by both countries in 2005. Singapore has become the second highest source of foreign direct investment into India. The Prime Minister has asked India to increase its presence in ASEAN and has invited India to join the ASEAN Regional Economic Partnership.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

### India Welcomes ASEAN Maritime Forum Expansion

ASEAN had agreed to "explore" the possibility of including its dialogue partners such as India and Japan in the ASEAN Maritime Forum on security and safety issues last year. While looking to expand, the ASEAN leaders had emphasized the need to maintain ASEAN's

<sup>9</sup> "Maritime row: China to build garrison on disputed islands", *Times of India*, 22 July 2012, <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-07-22/china/32788177\\_1\\_maritime-disputes-china-plans-islands](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-07-22/china/32788177_1_maritime-disputes-china-plans-islands)>, Accessed on: 03 July 2012.

<sup>10</sup> "INS Sudarshini on a historic Asean mission", *IBN Live*, 25 July 2012, <<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/ins-sudarshini-on-a-historic-asean-mission/273181-60-116.html>>, Accessed on: 03 August 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Jyoti Malhotra, "Singapore Asks Delhi to raise Profile at ASEAN", *Business Standard*, 16 July 2012, <<http://business-standard.com/india/news/singapore-asks-delhi-to-raise-profile-at-asean/480557/>>, Accessed on: 04 August 2012.

<sup>12</sup> "India steps up ASEAN diplomacy, Singapore PM on way", *NewsTrackIndia*, 09 July 2012, <<http://newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/07/09/336-India-steps-up-ASEAN-diplomacy-Singapore-PM-on-way-.html>>, Accessed on: 03 August 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Indrani Bagchi, "Singapore PM asks India to join ASEAN's Regional Economic Partnership", *The Times of India*, 12 July 2012, <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-07-12/india/32647922\\_1\\_ceca-india-asean-singapore-companies](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-07-12/india/32647922_1_ceca-india-asean-singapore-companies)>, Accessed on: 04 August 2012.

control in the forum.<sup>14</sup> Indian External Affairs Minister S.M Krishna while addressing the plenary session of the Second East Asia Summit (EAS) foreign ministers meeting said “We are actively continuing our cooperation in the maritime area with ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)+ members” and welcomed the proposal for expansion of the ASEAN Maritime Forum. He asserted that maritime security issues were a strategic priority for India owing to the growing asymmetric threats in the form of maritime terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking.<sup>15</sup> Philippines will be playing host to the ASEAN Maritime Forum Meeting to be held this year.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Vietnam seeks US\$ 100 million from India for stalled Tata project**

Attempting to break a four-year deadlock involving Tata Steel’s \$5 billion project, Vietnam has sought financial assistance of \$100 million from India towards payment of land compensation cost. The project has been stalled after the provincial government estimated the acquisition cost at \$200 million for around 4,000 acres of land, an amount Tata-Steel was not happy

with and refused to pay. This resulted in Tata not receiving the investment license for its 4.5 million-tonne steel plant at Vung Ang Economic Zone in Ha Tinh province.<sup>17</sup>

#### **India to host Mekong Ganga Ministerial Meeting**

India is hosting the sixth Mekong Ganga Cooperation Meetings on September 3 and 4 at New Delhi. Senior officials would be meeting on September 3 and the Foreign Ministers would meet on September 4. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) was launched on November 10, 2000 in Vientiane, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic setting out a vision for cooperation amongst India and the five Mekong region countries - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand.<sup>18</sup>

#### **India- Thailand Foreign Office Consultation Meeting Held in Bangkok**

On August 10, 2012, India and Thailand today took stock of ongoing measures to enhance connectivity and boost infrastructure between them, besides discussing security issues and status of negotiations on a bilateral FTA. The day-long India-Thailand Foreign Office Consultations held in Bangkok, involved from the Indian side, Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, while Sihasak

<sup>14</sup> “ASEAN leaders agree to study ‘expanded’ ASEAN Maritime Forum”, *United Nations Environment Programme*, 18 November 2011, <[http://www.mea-ren.org/ecmu\\_list.php?id=370](http://www.mea-ren.org/ecmu_list.php?id=370)>, Accessed on: 04 August 2012.

<sup>15</sup> “India welcomes expansion of ASEAN maritime forum”, *News Track India*, 12 July 2012, <<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/07/12/75-India-welcomes-expansion-of-ASEAN-maritime-forum.html>>, Accessed on: 05 August 2012.

<sup>16</sup> “ASEAN leaders agree to study ‘expanded’ ASEAN Maritime Forum”, *United Nations Environment Programme*.

<sup>17</sup> *Live Mint*, “Vietnam seeks \$100 million from India for Tata project”, 29 July, 2012, <<http://www.livemint.com/2012/07/29162933/Vietnam-seeks-100-million-fro.html>> accessed on 29 July, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> ‘India to host sixth Mekong Ganga Cooperation Meetings’, *Yahoo News*, September 1, 2012, <http://in.news.yahoo.com/india-host-sixth-mekong-ganga-cooperation-meetings-104018190.html>

Phuangketkeow, Permanent Secretary in the Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry, headed the Thai delegation. Both sides reviewed various elements of bilateral relationship, including follow-up on initiatives agreed during Yingluck's visit that set the course for forging a strategic partnership between the two countries.<sup>19</sup>

### **Northeast Insurgent Groups Still Operating Out of Myanmar: India**

Government's repeated attempts to get Myanmar to act against northeast terror groups operating out of its territory have failed to bear fruits, the government admitted on 29 August 2012. Replying to a question on the issue in the Lok Sabha, the home ministry said insurgent groups such as Manipur-based People's Liberation Army, United National Liberation Front, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak; Naga insurgent group like NSCN-K and ULFA (anti-talk faction) and NDFB had their camps and hideouts in Myanmar Naga Hills.

Minister of state for home Mullanpally Ramachandran said the presence of insurgent groups in Myanmar has been the single most important security issue for India at every bilateral negotiations between India and Myanmar. "Myanmar has always been assuring India that they will not allow their soil to be used by these

groups to carry out activities inimical to India. These groups continue to use Myanmar territory notwithstanding Myanmar's repeated assurances not to allow its territory for activities inimical to India," he said.

Replying to another question, Ramachandran said there were reports that Ulfa (anti talk faction) continues to consolidate organizationally and strengthen its military capability for carrying out violent activities in different parts of Assam, with a view to maintain its dominance as well as create fear psychosis to facilitate extortion. "State government has been advised to alert the security forces to control the activities of Ulfa," he said.<sup>20</sup>

## **Brunei Darussalam**

### **U.S Turns Attention to South Pacific**

U.S. Secretary Hilary Clinton visited the South Pacific at the end of August in U.S' bid to reassert itself against China. Clinton's visit included the South Pacific Forum in the Cook Islands and stops at Brunei, Indonesia, East Timor and China. Clinton attempted to emphasise the benefits of U.S. friendship to the group of small nations. Beijing has accused U.S. of sending wrong signals on the South China Sea issue.<sup>21</sup>

### **Brunei Pledges Commitment to ASEAN**

His Majesty Sultan Hajji Hassanlal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah of Brunei Darussalam

<sup>19</sup> 'India, Thailand discuss connectivity, security issues and FTA', *The Economic Times*, August 10, 2012, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-08-10/news/33137541\\_1\\_india-asean-fta-india-moves](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-08-10/news/33137541_1_india-asean-fta-india-moves)

<sup>20</sup> *The Times of India*, "Northeast terror groups still operating out of Myanmar:Govt", 29 August 2012, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-29/india/33474574\\_1\\_india-and-myanmar-myanmar-territory-ulfa](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-29/india/33474574_1_india-and-myanmar-myanmar-territory-ulfa), accessed on 3 September 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Quinn, "RPT-Clinton set to take U.S. Asia push to South Pacific", *Reuters*, 29 August 2012, available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/29/usa-asia-pacific-idUSL2E8JSGFN20120829>>, Accessed on: 01 September 2012.

expressed firm commitment in leading ASEAN in 2013. Chairmanship of ASEAN rotates based on alphabetical order of the ten member states. Brunei Darussalam is set to succeed the current Chair Cambodia in 2013 after Indonesia's request for swapping of the Chairmanship in 2011. The decision of the swap had been made during the 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN summit in Ha Noi in 2010.<sup>22</sup>

### Brunei and China Strengthen Ties

Brunei's Deputy Sultan, His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met on 11 August 2012. Yang was welcomed by Billah on behalf of Brunei's Sultan. With expanding political mutual trust, fast-growing economic and trade cooperation and ever-deepening people exchanges, friendly and cooperative relations between China and Brunei have made remarkable progress, Yang said. He further said that Brunei's role in boosting relations between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were highly appreciated by the Chinese Government. The Deputy Sultan in return said that Brunei highly valued its relations with China, and the country was willing to work with China to maintain high-level visits, deepen friendly

cooperation and enhance communication and coordination on international and regional affairs.<sup>23,24</sup>

### Brunei Signs MOU with Malaysia

The government of Brunei Darussalam and the state government of Malaysia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for greater Information in Communication Technology collaboration in the Sabah province of Malaysia. Promoting governance, cooperation, and development in ICT and multimedia initiatives that will be of benefit to both Brunei Darussalam and Sabah is the main objective of the MOU. In addition to this MOU, another MOU was signed between Brunei International Gateway (BIG) and Sedco Communications (Secom) on 11 July 2012 to provide communication infrastructure services to enable high-speed international capacity access between Brunei Darussalam and Sabah.<sup>25</sup>

### Brunei – New Zealand Discuss Bilateral Relationship

New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully met the Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei, Pehin Lim Jock Seng on 31st July. The ministers discussed their bilateral relationship and Brunei's priorities as it will assume Chairmanship for ASEAN in 2013. McCully said that Brunei was one of their most valuable partners within ASEAN and that he

<sup>22</sup> Sally Piri, Diyana Ibrahim, Koo Jin Shen and Wardi Buntar, "Brunei Firm in Leading ASEAN", *The Brunei Times*, 18 July 2012, <<http://www.bruneitimes.com.bn/news-national/2012/07/18/brunei-firm-leading-asean>>, Accessed on: 08 August 2012.

<sup>23</sup> "Brunei, China Affirm Strong Bilateral Ties", *Borneo Post*, 13 August 2012, available at <<http://www.theborneopost.com/2012/08/13/brunei-china-affirm-strong-bilateral-ties/>>, Accessed on: 27 August 2012.

<sup>24</sup> "China FM Meets Brunei Crown Prince on Ties", *People's Daily Online*, 12 August 2012, available at <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7906562.html>>, Accessed on: 27 August 2012.

<sup>25</sup> "Brunei, Sabah to collaborate on ICT, capacity", *telecompaper*, 18 July 2012, <<http://www.telecompaper.com/news/brunei-sabah-to-collaborate-on-ict-capacity>>, Accessed on: 08 August 2012.

looked forward to working with Brunei more closely in the future. He later added that the relationship between the two countries was built on close cooperation in many areas that included trade, investment, education and defence. Brunei has partnered with New Zealand in several Free Trade Agreement initiatives and is currently a participant in the wider Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations. Scholarships have been launched for Brunei under the NZ/ASEAN Scholars Awards programme in an attempt to raise New Zealand's profile in Brunei as a study destination.<sup>26</sup>

## Cambodia

### Philippines Criticizes Cambodia in China Row; Wen Jiabao appreciates Cambodia's support to China

On July 31, 2012, the Philippines summoned Cambodia's ambassador to explain comments he made accusing it and Vietnam of playing "dirty politics" in trying to solve a maritime row with China. According to the media reports, the move seems to have further deepened divisions within the ASEAN more than two weeks after a ministerial meeting hosted by Cambodia ended in disarray over the sea dispute.

Foreign Department spokesman Raul Hernandez said Cambodian ambassador Hos Sereythanh was asked on July 31 to personally explain his comments, but he failed to turn up claiming he was sick. "We

will continue to summon him until he is able to come," Hernandez said in a statement...we want him to explain what he meant when he stated that the 'inflexible and non-negotiable position of two countries of ASEAN is dirty politics'."

In the letter, Hos accused the Philippines and Vietnam of working to "sabotage and hijack the joint communique" during the ASEAN meeting. Hos argued that the Philippines and Vietnam should not blame Cambodia for ASEAN's failure to issue an end-of-meeting statement spelling concerns in the region, a first in its 45 year history.

China claims sovereignty over nearly all of the sea, which is believed to sit atop vast natural resources. But ASEAN members the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, as well as Taiwan, have overlapping claims in the area. Tensions have escalated this year, with China becoming embroiled in diplomatic rows with the Philippines and Vietnam.<sup>27</sup>

On September 2, 2012 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in a statement appreciated Cambodia's role in keeping Beijing's ties with Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2012. He also said that China seeks to push for solidarity and cooperation among East Asian countries despite regional challenges. Wen made the remarks when meeting Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on the sidelines of the second China-Eurasia Expo.

According to a press release issued by the Foreign Ministry, "Wen said the overall situation in East Asia is good, yet faced with some challenges. Maintaining unity, promoting development and cooperation are the most

<sup>26</sup> "McCully to Meet Brunei Minister", *Business.Scoop*, 31 July 2012, <<http://business.scoop.co.nz/2012/07/31/mccully-to-meet-brunei-minister/>>, Accessed on: 08 August 2012.

<sup>27</sup> *AFP News*, "Philippines hits out at Cambodia in China row", 31 July 2012, <<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ipwLtItUpUvQ5n9s05HI5w3Ct6eg?docId=CNG.c3ceaaoa027efe2900a88626bob2a9c.341>> Accessed on: 6 August, 2012.

important tasks for the region,” Cambodia, which holds the rotating presidency of the ASEAN in 2012, has played an important role in China-ASEAN relations. The remarks came amid Beijing’s increased tensions this year with Hanoi and Manila in the South China Sea.

At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in July, foreign ministers of the 10-member group failed to issue a joint communique as they could not agree on a paragraph about territorial disputes. Cambodia has supported China’s attitude toward a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. Beijing has said it is willing to negotiate with ASEAN on a COC given ripe conditions.<sup>28</sup>

### **New Judge Appointed to Investigate United Nations-Backed War Crimes Court in Cambodia**

Following the resignation of two predecessors to the investigating Judge’s position in less than a year, a former US prosecutor, Mark Harmon was approved as co-investigating judge at the Khmer Rouge tribunal by Cambodia’s Supreme Council of the Magistracy (SCM) on June 20, the court said in a statement released on 30 July, 2012.

“The United Nations is in the process of making the necessary arrangements for Mr. Harmon’s deployment to Phnom Penh,” the statement read. “His deployment will enable the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) to continue the critical task of

pursuing accountability for the crimes committed during the period of the Khmer Rouge regime.” The ECCC is a hybrid court staffed by both national and international personnel. ECCC legal communications officer Lars Olsen told DW that there was no confirmed date for Harmon’s arrival.<sup>29</sup>

### **Cambodia hopeful of ASEAN finding a common ground on South China Sea**

Current chair Cambodia announced on July 20, 2012 ASEAN had agreed on six principles on the sea, where tensions have flared recently with Vietnam and the Philippines accusing Beijing of increasingly aggressive behaviour.

The statement — which also includes a commitment to respect international laws and the non-use of force to settle disputes — is an attempt to dispel perceptions that the 10-nation bloc is divided. Southeast Asian nations on July 20 vowed to work towards a “code of conduct” in the disputed South China Sea, but failed to fully mend a rift that marred a regional meeting a week before. The Philippines said it was “pleased” with the outcome.

Divisions over the territorial disputes with Beijing prevented ASEAN from issuing its customary joint statement at the conclusion of a meeting in Phnom Penh on July 13, an unprecedented occurrence in the bloc’s 45-year history. But signs of discord remained as Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said that the points were broadly similar to what was rejected by Vietnam and the Philippines last week, and blamed them for the earlier impasse. China claims sovereignty over nearly all of the resource-rich sea, which is home to vital

<sup>28</sup> *China Daily*, “Premier praises Phnom Penh’s support”, 3 September 2012, <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/03/content\\_15728379.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/03/content_15728379.htm)> Accessed on 4 September 2012.

<sup>29</sup> *Deutsche Welle*, “New judge for Cambodia’s war crimes court”, 31 July, 2012, <<http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,16133344,00.html>> accessed on 6 August, 2012.

shipping lanes, but ASEAN members the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have overlapping claims in the area.<sup>30</sup>

### **Cambodia, Indonesia to sign rice pact**

Cambodia and Indonesia are planning to sign an agreement through which Indonesia would import rice from Cambodia if needed to supplement domestically produced supply. A statement in that regard was issued by Iman Pambagyo, director general of international trade cooperation at the Trade Ministry on 28 August 2012.

“The agreement will be similar with the ones Indonesia has with Thailand and Vietnam,” he said, without providing further details. Thailand and Vietnam agreed to supply rice to Indonesia when needed, he added.

Indonesia, which was self-sufficient in rice in 2008 and 2009, turned to imports the next year after stockpiles fell and output failed to meet targets. Indonesia does not need to import rice this year because stock levels are adequate, Trade Minister Gita Wirjawan said on Aug 14. Indonesia’s buffer stock amounts to 2.2 million tonnes to 2.3 million tonnes, which is enough for the year, Wirjawan said. It was added that the stock levels are reviewed every month.<sup>31</sup>

### **Cambodian Prince resigns from politics the second time**

Prince Norodom Ranariddh has resigned from politics for a second time. The Prince first resigned in 2008 after a scandal involving the sale of the Funcinpec party’s headquarters, before receiving a royal pardon and making a comeback in late 2010 with a self-named party that aimed to reunite all Royalists. That attempt seems to have collapsed, and along with it the political career of the Prince. Official biographer and former private secretary to the Prince’s father, Ambassador Julio Jeldres, told Radio Australia’s Asia Pacific the Prince was unable to accept Funcinpec leaders’ calls for more transparency in the decision process.

“As I understand it there had been a number of proposals sent to the Prince from the Funcinpec party asking him to accept the Presidency of the party in whatever title he wishes to have...but to accept that there was a kind of organisational decision making which didn’t exist before when he was the President of Funcinpec because normally he took all the decisions,” he said.

Mr Jeldres said there was also talk earlier in 2012 that the ruling Cambodian People’s Party would merge with Funcinpec, but this didn’t eventuate.

He said the resignation marks the end of the Royalist influence. “I don’t think there will be a major Royalist presence any longer in Cambodian politics but you never know, Cambodia is so fluid everything can change in one moment.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Channel News Asia*, “ASEAN finds common ground on sea dispute: Cambodia”, 20 July 2012, <[http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp\\_asiapacific/view/1214778/1.html](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1214778/1.html)> Accessed on 29 July 2012.

<sup>31</sup> *Bangkok Post*, “Indonesia, Cambodia ‘to sign rice pact’”, 28 August 2012, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/309760/indonesia-cambodia-to-sign-rice-pact>> Accessed on 1 September 2012.

<sup>32</sup> *ABC News*, “Cambodian Prince resigns from politics- again”, 13 August 2012, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-13/an-cambodian-prince-resigns-from-politics/4196544/?site=melbourne>> accessed on 4 September 2012.

### Possible Khmer Rouge Mass Grave Found in Cambodia

Villagers in northwestern Cambodia unearthed what authorities say could be a mass grave from the Khmer Rouge era that contains skulls and the bones of corpses, some with legs bound by rope. The morbid discovery was made last weekend about 60 km from Siem Reap, home to Cambodia's famed Angkor Wat temples. Authorities said that villagers were excavating land in a forested area when they discovered about 20 skulls and the remnants of skeletons. A local military official said the bones were found at the site of a former Khmer Rouge prison where hundreds were believed killed.<sup>33</sup>

## Indonesia

### Indonesia Riding High on a String of High Profile Meetings

Indonesia in the past two months has actively engaged with a number of countries on various issues. India and Indonesia held talks in July and discussed how strategic ties between the countries could be further deepened. External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna and

Indonesian Foreign Minister discussed varied issues such as energy, oil and gas, defence, counter-terrorism, agriculture, science and technology, education, culture and most importantly, the South China Sea issue. The two ministers co-chaired the fourth meeting of the India-Indonesia Joint Commission and identified particular areas, where the two countries would be working together to take the relationship to the next high level. The two countries have also signed a double tax avoidance pact in order to increase trade to \$25 billion by 2015.<sup>34,35</sup>

As a sign of growing relations between the two countries, the India- Indonesia Business Forum was launched in July to boost trade between the two nations.<sup>36</sup> In the same month, Indonesia held high level talks with Australia's Foreign Minister Bob Carr in Jakarta. It was the minister's first visit to Indonesia after he replaced Kevin Rudd as the Foreign Minister. The issue of asylum seekers was one of the main topics of discussion that were held ahead of the close door talks on more sensitive issues.<sup>37</sup> In August, Indonesia reinforced its ties with both Brunei and China. China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Jakarta and met his Indonesian counterpart Mr. Marty Natalegawa. While the two foreign ministers agreed to expand bilateral ties, it was comments

<sup>33</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Cambodians find possible Khmer Rouge mass grave", 7 August 2012, < <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/11014>>, accessed on 22 August, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> "India, Indonesia sign double tax avoidance pact", *sarkairtel.com*, 28 July 2012, available at <<http://www.sarkairtel.com/india-indonesia-sign-double-tax-avoidance-pact-set-25-bn-trade-target>>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

<sup>35</sup> "India, Indonesia Discuss South China Sea, Inks tax Treaty", *The Economic Times*, 27 July 2012, available at <[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-27/news/32889372\\_1\\_indonesian-counterpart-foreign-minister-marty-asean-countries](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-27/news/32889372_1_indonesian-counterpart-foreign-minister-marty-asean-countries)>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

<sup>36</sup> "India-Indonesia business forum launched to boost trade and investment", *sarkairtel.com*, 20 July 2012, available at <<http://www.sarkairtel.com/india-indonesia-business-forum-launched-to-boost-trade-and-investment>>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

<sup>37</sup> "Carr in Talks with Indonesian Minister", *7 News*, 16 July 2012, available at <<http://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/-/world/14246395/carr-in-talks-with-indonesian-minister/>>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

on the South China Sea that drew the most attention. Both ministers re-emphasized on the development of closer ties; and diplomacy bilaterally and within ASEAN.

They also stressed the deepening of trade and investment and have agreed to boost bilateral trade to \$80 billion by 2015. Cooperation in sectors of defence and security, especially maritime and food security were discussed as well. On the issue of the South China Sea, Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa told AFP “Having met the Chinese foreign minister, I’m assured that diplomacy is still on track.”<sup>38</sup> Relations between Indonesia and Brunei continue to strengthen. At the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indonesia’s Independence that was held at the International Convention Centre, the Indonesian ambassador, His Excellency Handriyo Kusumo Priyo hoped that Brunei and Indonesia would soon establish a bilateral agreement on labor-related matters.

The two countries are already working on Memorandum of Understanding for bilateral economic cooperation in the areas of coal mining, fisheries, palm oil and property. He also revealed that the defence ministries of both countries would soon be signing the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee, while the Armed Forces will

sign the High Level Committee, followed by cooperation inking between the Air Forces and Navies by the end of this year. The Brunei government is also considering undertaking a comparative study of Indonesia’s military equipment manufacturer to upgrade their military equipment in the future.<sup>39</sup>

### Indonesia to source missiles from US and China

Indonesia will be buying air-to-surface guided missiles from a US firm to equip the country’s growing fleet of US-built F-16 fighter jets. Hardin Arsine, the Indonesian Defence Ministry’s spokesperson said that Indonesia’s purchase of the missiles should not be cause of worry neighboring countries because Jakarta only wanted to modernize its defence capabilities and had no intention of attacking another country. Indonesia has requested 18 AGM-65K2 Maverick All-Up-Round missiles, 36 “captive air training missiles” and three maintenance training missiles, plus spares, test equipment and personnel training, worth an estimated value of USD 25 million. US administration has approved the request.<sup>40</sup>

While developments have been taking place between Indonesia and US, Indonesia has been busy negotiating with China to produce C-705 anti-ship missiles on the Indonesian island of Java as part of its programme to become more independent in manufacturing weapons. A

<sup>38</sup> Kate Lamb, “Indonesia, China Reaffirm maritime Ties”, *Voice of America*, 10 August 2012, available at <<http://www.voanews.com/content/indonesia-china-reaffirm-diplomatic-trade-ties-after-asean-meeting/1483987.html>>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Rabiatal Kamit, “Indonesia Seeks to Reinforce Relations with Brunei”, *The Jakarta Post*, 31 August 2012, available at <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/08/31/indonesia-seeks-reinforce-relations-with-brunei.html>>, Accessed on: 02 September 2012.

<sup>40</sup> “Indonesia to Buy Missiles from US”, *Zee News*, 27 august 2012, available at <[http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/indonesia-to-buy-missiles-from-us\\_796030.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/indonesia-to-buy-missiles-from-us_796030.html)>, Accessed on: 05 September 2012.

contract for missile production will be signed between Indonesia and China in March 2013. Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Michael Teen said “Certainly we are developing close relations with all friendly countries to develop our defence capacity, not just through procurement but joint investment, joint production to develop our own capacity to develop the defence industry and of course with China also, we have a range of cooperation to develop our industries in that area.”<sup>41</sup>

### Strong Earthquake Hits Central Indonesia

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit Indonesia on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2012 resulting in the death of at the least 6 people and injuring 43 others. The epicentre was located 61 kilometres south of the provincial capital of Central Sulawesi Palu, at a depth of 10 kilometres.<sup>42</sup> The earthquake damaged hundreds of houses and buildings and destroyed roads and bridges in Parigi Mountong and Sigie, the closest districts to the epicentre. Mountainous villages had been cut off by landslides that were the result of the strong earthquake.<sup>43</sup>

## Laos

### North Korea’s Kim Yong- Nam to Visit Laos and Vietnam Soon; Links with Laos to be boosted; four agreements signed during the visit

According to Pyongyang’s official news agency’s 23 July report, North Korea’s ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-Nam is to visit Laos and Vietnam. Kim “will soon pay official goodwill visits” to the two countries, the agency said in a brief report which gave no dates. Analysts quoted by South Korea’s Yonhap news agency said the North may seek to strengthen diplomatic ties and expand economic cooperation with the two fellow socialist nations.

A Lao government economic delegation headed back on July 20, 2012 from Pyongyang, while a foreign affairs delegation from Vietnam visited the city earlier in July. Kim, North Korea’s parliamentary chief, acts as ceremonial head of state because late leader Kim Il-Sung has been declared the “eternal president”. He visited Singapore and Indonesia in May 2012.<sup>44</sup>

North Korea has signed four agreements with Laos to increase cooperation between the two socialist nations, Pyongyang’s state media reported 9 August 2012. The agreements were

<sup>41</sup> “Indonesia, China to Sign Missile Production Agreement”, *The Chosunbilo*, 05 September 2012, available at <[http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2012/08/17/2012081700406.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/08/17/2012081700406.html)>, Accessed on: 05 September 2012.

<sup>42</sup> “Powerful Earthquake Shakes Indonesia, No Tsunami Warning”, *The Nation*, 19 August 2012, available at <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Powerful-earthquake-shakes-Indonesia-no-tsunami-wa-30188629.html>>, Accessed on: 03 September 2012.

<sup>43</sup> “Indonesia Earthquake Kills 6 on Sulawesi Island”, *Huff Post World*, 12 August 2012, available at <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/20/indonesia-earthquake-kill\\_n\\_1809824.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/20/indonesia-earthquake-kill_n_1809824.html)> , Accessed on: 03 September 2012.

<sup>44</sup> *AFP News*, “Senior N. Korea leader to visit Vietnam, Laos”, 29 July 2012, < <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iWhzEXSGQYjW6jov8dnIcLE7reHQ?docId=CNG.36b868foe207c66b5e3101c13ecb62dd.161> > accessed on 9 August 2012.

signed “with due ceremonies” Wednesday during a visit by the North’s ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-Nam, the official news agency reported.

“It is the steadfast stand of the DPRK (North Korean) government to develop the traditional relations of friendship with Laos,” Kim was quoted as telling Laotian President Choummaly Sayasone in Vientiane. According to the reports, the agreements cover information technology, cultural exchanges, education and commerce. A North Korean delegation headed by Kim arrived in Laos after a three-day trip to Vietnam, following a visit by a Laotian government group to Pyongyang in July. Vietnam announced Monday it would give 5,000 tons of rice to North Korea, which has been hit by floods in summer 2012.<sup>45</sup>

The four exchange-enhancing agreements signed between the socialist countries encompass fields of information, technology, tourism, culture, education, sports and commerce. “Developing the traditional friendship with Laos is our government’s unmovable stance,” KCNA quoted Kim as having said in the meeting. Kim and the Laos president pledged to further cement their cooperation on the international stage, the news outlet said.<sup>46</sup>

### **Laos Signs Environmental Management Pact with Thailand**

Luang Prabang and Xayaboury provinces and Vientiane signed on to the Community

Based Solid Waste Management project, with the aim of improving environmental quality. The agreement was signed on 16 August 2012 between the ministry of national resources and environment’s Environmental Quality Promotion Department and Thailand’s Department of Environmental Quality Promotion of the ministry of national resources and environment.

A memorandum of understanding for the cooperation project was signed by the Environmental Quality Promotion Department Director General Khampadith Khammounheuang and Thailand’s Director General Department of Environmental Quality Promotion Sunun Arunnopparat in Vientiane.

“We have agreed today on working together on this green policy over the next five years, Laos is also working on the implementation of policies to become a model green country amongst Asean nations,” Khampadith said. The initiative will receive financial and technical assistance from the Japanese government. “Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Laos and other Asean countries are collaboratively implementing the green project,” he added.

He also said that the first phase of cooperation will focus on capacity building for Lao personnel. “Kasetsart University of Thailand will be responsible for training Lao personnel and one environmental staffer will be selected from each district by provincial and capital authorities, with the training course taking between six months and one year,” Khampadith said.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Asia One*, “N. Korea to boost Laos links: state media”, 9 August 2012, <<http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20120809-364387.html>> accessed on 17 August 2012.

<sup>46</sup> *YONHAP News Agency*, “N. Korea, Laos sign 4 exchange accords: KCNA”, 9 August 2012, <<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/08/09/25/0401000000AEN20120809002500315F.HTML>> accessed on 19 August 2012.

<sup>47</sup> *Asia News Network*, “Laos, Thailand sign environmental management pact”, 17 August 2012, <<http://www.asianewsnet.net/home/news.php?id=35193&sec=1>>, accessed on 23 August 2012.

## Laos, Thailand Pledge For More Connectivity

The Lao PDR and Thailand plan to add two bus routes connecting the two countries this year, up from the existing nine routes. Department of Land Transport Director-General Somchai Siriwattanachoke and his Lao counterpart Wiang Sawat Si Than Don told a news conference in this northern Thai city about bilateral cooperation in the past year.

Both sides cooperated in operating nine routes and planned to add two new routes – Bangkok-Vientiane and Bangkok-Ubon Ratchathani-Pakse this year. In 2013, a new route – Bor Kaew-Chiang Khong-Chiang Rai – will be ready to be operational after the fourth Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, this one connecting Thailand's Chiang Khong and Lao's Bor Kaew is completed.

The cooperation is part of land transportation development among the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>48</sup>

## Malaysia

### Malaysia to review Controversial Internet law

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has

promised to review the controversial section of the Evidence Law that was passed in April after a day of protests.<sup>49</sup> Under the amendment to the Evidence Act, any web host, wi-fi provider and ordinary user of mobile or computer can be found liable for any defamatory or harmful Web content sent via its systems. People participating in the protests replaced their home pages with black screens featuring messages that attacked the amendment. Activists and critics called this a threat to free expression and an attempt by the ruling government coalition to sabotage the opposition that sends out most of its messages via the net because of the government control over the traditional forms of media.<sup>50</sup>

### Malaysia and Norway Sign Aquaculture Agreement

Malaysia has made a bid to contribute to sustainable development of **aquaculture** in its territory and has signed an agreement and institutional cooperation contract with Norway on Regulatory Framework for Aquaculture on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2012. Norway, the global leader of the aquaculture industry, will help Malaysia develop a regulatory framework for aquaculture farming and will also provide experts and training for Department of Fisheries (DOF) staff in the field. The funding for the project is on a cost-sharing basis. While Norway will provide RM 3.253 million, Malaysia will contribute RM 3.275 million.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Pattaya Mail*, "Laos, Thailand plan more bus routes, linking both countries", 9 August 2012, <<http://www.pattayamail.com/news/laos-thailand-plan-more-bus-routes-linking-both-countries-15446>>, accessed on 19 August 2012.

<sup>49</sup> "Review promised after Malaysia internet law protest", *BBC News*, 15 August 2012, available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19251896>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

<sup>50</sup> "Web 'blackout' in Malaysia to protest law", *Rappler Beta*, 14 August 2012, available at <<http://www.rappler.com/world/10492-web-blackout-in-malaysia-to-protest-law>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

<sup>51</sup> "Malaysia and Norway sign aquaculture agreement", *Eco-Business.com*, 27 August 2012, available at <<http://www.eco-business.com/news/malaysia-and-norway-sign-aquaculture-agreement/>>, Accessed on: 30 August 2012.

## Malaysia Shuts Embassy and Withdraws Students from Syria

Malaysian ambassador to Damascus; four other embassy spokespersons and 128 students were withdrawn in July due to growing unrest in Syria.<sup>52</sup> They will be evacuated in batches of 50 and were expected to touchdown at the KL International Airport on 24<sup>th</sup> July. Other Malaysians in Syria have been advised to leave Syria as well. A special operations room has been set up in the Foreign Ministry to coordinate the evacuation.<sup>53</sup>

## Malaysia Repeals Sedition Law

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced the government's decision to repeal the sedition law. He further stated that a mechanism to ensure the guarantee of speech for every citizen and the need to handle the complexity of plurality existing within the country must be found. The government will replace the Sedition Act 1948 with the National Harmony Act. The move has been welcomed by all parties in Malaysia. The government has also assured of consultations with different stakeholders during the process of drafting the law. Democratic Action Party (DAP) National Chairman Karpal Singh said that the decision was in the right direction and

met the needs of the present day. Meanwhile Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) chairman Tan Sri Hasmy Agam said that he hoped that the act would be drafted in a transparent manner and would be in line with fundamental human right principles.<sup>54</sup>

## Malaysians Abroad to Vote

All Malaysian citizens residing abroad will be allowed to vote for the coming general elections if they had been in Malaysia in the last five years and before the dissolution of the parliament. Previously only full-time Malaysian students, civil servants and their spouses had been allowed to vote. Election Commission (EC) Chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Yusof said that in addition to being registered voters and applying to be a postal worker, other conditions would be imposed on Malaysians citizens wishing to cast their vote. Out of 20,000 Malaysians living abroad, merely 2,700 have registered with the Malaysian embassies in their respective countries to be postal voters.<sup>55</sup>

# Myanmar

## Rakhine violence in Myanmar: UN seeks inquiry

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has called for an independent investigation after claims of abuses by security

<sup>52</sup> "Malaysia closes Syria embassy while evacuating students", Oye! Times, 22 July 2012, <<http://www.oyetimes.com/news/asia/26731-malaysia-closes-syria-embassy-while-evacuating-students>>, Accessed on: 8 August 2012.

<sup>53</sup> "138 Malaysians in Syria to return tomorrow", asiaone news, 23 July 2012, <<http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Malaysia/Story/A1Story20120723-360667.html>>, Accessed on: 8 August 2012.

<sup>54</sup> "Malaysia to Repeal Sedition Law", Borneo Post Online, 14 July 2012, <<http://www.theborneopost.com/2012/07/14/malaysia-to-repeal-sedition-law/>>, Accessed on: 08 August 2012.

<sup>55</sup> "Malaysian abroad allowed to vote with conditions", My Sinchew.com, 11 July 2012, <<http://www.mysin Chew.com/node/75345>>, Accessed on: 08 August 2012.

forces in Myanmar's Rakhine state. According to media reports, the UNHCR said that forces sent to quash violence in the northern state were reported to be targeting Muslims. About 80,000 people have been displaced following inter-communal violence. The latest violence in Rakhine began in May when a Buddhist ethnic Rakhine woman was raped and murdered by three Muslims.<sup>56</sup>

### **Myanmar and Thailand Agreed to Back Deepwater Port**

Myanmar and Thailand agreed on July 23, 2012 to develop jointly a special economic zone including an 8.6-billion-dollar deepwater port in southern Myanmar to be built by a Thai contractor. The deal to jointly develop the Dawei project in south-eastern Myanmar was signed by the governments of Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and Myanmar President Thein Sein, who was on a three-day visit to Thailand. On July 22, Thein Sein visited Laem Chabang deepwater port, 100 kilometres south-east of Bangkok, which could be linked by highways and railways to Dawei, opening a new trade route for Thailand and Southeast Asian neighbours. Dawei is about 342 kilometres west of Bangkok by road and 472 kilometres by road to Laem Chabang.<sup>57</sup>

### **Myanmar to Join Asia- Europe Parliamentary Partnership**

A Myanmar parliamentary delegation, led by Parliament Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, will head for Vientiane, Laos to attend an official ceremony in early October to become a full-fledged member of Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP), official media reported on 28 August 2012.

Myanmar would become a member in the seventh meeting of Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership slated for 2- 4 October 2012 in the Lao capital. The aim of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) is to promote understanding between Asian and European countries and peoples, to foster relations among parliaments, exchanging views, to work as a forum, to support the ASEM and parliaments in Asia and Europe and actively participate in their parliamentary issues at the ASEM summits; U Khin Aung Myint was quoted as saying.<sup>58</sup>

### **Myanmar agrees to resume border talks with Thailand**

According to media reports, the Myanmar government has agreed to resume talks to resolve long-standing Thai-Myanmar border issues in October 2012. Vasin Teeravechyan, co-chairman of the Thai-Myanmar Joint Boundary Committee (JBC), said as the situation in Myanmar has become more stable, the government there is trying to settle its border concerns with Thailand.

<sup>56</sup> News Track India, "UN seeks inquiry on Rakhaine violence in Burma", 29 July, 2012, <http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/07/29/119-UN-seeks-inquiry-on-Rakhaine-violence-in-Burma-.html> Accessed on July 29, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> The Nation, <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Thailand-Myanmar-agree-to-back-deepwater-port-30186777.html>> 23 July 2012, accessed on 23 July 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Xinhua, "Myanmar to become full-fledged member of ASEP", 28 August 2012, < [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-08/28/content\\_15712434.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-08/28/content_15712434.htm)> accessed on 28 August 2012.

Myanmar has agreed to resume the JBC meeting in October 2012 in Bagan, Myanmar. Mr Vasin and state officials in charge of border demarcation also inspected the Mae Sai-Nam Ruok River, which borders Thailand, Laos and Myanmar, and the second friendship bridge linking Thailand and Myanmar.

The last JBC meeting was held seven years ago and the mechanism has been suspended since because of Myanmar's internal problems. Thailand and Myanmar share 2,401km of common border. Mr Vasin said a key issue to be raised at the resumed JBC meeting would be Thailand and Myanmar's ongoing conflicts along the Moei River, which forms the border between Thailand's Tak province and Myanmar's Myawaddy province.

Mr Vasin said the two countries plan to discuss a memorandum of understanding to use as a guideline for border negotiations. Both sides want the Joint Technical Committee, which was set up to solve the problems on the river, to be more active, he said.

Thailand will try to separate the border matters from political issues to prevent the closure of border checkpoints, as this could affect border trade and transportation, Mr Vasin said. He also urged all Thai officials and Thais living along the border to help keep an eye on the border pillars and changes in the water course due to construction activities along the Moei River.

Mr Vasin said he wanted to see a buffer zone to be established at least 200 metres

from the river. This would help prevent permanent structures from being built in the area, he said. Thailand and Laos share a 1,810km common border — 702km of land and 1,108km of river. The two countries have not yet finished demarcating the border in 17 areas, including Ban Romklao in Phitsanulok, three villages in Uttaradit, Chong Mek in Ubon Ratchathani, and Phu Chee Fah and Kaeng Pha Dai in Chiang Rai.<sup>59</sup>

### **Myanmar President Reshuffles Cabinet**

Myanmar's president announced a major Cabinet reshuffle on 27 August 2012, move analysts see as advancing the once-pariah nation's reformist agenda. The shake-up is the biggest since President Thein Sein's government took office from the former military junta in March 2011 and launched a wave of dramatic reforms that have surprised the world and prompted Western powers to ease crippling sanctions.

The announcement made on 27 August 2012 on the president's official website said the overhaul affects nine of several dozen Cabinet posts. Some 15 new deputy ministers are also being appointed. Among the most prominent changes is the replacement of former Information Minister Kyaw Hsan, widely seen as a hard-liner. He was replaced by Labor and Social Welfare Minister Aung Kyi, who has also acted as a liaison between the government and pro-democracy opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The information ministry oversees local and foreign media and the film industry, and has supervised the approval of visas for foreign correspondents. Kyaw Hsan was kept in government, however, and appointed to head

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<sup>59</sup> Bangkok Post, "Myanmar agrees to resume border talks", 27 August 2012, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/309497/myanmar-agrees-to-resume-border-talks>> accessed on 1 September 2012.

the Cooperatives Ministry. The presidential statement did not name all of the new ministers, but said several outgoing ministers — most considered reformists — would be moved to four new ministerial-level posts in the president's office. They include the ministers of finance, national planning and economic development, and Railways Minister Aung Min, who has played a key role in negotiating cease-fires with ethnic rebel groups.

Thant Myint-U, a historian from Myanmar and grandson of the late U.N. Secretary-General U Thant, said in a tweet that the reshuffle is “unquestionably a strengthening of President U Thein Sein's reformist agenda, with top academics, technocrats brought into (the) Cabinet.” “U” is an honorific in Myanmar. Thein Sein has said in recent comments that he would leave behind anyone who is against reform.

Earlier in August, military representatives in parliament appointed the country's politically moderate naval chief as one of the nation's two vice presidents. Vice Admiral Nyan Tun replaced a known hard-liner, Tin Aung Myint Oo, who resigned citing health reasons.<sup>60</sup>

### **Myanmar: Thousands of Names from Entry Blacklist Removed**

Myanmar has announced the removal of 2,082 names from its blacklist, which bars people, deemed a threat to national security from entering or leaving the country. The decision by the military-

backed, civilian-led government - the latest in a series of reforms since last year - reduces the list by about a third. No other details of who had been taken off the list were provided.

The move came a day after the president announced a major cabinet reshuffle. The reshuffle is the largest since President Thein Sein's government took office in March 2011, after the military junta ceded power. “These relaxations are in line with the country's transformation,” presidential spokesman, Nay Zin Latt, was quoted by the Associated Press news agency as saying.

He added that more names would be eventually removed, and “only those who were put on the blacklist due to criminal and other economic misdemeanors will remain on the blacklist”. State media said the removal of names from the list gave a green light to Burmese citizens abroad to return home. “In the past, companies and persons from all fields including media men were blacklisted and banned by the government in the national interest,” reports the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper. “But the government is lifting the ban on them in accord with the reforming system.”

The blacklist - which the newspaper said included a total of 6,165 names - has also been known to include government critics, foreign journalists and public sector workers who went abroad during military rule. Actress Michelle Yeoh, who played Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in the film *The Lady*, was among those previously blacklisted.

Author Benedict Rogers, who wrote the biography of former military leader Than Shwe, was also included several times. During nearly five decades of military rule thousands of people

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<sup>60</sup> Yahoo News, “Myanmar president announces Cabinet reshuffle”, 27 August 2012, <<http://news.yahoo.com/myanmar-president-announces-cabinet-reshuffle-142459128.html>>, accessed on 3 September 2012.

- foreigners and Burmese - were blacklisted by the authorities. Some were expelled, others living overseas, especially political activists, assumed they could not return, or that they would be arrested if they did.

Since the new government's reforms, some Myanmarese living overseas have tested the restrictions and been allowed to return. Observers say a measure of the extent of the reforms will be whether prominent exiled activists are allowed back into the country.<sup>61</sup>

### **Hundreds Displaced in Myanmar Floods**

One of the worst monsoon flooding in years submerges hundreds of thousands of hectares of rice fields, causing 85,000 to flee. At least 85,000 people in Myanmar have fled their homes as the worst monsoon flooding in years submerged hundreds of thousands of hectares of rice fields. Around 70,000 people have been displaced in the delta and are being housed at 219 emergency relief centres set up at schools and monasteries, he said. Another 15,000 people have been displaced elsewhere in the country, and more than 240,000 hectares (600,000 acres) of rice fields have been swamped, according to the media reports. No casualties have been confirmed during the recent floods, which have affected 200,000 people nationwide.

Some families who have not fled have moved to the upper floors of their dwellings.<sup>62</sup>

### **Myanmar to Launch Satellite with Japan's Help**

Myanmar will launch a small globe-observing satellite with the assistance of Japan, official media reported on 22 August 2012.

The satellite will be launched with the help of Marubeni Aerospace of Japan for the use by Myanmar's Meteorology and Hydrology Department of the Ministry of Transport, said the New Light of Myanmar. A coordination meeting for the project was held in Nay Pyi Taw Tuesday, attended by Transport Minister U Nyan Tun Aung and Program Manager of the Marubeni Aerospace of Japan Shoichi Satoh.

After the launching, the department will use the satellite for broadcasting weather forecast news through one of the satellite channels, the report added.

## **Papua New Guinea**

### **Earthquake Hits Papua New Guinea**

A 6.2 magnitude earthquake hit Papua New Guinea on 20 August 2012 at 8.41 am local time. No reports of damage or casualties were filed. Additionally, there were no warnings of tsunami warnings. The earthquake was centred approximately 104 kilometres south-southeast of Angoram.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> BBC News, "Burma removes thousands of names from entry blacklist", 28 August 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19399612>>, accessed on 3 September 2012.

<sup>62</sup> 'Burma floods drive tens of thousands from their homes', Guardian, August 25, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/25/burma-floods>

<sup>63</sup> "Strong Earthquake Shakes Papua New Guinea, No Damage", Wireupdate, 20 August 2012, available at <<http://wireupdate.com/strong-earthquake-shakes-papua-new-guinea-no-damage.html>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012.

### **Papua New Guinea Approves of a Processing Centre for Asylum Seekers**

Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill along with the cabinet have formally approved of Australia's proposal to set up a processing centre for asylum seekers on the Manus Island in August 2012. The cabinet has also decided to fund the centre under a new development assistance package. The package will be separate from Australia's existing \$A490 million aid programmed to Papua New Guinea. The Manus provincial government is expected to be involved in negotiating the make-up of the assistance package with the Australian Government.<sup>64</sup>

### **Papua New Guinea Parliaments Elects Prime Minister, Ends Instability**

Peter O'Neill was elected as Prime Minister on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2012 by 94 votes to 12. Prior to this decision, Papua New Guinea underwent a year of instability that was a result of the parliament's decision to declare the position of PM vacant after Sir Michael Somare, the prior leader had left the country to seek medical treatment. While the lawmakers had elected Mr. O'Neill, the Supreme Court had ruled the election of O'Neill as illegal. Conflicting opinions within the government led to the establishment of parallel administrations in the country followed by a short mutiny. Mr. Somare agreed to support Mr. O'Neill

last month in order to bring some stability back to the country.<sup>65</sup>

### **United States Breaks Ground for New Embassy in Papua New Guinea**

"As an important symbol of enduring friendship", U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea Teddy Taylor broke ground for the new U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby. Acting Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ambassador Lucy Bogari, Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Cecil Haney, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director for the Philippines and the Pacific Islands Gloria D. Steele, Special Advisor for Asian Affairs at the Office of the Vice President Jeff Prescott, as well as Deputy Chief of Mission, Bryan Hunt, and Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) Project Director Matthew Otto attended the groundbreaking ceremony.<sup>66</sup>

## **Philippines**

### **Philippines Considers Joint Patrols with Malaysia and Indonesia**

The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are discussing the possibility of joint patrols in their sea borders to combat piracy, smuggling and the movement of al-Qaida-linked militants. The Philippines has considered joint naval patrols at a bilateral level with either Indonesia and Malaysia in the past. A three-way effort is being seen as the best remedy for improving security

<sup>64</sup> "PNG Sings upto Aust Asylum Scheme", *Radio New Zealand News*, Last updated: 24 August 2012, available at <<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/world/114164/png-signs-up-to-aust-asylum-scheme>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012.

<sup>65</sup> "O'Neill sworn in as Papua New Guinea leader", *BBC News*, 03 August 2012, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19108123>>, Accessed on: 09 August 2012.

<sup>66</sup> "United States Breaks Ground on New Embassy in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea", U.S. Department of State, 06 August 2012, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/196097.htm>>, Accessed on: 09 August 2012.

in the maritime domain. Philippine Defence Secretary Voltaire Gazmin said that authorities from the three countries would study the proposed joint naval patrols. They would, additionally, review real-time information exchanges and rapid-response arrangements to deal with emergencies at sea and cross-border crimes.<sup>67</sup>

### **Philippines Attempts to Speed-up the Repatriation Process in Syria**

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario flew to Syria in September to help speed up the process of repatriation of the Filipino workers trying to leave the country due to increasing violence. The Secretary said that President Benigno Aquino III wanted to ensure Filipinos' safety and repatriate as many Filipinos as soon as possible. Paying refunds to Syrian employers for unfinished contracts and fees levied by the Syrian government were some of the obstacles that the government had been facing. Foreign Affairs office has confirmed waiver from employers.<sup>68</sup>

### **Philippines Goes Soft on China**

The Philippines has softened its stance against China on the issue of the South China Sea. This change has occurred

partially in respect of the peaceful mood of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) and also because of the overseas development assistance that China recently extended to the Philippine government. The Philippines President Benigno Aquino also thanked China for its P 5.2 billion (Dh433.33 million) overseas development assistance for the creation of better water supply for 21 million residents in Metro Manila. The government has called back all its ships and did not send any other ship to the Scarborough Shoal despite the continuous presence of Chinese fishing vessels in the contested area. Although hostility over the shoal seems to have watered down, Lacierda, the Philippines' President's spokesman and the foreign affairs undersecretary said that the Philippines would continue maintain its sovereign rights over Scarborough Shoal.<sup>69</sup>

## **Singapore**

### **Singapore- US conduct Joint Military Exercise**

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and the United States Navy (USN) took part in the 18<sup>th</sup> Singapore-US Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise in the South China Sea from July 17 to 27, 2012. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the United States Air Force (USAF), the United States Coast

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<sup>67</sup> "Philippines Eyeing Joint Patrols with Indonesia and Malaysia on Volatile Sea Border", The Washington Post, 30 August 2012, available at <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/philippines-eyeing-joint-patrols-with-indonesia-and-malaysia-on-volatile-sea-border/2012/08/30/efe2d230-f27c-11e1-b74c-84ed55e0300b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/philippines-eyeing-joint-patrols-with-indonesia-and-malaysia-on-volatile-sea-border/2012/08/30/efe2d230-f27c-11e1-b74c-84ed55e0300b_story.html)>, Accessed on: 03 September 2012..

<sup>68</sup> "Philippines' Top Diplomat Flies to Syria to Step up Repatriation of More than 1,000 Filipinos", The Washington Post, 04 September 2012, available at <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/philippines-top-diplomat-flies-to-syria-to-step-up-repatriation-of-more-than-1000-filipinos/2012/09/04/51c5b1a8-f64b-11e1-a93b-7185e3f88849\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/philippines-top-diplomat-flies-to-syria-to-step-up-repatriation-of-more-than-1000-filipinos/2012/09/04/51c5b1a8-f64b-11e1-a93b-7185e3f88849_story.html)>, Accessed on: 05 September 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Mae Dacanay "Philippines Softens Stance on China on South China Sea", gulfnews.com, 19 July 2012, available at <<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/philippines/philippines-softens-stance-on-south-china-sea-1.1050763>>, Accessed on: 4 September 2012.

Guard (USCG) and the United States Marine Corps will also participate in this year's exercise.

This year's exercise will focus on sharpening conventional maritime capabilities such as anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, as well as maritime air operations. About 1,400 personnel from both countries are involved in this year's exercise. The RSN and the RSAF are participating with seven ships, a submarine, a naval helicopter and seven aircraft. The USN, USCG and USAF are participating with four ships, a submarine, three naval helicopters and six aircraft. The SAF and the USN have conducted the CARAT series of bilateral maritime exercises annually since 1995. Exercise CARAT aims to enhance interoperability and professional cooperation between the participating forces of Singapore and the US.<sup>70</sup>

### **Singapore, China Funds Invest US\$ 1 Billion in US LNG Export Plant**

The sovereign wealth funds of China and Singapore have invested a combined US\$1 billion in a U.S. plant that will export cheap liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asia, becoming the latest Asian institutions to tap into the gas boom in the United States. China Investment Corp and the Government of Singapore Investment Corp have pumped in around \$500 million each in U.S.-based Cheniere Energy Partners LP's planned liquefied natural gas (LNG) export plant.

Asian buyers have been eagerly eyeing U.S. LNG development opportunities in hopes of obtaining cheap gas, and buyers from top LNG importer Japan, South Korea, and India have already signed up for U.S. exports. Cheniere Energy is building a \$5.6 billion project in Sabine Pass, Louisiana. The project, expected to be ready by 2015, will be the United States' first LNG export plant since 1969.

The new technology, known as fracking, releases natural gas trapped in tight layered rock formations by injecting high-pressure water, sand and chemicals. Houston-based Cheniere has been seeking funds to start construction for the plant that is ideally located to ship LNG. Cheniere has already signed long-term commercial contracts to supply gas to BG Group, gasNatural Fenosa, GAIL (India) Limited and Korea Gas Corp, according to documents on its website.<sup>71</sup>

### **Singapore to Sign Agreement on Combating Transnational Crime**

Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security are likely to sign a new cooperation agreement on combating transnational crimes. The Cooperation Arrangement in Preventing and Combating Transnational Crimes will be inked during Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Teo Chee Hean's visit to Vietnam from 27 to 29 August 2012. Mr Teo's visit is at the invitation of Vietnam's Minister of Public Security Senior Lieutenant General Tran Dai Quang. DPM Teo will discuss cross-border crime and other law and order issues with Lieutenant General Tran.

<sup>70</sup> Today Online, "Singapore, US forces take part in South China Sea Exercise", 17 July 2012, <<http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC120717-0000073/Singapore,-US-forces-take-part-in-South-China-Sea-exercise> > accessed on 6 August, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Financial Post, "China, Singapore funds invest \$1B in US LNG export plant: source", 21 August 2012, <<http://business.financialpost.com/2012/08/21/china-singapore-funds-invest-1b-in-u-s-lng-export-plant-source/>>, accessed 21 August 2102.

In a statement released on 27 August 2012, MHA said the cooperation agreement has provided a useful platform for Singaporean and Vietnamese law enforcement agencies to cooperate in preventing, detecting and combating criminal acts such as terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and cybercrime. The new agreement widens cooperation to include fire-fighting and urban search and rescue management, and replaces an older 2006 agreement which will expire in December 2012. During the visit, Mr Teo, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security, will also call on Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and other Vietnamese leaders. MHA said Mr Teo's visit reaffirms the warm bilateral relations between Singapore and Vietnam and, in particular, the ministries overseeing safety and security.<sup>72</sup>

### Singapore Issues National Climate Change Policy

Singapore, the newest addition to the global C40 network, has published its national climate change strategy, "Climate Change & Singapore: Challenges, Opportunities, Partnerships." The comprehensive document reflects the key elements of Singapore's efforts on this issue – preparing for the uncertainties and impact of climate change, seizing opportunities for green growth, and supporting the transition to a lower emission economy.

Singapore has been a longstanding leader on environmental issues. It created its Ministry of the Environment in 1972, making it one of the first countries to form a Ministry dedicated to creating and sustaining a good environment for its people. Today, climate governance is strong at the highest levels: long-term planning, policies and action are guided and coordinated by the National Climate Change Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change.

As a low-lying island that is densely populated, Singapore is focused on efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as flooding and severe weather events, through integrated land use planning, water management and investment in research and infrastructure. Reducing emissions is another core aspect of its climate strategy, building upon significant efforts to date, including sourcing 80 percent of its fuel for electricity generation from natural gas and capping vehicle growth through regulation and taxes. Singapore is also studying how to stabilize its emissions over the long term.<sup>73</sup>

## Thailand

### Thein Sein Pays A Goodwill Visit to Thailand

Myanmar President Thein Sein paid a three-day goodwill visit to Thailand in July to enhance bilateral relations. Talks were to be held on Dawei Deep-Sea project, Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, opening of five border gates proposed by the Thai side and the handling of the 90 Thai detainees. President Thein Sein

<sup>72</sup> Today Online, "Singapore, Vietnam to sign new transnational crime cooperation agreement", 27 August 2012, <<http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC120827-0000097/Singapore,-Vietnam-to-sign-new-transnational-crime-cooperation-agreement>>, accessed 3 September 2012.

<sup>73</sup> National Geographic, "Singapore issues national climate change strategy", 16 August 2012, <<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/16/singapore-issues-national-climate-change-strategy/>> accessed on 3 September 2012.

along with Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra were to be witnesses to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation for development in Myanmar. A knowledge center for sustainable development along the Thai-Myanmar border; a “drop-in center” for human trafficking victims; and drug trafficking were to be on the agenda. Additionally, the two leaders were also to discuss the possibility of building the long-planned Thailand- Myanmar-India road project.<sup>74</sup>

### Multiple Insurgent Attacks in South Island

Insurgents launched a wave of attacks in South Thailand in a rare show of coordination at the end of August.<sup>75</sup> The unrest has come on the anniversary of the amalgamation of four Thai separatist movements in 1989 into an umbrella separatist group that, as well as the anniversary of neighbouring Malaysia’s independence from British rule. The insurgents burnt Thai flags and raised Malaysian flags. In addition to this, they planted bombs that resulted in injuries to six Thai soldiers.<sup>76</sup> Thai Deputy Prime Minister Yutthasak Sasiprapa, told the reporters “Right now we are holding peace

talks with different insurgent groups but we are still not clear what they want.” The Southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat have seen almost daily gun fights and bomb attacks since the re-emergence of separatist insurgency in January 2004. According to Deep South Watch the conflict has claimed more than 5,200 lives since 2004.<sup>77</sup>

### India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway to be ready by 2016

Feasibility for the 3,200-km trilateral highway linking India, Myanmar and Thailand has been approved and active construction will begin soon. It is hoped that the highway will become a reality by 2016. A part of the \$500 million loan to Myanmar by India will be used to fund the highway. Besides India, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are also funding the highway. The four-day India-ASEAN summit to be held on December 19 is expected to focus on connectivity with ASEAN countries. Moreover, Myanmar President Thein Sein, Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra and PM Manmohan Singh are expected to meet on the sidelines of the summit to push forward the trilateral highway project. The highway will open up India’s northeastern states to Southeast Asia and allow freight and container trucks to move across the borders from India to Myanmar and Thailand via Chiang Rai and border towns. The

<sup>74</sup> “Myanmar President’s Thailand Visit to Further Enhance Bilateral Ties”, philstar.com, 22 July 2012, available at <<http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=830155&publicationSubCategoryId=200>>, Accessed on: 1 September 2012.

<sup>75</sup> “Insurgents launch rare multiple attacks in south Thailand”, Reuters, 31 August 2012, <<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/insurgents-launch-rare-multiple-attacks-in-south-thailand-261574>>, Accessed on: 01 September 2012.

<sup>76</sup> “Insurgents burn Thai flags in attacks in Thailand’s violent south; 6 soldiers wounded”, *The Washington Post*, 31 August 2012, available at <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/insurgents-burn-thai-flags-in-widespread-symbolic-attacks-in-thailands-violent-south/2012/08/31/58115d2e-f325-11e1-b74c-84ed55e0300b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/insurgents-burn-thai-flags-in-widespread-symbolic-attacks-in-thailands-violent-south/2012/08/31/58115d2e-f325-11e1-b74c-84ed55e0300b_story.html)>, Accessed on: 01 September 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Amy Sawitta Lefevre, “Thailand holds peace talks with Muslim insurgents”, Reuters, 16 August 2012, available at <<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/08/16/thailand-politics-south-idINDEE87Fo8320120816>>, Accessed on: 01 September 2012.

Highway is expected to play an important role in boosting trade and investment, creating jobs and other benefits in the three countries.<sup>78</sup>

## Vietnam

### Vietnam Organizes Largest-Ever Trade Fair in Cambodia;

Vietnam organized the largest- ever trade fair on 23 August 2012, vowing to boost the bilateral trade to US\$3 billion in 2012. Speaking at the opening of the 5-day event at Mondial Center, Vu Kim Hanh, chairwoman of the Business Association of High Quality Vietnam Goods, said the fair brought together 120 Vietnamese companies displaying more than 2,000 types of products.

“This is the largest Vietnamese trade fair in Cambodia in a decade,” she said, pledging to push trade volume between Vietnam and Cambodia to \$3 billion in 2012. Mao Thora, secretary of state at Cambodian Ministry of Commerce, said that the bilateral trade volume between the two neighbors was \$2.8 billion in 2011 and during the first seven months of this year, the trade volume was \$1.9 billion.

“We notice that during the last few years, Cambodia-Vietnam trade has tremendously increased thanks to good relationship and cooperation between the governments of the two countries,” he said.<sup>79</sup>

### Vietnam, Laos and Thailand to Review Joint Tourism Programme

Tourism authorities from the provinces of Vietnam’s Quang Tri, Laos’ Savannakhet, and Thailand’s Mukdahan met in central Vietnam recently to review implementation of an agreement they had signed in 2011.

Speaking at the 8th conference on tourism cooperation in Dong Ha city, Quang Tri, Director of the province’s Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism Nguyen Huu Thang said since the previous meeting in Savanakhet last June the three border provinces had eased immigration formalities.

Mukdahan had organised familiarisation trips to Thailand’s north-eastern provinces while Quang Tri and Savannakhet had agreed to do surveys to organise tours between Laos and Vietnam for travellers from the two countries, he said. Many international-standard facilities have been built along the Trans-Asia Highway, also known as the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), which runs from central Vietnam through Laos and the north-east of Thailand to Myanmar.

But more facilities such as gas stations, motels, souvenir shops, restaurants, money changers, and information booths were needed there, especially in sections in Quang Tri and Savannakhet. The conference also agreed to expand the programme from the current three provinces to seven in Vietnam, six in Laos plus its capital Vientiane, and 11 in Thailand. The newcomers include Vietnam’s Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Thua Thien–Hue, Quang

<sup>78</sup> “India-Thailand highway to be ready by 2016”, *Times of India*, 13 August 2012, available at <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-13/india/33181793\\_1\\_trilateral-highway-thein-sein-india-asean](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-13/india/33181793_1_trilateral-highway-thein-sein-india-asean)>, Accessed on: 01 September 2012.

<sup>79</sup> *Global Times*, “Vietnam holds largest-ever trade fair in Cambodia”, 24 August 2012, <<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/728827.shtml>>, accessed on 26 August 2012.

Nam and Da Nang city. Delegates at the conference agreed to adopt and use an EWEC tourism logo that was recommended at the last conference. The Lao representatives proposed that tourism cooperation should be incorporated into bilateral Laos-Thailand, Laos-Vietnam, and other relations for better coordination.

According to Vietnam's border guard agency at Lao Bao in Quang Tri Province, in 2011 about 379,000 travellers entered Vietnam and 395,540 left through the border gate.<sup>80</sup>

### **US to Help Vietnam in Cleaning Agent Orange**

On August 9, 2012, after years of rebuffing Vietnamese requests for assistance in a cleanup, the United States inaugurated its first major effort to address the environmental effects of the long war. The programme is expected to cost \$43 million and take four years, was officially welcomed with smiles and handshakes at the ceremony. Over a decade of war, the United States sprayed about 20 million gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, halting only after scientists commissioned by the Agriculture Department issued a report expressing concerns that dioxin showed "a significant potential to increase birth defects." By the time the spraying stopped, Agent Orange and other herbicides had destroyed 2 million hectares, or 5.5 million acres, of

forest and cropland, an area roughly the size of New Jersey.<sup>81</sup>

### **Vietnam limits availability of Chinese TV and radio programmes**

Vietnam has restricted availability of the Chinese television and radio programmes following its spat with Beijing over the disputed islands in the South China Sea. Hoang Huu Luong, head of the Press Department of Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications, has directed the local radio and television stations to limit the broadcast of foreign TV series, especially those from the Chinese mainland and South Korea, the official media stated on 20 August 2012.

Hoang also asked the officials to reinforce Vietnam's sovereignty over the disputed islands in their coverage, the 'Global Times' reported. The Chinese state TV channels have not been made available there since the beginning of August, the report said.

Hanoi also removed link to China Radio International's (CRI) Vietnamese-language channel from the website of Voice of Vietnam (VOV). Wu Zhao-ying, the director at Vietnamese department of CRI said, said she did not know why the link was removed and wants to discuss the issue with her counterparts at VOV. Chinese strategic analysts linked it to the South China Sea dispute. "It's an important signal showing that the South China Sea dispute is causing tension between China and Vietnam," Liu Feng, a researcher at the Research Centre for Oceans Law and Policy under the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, told the

<sup>80</sup> *Asia News Net*, "Vietnam, Laos, Thailand review joint tourism programme", 1 August 2012, <<http://www.asianewsnet.net/home/news.php?id=34339&sec=1>>, accessed on 4 August 2012.

<sup>81</sup> '4 decades on, US starts cleanup of Agent Orange in Vietnam', *The New York Times*, August 9, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/10/world/asia/us-moves-to-address-agent-orange-contamination-in-vietnam.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/10/world/asia/us-moves-to-address-agent-orange-contamination-in-vietnam.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)

daily. “Vietnam’s government wants to block news broadcasts about the South China Sea from China, in case Vietnamese viewers are influenced by the reports,” Liu said. Tempers flared up between the two countries in the recent months after the Vietnam National Assembly passed the “Vietnamese Law of the Sea,” asserting that Spratly islands called Xisha and Nansha Islands by China were under Vietnam’s jurisdiction. Subsequently, China retaliated forming a new city Xisha on the islands and established a military garrison besides calling for bids for oil exploration around the islands.<sup>82</sup>

### **JICA helps Da Nang improve infrastructure**

DA NANG — The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Viet Nam will help Da Nang improve the city’s Lien Chieu water supply plant and Tien Sa port’s second phase with funds totaling US\$86 million from the Asia Development Bank.

As scheduled, groups of Japanese investors will come to study the feasibility of these Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) projects next year.

JICA will also provide funding to relocate the city’s railway station and rebuild Lien Chieu Port in the next few years.

Tien Sa port only allows access to 30,000 DWT (deadweight tonnage) ships, while

50,000 DWT container ships can dock at Lien Chieu. — VNS<sup>83</sup>

### **India-educated Vietnamese may get ASEAN’s top job**

Vietnam Tribune (IANS) *Saturday 11th August, 2012*

Vietnam’s Deputy Foreign Minister Le Luong Minh, an alumnus of India’s Jawaharlal Nehru University, may become the ASEAN’s next secretary-general, according to reports here.

Vietnamese foreign ministry spokesperson Luong Thanh Nghi said that ASEAN foreign ministers have expressed support to the nomination of Minh as ASEAN secretary-general for the 2013-17 tenure.

“The post of ASEAN secretary-general is being rotated alphabetically every five years among its 10-member countries. It is now Vietnam’s turn to take the secretary-general post from Thailand,” Vietnam’s Permanent Representative to ASEAN, Ambassador Vu Dang Dung, told The Jakarta Post.

No other candidates are said to be in the running.

An alumnus of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, Minh joined the foreign service in 1975. He served as Vietnam’s deputy foreign minister since December 2008 and if he is selected, Minh will assume his new post Jan 1, 2013.

The 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are Brunei Darussalam,

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<sup>82</sup> *The Indian Express*, “Vietnam limits Chinese TV, radio programmes”, 20 August 2012, <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/vietnam-limits-chinese-tv-radio-programmes/990670/>>, accessed on 22 August 2012.

<sup>83</sup> *Vietnam News*, “JICA helps Da Nang improve infrastructure”, 16 August 2012, <<http://vietnamnews.vn/vnnet.vn/Economy/228781/jica-helps-da-nang-improve-infrastructure.html>> Accessed on 30 September 2012.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

ASEAN is currently headquartered in Indonesia, a country where India's Ambassador, Gurjit Singh, too is an alumnus of JNU.<sup>84</sup>

### **Exhibition on Vietnam-India relations opens in Hanoi**

HANOI, Aug. 10 (Xinhua) — An exhibition, “Vietnam-India relations and cooperation — Solidarity, Cooperation and Development” was opened in Hanoi on 10<sup>th</sup> August to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Vietnam-India diplomatic ties and the 5th anniversary of their strategic partnership relations.

The exhibition was co-organized by the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) and Indian Embassy in Vietnam.

Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Ho Anh Tuan addressed the opening ceremony, saying nearly 200 photos and documents on display reflect the long-standing relations and friendship between Vietnam and India, which were fostered by the late Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Visitors will have a chance to understand more about India, its history, culture and people, so the expo will contribute to

further promoting the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries, said Tuan.

The exhibition describes vividly the development of the Vietnam- India relations. It is also an opportunity to remember the two countries' great leaders — President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who are the “architects” of the Vietnam- India relations, said Indian Ambassador to Vietnam Ranjit Rae.

He said that India will also hold various events throughout the year 2012 in capital Hanoi, central Da Nang and southern Ho Chi Minh City to mark the 20th anniversary of the India-ASEAN relations.<sup>85</sup>

## **Australia**

### **Australia Loses Five Soldiers in Afghanistan**

Australia lost five soldiers in two separate incidents in Afghanistan at the end of August 2012. While two Australian soldiers were killed in a US Black Hawk crash, three were killed in an attack on Australian soldiers by a man wearing Australian army uniform. Air Marshall Binskin said that the attack occurred at the end of the day when soldiers were relaxing and that they were as yet unsure of the attacker's motives or the events that lead to the shooting. The attack is bound to put more pressure on the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan that have been keen to portray the Afghan National

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<sup>84</sup> Vietnam Tribune, <http://www.vietnamtribune.com/index.php?sid/208210188/scat/fc849e836694179b/ht/India-educated-Vietnamese-may-get-ASEANs-top-job>. Accessed on: 30 September 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Vietnam Tribune, 10 August 2012. Available at <http://english.sina.com/life/2012/0810/495226.html>. Accessed on: 30 September 2012.

Security Forces as ready to assume the responsibility for security of their nation.<sup>86</sup>

### **India's GVK Gets Nod from Australian government**

India's GVK Group has finally received environmental clearance to develop three coal mines, build a railroad and a port in Queensland from the Australian government. Their projects had come to a halt in June this year after differences arose over environmental impact on the Great Barrier Reef between the Australian and Queensland governments. GVK in 2011 paid \$1.26 billion and acquired 79% stake in the Alpha Coal and Alpha West projects and a 100% stake in the Kevin's Corner project in Queensland from Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd. The projects holds 8 billion tonnes of coal reserves and can produce 80 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) at peak capacity. The company has acquired 100% stake in the 500km railroad and a 60 mtpa port.<sup>87</sup>

### **Canadian Spy Compromises Australian, UK and US Secrets**

Canadian naval intelligence officer Jeffrey Delisle was arrested and charged under Canada's Security of Information Act, with a conviction carrying a maximum penalty

of life in prison. His alleged offences occurred in the Canadian towns of Ottawa, Halifax, Ontario and Nova Scotia. It is feared that this leak may have compromised top level Australian, British and American intelligence.<sup>88</sup>

Louise Hand, Australia's High Commissioner to Canada was briefed by the Canadian Government and discussed the issue with Stephen Rigby, national security adviser to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Additionally, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) was also briefed on the Delisle case through liaison with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service at a security conference attended by ASIO in New Zealand.<sup>89</sup>

### **Australia Asks for Russia's Support**

Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr, urged Russia to support the removal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from office, after the latest round of massacre in Syria. He asked Russia to exert its influence in Damascus and to vote in favor of comprehensive sanctions in the UN Security Council. Rights activists allege that more than 17,000 lives have been lost in the country and that more than 150 people were killed the attack on the Syrian village of Treimsa in July. The attack has sparked international outcry and added urgency to the deadlocked Security Council negotiations on Syria.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Dylan Welch and Judith Ireland, "Five Australian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan", *The Age National Time*, 30 August 2012, available at <<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/five-australian-soldiers-killed-in-afghanistan-20120830-2510g.html>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012.

<sup>87</sup> Vishwanath Pillai, "GVK gets Australia govt nod for mines, railroad", *livemint.com*, available at <<http://www.livemint.com/2012/08/23203951/GVK-gets-Australia-govt-nod-fo.html?atype=tp>>, Accessed on: 31 August 2012

<sup>88</sup> "Canada 'spy' sold US, Australia, UK secrets: report", *Defence Talk*, 25 July 2012, <<http://www.defencetalk.com/canada-spy-sold-us-australia-uk-secrets-report-43943/>>, Accessed on: 07 August 2012.

<sup>89</sup> "Australia, Canada discussed navy spy case", *CBC News*, 24 July 2012, <<http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/politics/story/2012/07/24/jeffrey-delisle-spying-australia.html>>, Accessed on: 07 August 2012.

<sup>90</sup> "Australia urges Russia to support removal of Assad", *International News 24/7*, 15 July 2012, <<http://www.france24.com/en/20120715-australia-urges-russia-support-removal-assad>>, Accessed on: 07 August 2012.

## Australia: India Largest Source of Permanent Migrants

Australian High Commissioner Peter Varghese released figures that made India the largest source of permanent migrants to Australia. Commenting on the figures, the Australian Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Mr. Chris Bowen MP, said that the Indian community makes/made valuable contribution to economic, social and cultural life in Australia. Indian migrants comprised a total of 15.7 per cent of the total migration program of 185,000 placed under the 2011-12 permanent migration program surpassing China and the United Kingdom as the largest source of permanent migrants with 25,509 and 25,274 places respectively.<sup>91</sup>

## Fiji

### Fiji Opens Its First Embassy in West Asia

Fiji, a pacific island nation, has opened its first embassy in the West Asia. The nation hopes its new diplomatic ties with the UAE may boost its agriculture sector, as well as provide a gateway to West Asia.

Fiji Prime Minister Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama is arriving in the UAE for a five day visit on 30 august 2012 to open the country's first embassy in the Middle.

Fiji media reports said the Prime Minister avoided the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) summit in Tehran to

inaugurate the embassy in Abu Dhabi, showing the political importance the island nation attaches to the UAE. "If we get the right flight connectivity to the UAE, we can export fresh fruits and vegetables to the UAE," Robin Nair, Fijian Ambassador to the UAE said.

The UAE has invested in agricultural sectors in foreign countries to ensure food security and Fiji will seek such investments to improve its agriculture sector, Nair said. Asked whether Fiji permits Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in agriculture, he said foreign investors can enter the agriculture sector in partnership with local farmers. At the moment there is no direct flight between both countries. Fiji is connected through Sydney in Australia by a 14-hour flight from the UAE.<sup>92</sup>

### Prime Minister of Fiji Criticized Over Comments on Constitution

Fiji's interim Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, is facing criticism for his comments on constitution. Opposition politician Mick Beddoes has told Radio Australia the prime minister's "heavy-handed and threatening" remarks risked undermining the commission's work and credibility. "The whole idea of the process is to invite or encourage the population to step forward and make submissions to the commission as it makes its way around the country".

Commodore Bainimarama, who seized power in a 2006 coup, rejected calls by Constitutional Commission chairman Yash Ghai for greater freedom in Fiji, saying the Kenyan did not properly understand the situation in the

<sup>91</sup> "India becomes Australia's largest source of permanent migrants", *Global Indians*, 20 July 2012, < <http://in.news.yahoo.com/india-becomes-australias-largest-source-permanent-migrants-104500925.html>>, Accessed on: 07 August 2012

<sup>92</sup> *Gulf News*, "Fiji opens first embassy in region", 30 August 2012, <<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/fiji-opens-first-embassy-in-region-1.1068152>>, accessed on 3 September 2012.

country. “The comments by the chair are unfortunately misplaced... none of the laws currently in place stop any Fijian or hinder any Fijian from making any submission to the commission on any topic”.

Mr Ghai was appointed earlier this year to prepare a new constitution ahead of elections scheduled for 2014, with Commodore Bainimarama hailing him at the time as an “internationally renowned constitution and human rights expert”.

Fiji’s permanent secretary of information, Sharon Smith-Johns, said Commodore Bainimarama had given his full support to the constitution consultations and was confident the commission would produce a constitution based on democratic principles and equal rights.<sup>93</sup>

## New Zealand

### New Zealand Forces to Exit Afghanistan

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key announced on 20 August 2012 that the country will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan earlier in 2013 than planned. He said the move is not prompted by the deaths this month of five New Zealand soldiers, including three who were killed on Sunday by a roadside bomb.

August’s deaths account for half of all fatalities suffered by the small contingent of New Zealanders in the nine years they have been stationed in central Bamiyan province, which was comparatively stable

until a recent upswing in violence. Mr. Key said it was “highly likely” the remaining soldiers from the contingent of 145 would be withdrawn in April 2013. He said discussions for the earlier withdrawal began before the five deaths this month. Murray McCully, New Zealand’s Foreign Affairs Minister, had announced in May the troops would be withdrawn “in the latter part of 2013.”

Mr. Key said he wants to bring home the troops as fast as practicable within a timetable that fits in with the coalition partners. “We’ll do it as fast as we can, and we’ll do it in the way that protects our people as best we can,” he said.

“Yes we need to make it the shortest timeframe we can now logistically, but we have to do it with our partners. If we don’t, then the message we send to the rest of all of Afghanistan is that it’s time to run for the exits,” he said. “And if we do that, then the thousands of people who have lost their lives have been in vain. And I just don’t think that reflects the values and principles that underpin New Zealand.”

The move is likely to be popular among many New Zealanders, who have increasingly questioned the country’s role in the conflict. The New Zealand troops were sent there ostensibly as a reconstruction team, with the mission of helping to rebuild and protect Bamiyan province’s infrastructure and social systems. In recent months, however, that role has increasingly given way to combat operations, as violence in the region has increased. According to defence force officials, the three were travelling in a convoy of four Humvees on Sunday to escort a soldier suffering a medical condition back from a visit to the doctor when a

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<sup>93</sup> *ABC News*, “Fiji PM Criticised over constitution comments”, 22 August 2012, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-21/an-fiji-opposition-polly-slams-pm-over-constitution/4213758>>, accessed on 29 August 2012.

roadside bomb exploded, destroying the vehicle and instantly killing the occupants.<sup>94</sup>

### **New Zealand to Build Pacific Assistance With China**

New Zealand is looking to extend its assistance partnership with China in the Pacific during talks ahead of the Pacific Island Forum Meeting in the Cook Islands. New Zealand, China and the Cook Islands are due to announce a joint water supply project for Rorotonga, the main island of Cook Islands, ahead of the PIF Dialogue Partners Meeting.

The New Zealand government is working on an ambitious programme to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of relations with China in November, December 2012.<sup>95</sup>

### **New Zealand to Host Pacific Energy Summit**

New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully, who is in Rarotonga

attending the Pacific Islands Forum, says the Pacific energy summit will take place in April 2013. It would be co-sponsored by Australia, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and co-hosted by the European Union.

Renewable energy was a main talking point when New Zealand hosted the forum last year, and Mr McCully says the summit would be its legacy in ensuring the talk turns into action. New Zealand was also talking to other partners, including the United States, United Arab Emirates and Japan, to participate.

“The summit is designed to connect development partners, private sector investors and Pacific countries to help fast-track the region’s conversion to renewable energy sources,” Mr McCully said. New Zealand is also creating a \$10.5-million assistance package for Cook Islands construction of renewable electricity systems, and is supporting the installation of solar panels in Tokelau to help bring it close to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2013. The Cook Islands and Tuvalu are aiming to generate 100 per cent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *The Hindu*, “New Zealand signals early exit from Afghanistan”, 20 August 2012, <<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3798409.ece>>, accessed on 22 August 2012.

<sup>95</sup> *Bernama*, “New Zealand looking to build Pacific assistance with China”, 30 August 2012, <<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsworld.php?id=690813>> accessed on 4 September 2012.

<sup>96</sup> *Herald Sun*, “New Zealand to host Pacific energy summit”, 29 August 2012, <<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/new-zealand-to-host-pacific-energy-summit/story-e6frf7k6-1226460856384>>, accessed on 4 September 2012.

## Important Upcoming ASEAN Events

Sr No	Date	Event	Venue
1.	24-28 September 2012	Senior Officials Meeting for 12th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME)	Bangkok
2.	24-28 September 2012	3 <sup>rd</sup> East Asian Summit (EAS) Environment Ministers Meeting	Bangkok
3.	October	25 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN-Australia Forum (AAF)	Manila
4.	Third week of October 2012	Joint Commemoration of the 2012 ASEAN Day for Disaster Management and International Day for Disaster Reduction	Bangkok
5.	8-19 October 2012	11 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity	Hyderabad
6.	15-16 October 2012	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Retreat	Siem Reap
7.	5-6 November 2012	9 <sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM9)	Vientiane
8.	7 November 2012	India-ASEAN Ministers for New & Renewable Energy Sources Meeting	New Delhi
9.	17 November 2012	8 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN Economic Community Council (AEC)	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
10.	17 November 2012	ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (tbc)	Phnom Penh
11.	26 Nov-20 Dec 2012	2 <sup>nd</sup> ASEAN India Car Rally 2012	Yogyakarta- New Delhi

Source: <http://www.aseansec.org/22981.htm#09>



Source: High Commission of India, Singapore at < <http://hcsingapore.gov.in/news-and-events/asean-india-car-rally/> >

## ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

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