

Report # 128**Business and Politics in Muslim World****South East Asia****Tatheer Zahra Sherazi****From 10 July to 16 July****(Outline)**

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Summary

At political Front

- Indonesia

Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited a prominent anti-graft activist in a hospital yesterday, two days after he was attacked amid rising tensions over alleged police corruption. Tama Langkun, an activist from the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), who had investigated several top police generals and their alleged bank accounts, has been hospitalised after the assault early on Thursday morning.

"Whatever the challenges, obstacles and threats that are being experienced by all who combat corruption, this big mission has to continue," Yudhoyono told reporters after visiting Langkun.

Indonesian parliament is actively involved in global events to fortify government diplomacy as it is one of the country's high-ranking institutions who has strong power.

The parliament has joined and conducted several international activities this year such as participating in the session of Sub-Committee on Protecting and Respecting Cultural Diversity in Asia at Cambodia's Phnom Penh on July 5-6.

Long forgotten as a political vehicle until it resurfaced behind Prabowo Sugianto in his failed bid for the presidency last year, the Indonesian Farmers Association (HKTI) is again suddenly in the spotlight with a leadership bid by a daughter of the late President Suharto. Established in 1973, the HKTI is a confederation of 14 organizations of agricultural producers. Prominent in its support for Suharto during his three decades in power, it faded with the downfall of the dictator in 1998. Prabowo became chairman in 2005 and used it extensively to campaign for his party, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), and his run at the presidency. HKTI today begins a four-day national congress in Bali to elect a new chairman for 2010-15.

- Malaysia

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has appealed to the leadership of the largest ethnic Indian political party in the country to 'stop internal bickering' so as to serve the minority community amid a leadership row in the party. Najib urged the leaders in the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), which is a component of the ruling coalition of Barisan Nasional, to stop the internal bickering and change with the times. He said leadership problems should not let it sap its energy to serve the Indian community.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) government and Umno, which forms its backbone, will not allow the Opposition to disrupt political stability in the country, said Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. The Deputy Prime Minister said without political stability, Malaysia would

descend into chaos and this was a fact that must be understood by all Malaysians.

Alleging discrimination, a group of 20 ethnic Indians in Malaysia have approached the country's royal constitutional head for more scholarships and loans to help deserving students pursue higher studies. Activists of the Human Rights Party (HRP) turned up Sunday outside Istana Negara, the royal palace here, to hand over a memorandum seeking the king's intervention to help top Indian students. In Malaysia, such protests require prior police permission. No untoward incident occurred as a group of policemen stood by to monitor the situation, The Star newspaper said.

- Thailand

On the afternoon of May 19, following weeks of protests and mayhem, most of the core Red Shirt leaders barricaded in the center of Bangkok surrendered meekly to the Thai government forces. One leader who evaded capture was the volatile Arisman Pongruangrong.

Just before vanishing later that afternoon, Arisman was wearing a T-shirt bearing the image of Mahatma Gandhi. The symbolism was deeply ironic. Almost a century before, Gandhi had expounded a political principle that the Red Shirt leadership, including Arisman, had still not absorbed.

Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya (R) meets with U.S. Under-Secretary of State William Burns in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 16, 2010. William Burns said Friday that the U.S. hopes that the Thai government could lift the state of emergency in Bangkok and 18 other provinces "as soon as possible". (Xinhua/Shi Xianzhen)

After surviving the 10-week red shirts anti-government protest in May and vote of no confidence last month, the Abhisit administration is currently facing another wave of political uncertainty. This time, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva who led the Democrat Party, the backbone of the current coalition government, will have to face off with the Constitution Court which will decide whether to ban the party and its executives. The Office of Attorney-General Tuesday forwarded its case to the Constitution Court for the dissolution of the Democrat Party and to ban its executives who held positions in 2004 and 2005 from politics for five years

Thailand has never been comfortable with the idea of talking to the enemy, especially the Malay Muslim separatists in the deep South. And so when one of the long-standing groups broke their silence about a unilateral, unannounced ceasefire they had carried out, though with limited success, the government dismissed the report with extreme caution.

Perhaps the most sensible response to this sticky issue came from government spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn, who was quoted as saying the government does not recognise the insurgent groups but added that this administration "does not oppose any means that will

mitigate the violence. We regard them as a good initiative".

- **Philippine**

THE Philippine presidential election was held on May 10 and Benigno Aquino III (popularly known as Noytoy Aquino), the son of two democracy heroes (his father Benigno, a former assassinated senator and mother, former president Corazon), won handsomely and was proclaimed as president in a joint session of Congress on June 9. He was sworn in as the Philippines' 15th president on June 30.

Aquino's surge to the presidency was driven by a wave of emotion following the death of Corazon Aquino last August, with the family's reputation for propriety and honesty a powerful lure after two administrations dogged by allegations of corruption. The challenge now is how to use the enormous goodwill that President Aquino has to get the country of about 94 million people on the path of democracy and economic growth.

President Benigno Simeon Aquino III declared that the government is committed to a comprehensive, just and peaceful solution to the decades-old conflict in Mindanao. The President said he has standing instructions for the panel to review past agreements, records of the talks and documents of exchange between the Philippine government and the MILF panels and make recommendations on how the peace process can move forward, taking into account the limitations that both parties have to deal with.

The panel will report directly to the President and Secretary Deles. Deles pointed out that President Aquino's statement on the resumption of peace negotiations with the MILF is a "first step for a very major step" towards realizing one of his promises in his inaugural speech regarding the Mindanao issue.

The Philippine government is aiming to return home within two months 25,000 people who were displaced due to a decades-long rebellion in the south, an aide said Friday. President Benigno Aquino, who took office on June 30, wants the process completed during his first 100 days in office, Teresita Deles, the presidential adviser on the peace process, told a news conference. "What we do want is to address that as quick as possible, bringing home those who can be brought back to their places," Deles said

At Geo Strategic Front

- **Cambodia**

Cambodia will conduct its first ever large scale military exercise next week, a part of the United Nations Peacekeeping framework for strengthening peace and security, China's Xinhua news agency reported Saturday.

The speed with which two alleged Thai terrorists were extradited from Cambodia to Thailand demonstrates a degree of good will on the part of our neighbour. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen should be credited for expediting such a quick and

uncomplicated procedure. He did it voluntarily, without waiting for a request from Thailand. Within this context, the gesture indicates that Cambodia indeed has a firm commitment to work with other countries in fighting terrorism.

- Laos

The United States and Laos pledged to step up cooperation after their highest-level talks since the Vietnam War, the latest country in a renewed US effort to engage Southeast Asia. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met Tuesday with Foreign Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, who was paying the first visit by a top Laotian official to Washington since the communist victory in his nation in 1975.

At economic Front

- Indonesia.

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered 19 locally incorporated companies having foreign investment in June 2010. Of these 19 companies, seven were registered at the Company Registration Office (CRO) Karachi, while six were registered at the CROs in Lahore and Islamabad. The foreign investors in these different companies belong to various countries, including, the UK, the US, Italy, Singapore, Afghanistan, Nigeria, China, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Armenia, Nigeria, Panama, Indonesia, Switzerland and Turkey.

Indonesian Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo said on Thursday that the government will boost food supply to reduce rising pressure from inflation. The statement comes as the country's inflation pressure is predicted to rise significantly in the next three months following the acceleration of the inflation in June which stood the highest in the last 13 months. Indonesia to boost food supply to ease inflation pressure Cleared forested areas for palm oil plantations in Indonesia

Mini-hydro power, waste water and geothermal projects are shaping up as favorites among green investors eyeing Indonesia, but regulatory problems are holding back a potentially lucrative sector, investors said on Tuesday.

These policy hurdles could leave Southeast Asia's biggest economy struggling to attract the investment needed to meet its targets to grow power supply and cut greenhouse gas emissions, and keep carbon developers focused on China and India instead

- Malaysia

As the global economy develops slowly, the government is undertaking a form of economic transformation by focusing more on new sectors and development of the domestic economy. Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanazlah said new sectors such as Islamic finance where Malaysia occupies the top spot globally and services, can support the fall in manufacturing exports.

He said the move to expand domestic investments is the right action towards the projection for the Malaysian economy to expand positively."There are indicators now that the global economy is slowing. A number of countries are facing financial problems resulting from the global economic crisis which can impact the export of goods," he added.According to Ahmad Husni, the decision to enhance the domestic economy and export services, is the basis for the projection that the country's economy is on the right track

The impact of an economic slowdown in Europe is not expected to affect Malaysia severely said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah.

Ahmad Husni said based on data involving the trade volume between Malaysia and troubled European countries like Portugal, Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Spain was not big.He said during and before the global economic crisis, Malaysia had taken steps to draw out strategies to face such situations.

- Vietnam.

The EU and Vietnam are moving closer to opening negotiations on a free trade agreement, which can help resolve all the issues related to anti-dumping, the EU ambassador to Vietnam said on Wednesday.This comment was made at the release of the EU's annual trade and commercial counselors report 2010, called the Green Book, in which the delegation praised Vietnam's efforts in weathering the global crisis."We're confident that for Vietnamese exports, the worst is probably over now," said Sean Doyle, EU ambassador and head of the EU delegation to Vietnam.

Human rights issues are a serious concern in Vietnam but Prime Minister John Key says improving New Zealand's relationship with the southeast Asian nation can help.Mr Key, who is in Vietnam, said the Government was aware of human rights issues in Vietnam and discussed them with the Vietnamese.

"I don't think we're going to make progress lecturing people but we can certainly make progress having a discussion and dialogue with them, pointing out the expectations of the developed world when it comes to human rights."And from time to time there may always be issues that may either involve New Zealanders or involve others where we step in and take a strong stance," he said.

At Social Front

- Indonesia

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won a second term last year with an overwhelming mandate to fight corruption. Events this month show that battle is far from won.

Last week, antigraft campaigner Tama Langkun was beaten with iron rods by unknown

thugs, sending him to the hospital for five days. Mr. Langkun is best known for asking the Corruption Eradication Commission, or KPK, to investigate how senior police officers accumulated big bank accounts. Tempo Magazine, which ran a June cover story on the issue, saw its offices fire-bombed the week before Mr. Langkun's beating. The police have promised to investigate.

Muslims in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, have been praying in the wrong direction. The country's highest Islamic authority said Friday that people thought they were praying to Mecca but they were really pointed toward Kenya.

All Muslims are supposed to face the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia during prayer. The Islamic Authority suggested to the country's 196 million Muslims that they shift their direction to the northwest. The head of the Islamic Authority told people they shouldn't worry about their prayers not being answered and there is no need to demolish mosques.

Indonesia's police chief has promised to stop raids and other violent actions by Islamic vigilante groups. The promise was made earlier this week - Wednesday - at a meeting with human rights activists. They say in the last few months hard line Islamic organizations like the Islamic Defenders Front have disrupted events by political parties and minority groups and have attacked religious gatherings.

- Thailand

The International Monetary Fund said Thailand's economy may expand as much as 8 percent this year after deadly political protests ended last quarter without derailing growth. Gross domestic product will grow between 7 percent and 8 percent in 2010, compared with a previous target of 7 percent, the IMF said today in a statement distributed in Bangkok. Thailand's central bank this week raised its benchmark interest rate for the first time in almost two years after surging exports helped the nation weather two months of anti-government protests that hurt tourism and disrupted some manufacturing. The IMF expects the Thai economy to grow 4 percent in 2011, it said in the statement

- Philippine

Three people were missing in Vietnam as tropical storm Conson hit the country, officials said Sunday, after leaving 68 dead in the Philippines when it roared in as a typhoon.

A woman went missing in the north of Vietnam and two fishermen disappeared in waters off the impoverished central provinces, an official in Hanoi from the national committee to fight storms and flooding told AFP. Conson swept onto the shores of Vietnam late on Saturday and was downgraded to a tropical depression, the official said.

- Cambodia

Prime Minister issued a directive on performing a controlled measure on the current breakout of blue ears disease or porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) after the death of 190 pigs in nine farms, Vientiane Capital late last month.

The pigs in nine farms of Hardsaifong, Sisattanak and Sikhottabong districts, have been found the infection with the PRRS on 14 June as a consequence of the death of 190 pigs out of 620 sick pigs.

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen said Friday that his country's population will reach 17.5 million by 2025 citing the average birth rate at 1.54 percent per year.

In an open message to the World Population Day, Hun Sen said the Cambodian populations were recorded at 13.4 million in 2008 to about 14.3 million by July 2010. He said with the capacity of having 3 to 4 children in one family and with an average birth rate of 1.54 percent per year, the country's populations will "reach 17.5 million by 2025". He said women have played an important role in Cambodia's society and their roles have been elevated through the rectangular strategy set out by his government and their education was also recorded high. Hun Sen said that literacy rate among women at their ages of 15 and above was recorded having basic education from primary to graduate level was increased from 57 percent in 1998 to 71 percent in 2008.

- **Cyber world**
- Philippine
- Malaysia

After the success of the 1Malaysia clinic, the Government now plans to launch 1Malaysia mobile clinics as part of its continuous efforts to provide quality and affordable healthcare services to the people. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the mobile clinics, which would use buses fitted with facilities for medical treatment and equipped for minor surgeries, would serve remote areas with limited access to clinics. "I believe with the launch of the mobile clinics, more people living in the rural areas, traditional kampung, estates and new villages can have access to better and quality healthcare," he said at the Malaysian Medical Association's 50th anniversary dinner here last night.

Environmental Front

- Philippine

It was recently revealed that two percent of the forest cover in the Philippines is destroyed each year - accounting for a 20 percent drop over the course of the 1990s, or a fifth of the country's forest cover. The World Environmental Journalists eGroup, supported this evidence stating that 800,000 hectares of the Philippine forests were lost between 1990 and 2000 due to illegal logging, forest fires and timber export, all of which were

prevalent in those years.

Other threats to Philippine forests include illegal mining industries - which cause pollution, soil erosion and flooding. Forests are the main sources of clean water on the island. In addition, they're home to many of our country's endemic species, some of which are among the world's most endangered.

Detailed News Monitoring Report

Indonesia

- **Political front**
- **Indonesian president visits attacked activist Sunday, 11 July 2010 02:09**

Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited a prominent anti-graft activist in a hospital yesterday, two days after he was attacked amid rising tensions over alleged police corruption. Tama Langkun, an activist from the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), who had investigated several top police generals and their alleged bank accounts, has been hospitalised after the assault early on Thursday morning.

"Whatever the challenges, obstacles and threats that are being experienced by all who combat corruption, this big mission has to continue," Yudhoyono told reporters after visiting Langkun.

"The show must go on. We should not be afraid of any threats and acts of violence," Yudhoyono said, adding that everyone who shared the goal of eradicating graft should support each other.

Langkun was hit on the head while on his way home after watching a World Cup match. He was attacked by four people on two motorcycles who are still at large.

<http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/international/119823-indonesian-president-visits-attacked-activist.html>

- **Indonesian parliament actively involved in global events to fortify gov't diplomacy**

Indonesian parliament is actively involved in global events to fortify government diplomacy as it is one of the country's high-ranking institutions who has strong power.

The parliament has joined and conducted several international activities this year such as participating in the session of Sub-Committee on Protecting and Respecting Cultural Diversity in Asia at Cambodia's Phnom Penh on July 5-6.

It also held the First Plenary Session of General Assembly of Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians for Education (FASPPED) on July 6-7. The event was held as Indonesia's position as the forum president of the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians for Education.

The FASPPED resulted in Declaration of Jakarta Action Plan consisting of action plan by Asia-Pacific parliaments to accelerate realization of education for all as stated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Meanwhile, it also joined the Extraordinary Session of the Parliamentary Union of

Organization of the Islamic Conference Member States in Syria's Damascus in June, in which it took a theme of "Lifting the Blockade of Gaza".The session has discussed various efforts to help Palestinians' struggle from Israeli occupation.

"We also received visits by foreign parliament as a part of parliament diplomacy activities. We always hope that the activities, both in interacting with foreign parliaments and attending international inter-parliamentary organization meetings, could complete and fortify diplomacy conducted by the government," said Marzuki Ali, the parliament's speaker, in recent remarks. Indonesian parliament also conducted humanitarian mission to Gaza Strip on June 30.

According to Marzuki, Indonesian stand as to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is clear. "Israeli occupation on Arab lands must be stopped, including blockade on Gaza Strip," he said, adding that the visit could bring benefit for peace effort desired by Palestinians. They also brought a mission to lobby Palestine's neighbors like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to help opening blockade on Gaza. "At the opportunity, I symbolically put the first stone on construction of an Indonesian hospital at Al Royan of North Gaza, in which Indonesia will take a part to fund the construction by providing 2 million U.S. dollars," he said. According to Marzuki, Indonesian parliamentarians also met its Palestinian counterparts. "We do hope that visit by Indonesian delegation could really bring benefit for peace efforts desired by Palestinians," he said.

In the third week of July, it will participate in the 3rd World' s Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Swiss's Geneva. Marzuki said that the conference is held every five year and usually take themes related to the important role of parliament in responding to various global issues and cooperation with the United Nations.

"The current theme will be 'parliament in a world of crisis: securing global democratic accountability for common good'," he said. According to Marzuki, the conference is the right forum for Indonesian parliament to voice national interests especially on issues of economy, politics and other strategic issues such as climate change and energy. "Besides, we could inform about Indonesia's progress in developing democracy," he said.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7064513.html>

- **Indonesia Antigraft Battle**

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won a second term last year with an overwhelming mandate to fight corruption. Events this month show that battle is far from won.

Last week, antigraft campaigner Tama Langkun was beaten with iron rods by unknown thugs, sending him to the hospital for five days. Mr. Langkun is best known for asking the Corruption Eradication Commission, or KPK, to investigate how senior police

officers accumulated big bank accounts. Tempo Magazine, which ran a June cover story on the issue, saw its offices fire-bombed the week before Mr. Langkun's beating. The police have promised to investigate ...

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704682604575368282047316418.html?mod=WSJASIA_hps_sections_opinion

- **The chief patron of the ruling Democrat Party, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,**

The chief patron of the ruling Democrat Party, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, warned members of party's new executive board in Jakarta on Saturday not to get into trouble with the law because the party would not protect them if they did. He made the warning when inaugurating the party's new central executive board for 2010 - 2015 at the Stamford Activity Hall in the Raffles Hill housing estate in Cibubur.

Although no integrity pacts or working contracts were signed, he hoped the 130 members of the board could safeguard their integrity and behave well. "Those who cannot, and get into trouble with the law, should not expect the Democrat Party to protect them. For the sake of justice, the law must be upheld," he said.

If any of the Democrat Party executive board members violated the party's code of ethics, he said, the party would sanction them.

In his speech, Yudhoyono reminded the cadres about the party's political platform, which promoted intelligence, good governance and civility. He also expressed hope that the party would continue to develop to become a modern party having good management and information systems across the country. Yudhoyono called on cadres to always support the policy of the government at the central or regional levels.

If all party cadres work hard to make a success of the government's policy in improving the people's welfare he believed the Democrat Party would repeat its success of the 2009 legislative elections in 2014. However, he called on party cadres to refrain from talking about the 2014 general elections as yet. "Right now the Democrat Party must not talk much on issues relating to the 2014 general elections. Not yet now because it is still too early and too soon. [If they do], people might wonder why this country is being led to 2014 competition," he said.

Yudhoyono asked the new Democrat Party board members to continue to be active in the party and would not only become active just before the 2014 general elections. On Thursday, about 50 demonstrators staged a rally outside the Corruption Eradication Commission on Thursday to demand the immediate arrest of Democratic Party lawmaker Jhonny Allen Marbun for allegedly taking a bribe. Despite what appears to be strong evidence, Jhonny still has not been charged though at least one politician from a rival

party has been.

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/yudhoyono-tells-democratic-party-executives-to-remain-clean-or-face-sanctions/385149>

- **It's Not Political' as Suharto Scion Eyes HKTI**

Long forgotten as a political vehicle until it resurfaced behind Prabowo Sugianto in his failed bid for the presidency last year, the Indonesian Farmers Association (HKTI) is again suddenly in the spotlight with a leadership bid by a daughter of the late President Suharto. Established in 1973, the HKTI is a confederation of 14 organizations of agricultural producers. Prominent in its support for Suharto during his three decades in power, it faded with the downfall of the dictator in 1998. Prabowo became chairman in 2005 and used it extensively to campaign for his party, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), and his run at the presidency. HKTI today begins a four-day national congress in Bali to elect a new chairman for 2010-15.

Siti Hedyati "Titiek" Hariyadi — also a former wife of Prabowo — is the latest to announce her interest. Titiek also happens to be a deputy secretary general of the Golkar Party. "I ask for your support to continue to realize Pak Harto's efforts to make farmers self-reliant," she said, referring to her father by his nickname.

Titiek's announcement was the latest after Jafar Hafsal, a lawmaker and an official of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Democratic Party, declared his candidacy on June 28.

Aside from Prabowo, other figures expressing interest include Oesman Sapta, from the Regional Unity Party (PPD), and former Agriculture Minister Anton Apriantono, from the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Titiek has pledged not to use HKI as a political vehicle to raise Golkar's grassroots clout — including in the 2014 elections. "I will not make HKTI yellow," she said, referring to Golkar's color. "Making a political choice is a member's individual affair."

Many are doubtful. Burhanuddin Muhtadi, a political analyst from the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), said Titiek's candidacy was highly motivated by politics. He argued that Golkar, like other parties, was seeking to capitalize on the HKTI as "an instrument for the political party," and that Titiek had the most viable links with farmers given her father's legacy. "Electurally, the HKTI constitutes a huge market for political parties," he said, referring to the fact that over 44 percent of Indonesians work in agriculture, and that the group has the networking capacity to reach those farmers.

Titiek's candidacy also highlights the Suharto family's attempt to make a comeback in the political arena, Burhanuddin said. "It's quite clear the Suharto family wants to re-enter politics." Titiek's younger brother, businessman Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra,

failed miserably to be elected Golkar's chairman in 2009, while elder sister Siti Hardiyanti "Tutut" Rukmana is a key figure in the Concern for the Nation Functional Party (PKPB).

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/its-not-political-as-suharto-scion-eyes-hkti/385304>

- **Indonesia to keep assets of ex-president Suharto's son**

Indonesia's Supreme Court has ruled in favour of the finance ministry keeping 1.22 trillion rupiah (\$134.8 million) of assets of a company linked to the son of ex-President Suharto. The case illustrates how the clan of Suharto, who ruled Indonesia for 32 years, has seen its influence dwindle since Suharto stepped down in 1998.

The legal case started when now-defunct car assembler PT Timor Putra Nasional (TPN) defaulted on its loans to Indonesian state banks when the Asian financial crisis hit in 1997-1998. TPN was set up by Suharto's youngest son, Hutomo Mandala Putra -- also known as Tommy Suharto -- to build Indonesia's national car in the 1990s.

The project attracted widespread criticism as TPN sold rebranded versions of South Korean cars. The finance ministry ordered a freeze of the assets following the default, but the firm filed a civil case against the move. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the finance ministry, which had appealed a previous decision favouring TPN. Tommy Suharto, once sentenced to jail for murdering a Supreme Court judge, has been released from prison and is now operating several businesses, including the listed logistics company Humpus 'HITS.JK'.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/news/world/detail/73917/>

- **Economic Front**

- **19 firms with foreign investment registered in June**

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered 19 locally incorporated companies having foreign investment in June 2010. Of these 19 companies, seven were registered at the Company Registration Office (CRO) Karachi, while six were registered at the CROs in Lahore and Islamabad. The foreign investors in these different companies belong to various countries, including, the UK, the US, Italy, Singapore, Afghanistan, Nigeria, China, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Armenia, Nigeria, Panama, Indonesia, Switzerland and Turkey.

As for the sector-wise breakdown, four of the companies are in trading, three in services and two in agriculture. The rest are in printing, alternative energy, tourism, auto and allied, Information Technology, communication, real estate, electrical goods, transport and construction. app

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\07\17\story_17-7-2010_pg5

- **Indonesia to boost food supply to ease inflation pressure**

Indonesian Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo said on Thursday that the government will boost food supply to reduce rising pressure from inflation. The statement comes as the country's inflation pressure is predicted to rise significantly in the next three months following the acceleration of the inflation in June which stood the highest in the last 13 months. Indonesia to boost food supply to ease inflation pressure Cleared forested areas for palm oil plantations in Indonesia

Indonesia to boost food supply to ease inflation pressure Indonesia gets US climate funds "As we see that there was a hike in inflation in June which mostly contributed by foods," Martowardojo said at the Finance Ministry.

The rise of electricity tariff earlier this month, the start of new term of study in schools, Islamic holy month of Ramadhan followed by Islamic festivity, where the household's spending will normally increase sharply, from July to September, are the triggers of the prices hike.

The finance minister said that the government would increase food supply and boost its transport. "Therefore, we will ensure that all the logistic issues, the transports of foods, and supply of foods (can be boosted)," Martowardojo said.

The government increased electricity tariffs by an average of 10 percent on July 1, by which the National Statistic Bureau forecast to raise inflation pressure by over 0.22 percent in July. The annual inflation in June accelerated at 5.05 percent, higher than that of in the previous month of 4.16 percent, the bureau said. The central bank has targeted 4 to 6 percent inflation by the end of this year.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2010-07/15/content_10112508.htm

- **Green investors eye Indonesia but want regulatory reform**

Mini-hydro power, waste water and geothermal projects are shaping up as favorites among green investors eyeing Indonesia, but regulatory problems are holding back a potentially lucrative sector, investors said on Tuesday.

These policy hurdles could leave Southeast Asia's biggest economy struggling to attract the investment needed to meet its targets to grow power supply and cut greenhouse gas emissions, and keep carbon developers focused on China and India instead. Swedish carbon credit trader Tricorona AB, which specializes in sourcing, developing and trading offsets from greenhouse gas reduction projects, is eyeing four or five emissions reductions and renewable energy projects in Indonesia, said Sushila Maharjan, a Tricorona director. "We have projects we are working on here but getting the right information at the right time, to feel comfortable that there is a solid project, it takes so long here," she told Reuters at a green investment conference in Jakarta. "There's some

regulatory and policy barriers."

Problems with land acquisition, conflicting regulations, and graft have thwarted infrastructure development in Indonesia, leaving it lagging regional rivals in attracting foreign direct investment.

China and India are the largest sources of U.N.-backed carbon offsets, which big European or Japanese polluters can buy to meet emissions reductions targets. Tricorona, which has 63.8 million offsets in the pipeline for delivery between 2013 and 2020 and was bought by Barclays Plc in June, is working on deals in Indonesia on biofuels and waste water projects and on one 50 megawatt (MW) geothermal project, Maharjan said. If realized, the combined projects would create 400,000 offsets per year.

Indonesia boasts the potential to produce an estimated 27,000 MW of geothermal power, thanks to its many volcanoes, but technical risks and the cost of exploration may turn off investors looking for a quick return. "For the short term, mini-hydro, waste water have shorter lead times and with initial capital you can make it happen within a year," she said. Indonesia has vowed to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26 percent from business-as-usual levels by 2020, and to improve an electricity system prone to blackouts by building new coal-fired and renewable power plants

Mari Yoshitaka from Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities said that Japan was still interested in geothermal in Indonesia. "The Japanese government is very keen on Indonesia. We are looking at geothermal," she said. "For Japanese industry, our technology is quite good so a lot of our companies would be interested."

Frederic Crampe, managing director of ReEx Capital Asia -- which arranges financing for green projects -- said his firm had been turned off by Indonesia's huge fossil fuel subsidies, low electricity tariff and weak land acquisition laws. "In Indonesia, the reason we haven't done that much work, is because there are a lot of restrictions and distortions in the market," he said, adding that more incentives for green investors were needed.

"It would be great if there was a fund to support the cost of geothermal exploration, like in oil and gas." He said investors were aware reform was taking place in Indonesia, which raised electricity tariffs by an average of 10 percent this month.

"The Indonesia government, with the tariff increase, is probably going in the right direction. But are they doing it fast enough?"

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE66C3JD20100713?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=GCA-GreenBusiness&rpc=401>

- **At social Front**
- **Indonesia informs its Muslims they're praying in the wrong direction**

Muslims in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, have been

praying in the wrong direction. The country's highest Islamic authority said Friday that people thought they were praying to Mecca but they were really pointed toward Kenya. All Muslims are supposed to face the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia during prayer. The Islamic Authority suggested to the country's 196 million Muslims that they shift their direction to the northwest. The head of the Islamic Authority told people they shouldn't worry about their prayers not being answered and there is no need to demolish mosques.

<http://www.ksdk.com/news/national/story.aspx?storyid=207580&catid=28>

- **Indonesia's police chief has promised to stop raids and other violent actions**

Indonesia's police chief has promised to stop raids and other violent actions by Islamic vigilante groups. The promise was made earlier this week - Wednesday - at a meeting with human rights activists. They say in the last few months hard line Islamic organizations like the Islamic Defenders Front have disrupted events by political parties and minority groups and have attacked religious gatherings.

Hamid Usman with the Indonesian Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence says there have been a number of incidents of violence by Islamic vigilante groups seemingly without police intervention. He points specifically to the hard line Islamic group Islamic Defenders Front. The group forced the cancellation of a health care rally it believed was led by the banned Indonesian Communist Party, and stormed hotels to prevent a gay and lesbian conference.

Usman also refers to other groups that have attacked Christian churches and other religious organizations. He and other human rights activists, and some members of parliament addressed these issues with Indonesian police officials. "We would think that the violent activities could happen because of the absence of law enforcement, in particular the police. This is why we came to the police," he said. "We urged the national chief of police to take a firm action, to take a firm policy in response to a series of violence."

Usman says the human rights activists emphasized the need for police to enforce freedom of religion, the rule of law and equal treatment for minorities. He says Indonesian National Police Chief General Bambang Hendarso Danuri admitted some local police may have been negligent because they did not want to be seen as anti-Muslim. But Danuri promised to take strong action in the future, especially during Ramadan when Islamic vigilante groups have raided bars and ransacked restaurants that served alcohol.

"He guaranteed that in this coming Ramadan, there would be no violence and he guaranteed that the police will prevent any violence committed by any vigilante group against anyone," said Usman.

The national police chief told the group that he will make it known that police officers

that fail to protect minorities will be fired. He said he will also try to bring in Islamic and Christians leaders to help diffuse religious tensions and promote tolerance.

<http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/asia/Indonesian-Police-Promise-to-Stop-Islamic-Vigilante-Groups-98596779.html>

- **Cyber world**
- **Indonesia Sticks With Plan to Ban Celebrity Gossip Media**

The national broadcasting watchdog has defended its decision to classify racy gossip shows, known locally as infotainment, as non-factual programming.

The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) on Wednesday declared with the Press Council and the House of Representatives' Commission I that infotainment shows, which mostly cover celebrities' private affairs, could not be considered real journalism.

"None of the Commission I lawmakers at Wednesday's meeting denied that infotainment shows were disturbing programs," KPI chairman Dadang said on Friday.

Speaking at a discussion on what constitutes a factual program, he added that of all the complaints the KPI had received in June, 31.98 percent dealt with infotainment shows. Talk shows came second with 11.5 percent, followed by reality shows with 9.98 percent of complaints. "All the complaints about infotainment objected to the excessive coverage of the celebrity sex tape scandal," said Dadang, referring to the media circus surrounding leaked sex videos purportedly featuring singer Nazriel "Ariel" Irham and TV hosts Luna Maya and Cut Tari.

Previously, infotainment shows were considered factual shows, which according to the KPI's broadcasting code of conduct and programming standards, present factual data and are produced in accordance with journalistic principles.

However, media expert Amir Effendi Siregar, from the Yogyakarta-based Indonesia Islamic University (UII), said infotainment shows could be classified as either non-factual or factual. The problem was not merely about branding them one way or another, said Press Council member Agus Sudibyo. "It's about considering whether it's decent or not to discuss a certain topic in the public domain. A factual show is not always a journalistic product," he said.

He added true works of journalism addressed issues pertinent to the public interest, therefore it would be the KPI's task to draw a clear line on what constituted public and private interests. Agus also said another way to decide what category infotainment shows fell under was to look at how television stations labeled them. "As far as I know, there are only three stations — RCTI, Indosiar and Global TV — that include these shows in their newsrooms," he said.

He added the council "respected and appreciated" the KPI's decision because ultimately

it was the commission that had been overwhelmed with complaints about the shows.

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/indonesia-sticks-with-plan-to-ban-celebrity-gossip-media/386309>

- **Indonesian model admits being in sex video(social,cyber)**

Indonesian gossip show presenter and model Cut Tari has finally admitted to being in one of three sex videos which have widely circulated through the Internet, after weeks of denial. Her lawyer Hotman Paris Hutapea said Friday her client had confessed to featuring in the video with boyband lead singer Nazriel 'Ariel' Ilham. Tari, Ariel and another presenter Luna Maya, have been declared suspects in the video scandal.

"In the case file, we explain that she was in the video with the singer," Hotman said as quoted by kompas.com. Hotman said the confession came only recently as his client did not want to preempt the police's investigation into the case.

"She (Tari) has been named a suspect since Monday (July 5). We did not publish it as we did want to move ahead of the police," he said. The lawyer said her client was not aware she was being videotaped and who spread the video. "She has never seen, kept and distributed the video. Men often videotape their love making using cellular phones," he said.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=13068&sec=1>

Malaysia

- **Political Front**
- **Malaysian PM seeks end to 'internal bickering' in Indian party**

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has appealed to the leadership of the largest ethnic Indian political party in the country to 'stop internal bickering' so as to serve the minority community amid a leadership row in the party. Najib urged the leaders in the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), which is a component of the ruling coalition of Barisan Nasional, to stop the internal bickering and change with the times. He said leadership problems should not let its sap its energy to serve the Indian community.

"Do not fight and destroy MIC, that's my plea to you. There are 3,000 MIC branches. Ask yourselves what the Indian community wants, how do I become a more effective leader? Internal politics can only destroy MIC," he was quoted as saying by a local daily.

In his opening speech yesterday at the 64th MIC annual general assembly, which was attended by more than 3,000 delegates and observers, the prime minister underlined the need for unity in the party in a bid to strengthen the ruling coalition and serve the minority community. Najib's call for unity follows recent demands from some members who want 73-year-old Samy Vellu to step down as MIC president immediately as they feel he had not done enough for the minority community during his 31 years at the helm

of the party.

Najib, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, felt that the MIC should work with non-governmental organisations (NGO) also.

“Work with them (NGOs), don’ t exclude them. If I can work with them, why can’t MIC work with them?” he asked.

He said that as a small community of only 7.9 percent, the Indians could not afford to be further divided. However, he praised the MIC as a faithful partner to Barisan since the country's independence and recognised Vellu’s contributions to the Indian community.

He added that the MIC had to change along with the other Barisan component parties, including the Malay party Umno, to succeed in the next general election.

Vellu said the MIC would continue with its struggle to ensure a better life for the Indian community. "We will work harder in line with the prime minister’s vision of a stronger MIC," he added.

The MIC president said he appreciated Najib's confidence in the party in representing the Indian community within the Barisan Nasional. "We will work towards achieving what he expects of us (the MIC), and hopefully by the next MIC general assembly (next year), we would have achieved them," Vellu said.

Najib appealed to MIC supporters not to get carried away by internal differences, including on the basis of the caste system when choosing their leaders.

The leaders should be selected for their credibility and ability, Najib told the assembly here. "I know of incidences where one person does not want to put the garland on another because of his lower caste," he said.

In the last couple of months, there has been mounting pressure from disgruntled MIC activists for Vellu to step down immediately and let his deputy take over the party.

The 2008 general elections saw the MIC faring miserably with the party winning only three of the nine parliamentary seats it had contested. Vellu lost his Sungei Siput parliamentary seat which he had held on for four terms.

The MIC president, who has announced he will call it a day on or before September 30 next year, said his leadership era was "tough, testing and challenging".

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/80784/malaysian-pm-seeks-end-internal.html>

- **Political Stability Important For Malaysia To Achieve Developed Nation Status -Muhyiddin**

The Barisan Nasional (BN) government and Umno, which forms its backbone, will not allow the Opposition to disrupt political stability in the country, said Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. The Deputy Prime Minister said without political stability, Malaysia would descend into chaos and this was a fact that must be understood by all Malaysians.

He said the people, including those who did not support the BN, must understand the importance of political stability because the government wanted to maintain the momentum of economic achievement which the country has enjoyed all this while, and furthermore there was only 10 years more to go to achieve Malaysia's intention of becoming a developed nation.

"This is the success we have attained, obviously Umno which is the backbone of the government wants to protect this and if any party tries to disrupt the existing stability, it is a very irresponsible party," he said when opening Jempol Umno's annual delegates meeting here Sunday.

He said the developed nation status could be achieved if the country was able to sustain six per cent economic growth each year till 2020.

Muhyiddin said showing responsibility in airing views by taking into consideration the sensitivities of the people and not just solely on political or racial issues or touching on the special interests of a particular community, was very important.

"Can ask, but don't demand," he said, in referring to the attitude of the Opposition who he said questioned Malay rights, the institution of the monarchy, Islam and now were attacking national institutions with the latest being Felda.

The Deputy Prime Minister also reminded that economic success could not be achieved if the country neglected the quest for knowledge including mastering major languages like Mandarin.

He cited the Germans as an example, saying though they were technologically advanced they were among the first to master English and the latest was that more than 200 million people in China were learning English.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=512501>

- **Ethnic Indians seek monarch's help in Malaysia**

Alleging discrimination, a group of 20 ethnic Indians in Malaysia have approached the country's royal constitutional head for more scholarships and loans to help deserving students pursue higher studies. Activists of the Human Rights Party (HRP) turned up Sunday outside Istana Negara, the royal palace here, to hand over a memorandum seeking the king's intervention to help top Indian students. In Malaysia, such protests require prior police permission. No untoward incident occurred as a group of policemen stood by to monitor the situation, The Star newspaper said.

They were seeking the king's intervention to help top Indian students secure Public Service Department scholarships and study loans as well as university and matriculation places. The HRP claimed that over 2,000 Indian students had their applications for scholarships rejected by the government despite passing their exams with flying colours.

The group was led by HRP secretary-general P. Uthayakumar, who was one of the leaders of the banned Hindu Rights Action Front (Hindraf), detained for staging a rally to protest discrimination against ethnic Indians. Malaysia is home to 1.7 million Indians, a bulk of them Tamil Hindus who migrated here during the British era.

<http://www.manoramaonline.com/cgi-bin/MMOnline.dll/portal/ep/contentView.do?contentId=7534336&tabId=1&channelId=-1073865034&programId=1080127269>

- **Economic Front**
- **Malaysia To Focus On New Sectors For Economic Transformation**

As the global economy develops slowly, the government is undertaking a form of economic transformation by focusing more on new sectors and development of the domestic economy. Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanazlah said new sectors such as Islamic finance where Malaysia occupies the top spot globally and services, can support the fall in manufacturing exports.

He said the move to expand domestic investments is the right action towards the projection for the Malaysian economy to expand positively. "There are indicators now that the global economy is slowing. A number of countries are facing financial problems resulting from the global economic crisis which can impact the export of goods," he added. According to Ahmad Husni, the decision to enhance the domestic economy and export services, is the basis for the projection that the country's economy is on the right track. He said this to reporters after officiating the delegates meeting of the Umno Kubang Pasu branch on Saturday. He also said the government would continue to monitor the growth of the global economy although a number of international financial organisations have expressed optimism that Malaysia would achieve a six per cent growth this year as projected. "The government policy to reduce the number of foreign workers so as to not be too dependent on cheap labour, will not affect the economic transformation," he explained. He highlighted that during the economic crisis last year, more than 21 million tourists visited Malaysia, and this is a reason to export services which can make it more attractive for more people to come. He said that the Talent Corporation was established by the government to bring back 700,000 "high-powered" Malaysians from overseas to spearhead the change in the manufacturing technology sector to a high technology industry which had added value. On the Budget 2011, he said the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, had finished having consultations on it on July 6, with 400 delegates from various sectors in attendance.

They included associations, businessmen, professionals and individuals who gave their input on three key sectors, namely, macro economics, sectoral and social, which forms

the thrust of the formulation of the budget.

Ahmad Husni said the more than 10 focus groups created had finished meeting and looking into detail, the issues raised, including domestic investments as the basis for the country's future economic growth.

However, the ministry was still accepting suggestions from interested parties which would be looked at closely before being brought to the budget meeting, he added. On trade, he said China and India represent markets with potential, especially for manufactured goods and services.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsbusiness.php?id=512450>

- **Mustapa Urge Banks To Open More Branches In Rural Areas**

Local banking institutions have been urged to open more branches in rural areas to provide better service.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said it would also help entrepreneurs of small and medium sized industries (SMI) to apply for loans to expand their business. "The government is always concerned with the welfare of entrepreneurs involved in small and medium sized industries, especially those involving difficulties faced by them to secure loans from banks." "The government has set aside a big amount for the sector under the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP) but such efforts need the cooperation from all the relevant authorities, including banks," he said after opening the Bank Muamalat branch in Jeli here Sunday.

The government is well aware of the role played by SMIs and the problems faced by them. "We have heard of grouses from entrepreneurs involved in SMIs that they are not able to secure loans." "Under the 10MP, the government has set aside a huge amount and entrepreneurs can apply for loans of up to RM50,000 without any collateral," he said.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=512703>

- **Impact Of Economic Slowdown In Europe Will Not Affect Malaysia Badly - Ahmad Husni**

The impact of an economic slowdown in Europe is not expected to affect Malaysia severely said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah.

Ahmad Husni said based on data involving the trade volume between Malaysia and troubled European countries like Portugal, Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Spain was not big. He said during and before the global economic crisis, Malaysia had taken steps to draw out strategies to face such situations.

"When we speak of world economy, it will affect us in terms of trade. But since our trade volume in Europe was not big, during and before the economic crisis, we have strengthened Asean as a stable region." "Later, Asean strengthened economic status with

countries like China, India and the middle east, meaning we do not depend on only one region," he said when commenting on the current economic slowdown in Europe after opening the Tawau Umno Division's delegates meeting here Sunday.

According to Ahmad Husni, the emerging economy of the world would shift momentum towards Asian countries like China, India and the Middle East and not just European countries. As such, Malaysia need to increase its trade partners and destinations to ensure the country's economy would not be affected, he said

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=512688>

- **Social Front**
- **Malaysia Still Discussing Terms Of MoU On Indonesian Maids**

Malaysia and Indonesia are still discussing one or two issues before finalising the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on foreign maids said Human Resource Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam. Dr Subramaniam said officers from the Human Resource Ministry and Home Ministry are currently discussing the structure involving agents costs, with their Indonesian counterparts, since the cost has escalated to RM7,000. "Both parties will decide the date for the signing of the MoU after deliberating the issue and agreeing on a reasonable amount," he said adding that the signing of the MoU was not delayed.

He was speaking to reporters after a dialogue session with Wanita, Puteri MIC and 30 Malaysian Indian women Non Governmental Organisation (NGOs) on the 10th Malaysia Plan, organised by Yayasan Sosial Wanita Malaysia (YSWM) here Tuesday.

Indonesia froze its supply of maids to Malaysia in June 2009, following a number of maid abuse cases and the lack of benefits, including a minimum monthly salary and request for a day off in a week. Last month, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta signed a Letter of Intent to give a new dimension to the employment of domestic workers in Malaysia and the two countries had agreed on revised terms.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=513199>

- **Malaysian police urge global response to crime**

The globalisation of crime can only be tackled by intelligence sharing like that which netted militant leader Noordin Mohammed Top, a top Malaysian official said on Thursday. Shahbudin Abdul Wahab, commander of the nation's police academy, said terrorism, drugs and human trafficking - the top-three most serious threats - require collaboration between law enforcement agencies. "We cannot work alone. We have to collaborate," he told reporters ahead of a three-day gathering of some 200 senior Asia-Pacific security officers including FBI personnel from July 20.

"Criminals today are multifaceted. They exploit globalisation and the IT industry," he

said. Shahbudin cited cooperation between Malaysian and Indonesian agencies which pinned down Noordin Mohammed Top, master bomb-maker and leader of a violent splinter faction of the radical Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network.

Noordin, a Malaysian, was killed in a police raid in Indonesia last September, ending one of Southeast Asia's biggest manhunts. "We collaborated with Indonesia. As a result of it we got Noordin Mohammad Top," Shahbudin said, while warning that despite the elimination of some of its top leaders JI remained dangerous. "They will revive their activities," he said.

The annual security meeting will look into new ways to combat transnational organised crime. JI is blamed for a string of major attacks in the region including the 2002 Bali bombings. Malaysian police said recently that the terror outfit is recruiting new members from local universities.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1069650/1/.html

- **Environmental Front**
- **Cyber world**
- **Anwar's newspaper defies Malaysia's publication ban order**

A Malaysian newspaper run by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's Keadilan party Sunday pressed ahead with publication despite being suspended by the government.

Critics have labelled the crackdown on the Suara Keadilan as an attempt to silence free speech and muzzle the opposition in its attempt to reach out to voters amid speculation of a snap election. "Yes, the latest issue has hit the streets. We feel the government has not banned the newspaper. It only has not renewed the printing permit," Keadilan lawmaker Tian Chua said. "We have the right to circulate information. We are a political party and it is our role to provide different perspectives," he added.

Suara Keadilan ran into trouble after the authorities said it violated publishing laws with a report this month which claimed a government agency is bankrupt.

The Home Ministry, which oversees Malaysia's newspapers, said it would not renew Suara Keadilan's permit -- which expired last Wednesday -- as it was not satisfied with the paper's explanation for the allegedly inaccurate report. The newspaper has a circulation of 100,000 copies and highlights political issues. All newspapers need an official permit to print, which must be renewed annually. The licensing system allows the government to close media outlets at will and often encourages publishers to toe the line.

Tian Chua, Keadilan's strategic director, said the government was trying to silence criticism and intimidate opposition supporters. "We believe we are right in what we are doing," he said. Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, a minister in the prime minister's department, said authorities would act against Keadilan for defying the order.

"We will take action. We are clamping down on lies, not free speech," he told AFP. The opposition scored unprecedented gains in elections in 2008, which saw it claim five states and a third of parliamentary seats. The next election is not officially due until 2013 but pundits say it could be held next year.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1068774/1/.html

- **Malaysian newspaper defies government**

A Malaysian newspaper run by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's Keadilan party has pressed ahead with publication despite being suspended by the government. Critics have labelled the crackdown on the Suara Keadilan as an attempt to silence free speech and muzzle the opposition in its attempt to reach out to voters amid speculation of a snap election. Today the newspaper is back on the news stands, with its supporters vowing to keep it in circulation. Suara Keadilan ran into trouble after the authorities said it violated publishing laws with a report this month which claimed a government agency is bankrupt.

[http://www.radioaustralianews.net.au/stories/201007/2951552.htm?="](http://www.radioaustralianews.net.au/stories/201007/2951552.htm?=)

- **Malaysia opposition newspaper gets relief**

Malaysian authorities agreed on Thursday to let an Islamic opposition party continue publishing its newspaper, but kept two other anti-government publications in suspense about whether they might be banned.

The newspapers of all three parties in opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's alliance have faced an uncertain future because the Home Ministry refused to immediately renew their expired publication licenses in recent weeks. All Malaysian publications require government-issued permits that must be extended annually.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/a294247d-83ba-4c25-802c-67e1db1a83d8.aspx>

- **1Malaysia mobile clinics to serve remote areas**

After the success of the 1Malaysia clinic, the Government now plans to launch 1Malaysia mobile clinics as part of its continuous efforts to provide quality and affordable healthcare services to the people. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the mobile clinics, which would use buses fitted with facilities for medical treatment and equipped for minor surgeries, would serve remote areas with limited access to clinics. "I believe with the launch of the mobile clinics, more people living in the rural areas, traditional kampung, estates and new villages can have access to better and quality healthcare," he said at the Malaysian Medical Association's 50th anniversary dinner here last night.

Besides this, the Government also planned to open more 1Malaysia clinics under the 10th Malaysia Plan, following the increasing popularity of these clinics among the people.

Najib also said the Government would provide better healthcare services for the urban poor, especially since 70% of the country's population lived in towns and cities. "Those living in the metropolitan areas, especially the urban poor should not be denied access to quality healthcare services," he said.

He also said that although the Government was putting greater emphasis on health tourism, the healthcare and medical needs of Malaysians would not be neglected.

The Government, he said had set the target of achieving a ratio of one doctor to 600 people by 2015 from the current ratio of one doctor to 900 people.

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/7/15/nation/6670275&sec=nation>

Philippine

- **Political Front**
- **Aquino: New chapter to Philippine dynasty?**

THE Philippine presidential election was held on May 10 and Benigno Aquino III (popularly known as Noynoy Aquino), the son of two democracy heroes (his father Benigno, a former assassinated senator and mother, former president Corazon), won handsomely and was proclaimed as president in a joint session of Congress on June 9. He was sworn in as the Philippines' 15th president on June 30.

Aquino's surge to the presidency was driven by a wave of emotion following the death of Corazon Aquino last August, with the family's reputation for propriety and honesty a powerful lure after two administrations dogged by allegations of corruption.

Outgoing President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo did not stay for Aquino's inauguration, which was watched by former presidents Joseph Estrada and Fidel Ramos.

Many in the crowd were dressed in yellow, the colour of the 1986 People Power revolution that drove dictator-President Ferdinand Marcos from office and swept Aquino's mother Corazon to power (the writer was Bangladesh ambassador to the Philippines at the time). Yellow confetti was sprinkled over the crowd from helicopters shortly before Aquino III took his presidential oath.

In his first speech as president, Aquino said he would fight poverty, improve the investment climate, and seek a just resolution to a long-running Muslim separatist insurgency in the south of the poor, mainly Catholic, nation.

"My parents sought nothing less, and died for nothing less, than democracy, peace and prosperity," Aquino told an adoring crowd that police estimated at about half a million people. "I am blessed by this legacy. I shall carry the torch forward," he said at the ceremony at the Quirino Grandstand near Manila Bay in the old part of the capital.

Aquino later hosted a reception for the diplomatic community and attended a street party open to the public.

Aquino's first directive declared vacant about 4,000 executive positions in the bureaucracy, although he extended contracts of key officers, particularly in the presidential palace, for at least 30 days to prevent any disruption.

He swore into office 26 cabinet secretaries (ministers) on June 30, and asked his cabinet to identify top spending priorities ahead of his submission of the 2011 budget in July or August.

Aquino inherits an economy whose annual growth rate over the past two decades has averaged 3.7% lower than most economies in Southeast Asia. He has to tame a budget deficit which is estimated at \$6.4 billion, that reached nearly 4% of GDP in 2009, which he said he would first do by enforcing existing tax laws to improve collection before considering any increase in tax rates.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said that the new government had a mandate to implement existing programs more aggressively against tax evaders and smugglers, with charges to be filed soon against individuals and business groups. Prosecutions would encourage greater compliance, but the public also needed to accept that taxes had to be paid, he said.

A day before he took oath of office, President Aquino said that he was setting up a Truth Commission to investigate allegations of corruption, electoral fraud and rights abuses against his predecessor Arroyo and her administration. Arroyo denies any wrongdoing.

"To those who talk about reconciliation, if they mean that they would like us to simply forget about the wrongs that they have committed in the past, we have this to say; there can be no reconciliation without justice," Aquino said.

Aquino said he would review Arroyo's "midnight" appointments -- those made late in her term. He took the oath of office from Associate Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales rather than Chief Justice Renato Corona, whom Arroyo appointed after the May 10 election.

Arroyo is not departing the political scene, having won a seat in the lower house of Congress in the May election, and she could potentially block some of the new president's agenda.

Apart from corruption, Aquino faces problems from decades-old insurgencies by Muslim separatists on southern Mindanao Island and Maoist-led guerrillas, and restoring public and investor confidence in governance and institutions.

"My government will be sincere in dealing with all the peoples of Mindanao. We are committed to a peaceful and just settlement of conflict, inclusive of the interests of all," he said. He made no mention of the Maoist insurgency.

The new president is also faced with the task of improving human rights record. One

rights group, Karapatan, reportedly said it had documented more than 1,200 cases of extra-judicial killings of activists as well as the torture and abduction of hundreds more.

Another issue that the president has to handle is land reform and redistribution in the country, even though his family had declined in the past to distribute land from its vast sugar plantations, as is required by the government's agrarian overhaul program.

The challenge now is how to use the enormous goodwill that President Aquino has to get the country of about 94 million people on the path of democracy and economic growth.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=146617>

- **Manila poll panel rejects 2 nominees**

: In an unprecedented decision, Philippine Commission on Elections (Comelec) has disqualified the two top nominees of a party-list group that won in the May 10 automated elections because they do not belong to the marginalised and underrepresented sector of society which their group claims to represent. In a resolution, a three-member Comelec panel said it disqualified Teodorico Haresco and millionaire-businessman Eugenio Jose Lacson who failed to refute allegations that they are not eligible to represent the party list group "Kasangga sa Kaunlaran" (Partners in Progress). "The party list system of representation has been prostituted in the past by some unscrupulous individuals," the Comelec stressed.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/8df551ae-6cee-46bc-ad7c-b6cf8ad9cfcc.aspx>

- **Aquino says gov't committed to end Mindanao conflict**

President Benigno Simeon Aquino III declared that the government is committed to a comprehensive, just and peaceful solution to the decades-old conflict in Mindanao.

In a statement read for him by Presidential Spokesperson Edwin Lacierda during the press briefing on the government peace process with Presidential Peace Adviser Teresita Quintos-Deles and Dean Marvic M.V.F. Leonen held July 15 in Malacanang, Aquino pointed out that suspended peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would be resumed "at the soonest and most appropriate time."

In order to get the talks going again, the President has created a government panel that will spearhead the peace negotiations with the MILF and named Dean Leonen, the current head of the College of Law of the University of the Philippines, to chair the government panel and facilitate the discussions with the other side.

Deles said the government panel is going through the final stages of its reconstitution after the body became inactive following the suspension of peace negotiation in 2008. The other members of the government panel will be announced later.

The President said he has standing instructions for the panel to review past agreements, records of the talks and documents of exchange between the Philippine government and

the MILF panels and make recommendations on how the peace process can move forward, taking into account the limitations that both parties have to deal with.

The panel will report directly to the President and Secretary Deles. Deles pointed out that President Aquino's statement on the resumption of peace negotiations with the MILF is a "first step for a very major step" towards realizing one of his promises in his inaugural speech regarding the Mindanao issue.

It will be recalled that the President stressed the government will be sincere in dealing with all the peoples of Mindanao and that it is committed to a peaceful and just settlement of conflict inclusive of the rights of all – may they be Lumads, Bangsamoro or Christian.

Deles said Dean Leonen brings to the critical task of peace negotiations a varied and rich experience and expertise in advancing people's rights, having worked on various concerns ranging from agrarian reform, access to justice, ancestral domain, health, environment, international economic law to the Mindanao question. (PIA 6)

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EGUA-87DQ4H?OpenDocument>

- **Aquino to re-open peace talks with Islamic separatists**

Benigno Aquino intends to revive talks with Islamic separatists in the southern Philippines, appointing a law professor known for supporting the land rights of Muslims to serve as chief negotiator. Analysts saw the appointment as a sign that the President, who was inaugurated only weeks ago, was moving strongly to recognise the rights of Filipino Muslims, or Moros. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front has been fighting for a separate Islamic state since the 1970s.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/aquino-to-reopen-peace-talks-with-islamic-separatists-20100716-10e7w.html>

- **Philippines to bring home 25,000 who fled Muslim conflict**

The Philippine government is aiming to return home within two months 25,000 people who were displaced due to a decades-long rebellion in the south, an aide said Friday. President Benigno Aquino, who took office on June 30, wants the process completed during his first 100 days in office, Teresita Deles, the presidential adviser on the peace process, told a news conference. "What we do want is to address that as quick as possible, bringing home those who can be brought back to their places," Deles said.

The effort is part of a broader strategy to push forward peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has been fighting for an independent Muslim homeland in the southern Philippines since 1971. "We need to bridge that gap between the negotiating table and the lives of communities," Deles said. The evacuees are scattered over a string of tent cities on the southern island of Mindanao, where they scrape by on food rations from the social welfare department and foreign aid organisations including

the United Nations.

To ensure their safety as they return home, the government will ask the 12,000-member MILF to maintain a ceasefire that had been negotiated with the previous government, Deles said. Many of the evacuees fled their homes in 2008 when MILF commanders launched a series of attacks on mostly Christian communities. afp

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\07\17\story_17-7-2010_pg4_3

- **Philippines' new government to review peace plan before talks**

The Philippines' new government is reviewing how it plans to negotiate an end to two long-running insurgencies, including the role of foreigners, and expects to hold informal talks with Muslim separatists by the end of September.

Since 2001, Malaysia has been hosting talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the country's largest Muslim rebel group, and has led an international monitoring team since 2004. Norway and the European Union have agreed to join the monitoring team on the southern island of Mindanao.

Norway also oversees talks between the government and the Maoist National Democratic Front (NDF) to end an insurgency that began in the late 1960s. "Definitely, we will begin this year," presidential peace adviser Teresita Quintos Deles told foreign correspondents on Friday when asked about resuming negotiations with the MILF to end 40 years of conflict in the south of the mainly Roman Catholic state in Southeast Asia.

"It's a necessity. This country cannot move along with the conflict with the levels that it had then. This is a national agenda." More than 160,000 people have died in the two long-running insurgencies, which have also stunted growth and investment in the resource-rich but poor Southeast Asian state.

President Benigno Aquino III has said a secure and sustained peace would help attract foreign investment needed to generate jobs in the country.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/philippines/philippines-new-government-to-review-peace-plan-before-talks-1.655297>

- **New intellectual leader emerges in Asean**

The dramatic departure of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the resignation of Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatomaya have effectively unplugged their nascent plans of constructing a new regional architecture. Asean, therefore, is the direct beneficiary of their downfall. For nearly two years, the Asean leaders were dragged into debates unprepared and did several rounds of soul-searching. Member states found themselves united and at odds with one another examining national interests that has broader regional contexts. They ended up with a new mantra, known as "Asean centrality".

Without the constant pushing of the two powerful dialogue countries, the question

remains whether Asean should go slow or move forward full throttle to gain a consensus as early as possible on the new regional architecture. If the past is any judge, Asean tends to move quicker and consolidate faster with external pressure or crisis looming large.

Apparently, this time around a majority of Asean wants to proceed with the discussions, which were held already in quite comprehensive ways. But minor divergent views still need to be ironed out before a consensus can be reached. At the Asean ministerial meeting in Ha Noi next week, the new regional architecture issue will top the agenda.

To do that, Asean has to bridge their perceptions over the role of major powers, organisational structures as well as formats that the grouping wishes to see them fit in. Without fanfare, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong presented the Asean plus eight plan at the last summit in Ha Noi in April. The US and Russia will be invited to join the grouping's major dialogue partners including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. The Asean plus eight summit will take place when the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders meeting occurs in an Asian country.

This format, Singapore believes, would enable a US President to attend an Asean-led summit. That has been the focus of the debate as Asean realises the importance of a US President attending. But a question can be raised, for instance, if South Korea hosts the Apec summit - Will the host provide the hospitality for all delegates from Cambodia, Laos and Burma? Certainly, this issue could be solved if they join Apec at the end of November, when the Apec leaders are scheduled to meet in Yokohama in Japan. Asean will certainly push hard for such a goal.

On the other hand, in mid-January this year, Indonesia floated the idea of expanding the East Asia Summit (EAS). This leaders' forum, founded in Kuala Lumpur in 2005, discusses strategic and transnational issues. It is an existing Asean-led forum. The US and Russia would be invited to join. Russia has been consistent in being a member of the EAS, while the US has expressed interest but without any clear action. Recently, Canada and EU indicated a similar interest.

At the May meeting in Hoi An, Asean senior officials found it extremely difficult to choose either formula for the inclusion of the world's two superpowers. The Asean chair, Viet Nam, plus Indonesia and Laos prefer an expanded EAS. Singapore and Cambodia strongly back the Asean plus eight, along with potential support from the Philippines and Burma. Thailand, Brunei and Malaysia need additional information to come up with their positions. Of late, both Thailand and Malaysia are edging towards the proposed Indonesian plan.

When the foreign ministers meet in Ha Noi in coming days, these positions would certainly shift and change. Meanwhile, strong posturing and lobbying are visible from

Singapore and Indonesia over their preferred formulas. In fact, their differences are minimal. Quite a few Asean members fear that Asean will lose its influence and centrality in the newly proposed Asean plus eight. They prefer an expanded EAS with the US and Russia added on as it would help forge common views on global issues with the fulcrum in Asean. A consensus must be reached before a report with recommendations is ready to be made and submitted to Asean leaders at their summit in October.

In the past, Singapore has been the uncontested intellectual leader of Asean, providing new ideas related to economic and security matters to reinvent and make Asean relevant to the global community. The Asean Regional Forum and Asia Europe Meeting are such hallmarks. It used to be a given that Singapore's ideas would eventually morph into Asean plans.

This time, however, there is a new regional environment with the rise of democratic Indonesia. The grouping's biggest member has come up with many bold and liberal ideas of its own regarding Asean. It has played crucial roles in pushing for the drafting of an Asean charter and security community. Gone are the days when it used to be ridiculed as the grouping's smallest denominator - nothing moves without Indonesia's consent. Now the country has become the biggest denominator that can inspire the rest of Asean. Jakarta's growing confidence in its own democratic development has already transferred to its multilateral diplomacy towards Asean and major powers. Indonesian civil society groups have been the most active in Asean in pushing for people-oriented agenda including human rights and climate changes.

Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa also stressed the importance of Asean in Indonesian foreign policy in his interview with the author at the end of last year. Indonesia's switching the Asean chair with Brunei for next year was another example. The move aims to achieve twin objectives of regional and global leadership. With the Asean chair next year, Indonesia has ample time to devote all its energy to host the G-20 and Apec summits in 2013. To become a Brussels of the East is no longer far-fetched.

In the end, the role of potential intellectual leader in Asean as perceived by fellow Asean members would be a pivotal factor to swing their decisions on either option. Thailand will also use this benchmark as one of the criteria for its decision.

- **Economic**
- **At Social Front**
- **19 missing as typhoon approaches Philippines**

NINETEEN fishermen were reported missing as the Philippines' first typhoon of the year barreled toward the country's east coast yesterday, prompting flight and ferry cancellations, school closures and warnings of floods and landslides.

The military and coast guard are searching for the fishermen, who ventured to sea despite the rough weather in northeastern Catanduanes province, officials said. Thirty-three of the country's 81 provinces and the capital Manila have been placed under storm alert, and residents in low-lying communities and near mountains and hills have been told to evacuate at any sign of danger. "(We) don't (want them to) wait for the wall of water or rolling boulders," Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman said. "Families should evacuate preventively if they're in the path of the typhoon."

Typhoon Conson, with sustained winds of 120 kilometers per hour and gusts up to 150 kilometers per hour, was expected to make landfall late yesterday in mountainous Aurora or Quezon provinces in the rural northeast.

<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/?id=443028&type=World#ixzz0u38J3wNb>

- **End killings, Aquino urged**

An international human rights watchdog on Tuesday urged Philippine President Benigno Aquino III to fulfill his campaign promise to end suspected state-sponsored killings. Human Rights Watch said four journalists, two leftist activists and a witness to an election-related massacre last year have been gunned down since Aquino was proclaimed the election winner in June. Security forces and gunmen hired by political warlords have been blamed for most of the killings. Out of hundreds of extrajudicial killings and disappearances in the past decade, only six cases have been successfully prosecuted and 11 people convicted, none of them military members, the New York-based group said in an open letter to Aquino.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/38cd2e52-4e5c-47da-854b-06dfd28df039.aspx>

- **Typhoon hits Philippines, brings rain**

A typhoon struck the eastern part of the Philippines on Tuesday, bringing heavy rains and official warnings of floods and possible landslides. Prisco Nilo, the chief of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), had earlier warned that "Basyang" (international codename Conson) has intensified from a storm into a typhoon as it gathered strength in moving toward the fringes of several provinces in the Bicol Region.

At 4pm on Monday, Nilo said Basyang was spotted about 40 kilometres west of Camarines Norte in Bicol, which prompted Pagasa to hoist typhoon signal No.3 over the province along with Catanduanes, also in Bicol, as well as Northern Quezon and Polillo Island in Southern Luzon and Aurora in Central Luzon. Under signal No.2, Nilo said, are nine provinces in Southern and Central Luzon, including Nueva Ecija, Southern Quezon, Laguna, Rizal, Pampanga and Bulacan.

Metro Manila was placed under signal No.1 and about 14 other areas where the impact of

Basyang would be felt, Nilo added. He also advised all residents in the areas covered by the typhoon signals to take all the necessary precautions, particularly those living along the coast where they could expect typhoon surges as well as landslides.

Many schools were closed in Metro Manila and the other affected areas. Officials assured they have already taken all the necessary steps to extend immediate aid to victims and minimise the number of victims in line with the recent order of President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino for disaster preparedness. Dozens of international and domestic flights were either cancelled or delayed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) due to inclement weather, Naia officials announced.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/713e1472-24a3-4b69-8e05-99c10d4424f4.aspx>

- **Environmental Front**
- **First Philippines Typhoon of 2010 Proves Deadly**

At least 20 people have lost their lives and 57 others are missing following the first typhoon to strike the Philippines this year. Typhoon Conson hit on July 13, knocking out power for more than 40 million people on the main island of Luzon, closing roads and bridges, and destroying hundreds of homes in coastal areas, the Philippines National Disaster Coordinating Council reports.

Houses knocked flat by Typhoon Basyang (Photo by Biboy3)

The storm, known locally as Typhoon Basyang, is moving in a northwesterly direction and is expected to hit Laoag City on the northwest coast of Luzon island tomorrow afternoon. During an emergency meeting with NDCC officials today, President Benigno Aquino ordered the interior department to conduct an inventory of areas affected, account for vulnerable people, and ensure that the needs of affected populations are attended to," said NDCC chief Benito Ramos.

Many of those killed were fishermen, so President Aquino has ordered the Philippines Coast Guard to come up with a "recall system" for fishermen at sea during weather disturbances. Aquino also directed government agencies to ensure the safe return of evacuees especially to potentially hazardous areas.

Residents of low-lying and mountainous areas are warned to take precautions against flash floods and landslides. Twenty evacuation centers are providing temporary shelter to 1,911 people. Flights and ferries were canceled, schools are closed, and at the South Luzon Expressway in suburban Manila, a construction crane collapsed. Meanwhile, rebuilding from last year's storms in the typhoon-prone island chain is moving forward.

More than 600 families, who were left homeless when typhoons Ketsana, Parma and Mirinae lashed the Philippines in late 2009, now have homes with the assistance of the Philippine Red Cross, supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies.

"The Red Cross is there for you before, during, and after the storm," said Gwendolyn Pang, secretary general of the Philippine National Red Cross, speaking during a relief distribution in Laguna earlier this month, which doubled as a ceremony to mark completion of the homes.

Many of these families were living in poverty before the typhoons struck and could not afford to rebuild their homes or replace property lost to the typhoon, said Pang.

The 630 families are among the first to finish building their own transitional shelters after receiving building materials from the Red Cross. The construction of 1,600 more shelters is underway or in the planning stage.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jul2010/2010-07-14-02.html>

- **How the Philippine Forests are Shrinking Every Day**

It was recently revealed that two percent of the forest cover in the Philippines is destroyed each year - accounting for a 20 percent drop over the course of the 1990s, or a fifth of the country's forest cover. The World Environmental Journalists eGroup, supported this evidence stating that 800,000 hectares of the Philippine forests were lost between 1990 and 2000 due to illegal logging, forest fires and timber export, all of which were prevalent in those years.

Other threats to Philippine forests include illegal mining industries - which cause pollution, soil erosion and flooding.

Moreover, more than 400 species of plants and animals are considered endangered due to clearing of forests, according to environmental journalists. There are now only 16 provinces in the country whose forest cover is at more than 50 percent.

One of the many areas in the Philippines that has lost more than 50 percent of its forest cover is Metro Manila (in Luzon). To date, the surrounding forests of the La Mesa Watershed in Quezon City is the last remaining forest of its size in Metro Manila.

A watershed is "an area of land that drains into an underground water supply: local stream, lake, small holding pond or wetlands." Every action we do, even in our respective properties, has an effect on drainage. The watershed, which serves more than two million Metro Manila residents with a source of potable water, was renamed the La Mesa Ecopark when organizations like ABS-CBN, MWSS, and the Quezon City government restored 33 hectares of land located right outside the watershed. It included the restoration of an ecopark, which was opened to the public in 2004.

In Negros Island, one of the largest islands with one of the largest forests in the Philippines, forest cover has fallen from 95% in 1897 to only 4% today. "This is greatly attributed to mining," lamented Negros Oriental Vice-Gov. Jose Baldado. "The loss of

forests has led to the loss of biodiversity in general," he added. Deforestation, reforestation and river proposal
Photo: treesftf

Balbado said it's ironic how the Philippines ranks one of the first among the world's richest biodiversity areas because of its high number of native species and various habitats; the country also has one of the highest discovery rates in the world. In spite of that, he lamented how hunting and wildlife trade have contributed further to the loss of biodiversity. Wildlife trade is the third largest industry in the country, Baldado said.

What's worse is that for every 10 birds illegally traded in the country, only one actually survives. In Negros Island, some species have been made endangered due to the improper disposal of solid waste. To date, a solid waste management plan has been formulated to address this problem.

Section chief-designate of the Environment and Natural Resources office of Negros, Lucena Amaro said that although the government has enforced R.A. 9003, which concerns the formulation of a 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan, the garbage problem has not been resolved.

"It would be practical to segregate out waste into four different bins: biodegradable, non-biodegradable, bottles and cans, and toxic waste; this has to start at home," she advised.

The Flora and Fauna International-Philippines Oriental Negros is also helping reclaim the lost forests. It is currently working toward the preservation of the forests through awareness campaigns among communities. It also helps promote wildlife protection and improve reforestation efforts on the island through the help of non-government organizations and academic institutions. "Forests are the main sources of clean water on the island. In addition, they're home to many of our country's endemic species, some of which are among the world's most endangered. If we don't save our last remaining forests, we risk altogether losing two valued resources - water and biodiversity," warned Jean Asuncion Utzurum, Education officer of Flora and Fauna International-Philippines.

<http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/conservation/news-biodiversity-talk-philippine-forest>

- **Cyber world**

Thailand

- **Political Front**
- **Political parties seek that added intervention**

It was a day of lavish merit-making rituals yesterday for the ruling Democrat Party and the opposition Puea Thai Party as members sought to take advantage of what is regarded as an auspicious time for attracting good luck. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva places flowers before the statue of the Goddess of the Earth, the party's symbol, during a merit-

making ceremony at the party's headquarters yesterday

Payap Shinawatra, the younger brother of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, yesterday presided over a merit-making ceremony at the headquarters of Puea Thai on Rama IV Road to mark the 61st birthday of Thaksin on July 26. Food and elaborately carved ceremonial candles to mark the arrival of Buddhist Lent on July 27 were presented to monks. Mr Payap, chief of Puea Thai MPs in the Northeast, said Thaksin's birthday this year falls on Asarnha Bucha Day, which commemorates the day on which Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon, an auspicious sign for the fugitive former premier.

Mr Payap said the merit-making ceremony was aimed at bringing peace and unity to the country. He also hoped the ritual will help bring his brother back home soon. Meanwhile the Democrat Party held a religious and merit-making ceremony, including offering alms to monks, at the party's headquarters yesterday morning.

The ritual was intended to bring good luck to the party and to make merit for the deceased founders of the party. Payap Shinawatra presents a carved ceremonial candle to a monk during a merit-making ceremony to mark his brother Thaksin's 61st birthday which this year falls on Asarnha Bucha Day, July 26. Prime Minister and party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva led party members in paying respect to the statue of the Goddess of the Earth who is the party's symbol.

A ritual was also performed with flowers being scattered, liquor splashed and pieces of paper burnt in front of the entrance gate to the party's headquarters. A party source said the ritual is meant to dispel curses and black magic caused by the blood dumping and cursing rite performed by anti-government protesters led by the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship on March 16. The Democrat Party is facing the threat of dissolution over an alleged illegal 258 million baht donation and improper use of political development funds five years ago. The ritual was intended to shore up the party's waning luck. Also yesterday, a merit-making and Buddhist chanting ceremony was held at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, organised by the Internal Security Operations Command, the Thai Bankers' Association and the Thai Chambers of Commerce. Hundreds of people took part in the ceremony aimed at bringing Thais together in a show of unity and loyalty to the monarchy. Isoc spokesman Ditthaporn Sasasmit said the ceremony had nothing to do with the Day of Anger organised by Cambodian activists to remind Cambodians of Thailand's continued deployment of troops in an area whose ownership is disputed by Bangkok and Phnom Penh. Kengkaj Jongjaipra, a prominent astrologer, said a lot of merit-making rituals were performed yesterday because Thursday is an auspicious day.

Mr Kengkaj said Thaksin's supporters performed rituals to improve Thaksin's luck while his opponents held "counter-rituals" against him.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/186299/political-parties-seek-that-added-intervention>

- **Red, Yellow and Black: Behind the Destruction of Thailand's Democracy**

On the afternoon of May 19, following weeks of protests and mayhem, most of the core Red Shirt leaders barricaded in the center of Bangkok surrendered meekly to the Thai government forces. One leader who evaded capture was the volatile Arisman Pongruangrong.

Just before vanishing later that afternoon, Arisman was wearing a T-shirt bearing the image of Mahatma Gandhi. The symbolism was deeply ironic. Almost a century before, Gandhi had expounded a political principle that the Red Shirt leadership, including Arisman, had still not absorbed.

To dislodge an entrenched government like Thailand's, a popular uprising had to do two things: attract public support in very large numbers and be nonviolent.

The Red Shirts failed on both counts.

The group was protesting grievances related to the 2006 overthrow of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's government and what they said was political and economic injustice stemming from income disparities between the rich and the poor. Their central demand was that the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva dissolve Parliament and call immediate new elections.

In questioning the electoral mandate of the Abhisit government they had a point. In drawing attention to the government's lack of a constructive response to the social and economic grievances of the Red Shirt movement, they had another point. But they were never going to remove Abhisit through direct physical confrontation alone. They were neither sufficiently numerous nor sufficiently well-armed for that.

Weeks before, Red Shirt leaders had promised to bring one million protesters to the streets of Bangkok. Their numbers never approached that total and dwindled as the conflict continued, with escalating violence. For their protest to achieve its stated aims, they had to persuade police and army personnel to disobey if and when the government ordered a crackdown.

If that had happened in sufficient numbers, the government would have been defeated. But for that to have occurred, the Red Shirts first needed to attract large numbers of previously uninvolved Thai people to join them.

Their failure to do either was due largely to their lack of commitment to nonviolence. As the conflict continued, it brought growing inconvenience and disruption to the lives of ordinary Bangkok residents. Public transportation and the delivery of public services were disrupted, especially harming the livelihoods of the working poor, the Red Shirts' main

potential allies. The Red Shirt leadership displayed a lack of interest in the hardships caused by their disruption of the city's economic life.

This cost them public support and placed them in a similar self-serving category to the pro-establishment Yellow Shirt demonstrations of late 2008. Those demonstrations had included the blockading of Bangkok's airports, also causing massive disruption to the city. The worst feature of these demonstrations was that they seemingly worked. As many saw it, with the help of the courts the Yellow Shirts successfully unseated a government they disliked. More of the same behavior from their political opponents was then inevitable. The Red Shirt version of a similar strategy was no less disruptive, no less arrogant. But it was significantly more violent. There were several different elements among the Red Shirts, with correspondingly different agendas. Most felt a sense of injustice, both political and economic. But they differed among themselves on how their protest should proceed.

First, there were large numbers of genuinely nonviolent and unarmed rural people, and this group was numerically the largest. They included many elderly people, women and children, the latter innocently dragged into the conflict.

A significant number were among the 89 who died in the fighting. They were the true victims. Second, there were large numbers of youthful hotheads, men in their 20s and 30s armed with homemade weapons — sling-shots, Molotov cocktails and rocks.

Finally, there were mysterious, black-clad, well-armed and well-trained men, possibly former or serving military or police personnel, who were not necessarily protesting anything. There may have been different groups among these black shirts, but they seemingly included professional killers, there to implement the agendas of other, as yet unknown, employers.

That included killing soldiers and police. One of their goals was apparently to incite wider violence with the hope that this would destabilize and discredit the government.

Nevertheless, despite abundant rumors, we still know little for sure about who they were and who hired them. The failure of the Red Shirt leadership was that — contrary to Gandhi's admonition — they tolerated the coexistence of three groups within their midst. The presence of the violent black shirts, especially, meant that eventually the state would have no choice but to move against them, leading to many innocent deaths.

It also meant that the protesters progressively lost the sympathy of the Bangkok population and any chance that significant numbers of rank and file military or police personnel might disobey orders, potentially bringing down the government.

Short-term politics dominated the crisis, of course, but there were important underlying economic drivers, some of which had been building up for decades. First, although

average incomes in Thailand have increased dramatically in recent decades there has simultaneously been a long-term increase in economic inequality.

This occurred even though the incidence of absolute poverty has declined. A further and more recent economic driver of Red Shirt grievances is less widely understood. The Thai economy is heavily export-dependent. The global financial crisis that began in 2008 impacted severely on Thailand through a 25 percent contraction in global demand for its exports. Many of the industries most heavily affected are labor-intensive, employing vast numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled people from the north and northeast. In response to the crisis they were laid off in huge numbers, many returning to their villages.

Unfortunately for Abhisit, the global financial crisis and the suffering it produced coincided with his accession to power. Global events were largely responsible, but it was easy for a local rabble-rouser to blame the current hardship on Abhisit and to contrast it with the relative prosperity of 2001 to 2006, Thaksin's period in government. These economic phenomena have meant that unskilled and semi-skilled rural people have not participated fully in Thailand's long-term economic progress.

With reason, they feel left out of the development process. It is not difficult for a populist demagogue to portray these events as meaning that the urban elite has gained unfairly at the expense of the rural masses.

Thaksin's great political achievement was to recognize this electoral opportunity and to grasp it. It was also his undoing. So now what? Having seen off the immediate threat, the government must surely offer a gesture of reconciliation. That must include a commitment to elections in November or earlier and a guarantee that the electoral outcome will be respected, even if a pro-Thaksin party wins. There must also be a commitment to a process of genuine dialogue to address the Red Shirts' real grievances — not brinkmanship based on mutual threats of violence.

But there is a major obstacle: disagreement on the meaning of "democracy." The word democracy appears in the official names of both the Yellow Shirts (Peoples' Alliance for Democracy) and the Red Shirts (United front for Democracy and Against Dictatorship). Both are misnomers. Neither group adheres to democratic principles internally.

As he was being arrested on May 19, one of the Red Shirts' more moderate leaders, Veera Musikapong, was quoted as saying that he and his colleagues must now "dissolve our anger, because democracy cannot be based on anger."

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/opinion/red-yellow-and-black-behind-the-destruction-of-thailands-democracy/386036>

- **U.S. urges Thailand to lift state of emergency**

Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya (R) meets with U.S. Under-Secretary of State

William Burns in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 16, 2010. William Burns said Friday that the U.S. hopes that the Thai government could lift the state of emergency in Bangkok and 18 other provinces "as soon as possible".(Xinhua/Shi Xianzhen)

A senior U.S. envoy said Friday that the U.S. hopes that the Thai government could lift the state of emergency in Bangkok and 18 other provinces "as soon as possible". "Clearly the U.S. hopes that the state of emergency can be lifted as soon as possible," William Burns, U.S. Under Secretary of State for politics told reporters after a "strategic dialogue" with Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya.

On April 7, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva declared a state of emergency in Bangkok and some areas of the nearby five provinces to deal with then anti-government "red-shirts" rally. The area under the emergency law have been expanded to 24 provinces later. On July 6, the government approved to renew the emergency decree in Bangkok and other 18 provinces, citing intelligence reports that there are still some people trying to commit sabotage. The situation in Thailand is tense after street protests ended after an army disperse in May 19. The "red shirt" movement called for the United States to mediate but opposed by the government.

During the talks, Burns exchanged views with Thai officials on bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest, said Thai Foreign Minister Kasit. Burns is scheduled to deliver a speech at Bangkok-based Chulalongkorn University on the U.S.-Thai alliance and cooperation in the region.

Thailand is the first leg of his four-nation southeast Asia trip which will also take him to Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines, according to a statement of U.S. Department of State. Burns' visit "to these South-east Asian partners is an important element of the administration's commitment to increased and deepened engagement with this dynamic region," the statement said.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7069778.html>

- **Another Wave Of Political Uncertainty In Thailand**

After surviving the 10-week red shirts anti-government protest in May and vote of no confidence last month, the Abhisit administration is currently facing another wave of political uncertainty. This time, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva who led the Democrat Party, the backbone of the current coalition government, will have to face off with the Constitution Court which will decide whether to ban the party and its executives. The Office of Attorney-General Tuesday forwarded its case to the Constitution Court for the dissolution of the Democrat Party and to ban its executives who held positions in 2004 and 2005 from politics for five years.

The party is alleged to have received illicit donations amounting to 258 million Baht

(about RM26.5 million) in 2005. Abhisit was the deputy party leader in 2004 and party leader in 2005.

On top of that, the Democrat is already facing a dissolution threat following the allegation that the party had misused 29 million Baht (about RM2.98 million) granted in 2005 from the Election Commission's political development fund. The court has set Aug 9 for the first hearing of the 29 million Baht case.

The two legal battles leave a big question mark on whether the party can survive before the current government term of office ends in December next year.

These two battles are tougher than the red shirts anti-government protest and vote of no confidence against the prime minister. Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban Tuesday ruled out the possibility that Parliament would be dissolved before the Constitution Court gives its verdict. He was asked to comment on speculation on the matter just to avoid problems in the event the court makes the rulings later which may not be in favour of the party. Asked whether Parliament would be dissolved before the court judgment, Abhisit Tuesday said: "I don't think about this." It is in the court process and the court will consider and decide on the case. We will respect and follow the decision of the court," he said. Asked whether the two cases would affect his political life, Abhisit said: "I cannot say....everything depends on facts and we will fight for the truth." Suthep denied that following the development (the two legal battles), some of the party leaders had registered a new back-up political party, Thai Khem Kaeng, to accommodate Democrat members of Parliament in the event the party is dissolved by the court. "I am the leader of this (Democrat) party," said Abhisit when answering the same question. Asked further whether Democrat had formed a back-up party, the prime minister said he did not know about this.

The Abhisit administration still stood tall despite street protest by the red shirts protesters that left 90 people dead and 1,800 others injured in violent clashes between protesters and troops between April 10 and May 19. On June 2, Abhisit survived the vote of no confidence against him in Parliament.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=513264>

- **It's time to talk face-to-face with southern rebels**

Thailand has never been comfortable with the idea of talking to the enemy, especially the Malay Muslim separatists in the deep South. And so when one of the long-standing groups broke their silence about a unilateral, unannounced ceasefire they had carried out, though with limited success, the government dismissed the report with extreme caution.

Perhaps the most sensible response to this sticky issue came from government spokesman

Panitan Wattanayagorn, who was quoted as saying the government does not recognise the insurgent groups but added that this administration "does not oppose any means that will mitigate the violence. We regard them as a good initiative".

Internal Security Operations Command spokesman Colonel Banpot Poonpien, on the other hand, was lost for words, and decided to play it safe by dismissing the entire thing, probably because his outfit weren't in the know, as always.

For the record, no Thai government has ever officially recognised any of the separatist groups, many of whom surfaced in the late 1960s and fought the Thai military bitterly in the 1970s and 80s until a blanket amnesty crippled their militant wings on the ground.

But the absence of official recognition does not mean the insurgents do not exist. The daily killings and attacks against government troops should be testimony that there is such a thing as an insurgency. Or perhaps the authorities are still clinging to the outdated explanation that these attackers are drug-crazed young men lured by false history and Islamic extremism. Coming to terms with reality hasn't been easy for security people with inflated egos. And therefore young men who can't buy their way out of the Army draft take the bullet for it.

Moreover, the absence of official recognition does not mean the two sides can't talk. The British government and the Irish Republican Army negotiated secretly for a decade before it was "officially acknowledged" that they had been talking.

Back in 2005, the government of Thaksin Shinawatra dispatched two top security officers, the then Armed Forces' Security Centre chief Lt-General Vaipot Srinuan, and General Winai Pathiyakul of the National Security Council, to Langkawi, Malaysia to attend a series of meetings with separatist leaders. The event was organised by the former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Towards the end of his term, then prime minister Surayud Chulanont met personally with representatives from the Patani United Liberation Organisation during a stopover in Bahrain in late 2007. After more than 4,000 deaths over the past six years, perhaps it's time for all stakeholders, especially the government, to think outside the box. The recently concluded unilateral ceasefire was implemented in Rangae, Yi-ngor and Joh I-Rong districts of Narathiwat province. Under the initiative, there were to be no "organised attacks" against government targets during that period in the three designated districts. It wasn't perfect, but it was something different. Did it qualify as something totally new? Not really, because there have been cases in which local military commanders, with the help of community leaders, cut deals with local insurgent cells to establish rules of engagement.

Similar arrangements have also been carried out in various pockets in which security units agreed to back off from certain areas in exchange for some form of guarantee that soft targets would not be hit. Naturally, these were arranged through local community leaders respected on both sides of the conflict, and were not part of a comprehensive policy. Indeed, some of the local leaders who have quietly stepped in to "mediate" between the security units and militants include former foot soldiers of some of the Patani Malay Muslim separatist groups that roamed the hills and back roads two decades ago. Unlike the top brass, who let their egos get the better of them, these community leaders probably felt they had a moral obligation to do something for their communities. At the least, they pushed for some sort of rules in order to lessen the collateral damage.

Because there is no policy from central government, commanders on the ground are left to deal with the situation as they see fit. Perhaps now is the time for the government to take a good look at the deep South and come up with a sound policy on the issue of a peace process. Various proposals for talks - like the Langkawi and Bahrain meetings - have come and gone, but few, if any, have gained any real traction. Either the participants are barking up the wrong trees or the policy-makers can't find it in them to come to talk to the enemy. But one thing is clear. No ethno-nationalist conflict of this nature can be solved without dialogue. A good facilitator and/or mediator is needed simply because the separatists and the state do not trust each other.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=13158&sec=3>

- **Economic front**
- **Thailand's Economy Shows 'Resilience,' May Expand 8% This Year, IMF Says**

The International Monetary Fund said Thailand's economy may expand as much as 8 percent this year after deadly political protests ended last quarter without derailing growth.

Gross domestic product will grow between 7 percent and 8 percent in 2010, compared with a previous target of 7 percent, the IMF said today in a statement distributed in Bangkok. Thailand's central bank this week raised its benchmark interest rate for the first time in almost two years after surging exports helped the nation weather two months of anti-government protests that hurt tourism and disrupted some manufacturing. The \$272 billion economy grew 12 percent in the first three months of this year, the most since 1995. "Thailand's economy has shown remarkable resilience to shocks over the past year," Joshua Felman, assistant director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, told reporters today in Bangkok. "The process of normalization is going to continue for the rest of the year."

Concerns about the pace of the global economic recovery and local political uncertainties remain risks to growth, he said. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has set up committees to reform the nation's political system after clashes between troops and protesters seeking an immediate election earlier this year led to 89 deaths. Bangkok and other parts of the country remain under a state of emergency imposed in April.

'Accommodative' Policies

The Bank of Thailand increased the one-day bond repurchase rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 1.5 percent on July 14, after keeping it unchanged in the past nine meetings

"Fiscal and monetary policies remain accommodative" even after the rate increase, the IMF said today, adding that the decision made by policy makers this week was "the right one". Exports rose 42.5 percent in May, the biggest gain since July 2008, and the central bank said this week that economic expansion may be "higher than previously anticipated" after the protests had a "limited" impact. Thailand's government in June raised its forecast for gross domestic product growth this year to as much as 6 percent.

The IMF expects the Thai economy to grow 4 percent in 2011, it said in the statement.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-07-16/thailand-s-economy-shows-resilience-may-expand-8-this-year-imf-says.html>

- **Social Front**

Cambodia

- **Political Front**
- **Cambodian delegation to attend Asian political parties meeting in China**

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An on Tuesday leads a delegation to attend an Asian political meeting held in Kunming, China, where Asian leaders will exchange their views on the poverty reduction strategy and find ways how to improve their cooperation for the mutual benefit of the peoples in the region, said a top Cambodian official.

Tekreth Samrach, deputy minister of the Office of the Council of Ministers, said that leaders who represent about 1,000 parties will take part in the conference, which was organized by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and to be held from July 16 - 18.

"His Excellency Sok An will share Cambodian experiences about its win-win strategy how to bring peace for the country after 30 years of wars," said Tekreth Samrach.

An estimated 30 percent out of the country's total 14 million people live below the poverty line of less than one dollar a day. "We expect to reduce poverty one percent per year thanks to the leadership by the ruling party, Cambodian People's Party, and by 2020 we expect to reduce poverty to below 20 percent," he said. Cambodia will host the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) in early December, aimed at

enhancing exchange and cooperation between the political parties for the benefits of the peoples in the region.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7063920.html>

- **World parliaments criticize Israel, Cambodia**

Representatives of world parliaments on Thursday criticized Israel, Cambodia and 19 other countries for their treatment of lawmakers. The chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's human rights committee, Rosario Green, urged Israel not to deport Palestinian lawmakers Mohammed Abu Teir, Mohammed Totah and Ahmed Abu Atoun after they were recently released from prison. The three were ordered expelled from Jerusalem for links to Hamas. But Green, a former Mexican foreign minister, said the expulsion violates the lawmakers' human rights.

Green's panel also called a Cambodian defamation case against opposition lawmaker Mu Sochua a "complete travesty of justice." Mu Sochua faces up to six months in prison after refusing to pay a court-ordered fine for defaming Cambodia's prime minister.

Other countries scrutinized by the committee for their treatment of lawmakers included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Zimbabwe. In one of its harshest criticisms, the panel slammed Russia for failing to bring to justice the murderers of Galina Starovoitova, who was gunned down in the stairwell of her St. Petersburg apartment building in 1998. "We have been urging the Russian Federation for now 12 years to investigate more deeply into the masterminding of the assassination," said panel member

Advertisement

Sharon Carstairs, a Canadian senator, explaining why the previously confidential case was now being highlighted. "It is clear that they are not trying to get to the bottom of her assassination," said Carstairs. "We believe therefore that it is necessary to make this a public case, in order for her murderers—those who are ultimately responsible for her murder—to be brought to justice." IPU brings together lawmakers from 155 countries. The U.S. Congress isn't a member

http://www.yorkdispatch.com/nationworld/ci_15522871

- **Geo-strategic Front**
- **Cambodia To Host Large Scale Military Exercise Next Week**

Cambodia will conduct its first ever large scale military exercise next week, a part of the United Nations Peacekeeping framework for strengthening peace and security, China's Xinhua news agency reported Saturday.

Chhum Socheat, spokesman of the Ministry of National Defence said that the military

exercise codenamed "Angkor Sentinel 2010", will be conducted from July 17 to July 30, with 26 countries and more than 1,000 forces participating. Among some of the participating countries are France, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, India, Italy, Germany, Japan, Mongolia and the United Kingdom.

Of those forces, the largest number will be coming from Cambodia as a host country and from the United States, the co-organiser of the exercise. Chhum Socheat said the military exercise, which is part of the Global Peace Operations Initiatives (GPOI), a UN-US peacekeeping-training programme will be conducted in two separate exercise.

The first field exercise will be held in Kompong Speu province, about 50 kilometers from Phnom Penh and the second exercise will be conducted in Phnom Penh as part of the far command from headquarters.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsworld.php?id=512482>

- **Thailand's diplomatic ties with Cambodia appear to be on the mend**

The speed with which two alleged Thai terrorists were extradited from Cambodia to Thailand demonstrates a degree of good will on the part of our neighbour. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen should be credited for expediting such a quick and uncomplicated procedure. He did it voluntarily, without waiting for a request from Thailand. Within this context, the gesture indicates that Cambodia indeed has a firm commitment to work with other countries in fighting terrorism.

However, further confidence-building measures are needed to loosen the tension between the two countries, which have been soured over two major issues - the ongoing border dispute around the ancient Preah Vihear temple complex, and Phnom Penh's cosying up to fugitive former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Indeed, Phnom Penh has previously refused to extradite Thaksin during his frequent visits to Cambodia, yet has quickly sent back the two red-shirt suspects. The restoration of full diplomatic ties will thus move forward one step at a time

Thai-Cambodian ties are unique and complicated, with many issues and challenges. Both sides must still demonstrate extraordinary diplomatic patience and understanding in order to fully resolve the current impasse. Confidence between the respective governments and peoples are a prerequisite for trust building.

It must be noted that people-to-people contacts between Thais and Cambodians have continued unabated during the diplomatic crisis. Border trade and tourism have even increased. This is an important building block. When local people have confidence in each other, their governments are more likely to act accordingly.

The Thai government has expressed its gratitude to the Cambodian government for its cooperation on this matter. It is a critical moment, with bilateral relations being put to the

test. There has been criticism in the local media over Cambodia's actions in harbouring red-shirt suspects in the first place. Critics want to see Phnom Penh doing more to help Thailand, by refusing sanctuary for wanted leaders of the pro-Thaksin group. It is an open secret that red-shirt leaders and extremists like Arisman, Suriya, Jakraprob and others are hiding out in Cambodia. But it will take time for Cambodia to sort things out, pending political developments in Thailand.

Hun Sen is the region's longest reigning leader, with three decades in power. He knows full well how to govern his country. His political versatility has brought Cambodia to where it is today. Cambodia is a democracy, albeit with numerous and serious shortcomings. The country is basically under one party rule, but it seeks to improve the quality of its parliamentary system and overall governance.

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is working hard to heal the nation after the horrible experience of the April and May red-shirt protests and violence. A series of reconciliation and development plans are in the offing. But it will take time to produce tangible results. In the meantime, it is hoped that these activities will create a better political atmosphere in the country. This in turn will help to ease the lingering tension between Thailand and Cambodia.

Both countries are active members of Asean. Their political quarrels have affected the regional grouping's solidarity and cooperation. Asean has been quite worried about future repercussions if the diplomatic problems continue. But the two countries are learning from this experience - learning to listen and accommodate each other. Lately, diplomats and political leaders on both sides of the border have been more cautious and measured in their comments and references to each other. In this Asean spirit of togetherness, the two countries can reach a reconciliation and work together for the common good.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=13003&sec=3>

- **Some 100,000 Cambodian gov't officials to be asked to declare assets**

Chairman of the Cambodian Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) told reporters on Wednesday that about 100,000 government officials will be asked to declare their assets as part of the government's efforts to fight against graft. Om Yentieng said at a news conference that "we have list of the names of about 100,000 officials to declare their assets to the National Anti-corruption Council and is expected to do so ahead of November this year." Cambodia is to host a regional conference on anti-corruption on Nov. 4, 2010. He said that the government officials, who have been appointed by royal decree or government's sub-decree, would be asked to declare their assets if needed. The Cambodian lawmakers and leaders of the civil society would be also asked to declare their assets to the National

Anti-corruption Council in the future, he said. Om Yentieng also said that his Unit will sign notes of the Memorandum of Understands (MOU) with a number of the relevant ministries such as ministries of justice and interior for collaborations in investigating grafts and law enforcement.

The Cambodian National Assembly approved in March the anti- corruption law allowed the country to establish the mechanism of the National Anti-corruption Council and the Anti-corruption Unit.

Cambodia has planned to set up hotlines, emails and offices to receive complaints about corruption. The Anti-corruption Unit would protect the identities of the sources, said Om Yentieng. The Unit called Cambodians to come forward with their complaints of corruption if any, he said.

Cambodian officials of the Unit have so far received five training sessions, which conducted by USAID, on how to fight against such illicit activities of graft, he said.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7066230.html>

- **Economic Front**
- **Social Front**
- **Capping on swine disease outbreak**

Prime Minister issued a directive on performing a controlled measure on the current breakout of blue ears disease or porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) after the death of 190 pigs in nine farms, Vientiane Capital late last month.

The pigs in nine farms of Hardsaifong, Sisattanak and Sikhottabong districts, have been found the infection with the PRRS on 14 June as a consequence of the death of 190 pigs out of 620 sick pigs.

The Prime Minister's directive has been made to fight back and cap on the outbreak of PRRS not to spread out of other area and other province, which will have impacts on the economic growth, living conditions of local people and entrepreneurs. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry was closely heeded cooperate with Vientiane Capital to give supervision and strict inspection as well as the implementation of PM's directive to put off the outbreak of PRRS.

The Secretariat of National Communicable Prevention and Control Committee should also advise closely to its provincial committee and agriculture and forestry services to carry out close surveillance measure to prevent the outbreak in their localities. Along with the promotion campaign for pig farming and hygiene should be done.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is advised to set up local technical teams (like the taskforce of bird flu control) in cooperation with pig raisers to implement other preventive measure on surveillance the outbreak of PRRS. Other materials, vehicle and

rehearsal for responding and controlling the outbreak of the disease prevention, treatment, collection of sample for analysis should also be prepared. The directive advised that in case of found the infected pig with PRRS it should dispose as spreading zone.

The local vet officials should cooperate with traffic policemen to inspect strictly in pork transport and removal. The vet officials should also cooperate with public health and commercial officials, and market authorities to conduct inspections of pork in slaughterhouses and trade in markets to prevent and avoid buying pork from unregistered butchers, who likely sell unsafe pork.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce should usually inspect the price pork and control its price.

The measures also order the suspension of pork and products importation from neighbouring countries. All banks under the authority of the Central Bank should cooperate with the Council of National Commerce and Industry or pig raiser group and pig farm victims to seek a way for helping them by suspending the clearance of interests and loan and issuing new loan for farmers.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/12.07.2010/edn2.htm>

- **Human rights head "seriously concerned" at pursuit of opposition MP**

Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed 'serious concern' Tuesday at the Cambodian government's pursuit of a criminal case against opposition parliamentarian Mu Sochua.

Speaking on Pillay's behalf, UN spokesman Rupert Colville said in Geneva the manner in which a defamation case filed by Prime Minister Hun Sen had been conducted appeared to show 'an alarming erosion of both freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary.' The UN body said Hun Sen's lawyer had produced no evidence during the 'highly politicized' court case, but had instead relied on a letter written by Mu Sochua to an international parliamentary grouping, which was 'totally unacceptable.'

'Communicating with international organizations - including the UN Human Rights office itself - is part of the fundamental right to freedom of expression,' Colville said, adding the courts should try freedom of expression cases using civil law, not criminal law. Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - which has been ratified by Cambodia - states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression,' Colville said. 'The criminal justice system is the bedrock of human rights protection,' said Colville. 'However, in this case it has become a blunt instrument to silence freedom of expression. The case between Hun Sen and the former women's affairs minister culminated in a Supreme Court ruling last month that upheld the premier's victory for defamation in the lower courts. Mu Sochua now faces arrest after missing a July 10

deadline to pay compensation of 1,900 dollars to Hun Sen. The deadline to pay a second court-imposed fine of 2,000 dollars levied in the same case expires on Friday. Mu Sochua has said she would rather go to jail than pay - a stance she reiterated Tuesday.

The case followed Hun Sen's comments in a speech two years ago when he used the term 'strong leg,' described by some as derogatory, against an unnamed woman from Kampot province. Mu Sochua, who represents Kampot province, said the comment was aimed at her, was defamatory, and announced she would sue. Hun Sen countersued saying her defamation allegation was itself defamatory. Mu Sochua's case was thrown out of court.

The case was one of several brought against the government's critics in politics and civil society over the past 18 months, and has led to fears of increasing repression.

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/asiapacific/news/article_1570501.php/Human-rights-head-seriously-concerned-at-pursuit-of-opposition-MP

- **Cambodian population to reach 17.5 mln by 2025**

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen said Friday that his country's population will reach 17.5 million by 2025 citing the average birth rate at 1.54 percent per year.

In an open message to the World Population Day, Hun Sen said the Cambodian populations were recorded at 13.4 million in 2008 to about 14.3 million by July 2010. He said with the capacity of having 3 to 4 children in one family and with an average birth rate of 1.54 percent per year, the country's populations will "reach 17.5 million by 2025". He said women have played an important role in Cambodia's society and their roles have been elevated through the rectangular strategy set out by his government and their education was also recorded high. Hun Sen said that literacy rate among women at their ages of 15 and above was recorded having basic education from primary to graduate level was increased from 57 percent in 1998 to 71 percent in 2008.

Also, at the same time, women have been integrated and posted in the government cabinet, parliaments as well as other governmental institutions. Cambodia holds its population census every 10 years and since 1993, Cambodia has held twice, one in 1998 showing 11,437,656 with 5.5 millions as males and 5.9 millions as females, and the second was in 2008 showed the populations increased to 13,388,910 with 6.5 millions as males and 6.9 millions as females.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7060214.html>

Vietnam

- **Political Front**
- **Hanoi gears up to host ASEAN meeting**

Foreign ministers and government officials of more than 27 countries are expected to arrive in Hanoi for the 43rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the 17th ASEAN Regional

Forum (ARF) scheduled between July 15 and 23. Pham Quang Vinh, assistant to Vietnam's Minister of Foreign Affairs and chief of the ASEAN-Vietnam Meeting, said that the series of high-level meetings will boost cooperation among ASEAN members as well as the bloc's relations with other important partners, particularly China, the US, South Korea and Japan.

Vinh said discussions would primarily center on advancing the ASEAN community in the next five years but also address global issues such as climate change, infectious disease control and food and energy security.

According to Vinh, the ministers are expected to sign the revised third Treaty of the Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia and reach a consensus on ARF's vision for the next ten years. A comprehensive agenda to bring forward solutions for the ASEAN community will be completed during these meetings and presented at the 17th ASEAN summit scheduled in Hanoi this October. The meetings will include the participation of Papua New Guinea and East Timor as observers.

North Korea will also participate in ARF talks, as discussions of its nuclear activities and the sinking of the South Korean warship will also dominate the dialogue.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/2010/Pages/20100710224737.aspx>

- **Geo-strategic Front**
- **Laos, US in highest contact since Vietnam War**

The United States and Laos pledged to step up cooperation after their highest-level talks since the Vietnam War, the latest country in a renewed US effort to engage Southeast Asia. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met Tuesday with Foreign Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, who was paying the first visit by a top Laotian official to Washington since the communist victory in his nation in 1975.

They pledged to step up exchanges, saying in a joint statement that cooperation is "producing mutual benefits and a constructive relationship contributing to peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world." In a practical sign of ties, the two countries signed an "open-skies" agreement allowing access to each other's airlines, which officials said may give a small boost to tourism in isolated and landlocked Laos. US relations with Laos, while never severed, were long tense, in part over its campaign against the Hmong hill people who assisted US forces during the Vietnam War along with uncertainties over American troops missing in action. But the United States established normal trade ties with Laos in 2004 and has recently looked at ways to help clean up ordnance that continues to take a heavy civilian toll.

US forces dropped millions of bombs on the country to cut off North Vietnam supply lines, which according to a survey earlier this year have killed or injured some 50,000

people in Laos

Philip Crowley, the State Department spokesman, said that Clinton and Thongloun discussed "a wide range of old and new areas for bilateral cooperation." "The United States is committed to building our relationship with Laos as part of our broader efforts to expand engagement with Southeast Asia," Crowley told reporters.

Another US official said that talks also touched on "fighting drug addiction and illegal drug trafficking and US government concerns for the welfare of Hmong" who were controversially returned from Thailand in December.

President Barack Obama's administration has put a new focus on Southeast Asia, saying the region was overlooked as George W. Bush's former administration became preoccupied with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Obama administration last year initiated a dialogue with another isolated state in Southeast Asia -- Myanmar, also known as Burma, whose military regime has curtailed the rights of the democratic opposition.

Ernie Bower, who heads the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, saw the talks with Laos as a new example of the US effort to "really try to broaden and deepen engagement with all the ASEAN countries." As for Laos, "they know there are interest groups in the United States who are out to pressure them on issues they just don't want to talk about, like the Hmong," Bower said. "The Lao were a little nervous about taking the diplomatic risks of reaching out their hand, but now they are starting to see a little return," he said, pointing to growing US business in Laos since restrictions were lifted. Some 250,000 Hmong have resettled in the United States and often speak of persecution in Laos, enlisting support of US lawmakers to pressure the Vientiane government.

China has meanwhile been seeking to improve relations with Laos, with China's Vice President and heir apparent Xi Jinping visiting last month.

Beijing has also pledged to invest in Laotian infrastructure, which would help transport Chinese goods to key regional hub Thailand. In the joint statement, Thongloun said he invited Clinton to visit Laos. The only secretary of state to visit Laos was John Foster Dulles, who spent a day in the then-monarchy in 1955.

Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice skipped a meeting of ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in Laos in 2005, sending instead her deputy Robert Zoellick.

<http://nz.news.yahoo.com/a/-/world/7581067/laos-us-in-highest-contact-since-war/>

- **Economic Front**
- **EU, Vietnam closer to free trade talks**

The EU and Vietnam are moving closer to opening negotiations on a free trade

agreement, which can help resolve all the issues related to anti-dumping, the EU ambassador to Vietnam said on Wednesday. This comment was made at the release of the EU's annual trade and commercial counselors report 2010, called the Green Book, in which the delegation praised Vietnam's efforts in weathering the global crisis. "We're confident that for Vietnamese exports, the worst is probably over now," said Sean Doyle, EU ambassador and head of the EU delegation to Vietnam.

In the report, the EU suggested the government invest more resources in establishing a local supply chain for Vietnam's export-oriented industries, which could help the country deal with a growing trade deficit and a greater imbalance of national accounts.

However, EU ambassador Doyle noted that Vietnam's lack of a domestic supply chain has continued to lead the country to import large amounts of raw materials and machinery.

The report also pointed out the need for Vietnam to restructure its public sector, which continued to produce less, export less and create less employment than private companies and foreign-invested enterprises in 2009.

The EU remained the second biggest overseas market for Vietnamese goods, absorbing 20.4 percent of products made in Vietnam in 2009.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/2010/Pages/20100710223203.aspx>

- **Vietnam raises 2010 trade gap forecast to \$14 bln: paper**

Vietnam has revised up its forecast for its 2010 trade deficit to US\$14 billion from \$12 billion after imports in the first six months of the year rose much faster than exports, a local newspaper reported Wednesday.

Imports this year reach \$80 billion to \$81 billion, while exports were expected to reach \$60-\$61 billion, Phan Van Chinh, a director at the Industry and Trade Ministry was quoted by the Vietnam Economic Times newspaper as saying.

Imports in the first six months of 2010 surged 29.4 percent from a year ago to \$38.9 billion, compared with export growth of 15.7 percent and revenues reaching \$32.1 billion, government statistics show. In January, the trade ministry initially projected full-year imports at \$72.66 billion and exports at \$60.54 billion, leaving the annual trade deficit flat at \$12.12 billion. The upward trade deficit revision means Vietnam would miss its target to keep the annual trade deficit at 20 percent of its export revenues this year, which it hopes to help avoid pressure on the dong.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/2010/Pages/20100709154259.aspx>

- **Trade key to better human rights in Vietnam - PM**

Human rights issues are a serious concern in Vietnam but Prime Minister John Key says improving New Zealand's relationship with the southeast Asian nation can help. Mr Key,

who is in Vietnam, said the Government was aware of human rights issues in Vietnam and discussed them with the Vietnamese.

"I don't think we're going to make progress lecturing people but we can certainly make progress having a discussion and dialogue with them, pointing out the expectations of the developed world when it comes to human rights." And from time to time there may always be issues that may either involve New Zealanders or involve others where we step in and take a strong stance," he said.

Amnesty International said in its 2009 report on human rights in Vietnam a crackdown on dissidents continued, with severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. A group of Catholics peacefully protesting over a land dispute were attacked and more than 200 ethnic minority Montagnards fled to Cambodia to seek asylum from persecution, the report said. The United States State Department said Vietnam's human rights record was unsatisfactory, with instances of police abusing suspects during arrest, detention and interrogation, and people being denied the right to fair and expeditious trials. According to the Human Rights Watch group, three Vietnamese men who campaigned for workers rights and victims of land confiscation had been detained since February. It was unknown if charges had been laid against the men who were not allowed to contact lawyers or their families. The group's deputy director for Asia, Phil Robertson, said given the harsh treatment of political detainees in Vietnam, he was concerned authorities would use torture or cruel treatment to extract confessions from the men.

Mr Key said while human rights issues in Vietnam were not perfect, progress was being made. "We try our best to use our economic relationship and the growing strength of the relationship to improve human rights," Mr Key said. "One option is just to say that we wouldn't have a commercial relationship with a country that had a human rights record that we didn't approve of, but I'm not sure that that would actually take us anywhere." Instead, the Government would use its friendship to reach out and speak about the issues. New Zealand's two-way trade with Vietnam is worth about \$500 million a year; exports to Vietnam totalled about \$315m, 40 percent of which was dairy products. New Zealand mainly imported wood, furniture and clothing.

New Zealand essentially has free trade agreement with Vietnam through the Asean-New Zealand-Australia agreement, to which both are parties. Vietnam was also involved in Trans Pacific Partnership) negotiations.

Mr Key hoped building on that economic relationship would put New Zealand in a position to guide Vietnam to improved human rights issues.

Today he met with Vice President Nguyen Thi Dzoan and laid a wreath at the mausoleum of the late president Ho Chi Minh and at the monument of the National Heroes and

Matyrs to commemorate the 37 New Zealander servicemen who died during the Vietnam war. Mr Key departs Vietnam tomorrow after a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and a courtesy call on President Nguyen Minh Triet.

<http://nz.news.yahoo.com/a/-/top-stories/7566056/trade-key-to-better-human-rights-in-vietnam-pm/>

- **Vietnamese Soft Drinks Industry Remains Hot as Economy Cools**

As many soft drinks markets around the world faltered during the uncertain economic times of last year, the Vietnamese soft drinks market still recorded a healthy growth of 16%. According to Canadean's new Vietnam Soft Drinks Industry Report, the market was by no means immune to the economic woes of the global markets but the momentum of recent years carried on into 2009. Growth even outpaced neighbouring China, but with an annual per capita of just under 19 litres, Vietnamese soft drinks consumption remains nearly half that of their giant neighbour and less than a quarter of the global average.

Soft Drinks Per Capita Consumption

Litres	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Global	71	74	77	78	78	
China	21	24	28	32	37	
Vietnam		10	11	13	16	19

Source: Canadean Soft Drinks Service

The younger generation is a key driver but last year the investment in marketing and advertising ensured the market was still able to expand, albeit at a slower rate. Advertising spend was substantial and was surpassed only by advertising investment in telecoms, food, hygiene and beauty. The Tan Hiep Phat Beverage Group in particular, pumped money into supporting an assortment of brands in different soft drinks categories.

Carbonated soft drinks in Vietnam make up under a fifth of volumes, even less than packaged waters and perhaps surprisingly compared to the global soft drinks stereotypes, it is iced teas that are the leading soft drinks category, accounting for more than a third of sales. Iced teas have been a major contributor to the development of the soft drinks market in recent years and last year was no different. The catalyst for the progress of iced teas was the phenomenal success of Green Tea Zero Degree in 2006 which triggered considerable new product development. The Vietnamese iced tea market has remained dynamic in 2009 and was boosted by the entry of Kirin Acecook, the big Japanese drinks player and the rising popularity of herbal tea.

The interest in herbal teas reflects a general interest in products with a perceived health and wellness attribute. This trend has helped to shape much of the new product

development and is targeted at the more affluent consumers found in major cities such as Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Da Nang who have seen disposable incomes and standards of living rise in recent years. These consumers have shown that they are prepared to pay a premium for drinks that tick the right boxes.

Canadean anticipate that there remains plenty of slack in the Vietnamese soft drinks market and volumes will increase again in double digit growth terms this year. In the longer term, although hot tea sales continue to edge forward, younger consumers are seeking out the refreshment qualities of soft drinks and there is a shift from hot to cold. At the turn of the century, hot drinks made up nearly half of all commercial beverages sales and soft drinks 15%; today hot drinks have dropped to little more than a quarter and soft drinks increased to more than a fifth. The youthful consumer age profile and the tropical climate should facilitate many years of future growth for the Vietnamese soft drinks industry; the only dark cloud will be economic.

<http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/Vietnamese-Soft-Drinks-Industry-Remains-Hot-as-Economy-Cools-1291295.htm>

- **WB helps Vietnam enhance public investment efficiency**

The World Bank and the State Bank of Vietnam signed Thursday a credit of US\$100 million for a project to help Vietnam make its public investments more efficient.

The project, called Preparation Technical Assistance Facility Project, is expected to be implemented from October 2010 to October 2015, the Washington-based lender said in a statement.

Funding comes from the International Development Association, the World Bank's source of funding for low income countries. Public investment in general, and infrastructure investment in particular, are frequently delayed in Vietnam, the World Bank said in the statement.

It said undisbursed Official Development Assistance was about \$11 billion at the end of 2008, and that this could increase if project start-up delays are not substantially reduced. Victoria Kwakwa, the World Bank Country Director for Vietnam said that the project would help accelerate project start-ups as well as disbursement by improving the speed and quality of preparatory work.

This, in turn, would "enable beneficiaries to quickly realize the economic and social benefits from investments supported through the project," she said.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/2010/Pages/20100715180848.aspx>

- **Social front**
- **Hanoi hit by floods**

Heavy rains after weeks of drought turned the streets of Vietnamese capital Hanoi

Tuesday into rivers up to half a metre deep. A heavy downpour that lasted for more than two hours forced motorbike commuters to push their machines through the dirty water and trees were down.

Police said on state radio that scores of locations in the city of several million people were flooded or snarled by traffic jams. A meteorologist said the city centre was hardest hit, with about 120 millimetres (4.7 inches) of rain falling in the rush-hour period. Hanoi had been suffering for weeks from a drought which meteorologists said was the worst in decades. It worsened power shortages and led to blackouts in the country, which gets more than one-third of its electricity from hydropower. Hanoi, AFP

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2010/07/14/wld01.asp>

- **Storm kills 68 in Philippines; three missing in Vietnam**

Three people were missing in Vietnam as tropical storm Conson hit the country, officials said Sunday, after leaving 68 dead in the Philippines when it roared in as a typhoon.

A woman went missing in the north of Vietnam and two fishermen disappeared in waters off the impoverished central provinces, an official in Hanoi from the national committee to fight storms and flooding told AFP. Conson swept onto the shores of Vietnam late on Saturday and was downgraded to a tropical depression, the official said.

“It continues to cause rainfall in parts of northern and central regions. We have not yet been able to calculate the amount of damage,” he said, but added the storm “has destroyed basic infrastructure, especially water works”. Thousands of Vietnamese soldiers have been mobilised to help people living in areas affected by Conson and about 30,000 people were evacuated before the storm blew in.

Conson slammed into the Philippines on Tuesday, directly hitting the capital Manila as it cut westward into the South China Sea with a ferocity that caught weather forecasters by surprise. Rescuers retrieved three more bodies from the sea Sunday, raising the death toll to 68 in the Philippines, but more bad weather was hampering search operations. “Three more bodies were recovered from a sunken fishing vessel,” Benito Ramos, chief of the Office of Civil Defence in Manila, said on DZBB radio.

“The death toll is now 68.” He said rescuers, including volunteers and troops, continued to scour coastal areas in the country's southeastern seaboard Sunday, where the majority of the 84 still missing were reported. “We are still hoping that they are still alive,” Ramos said. However, he said fresh rains brought on by a new weather disturbance east of the main island of Luzon were hampering search and rescue operations.

State weather forecasters said the rains were unlikely to develop into a full-blown storm. The Philippines is in the so-called typhoon belt of the Pacific. Up to 20 typhoons sweep through the country each year, killing hundreds of people. After slamming into the

Philippines, Typhoon Conson, the first of the season, brushed past the southeastern Chinese island of Hainan and barreled its way into Vietnam on Saturday. It killed at least two people, tore down trees and ripped up electricity pylons when it hit Hainan Friday evening, local officials said.

Authorities on the popular tourist island evacuated around 40,000 people from the most vulnerable areas before the storm headed inland.

Two men, a security guard and a motorcyclist, died after being struck by advertising hoardings unhinged by strong winds, an official from the local typhoon warning centre said.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/44-sixty-eight-dead-in-philippines-three-missing-in-vietnam-after-storm-fa-03>

- **Vietnam raises concerns over brides marrying abroad**

The Vietnamese government on Thursday voiced concerns over Vietnamese women getting married to foreign men after a bride was killed by her mentally ill South Korean husband. According to South Korean news reports, police last week found Thach Thi Hong Ngoc, 20, murdered in her house in Busan, just one week after she left Vietnam. Two days later, police arrested her husband, Jang Du Hyo, on murder charges.

According to police, Jang said he heard a voice telling him to kill his wife during a heated argument. The man had been treated 57 times for schizophrenia since July 2005. 'From this sad story, we can draw some valuable lessons for Vietnamese brides when they want to get married abroad,' Vietnamese government spokeswoman Nguyen Phuong Nga said. Vietnamese brides face a lot of difficulties when they get married to foreign husbands, she said, pointing to cultural differences, lack of understanding about the husband's country and especially language barriers making their lives difficult. 'Vietnamese brides should fully understand and get more information about their future husband before getting married,' Nga said.

In order to prevent similar cases, Nga called on authorities in the future husbands' countries to do more to help the prospective brides, including providing information on their fiances' financial status, physical health, mental illnesses or a violent crime record.

Vietnamese brides have attracted a lot of attention from foreign husbands for the past 10 years, especially husbands from South Korea, Taiwan and China.

According to the South Korean consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, it issued 8,000 visas to Vietnamese brides last year. An estimated 35,000 Vietnamese women have married South Korean men so far.

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/asiapacific/news/article_1571026.php/Vietnam-raises-concerns-over-brides-marrying-abroad

- **Cyber world**

Laos

- **political Front**
- **Laos and US agree to boost cooperative ties**

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her visiting Lao counterpart Thongloun Sisoulith have agreed to boost cooperative ties between the two countries in the coming time, according to yesterday's report of Vietnam New Agency. In a joint statement issued after their meeting in Washington DC on 13 July, the two sides emphasised that increasing exchanges and cooperation between the US and Laos are producing mutual benefits and a constructive relationship contributing to peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world. They welcomed the signing of an Air Transport Agreement between the US and Laos that will facilitate greater trade and tourism exchanges. Additionally, they also discussed the opportunities to expand the role of the US Agency for International Development in Laos.

The joint statement said that the US and Laos continue their longtime cooperation in the search for Americans missing from the Indochina War, on clearance of unexploded ordnance remaining from the war, and on fighting drug addiction and illegal drug trafficking. More recently, the two countries have been working closely together on preventing the emergence of pandemic diseases, and continue to gradually expand military-to-military cooperation following the exchange of defense attaches.

While expressing his sincere thanks for the warm welcome extended him and his delegation, Foreign Minister Thongloun invited Secretary Clinton to pay an official visit to Laos at a convenient time.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn2.htm>

Economic Front

- **Cambodia , Laos, Vietnam Strengthen Cooperation in Developing Border Areas**

The 2nd Conference on The Roles of the Parliament in Promoting and Strengthening the Development within the Triangle Border Areas: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam was held last week in the Cambodian northeastern province of Kratie, said AKP.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the conference, Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin said the conference aimed at promoting sustainable development, economic growth and peace in the border areas. The conference also shows the consolidation and expansion of the traditional ties of friendship and cooperation between the three neighbouring countries, aiming at finding strategies to alleviate poverty and enhance people's living standard in those areas, he added.

Members of the National Assembly of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, representatives of foreign embassies, governors and deputy governors, territorial authorities as well as officials concerned have been participating in this three-day event. According to a report of the Cambodian Ministry of Economy and Finance, Japan has decided to provide US\$20 million for the development of the CLV Triangle Area. The 1st conference was held in July 2009 in Cantum, Vietnam.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn13.htm>

- **Indochina countries pledge development triangle**

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have issued a joint communique on developing the border triangle area between the three countries. The joint communique was issued on July 9 after a four-day second conference of the External Relations Committees of three National Assemblies concluded in Kratie, Cambodia. The Development Triangle Area (DTA) includes Dac Lac, Dac Nong, Gia Lai and Kon Tum provinces of Vietnam; Attapeu, Saravane and Sekong provinces of Laos; and Mondulakiri, Rattanakiri and Stung Treng of Cambodia.

Under the joint communique, the three countries will set up a joint checkpoint in their border area, organise conferences of the relevant provinces and build a joint website in English and their languages. This was the first time Cambodia had hosted such conference. The first one was held in Vietnam in 2009. In 2002, leaders of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia reached an agreement on the DTA which aims to boost economic benefits, tourism and cultural exchange, security and social order cooperation, and poverty reduction in the three nations. On July 9, Cambodia's *Rasmei Kampuchea* daily said that the Japanese government proposed an aid of 20 million USD for strengthening economic development cooperation between DTA provinces. Of this, Laos and Cambodia will receive 7.5 million USD each while Vietnam will be given 3.5 million USD. The rest will be used for infrastructure projects in the area.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn14.htm>

- **ADB to help Laos improve vocational training, address skill shortages**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is helping the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) to improve the quality and relevance of its technical and vocational training with an aim to address skill shortages in key areas of the economy.

The statement was contained in a press release of the regional bank based in Manila, the Philippines, on 12 July. The ADB is providing a \$23 million grant from its concessional Asian Development Fund for the Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project. It targets improvements in quality, access, governance and private sector involvement in the vocational training sector, and complements earlier ADB-

assisted projects in basic and post-secondary education. The Lao PDR's economy has been booming in recent years, supported by the buoyant mining and hydropower sectors, with gross domestic product growth estimated by the ADB to reach 7.5% this year, and to average 7.8% from 2011 to 2015. However, technical and vocational institutions are not producing the skilled graduates needed to meet labour needs in key sectors.

Market assessments show enrolment for courses in high demand areas such as construction are declining, and only a small proportion of private firms are recruiting workers directly from technical and vocational institutions. The ADB project aims to improve the relevance of vocational education courses and programmes, strengthen teachers' practical skills, update training equipment, enhance access for women, and strengthen the private sector's role in vocational education strategy development and delivery. Along with curriculum and teacher training improvements, the project will focus on developing certificate and diploma courses for students in four areas where labour shortages have been identified - construction and building, mechanical and machinery maintenance and repair, furniture making, and basic business. Absorbing the growing numbers of school graduates and providing skills that are relevant to the needs of a fast-growing economy represent challenges for the country's long-term development. This initiative will help develop a more highly skilled and diverse workforce, said Norman LaRocque, Senior Education Specialist in ADB's Southeast Asia Department.

The project will have a strong focus on improving access to vocational training for girls and ethnic groups. A training assistance voucher programme for students at public and private vocational institutions will be provided, with at least 25% of vouchers allocated to women and 20% to members of ethnic groups. Dormitories at public technical and vocational training institutions will be refurbished with 50% of places reserved for women. A six-month salary supplement will be paid to employers who hire women supported under the voucher programme to encourage post-study labour market integration.

Two programmes with private firms and training institutions will be set up to improve the responsiveness of technical and vocational courses to labour market needs, including specialist skills training for both teachers and students in sectors such as mining, which require expensive equipment. About 20,000 students are expected to be trained through the project, and based on conservative estimates the improvement in skills could result in monthly wage increases for individuals of around LAK 200,000 (\$24.20) - a significant amount given that unskilled construction workers may earn around LAK 400,000 - LAK 900,000 (\$48.40 - \$108.90) per month in the Lao PDR, said Mr. LaRocque.

The Government of the Lao PDR will provide additional financial support of \$1.8 million for a total investment cost of \$24.8 million. The Ministry of Education is the executing agency for the project, which is expected to be completed by September 2015.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/13.07.2010/edn4.htm>

- **social front**
- **PM praises Oudomsay's effort in poverty reduction**

Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh has appreciated authorities and people in Oudomsay province for their efforts in poverty reduction, public security and the enhancement of solidarity among the Lao cultural groups. Mr. Bouasone visited Oudomsay province to talk with leading officials and retired people of the province on Wednesday, July 14. The Prime Minister was briefed by Governor of Oudomsay province, Mr. Khamla Lingmasone about the socio-economic development in the province, especially the goods production, poverty reduction, the promotion of market oriented production of sugarcane, tobaccos and animal husbandry as well as the development of communication infrastructure.

He urged local authorities to pay attention to the resolution of the social shortcomings through imposing ban on drugs abuse and trafficking and increasing the enrolment rate of school-aged children at primary schools up to 90-95%. Mr. Bouasone also asked the authorities to attach attention to the prevention of disease outbreak, mainly by raising public awareness on hygiene and health education.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn5.htm>

- **Lao civil servants upgrade their English for work and Party**

Over 50 officials from ministries and provinces are attending an upgrading course in the English language, held at the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 12 July to 8 December. Mr Thongvin Vongmounty, Deputy Head of the Institute Foreign Affairs said that the objective of this course was to raise the standard of English of civil servants so that they could use it in their daily work and ultimately benefit the various sections of the Party and government.

The curriculum of the course was made up of core text, listening, pronunciation, speaking, writing, grammar and basic computer operations. Beside these, the trainees would also be involved in sporting activities, charitable work, carry out data collection exercises, writing up reports and making presentations on their reports.

The six-month course would be divided into three modules and this 500-hour classroom course would be made up of morning and afternoon classes. Mr Thongvin urged the trainees to respect the rules of the institute, switching off their cell phones during classes and not to consume any alcohol within the confines of the school.

Mr Thongvin said that the Institute of Foreign Affairs sourced for highly experienced teachers from Japan, New Zealand, and Singapore and so the trainees were assured of the highest quality of teaching.

Patrick Loo a teacher from Singapore explained that the trainees should use the English to English dictionary, like the Oxford English dictionary and not the English to Thai dictionary.

Patrick added that the trainees should speak English with other friends and teachers and not other languages and this would get them to become fluent in English.

For anyone who was learning the English language in Laos he faced the problem that Laos was not an English speaking country and the lingua franca was the Lao language. However, if one was studying English in an English speaking country one's spoken and written English would improve at a rapid pace because of the language environment one was in.

He also said that the six-month course was not long but was short and the trainees should consider it as high-value time.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn7.htm>