

Business and Politics in Muslim World

**South East Asia
Tatheer Zahra Sherazi**

From 3 August to 10 September

(Outline)

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Summary

Summary

At Political Front

- Indonesia

Despite President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's flagging popularity, his Democrats remain the party to beat, in part because of a lack of viable alternatives, according to recent surveys.

If a national election had been held last month, the Democratic Party would have won with 27 percent of the vote, six percentage points more than what the party managed in winning elections in 2009, according to a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute.

The survey involved 1,829 respondents and was released this month. While survey respondents had doubts about a viable alternative to Yudhoyono, former President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) appears to be benefitting from the president's troubles. The LSI survey also showed that 77 percent of the respondents thought the government had failed to properly handle a spate of explosions involving liquefied petroleum gas canisters, while 66 percent objected to the government's decision to increase electricity rates.

"This is natural. When the government's performance is seen as bad, the opposition automatically gets the credit," Burhanuddin said.

However, he said the PDI-P's failure to break the 15 percent approval rating pointed to a public that did not believe the party had a leader who matched up well with Yudhoyono. "Their leaders are the same old faces," he said.

- Vietnam

On the 2nd of September, the people of Vietnam celebrated along with their many friends from all other countries around the world, 65 of them having declared their national independence. A historical fact that in most cases in other countries it shines like something natural even for their own people. It may be said that in the case of Vietnam it has and will always have a global significance.

At Geo-strategic

- Indonesia

Former vice president Jusuf Kalla called on the Indonesian government to take a firm stand in its border talks with Malaysia at an Indonesian Red Cross meeting on Sunday.

"The problem is very technical so it will take a long time. But we must be firm in defending our territory based on international law," he said on the sidelines of an Indonesian Red Cross meeting at the National Monument.

- Laos

Laos and Cambodia have agreed to allow technical officials from the two nations begin a border demarcation project in six locations along their common borderline in December this year. The agreement was reached at a meeting between border officials of both countries held on August 27-29 in Stung Treng province of Cambodia to discuss the demarcation project.

Economic Front

- Indonesia

Although the Indonesian Palm Oil Association said it was confident environmental issues would not keep the World Bank from resuming its financing of the industry, senior government officials said producers could continue to rely on commercial loans if the funding fell through.

Indonesia moved up 10 places to 44th in the latest Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) for 2010-2011 published in the World Economic Forum in Beijing on Thursday.

Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said Indonesia was deemed capable of maintaining its macroeconomy at a healthy level and of improvement in the education sector, despite the global crisis. "This [ranking] mirrors improvements in Indonesian economic conditions," Mari said as quoted by Antara state news agency.

Indonesia trails Southeast Asian neighbors Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand but with a narrower margin. The three countries rank third, 26th and 38th respectively.

Switzerland tops the global ranking, which saw Nordic countries continue to be well positioned on the roster, with Sweden (second), Finland (seventh) and Denmark (ninth) among the top 10.

- Singapore

The booming finance industry is leaving recruiters and head-hunters scrambling to find skilled staff amid one of the most severe talent squeezes in years.

A new study points to how serious the problem is: About 81 per cent of industry professionals with recruitment responsibilities say there is a lack of personnel equipped with finance and accounting skills. This includes 40 per cent of respondents who described the situation as either major or chronic.

Singapore's economy will likely expand at a record pace of 14.9 percent this year as a surge in demand for the city-state's exports fuels manufacturing, according to a central bank survey of analysts. In June, analysts had forecast just 9 percent growth.

DRIVERS: Singapore's economy - which relies on trade, finance and tourism - will likely be led this year by a 29 percent expansion of the manufacturing sector as non-oil exports soar. Financial services is seen growing 10.6 percent and wholesale and retail trade by 16 percent.

- Cambodia

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen said Saturday that his country is considered as a "successful post-conflict country". Giving speech at the forum on 2010 Asialink Conversations- Cambodia, Hun Sen said "Cambodia can be considered as a successful post-conflict country," saying the reforms and economic growth plus other development schemes and plans are on right track.

He said, after the post conflict that only ended in late 1990s, and with the support from development partners and the private sector, Cambodia has made giant strides in development in the last decade. Cambodia Monday denied media's report that suggested the country might have deal with Iran to build a nuclear power plant.

Koy Kuong, spokesman of Foreign Ministry said Monday that Cambodia has not made any deal with Iran on anything related to nuclear power plant. Koy Kuong made the statement following media's report that suggested during the recent visit to Iran. Hor Namhong, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs might have discussed any issue on nuclear power plant.

- Brunei

BRUNEI further improved on its Global Competitiveness ranking this year to 28th out of 139 economies, the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR 2010-2011) said.

Released by the World Economic Forum yesterday, the report showed that Brunei made a four-step rise from 32nd out of 133 economies last year. "The four-step rise in ranking was due to improvements in many of the areas measured by the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). Brunei was able to maintain its number one position in macroeconomic stability and further enhanced its ranking in five of the 12 pillars of the GCI," said the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR), which is the partner institute of the Geneva-based World Economic Forum's Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance (CGCP) in Brunei.

In our ever progressive world, it has become increasingly challenging for Muslims to determine whether the products they consume are religiously acceptable or 'Halal'. Halal and non-Halal classifications are not only limited to food and beverages but also to other products such as health supplements, pharmaceutical products, personal care and cosmetics products.

As Brunei prides itself on its status as a Malay Islamic Monarchy, the role of Halal

products is extremely important. Brunei's standards for Halal certification is known to be one of the strictest in the world- the credibility of Brunei Halal Certification brings confidence to Muslims worldwide and also guarantees safety and quality assurance to the general consumer market.

At Social Front

- Indonesia

Ignoring the outrage of rights activists, the religious affairs minister on Tuesday reiterated his belief that an outright ban on Ahmadiyah would be good for both the country and the sect.

Suryadharma Ali said the government had two options: maintain the restrictions on the group's activities, or ban Ahmadiyah. A ban, he said, would protect group members from attack and also help bring them into the fold of mainstream Islam.

the interdepartmental National Anti-terror Agency (BNPT), which wields greater authority than the National Police's Special Detachment 88 counterterrorism unit.

Insp. Gen. (ret) Ansyad Mbai, who was appointed chief of the agency, said the BNPT would have a wide range of authorities in the prevention and eradication of terrorism.

"To make it effective, we need close cooperation with other institutions such as the military, the religious ministry, academic and other related parties," Mbai told journalists after his swearing-in ceremony.

THE ninth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the planned Muslim cultural centre near Ground Zero, the planned burning of Al-Quran, the Aidilfitri celebration ending the fasting month of Ramadhan this year, all have put many Muslims in America and around the world in a predicament and made them redefine their identity.

The 9/11 tragedy has influenced many people from various walks of life. A Christian Arab may be mistaken for a Muslim. A Sikh was attacked for wearing his turban.

An Indonesian visiting or returning to the United States whose name is common but Arabic may experience extra scrutiny by the department of Homeland Security. Mosques, churches and houses of worship may be filled with sermons expressing contradictory views, memories and feelings about the tragedy and about each other.

The start of the trial of 19 defendants in the November 2009 massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao province in the southern Philippines is a step for justice, but the government needs to arrest all those implicated and provide better protection for witnesses, Human Rights Watch said today. The killing since the massacre of five people with knowledge of abuses by the Ampatuans shows that the family still wields considerable power, Human Rights Watch said.

- Thailand

Thailand ranked 38th in the world in terms of competitiveness for 2010, a decline of two spots from the year before, according to a competitiveness report by the World Economic Forum. Switzerland led the charts for the second consecutive year in the ranking of 139 economies, followed by Sweden, Singapore, the US and Germany.

Thailand ranked 48th in terms of basic requirements, 39th in the category of "efficiency enhancers" and 49th for innovation and sophistication factors.

Health is the basic right of every citizen. It is the moral obligation and the responsibility of governments to ensure that all citizens have equitable access to quality health care, so that they can contribute fully to the economic and social advancement of the nation. Of course, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best medicine that one can have, and prevention is always better than cure.

In the last 40 years, Thailand has achieved significant progress on health development, especially on the reduction of maternal and child mortality, improved life expectancy, combating HIV/Aids, and introducing and enforcing legislation against tobacco and alcohol. Thailand has also achieved all the Millennium Development Goals on health well before our 2015 commitment.

- Laos

Over 1,000 people have died of AIDS in the country over the past nine years (1990-2009) and it is estimated that the number of HIV infected people would reach 7,000 over the half decade, said an official. The HIV infection is attributed to unsafe sex, according to Director of Centre for HIV/AIDS/STD Dr. Chansy Phimpachanh.

"At present, AIDS has increased on an annual basis. Vientiane, ranking the second province with the largest number of HIV/AIDS infected people after Savannakhet, has 3,659 people dying and infected with HIV/AIDS since 1990," said the official. One thousand and thirty-eight people have reportedly died of AIDS in Vientiane over the past nine years.

Cyber World

- Thailand

As software is a global business that has untold value to drive the IT industry and strengthen the nation socially and economically, software developers need to capture the demand in the market and build distribution channels through physical partners and deliver their software as a service through the cloud computing, according to Suwipa Wanasathop, Director of Software Park Thailand.

Locally, Software Park leverages its partnering network through eight software parks, both private and public, around the country and matches Bangkok-based businesses to expand its market in upcountry regions by selecting local resellers and implementers,

which creates IT-related jobs."Demand in the domestic market is still strong, especially in banking and finance, including business continuity planning services for enterprises," Suwipa said.

ASEAN

- Economic Front

According to Vietnamese Ambassador to Turkey Duong Huynh Lap, the increasingly developed bilateral relations between Vietnam and Turkey will reach their full potential as the latter has taken a key step toward expanding its diplomatic outreach to Southeast Asia, signing a cooperative agreement with the main forum in the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Detailed News Monitoring Report

Indonesia

- **Political front:**
- **SBY Is Down, but He's Not Out, Surveys Find**

Despite President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's flagging popularity, his Democrats remain the party to beat, in part because of a lack of viable alternatives, according to recent surveys.

If a national election had been held last month, the Democratic Party would have won with 27 percent of the vote, six percentage points more than what the party managed in winning elections in 2009, according to a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute.

The survey involved 1,829 respondents and was released this month. While survey respondents had doubts about a viable alternative to Yudhoyono, former President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) appears to be benefitting from the president's troubles.

The LSI, which has done work for Golkar and other parties in the past, said its survey found that Yudhoyono's popularity had dropped to 66 percent in August from 85 percent shortly after he was re-elected to a second five-year term a year ago. "This shows that there is a great dilemma among the public that while SBY's performance is seen as deteriorating, there is also a lack of an alternative figure who could bring new hope to the country," said Burhanuddin Muhtadi, an LSI analyst.

Separately, a survey by Indo Barometer, which has also worked with political parties in the past, found that if a presidential election had been held in August, 35.1 percent of the electorate would have voted for the incumbent. The survey involved 1,200 respondents.

Megawati came in a distant second with 13.6 percent, and retired Army general Prabowo Subianto, from the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), came in third with 4.5 percent. Even though Megawati fared poorly in the limited survey, her party was seen making inroads elsewhere.

The survey found that the PDI-P was making strides in the eyes of voters, with its popularity rising from 9 percent to 15 percent since April this year. The party won 13 percent of the vote in the 2009 legislative elections. The LSI survey, which did not offer figures for former client Golkar, found the Democrats' popularity had fallen from 32 percent to 27 percent since January.

Burhanuddin said there was a correlation between the PDI-P's gains and Yudhoyono's declining approval rating. He said that as long as people remained disappointed in the performance of the government, particularly on populist issues, the opposition PDI-P

would continue to gain.

The LSI survey also showed that 77 percent of the respondents thought the government had failed to properly handle a spate of explosions involving liquefied petroleum gas canisters, while 66 percent objected to the government's decision to increase electricity rates.

"This is natural. When the government's performance is seen as bad, the opposition automatically gets the credit," Burhanuddin said.

However, he said the PDI-P's failure to break the 15 percent approval rating pointed to a public that did not believe the party had a leader who matched up well with Yudhoyono. "Their leaders are the same old faces," he said.

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/sby-is-down-but-hes-not-out-surveys-find/395364>

- **Jusuf Kalla: Indonesia Must Be Firm in Border Talks With Malaysia**

Former vice president Jusuf Kalla called on the Indonesian government to take a firm stand in its border talks with Malaysia at an Indonesian Red Cross meeting on Sunday.

"The problem is very technical so it will take a long time. But we must be firm in defending our territory based on international law," he said on the sidelines of an Indonesian Red Cross meeting at the National Monument.

The two nations are scheduled to hold talks in Kinabalu, capital of the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah, on September 6 to discuss their borders. The border talks will cover land and maritime borders, including sea borders in the Singapore strait and the Ambalat waters. "Our team of negotiators must be competent and able to show compelling evidence," Jusuf said.

Ties between the two nations turned sour over the past few weeks following the recent arrest by Malaysian police of three Indonesian fisheries officers. The fisheries officers were arrested and later taken to Malaysia by a Malaysian police boat crew who had intercepted their boat on their way to Batam Island while escorting a Malaysian fishing boat that had been caught poaching in Indonesian waters.

They were later set free by the Malaysian authorities in exchange for the release of seven Malaysian fishermen who had been caught poaching in Indonesian waters near Bintan island.

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/jusuf-kalla-indonesia-must-be-firm-in-border-talks-with-malaysia/394669>

- **Economic Front**
- **Palm Oil Industry Hoping for World Bank Funding**

Although the Indonesian Palm Oil Association said it was confident environmental issues would not keep the World Bank from resuming its financing of the industry, senior

government officials said producers could continue to rely on commercial loans if the funding fell through.

Fadhil Hasan, head of the association, also known as Gapki, said on Friday that he expected local palm oil firms to qualify for World Bank funds even if they failed to meet the International Finance Corporation's sustainable environment criteria.

Fadhil said Gapki planned to address the issue during a World Bank strategy forum on palm oil financing in Frankfurt on Tuesday and Wednesday. Indonesia will also be represented by deputy trade and agriculture ministers, as well as industry representatives.

The IFC, a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the World Bank Group, stopped financing palm oil firms in September over environmental concerns. It said funding would only resume after it introduced comprehensive verifiable sustainability regulations. Last month, the IFC released a draft framework for re-engagement in palm oil financing.

The financing suspension followed accusations from environmental groups that Indonesian palm oil producers, especially Sinar Mas, were engaged in widespread deforestation — a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Indonesian palm oil firms claim Greenpeace, which receives financing from the European Commission, is waging a smear campaign against them to help European producers of alternative edible oils such as rapeseed.

An independent audit of the deforestation allegations against Sinar Mas this month answered few questions definitively, and both Sinar Mas and Greenpeace claimed victory. Deputy Trade Minister Mahendra Siregar said on Thursday that he expected the Frankfurt meeting to focus not only on environmental issues, but also on the palm oil sector's contribution to public welfare and the economy.

The sector directly employs an estimated three million people. Mahendra said the nation would not focus on seeking financing during the meeting because most of the country's big palm oil companies have been able to obtain funding from banks.

He suggested that the IFC help improve the welfare of small-scale palm oil farmers. "If we receive funding, we will channel it to the small-scale palm oil industry, which accounts for 45 percent of the total sector in the country," he said.

Palm oil is one of Indonesia's leading exports. The crude palm oil sector grew by 16.2 percent in the first half of this year, with exports valued at \$5.71 billion. For 2009, total exports amounted to \$10.37 billion. China, India and Malaysia are the primary customers overseas.

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/business/palm-oil-industry-hoping-for-world-bank-funding/393241>

- **Minister: Indonesia more competitive than ever**

Indonesia moved up 10 places to 44th in the latest Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) for 2010-2011 published in the World Economic Forum in Beijing on Thursday.

Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said Indonesia was deemed capable of maintaining its macroeconomy at a healthy level and of improvement in the education sector, despite the global crisis. "This [ranking] mirrors improvements in Indonesian economic conditions," Mari said as quoted by Antara state news agency.

Indonesia trails Southeast Asian neighbors Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand but with a narrower margin. The three countries rank third, 26th and 38th respectively.

Switzerland tops the global ranking, which saw Nordic countries continue to be well positioned on the roster, with Sweden (second), Finland (seventh) and Denmark (ninth) among the top 10.

Other factors that contributed to the improvement in Indonesia's competitive index included the country's favorable bureaucracy and business climate.

But Mari admitted infrastructure and logistics remained the main challenges Indonesia had yet to cope with. "They are our unfinished projects, but the government considers them a priority," she said. The report recommended that Indonesia made more effort to eradicate TB and malaria, curb the infant mortality rate, and boost the use of information technology.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/09/09/minister-indonesia-more-competitive-ever.html>

- **Indonesian central banker sees more tightening in 2011**

A deputy governor of Indonesia's central bank said yesterday that the recent increase in bank reserve ratios should be enough to bring inflation down in the coming months, but policy is likely to be tightened further next year.

"If the food components of inflation keep on declining because of the impact of government policy, and core inflation stays stable at this level, which is quite low, we don't have to increase rates for the rest of this year," Hartadi Sarwono told Reuters in an interview.

Bank Indonesia left its policy interest rate at 6.5% on Friday but raised bank reserve requirements – cash that has to be put aside with the central bank – to 8% from 5%.

He spoke on the sidelines of the two-day meeting of finance ministry and central bank deputies from the Group of 20 developed and leading emerging economies in the South Korean city of Gwangju.

Annual inflation in August hit a 16-month high of 6.44%, above the central bank's target of keeping it in a range of 4-6%. Core inflation moved up to 4.53%.

Sarwono added though that as the global economy continues to recover, policy next year would have to return to normal.

“We have already extended quite a lot of liquidity to the markets and the economy is back on track for recovery, so maybe next year is a good time to unwind liquidity and also put interest rates up,” he said

<http://www.gulf->

[times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=384109&version=1&template_id=48&parent_id=28](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=384109&version=1&template_id=48&parent_id=28)

- **Social front**
- **Ahmadiyah Again Faces Minister’s Call for a Ban**

Ignoring the outrage of rights activists, the religious affairs minister on Tuesday reiterated his belief that an outright ban on Ahmadiyah would be good for both the country and the sect.

Suryadharma Ali said the government had two options: maintain the restrictions on the group’s activities, or ban Ahmadiyah. A ban, he said, would protect group members from attack and also help bring them into the fold of mainstream Islam.

“The government can let them be or ban them. Both carry risks,” he said. “To let them be is not regulated by our laws, but we can ban them because we have regulations for this.”

The minister, who last week caused an uproar by saying Ahmadiyah should be banned because the group had angered mainstream Muslims, was referring to the 1965 Blasphemy Law and a joint decree issued in 2008 by the religious affairs and home affairs ministries, and the Attorney General’s Office, restricting the group’s religious activities. The decree stopped short of banning the sect but prohibited Ahmadiyah followers from publicly practicing their faith and from proselytizing.

“Banning Ahmadiyah, in my opinion, is not an act of hatred or enmity, it is an act of love and care for all our brothers across the nation. To ban them is far better than to let them be,” Suryadharma said. “To outlaw them would mean that we are working hard to stop deviant acts from continuing. It is better for us to take the hard steps now and, God willing, all will be well.”

According to Suryadharma, all Ahmadis want to follow mainstream Islam, and therefore “it is the duty of every Islamic figure to take them in, teach them the correct way of the religion.”

The minister also said that until a ban was enacted, Ahmadiyah followers would continue to be targets for violent attacks by hard-line groups. “Why don’t you study the reactions toward the Ahmadiyah?” he said. “We believe such harsh reactions are because there are rules that are not being followed.”

Ahmadiyah followers have been the target of numerous attacks by hard-line Muslim groups, with authorities being accused of failing to take steps to protect sect members. Rights activists have said the minister's comments could be construed by hard-liners as justification for more attacks on the group. Suryadharma, however, said that, in principle, there should be no violence. Founded in India in 1889, Ahmadiyah holds that the group's founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was a prophet — a belief that goes against mainstream Islam, which holds that Muhammad was the last prophet. Said Aqil Siradj, chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim organization with an estimated 40 million members, last week urged caution against banning Ahmadiyah.

"Ahmadiyah has been in Indonesia since 1925. Why is it being made a problem now?" he said. "This is not a local organization, it is present in 102 countries around the globe."

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/ahmadiyah-again-faces-ministers-call-for-a-ban/395172>

- **Indonesia launches first counter-terrorism agency**

After a decade of waiting, Indonesia finally saw on Tuesday (September 7) the birth of the interdepartmental National Anti-terror Agency (BNPT), which wields greater authority than the National Police's Special Detachment 88 counterterrorism unit.

Insp. Gen. (ret) Ansyad Mbai, who was appointed chief of the agency, said the BNPT would have a wide range of authorities in the prevention and eradication of terrorism.

"To make it effective, we need close cooperation with other institutions such as the military, the religious ministry, academic and other related parties," Mbai told journalists after his swearing-in ceremony.

Human rights activists have voiced concern that the new anti-terrorism agency wields too much power and is reminiscent of the kind of state authority that the New Order regime used to quash government critics.

Critics pointed to the unclear definition of "terror activities" and greater participation of the military in the antiterrorism movement as stipulated in the presidential regulation on the agency's establishment, which they said might be used to intimidate innocent citizens. Under the new agency, the police will maintain their leading role in antiterrorism activities. One of the agency's priorities, Mbai said, should be to widen its surveillance because there were still scores of terror suspects on the loose.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=14188&sec=1>

Malaysia

- **Foreign Relations**
- **Future is bright for Brunei-M'sia ties**

MALAYSIA'S outgoing envoy is upbeat ties between Brunei and Malaysia will further

improve, particularly in oil and gas, Islamic finance, telecommunications, halal, tourism and even agriculture.

Dato' Ku Jaafar Ku Shaari, the outgoing High Commissioner who is set to leave Brunei later this month, said ties had improved since the signing of a major deal last year in a bid to resolve disputes. The pact serves as the framework for the final delimitation of maritime boundaries between the two countries and the establishment of a commercial arrangement area), which aims to resolve the dispute over oil and gas reserves located in the overlapping areas of the exclusive economic zones of Brunei and Malaysia.

The envoy said Brunei and Malaysia had achieved a lot over the past three years, especially in terms of bilateral relations. "Before I came here, I had set a target of what I want. Of course, to give more towards the economic collaboration and cooperation especially being able to witness the exchange of letters between the two leaders. Not that relations were not good before that, as cooperation was already excellent, but the exchange has opened up more things." He said the two countries had managed to identify areas where both sides can cooperate closely and focus has been given to those areas.

However, he said both sides must work hard to achieve this. "Now we see results as there is a joint committee between Sabah and Brunei formed. They visit each other frequently and look at areas to focus on. The same thing can be said between Sarawak and Brunei. Immediately after the exchange of letters, there was a memorandum of understanding for the energy sector which will see Sarawak supply energy to Brunei, targeted at the end of next year," said Dato' Ku Jaafar.

He said both sides are working hard to achieve that target, adding that "it's a good thing, something tangible and at the same time, we identified areas in Sarawak for further cooperation". These include ties in telecommunications, halal hub, tourism and agriculture, to name a few. "The two sides work regularly as well and we hope one day, they will be able to connect and do it together," he said.

The envoy also said Brunei and Malaysia are looking into ties in Islamic banking, noting there are opportunities for both sides. "The future is bright as both sides are ready. Also there is cooperation between the Brunei Investment Agency and Khazanah Malaysia, the investment arms of the two countries, working together for projects not just in our countries, but also in a third country as well." Dato' Ku Jaafar also mentioned how PetroleumBRUNEI and Petronas are looking at opportunities in both the downstream and upstream sectors. Both sides have a committee which meet regularly to discuss and define the terms of reference. "We hope they are able to sign a memorandum and finalise the whole deal soon. The exchange of letters took place more than a year ago and there has been so much expectation. There has to be results and I know both sides will iron out

whatever problems so results can be achieved as soon as possible," he said."The future looks very bright, I must say frankly and sincerely, there are no problems between the two countries."

<http://www.bruneitimes.com.bn/business-national/2010/09/10/future-bright-brunei-msiaties>

- **Economic Front**
- **Social Front**
- **The Sept 11 predicament and being Muslim today**

THE ninth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the planned Muslim cultural centre near Ground Zero, the planned burning of Al-Quran, the Aidilfitri celebration ending the fasting month of Ramadhan this year, all have put many Muslims in America and around the world in a predicament and made them redefine their identity.

The 9/11 tragedy has influenced many people from various walks of life. A Christian Arab may be mistaken for a Muslim. A Sikh was attacked for wearing his turban.

An Indonesian visiting or returning to the United States whose name is common but Arabic may experience extra scrutiny by the department of Homeland Security. Mosques, churches and houses of worship may be filled with sermons expressing contradictory views, memories and feelings about the tragedy and about each other.

Ordinary chats and social network discussions about the tragedy and its aftermath take different directions, many becoming more literate, and others confirming their prejudices. For Muslims, living in this global village would be much different if no 9/11 had ever occurred. Today, as in the past, human relationships are full of conflict and tension as well as dialogue and cooperation. People often need a trigger for increased tension, or for dialogue and cooperation.

That trigger could be big, small, near, or far, but because of increased ways of communication, people may be affected immediately by what's happening in other parts of the world.

Those 19 people who attacked the World Trade Centre nine years ago were not directly related to other Arabs, other Muslims, other individuals. They are not linked to Muslim politicians, educators, artists, or others, in many parts of the world, but everyone has become a stakeholder of that attack: for better or worse.

The planned Muslim centre, the current status of which is not clear, provides opposing arguments: religious freedom and American identity versus religious freedom and sensitivity to the horror and the many victims. For the supporters, building the centre near the sacred space would demonstrate Muslim New Yorkers outreach to other faiths and ideologies. For them, near Ground Zero would be a good site for raising awareness about

Islam and Muslims.

The supporters argue that the centre would not become a haven for extremism, anti-Americanism, but instead a space for moderation and dialogue. Jewish and Christian leaders support the building. However, the opponents argue that the plan jeopardises the sense of atrocity committed by a group associated with Islam. For them, Islam is responsible for 9/11. There is little change in their view after nine years.

Not only that. The pastor in Florida advocates the burning of Al-Quran on that day. Many have mailed Qurans to be burned there. On the other hand, Jewish, Christian, and interfaith forums demonstrate their support for Muslims struggling for recognition and acceptance in American society. Many are simply ignoring the invitation. Others, many being non-Muslims, feel insulted by such senseless plan. There were already acts of ignorance, if not attacks and insults directed toward Al-Quran. In American schools and colleges, and public places, Quranic studies and Islamic studies attended by multifaith students and audiences have developed in ways that are balanced. Attempts continue to increase awareness about Al-Quran, and Islam. For many, it is increasingly difficult to live as an observant Muslim today, but for others it is easier now than before because of communication technology and globalisation.

Many Muslims are worried about their own security but, at the same time, they should show empathy toward the victims of the attacks and their families. Many Muslims are expected to be tolerant of others when part of the others continues to show prejudice towards them.

To a great extent, because of 9/11, Muslims are increasingly diverse and dynamic: some still categorise Muslims as the liberal, the moderate, and the conservative (the hard-liners being part of them), using how they react to the event and how they respond to modernity and tradition. Being Muslim today varies from place to place, but 9/11 seems to have influenced the way Muslims redefine their identity in relation to America. There is no way to define Muslims with one, monolithic characteristic. Interests and perceptions about Islam and Muslims increase in both positive and negative ways, but one thing is quite sure: Being Muslim today is different from being Muslim before 9/11.

There are choices to be made: To continue in goodness and wisdom, or to become reactionary and violent, perpetuating others ignorance and prejudice that have long prevailed.

<http://www.bruneitimes.com.bn/opinion/2010/09/10/sept-11-predicament-and-being-muslim-today>

Philippine

- **Political Front**

- **Economic Front**
- **Social Front**
- **Abu Sayyaf commander shot dead in southern Philippines**

Philippine police commandos killed an Abu Sayyaf commander linked to last year's kidnapping of Red Cross workers and gunned down two other militants in a clash in the south, officials said Sunday. Police went on full alert after the killings to guard against any retaliatory attacks.

Gafur Jumdail and two of his men were killed late Saturday near Maimbung town on Jolo Island after clashing with commandos tracking a Malaysian militant and allied Filipino fighters, Jolo police chief Senior Superintendent Joseph Ramac said. The death of Jumdail, who had been accused of several high-profile abductions including the January 2009 kidnappings of three Red Cross workers from Switzerland, Italy and the Philippines, is the latest blow to the Al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf.

Still, the group remains a major security threat in the Philippines, and national police placed the entire force in the southern Mindanao region on full alert Sunday to brace for any possible retaliatory attacks over Jumdail's death.

In Saturday's clash, commandos assaulted a house in a remote village in an attempt to arrest Jumdail, his elder brother, who is also an Abu Sayyaf commander, and Zulkifli bin Hir, a Malaysian militant wanted by Washington for alleged terrorist involvement, according to a police report.

As they raided the house, about 20 other Abu Sayyaf militants armed with rifles and grenade launchers opened fire nearby, sparking a 15-minute gunbattle. When the militants withdrew, police found the bodies of Gafur Jumdail and two other militants in the house, the report said. Washington has blacklisted the Abu Sayyaf as a terrorist organization and deployed hundreds of troops in the country's south to train and arm Filipino soldiers battling the militants.

The extremist group, which has about 400 gunmen in Jolo and outlying islands, has been blamed for the country's worst bomb attacks, kidnapping sprees and for beheading some of its hostages, including an American tourist, who was decapitated in 2001.

Zulkifli bin Hir, also known as Marwan, is a US-trained engineer accused by Philippine authorities of involvement in a number of deadly bombings in the country. The US has offered a \$5 million reward for his capture. Marwan is believed to have been hiding with the Abu Sayyaf in the southern Philippines for years. It was not immediately clear if Marwan was with Jumdail during Saturday's assault, police said.

The US State Department says Marwan is believed to be a leader of the militant organization Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia and a member of the central command of

Jemaah Islamiah, the Al-Qaeda affiliate blamed for numerous regional attacks, including the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings in Indonesia.

<http://arabnews.com/world/article127352.ece>

- **Fears for witnesses as Philippine massacre trial starts**

The main suspect in the Philippines' worst political massacre goes on trial on Wednesday, amid allegations of witness intimidation and fears the case could drag on for years. Andal Ampatuan Jnr and over 100 members of his private army allegedly stopped a convoy belonging to a political rival in the southern Philippines in November last year and killed 57 people.

Ampatuan Jnr and 16 police officers identified with his powerful clan are to appear at a special courtroom built inside a maximum-security police jail in southern Manila.

The trial was to have started last week, but the lower court judge handling the case moved it back seven days to give the Ampatuan lawyers more time to study documents in the case. Rights groups and the victims' relatives have accused the Ampatuans of applying delaying tactics while ordering their men to terrorize witnesses.

"We cannot wait any longer. One key witness has already been killed and more will surely follow," said Harry Roque, a lawyer representing some of the relatives of the victims. Prosecutors are scheduled to put the first of their 200 or so witnesses on the witness stand.

"We hope to present at least one witness on day one," Roque told AFP. "But we are also anticipating that the accused would again raise technical matters in a bid to delay the case." At least 30 journalists were among those shot dead in the massacre in Maguindanao province and stuck into mass graves in the single biggest attack on the working press in history, according to global press watchdogs.

Five other Ampatuans, including the patriarch Andal Ampatuan Snr, are among the 196 people charged for the crime in total, though more than 100 of the alleged gunmen remain at large.

Ampatuan Jnr, then a local mayor, allegedly led the massacre to stop the rival from running against him for the post of Maguindanao province governor in this year's national elections.

New York-based Human Rights Watch, which has been closely following the case, said five ex-employees of the Ampatuans who had knowledge of the planning and execution of the crime had been killed.

Among those was Suwaib Upham, a member of the clan's militia force who claimed to have taken part in the actual shooting and could place Ampatuan Jnr at the crime scene, it said. Upham was gunned down in June before he was scheduled to be placed under a

government witness protection program."The government needs to provide effective witness protection if these trials are going to succeed in bringing justice," said the rights monitor's Asia researcher Jessica Evans.

"Having the Ampatuans in custody seems to have weakened, but by no means eliminated, the Ampatuans' grip on power in Maguindanao," she said. Roque said he feared the trial would take years to complete and the Supreme Court may eventually have to create a special court to try the case.

The Ampatuan clan controlled Maguindanao province with brutal efficiency over the past decade under the patronage of then-president Gloria Arroyo. Arroyo had turned a blind eye to their excesses in exchange for using the Ampatuan's vast private army as a proxy force against Muslim separatists and its influence to win votes in the southern region for her political allies. Shortly after being elected as Arroyo's successor in May, Benigno Aquino vowed justice for the massacre victims.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Fears+witnesses+Philippine+massacre+trial+starts/3491128/story.html>

- **Philippines: Maguindanao Massacre Trial Moves Forward**

The start of the trial of 19 defendants in the November 2009 massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao province in the southern Philippines is a step for justice, but the government needs to arrest all those implicated and provide better protection for witnesses, Human Rights Watch said today. The killing since the massacre of five people with knowledge of abuses by the Ampatuans shows that the family still wields considerable power, Human Rights Watch said.

The murder trial is set to begin on September 8, 2010, before Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court in Taguig City, Metro Manila. The defendants include the lead suspect, Andal Ampatuan, Jr., then mayor of the town of Datu Unsay and the son of the former Maguindanao governor, Andal Ampatuan, Sr., 16 police officers, and two alleged members of a paramilitary force.

"The quest for justice for the victims of the Maguindanao massacre begins now," said Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "But the dozens of suspects still at large and the threat to witnesses shows that there is a long road ahead."

The trial involves only 19 of 195 persons accused in the massacre. Altogether, 127 suspects remain at large, including 23 members and allies of the Ampatuan family, 10 police officers, and 4 soldiers. The remaining 49 accused that are in custody have yet to be arraigned.

The massacre took place on November 23, 2009, in the town of Ampatuan, Maguindanao province, in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. Gunmen killed members of a

convoy that was en route to file the candidacy for provincial governor of Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudatu of the town of Buluan. Those killed included family members, supporters, and journalists, together with bystanders.

With fewer than half of the suspects in custody, witnesses, investigators, and others who might be deemed to be a threat to the Ampatuan family are at risk, Human Rights Watch said. At least five individuals with knowledge of Ampatuan activities have been killed since the Maguindanao massacre. Suwaib Upahm, who had worked for the Ampatuans for several years, told Human Rights Watch of three killings of drivers ordered by the Ampatuans following the massacre, including the driver of a police car that Andal Ampatuan, Jr. would often use. No charges have been filed in these cases. Unidentified men shot and killed Upahm in Parang, Maguindanao on June 14, three months after he told private prosecutors representing journalists killed in the massacre that he would testify against the Ampatuans in exchange for protection. At the time of his death, the Justice Department was still considering his request for witness protection.

Two unidentified men on a motorcycle shot and killed Enrique Barroga, the director of the Cotabato City Assessor's Office, while he was travelling by car on a main street in Cotabato City. He was killed two months after he had complied with a subpoena issued by government investigators regarding abuses by Ampatuan local government officials. Human Rights Watch called on President Benigno Aquino III to direct the National Bureau of Investigation to investigate these killings immediately, including possible involvement by persons already in custody, and to prosecute all those responsible. "Abuses in Maguindanao have not stopped with the arrest of six members of the Ampatuan family," Pearson said. "Prompt investigation of ongoing crimes is essential to prevent further killing and to stop suspects from interfering with the trial."

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/09/07/philippines-maguindanao-massacre-trial-moves-forward>

'Everybody laughed, saying it's OK for everybody to be killed': Philippine massacre of 57 was planned over dinner, according to plotters' house servant

Among the 57 dead were 30 media workers travelling in an election convoy - making it the deadliest single attack on reporters in the world.

Some 30 members of the media were killed in southern Maguindanao province in November

The patriarch of the clan, Andal Ampatuan senior, had gathered his siblings over dinner to ask them how they can stop their political rival from running for provincial governor, one of the key regional posts that the Ampatuans had held and exploited for years, Saliao said.

Former town mayor Andal Ampatuan junior, the scion of the clan and the prime suspect in the massacre, replied, 'That's easy. If they come here just kill them all,' Saliao told the court.

He said the elder Ampatuan then asked his children if they agreed with the plan, and according to Saliao, 'Everybody laughed, saying it's OK for everybody to be killed.'

Saliao said the Ampatuan patriarch ordered that his rival, Esmael Mangudadatu, must be stopped on a highway where he was supposed to pass on the way to file his candidacy papers.

Accused: Maguindanao massacre suspect Andal Ampatuan junior enters a courtroom at a maximum security prison in Taguig, south of Manila where he pleaded not guilty

It was on the same spot that troops recovered the 57 bodies gunned down and hastily buried in mass graves dug by a backhoe. Mangudadatu, who was later elected governor in the May elections, had sent his wife, sisters and other female relatives accompanied by journalists in the belief that their lives would be spared.

The Ampatuans have denied the charges. Andal Ampatuan Jr. and 16 policemen were the first to be arraigned and were led in handcuffs into the courtroom packed with anxious relatives and observers inside a Manila maximum-security prison.

Black-clad sharpshooters patrolled the premises while dozens of heavily armed police stood guard.

The carnage drew international condemnation and prompted then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to impose martial law for a week as troops cracked down on the Ampatuans - her political allies. A prominent senator, Joker Arroyo, has recently warned that the sheer volume of the case - at least 227 witnesses are listed by the prosecution and another 373 by the defense - means it could drag on for '200 years'.

Officials wouldn't comment on how long the trial will last but cautioned it will take time. An average criminal case takes about seven years to complete due to lack of prosecutors and judges and a huge backlog of cases. The Maguindanao massacre is considered to be the largest criminal prosecution since the country's World War II war crime trials.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch urged the government Wednesday to protect witnesses and round up more than 100 suspects still at large, most of them linked to the Ampatuans' private army. The watchdog said five people with knowledge of abuses by the Ampatuans have been gunned down.

'With fewer than half of the suspects in custody, witnesses, investigators, and others who might be deemed to be a threat to the Ampatuan family are at risk,' the group said in a statement.

'It's hard to fight the devil,' said Monette Salaysay, mother of Napoleon Salaysay, one of

the slain journalists. 'So many were killed and yet the justice is
<http://www.mailonsunday.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1310098/Philippine-massacre-57-planned-dinner-according-plotters-house-servant.html#ixzz0z6MUX9qi>

Thailand

- **Political Front**
- **Economic Front**
- **Thailand drops to 38th in poll**

Thailand ranked 38th in the world in terms of competitiveness for 2010, a decline of two spots from the year before, according to a competitiveness report by the World Economic Forum. Switzerland led the charts for the second consecutive year in the ranking of 139 economies, followed by Sweden, Singapore, the US and Germany.

Thailand ranked 48th in terms of basic requirements, 39th in the category of "efficiency enhancers" and 49th for innovation and sophistication factors.

The country scored relatively poorly in areas such as higher education and training and technology, but ranked 24th in terms of labour market efficiency and 23rd for market size. Thailand has fallen 10 spots in overall competitiveness since 2006.

The assessment of public institutions has fallen 30 places over the past four years to 70th in the world, "likely related to recent social unrest and political instability", the report said.

"However, Thailand continues to benefit from its relatively large domestic and export markets, (23rd), its excellent transport infrastructure (23rd), the efficiency of its labour market (24th), and a relatively well-functioning goods market (ranked 41st)." The WEF also noted the country's relatively sophisticated business environment, but said Thailand needs to urgently improve its institutional framework, health and education systems and adoption of new technology.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/economics/195528/thailand-drops-to-38th-in-poll>

- **Severe talent shortage hits finance industry**

The booming finance industry is leaving recruiters and head-hunters scrambling to find skilled staff amid one of the most severe talent squeezes in years.

A new study points to how serious the problem is: About 81 per cent of industry professionals with recruitment responsibilities say there is a lack of personnel equipped with finance and accounting skills. This includes 40 per cent of respondents who described the situation as either major or chronic.

"In my 13 years in recruiting for finance and accounting and the four years I've been in Singapore, I've never seen such a high percentage of people describe the situation as chronic or major," said Tim Hird, managing director at recruitment firm Robert Half,

which conducted the study with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). Hird added that the chronic shortage of accountants and finance professionals is even higher now than in the boom years before the financial crisis hit.

The talent crunch has led companies to become more creative in the ways they source talent, like offering incentives for employees who refer former colleagues to their companies, said Hird. "Companies have had to move away from traditional recruitment methods like direct advertising... and more and more, they have had to look at those who are happily employed and not actively looking (for a new job)," he added.

Firms are also looking to plug vacancies by turning to contract labour. Of the recruiters who indicated there was a shortage of talent, about 47 per cent said they are hiring temporary or contract staff - this is about double the number a year ago, according to Hird. Other than hiring contract staff, firms often work on upgrading the skills of existing staff, getting employees to work longer hours and recruiting overseas.

The study was conducted last month and covered Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore. In Singapore, 325 finance professionals with recruitment responsibilities were polled. The situation is even worse in Hong Kong, where 58 per cent of respondents said there is a chronic or major skills shortage.

Teo Cheow Tong, senior partner at Singapore accountancy firm RSM Chio Lim, said it has trouble recruiting due to the limited supply of accountants from the local universities. "Furthermore, the accounting profession is increasingly becoming less attractive to the younger generation compared to the banks and commerce," he added.

The firm is increasing pay to attract recruits, and it also has an introduction scheme for staff to recommend people. The study by ACCA and Robert Half also examined how companies can retain their best people. It polled the 325 recruiters here plus 103 finance and accounting professionals with no recruitment responsibilities. It showed that employees would most likely look for other jobs when managers are not offering them deserved opportunities, when they see a better management structure elsewhere, or when they have conflicts with bosses. "People join companies because of the company name, but people leave because of leadership," said Darryl Wee, country head of ACCA Singapore.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=14215&sec=2>

- **Social Front**
- **Working closely with WHO to tackle threats**

Health is the basic right of every citizen. It is the moral obligation and the responsibility of governments to ensure that all citizens have equitable access to quality health care, so that they can contribute fully to the economic and social advancement of the nation. Of

course, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best medicine that one can have, and prevention is always better than cure.

In the last 40 years, Thailand has achieved significant progress on health development, especially on the reduction of maternal and child mortality, improved life expectancy, combating HIV/Aids, and introducing and enforcing legislation against tobacco and alcohol. Thailand has also achieved all the Millennium Development Goals on health well before our 2015 commitment.

The attainment of health goals was possible for Thailand thanks to our three-pronged development policy, which I will call the "3 P's." First is primary health care, where there has been extensive investment in health service infrastructure since the 1970s, focusing on primary health care at the sub-district and district levels. These local health systems provide "close-to-client" services, which are better accessible by the rural poor. The district health systems, such as community medical centres, have proven to be the key strategic approach in progressing towards more equitable health care in Thailand. We are also in the process of upgrading our health care facilities through the use of ITC to link up with other resources.

Second is the issue of people and participation. Primary health care functions best when there are enough well-trained health workers. Here in Thailand, we have put in place mandatory rural services by all medical, nursing and other health care graduates for many decades. Various other schemes were also launched, such as rural recruitment, hometown placement, as well as financial and non-financial incentives to ensure rural retention of medical personnel.

This also led to the creation of Thai Health and the Provincial Health Assemblies, as part of the effort on people's participation.

Third is protection. Financial risk protection for health expenses ensures adequate access to health care. Low-income households and vulnerable populations have been the target groups for free medical care coverage since 1975, while private employees have been covered by social health insurance since 1990. All civil servants are covered by a government medical benefit scheme.

Thailand takes pride in having achieved universal health coverage in 2002, which produced a pro-poor and more equitable policy outcome that corresponds with our goal to become a welfare society. The vibrant and continuous economic growth in Thailand has made possible a more generous health care budget and, for this government, this is concomitant with the strong political commitment to human development.

Like all countries in the region, Thailand is faced with many health challenges. For example, successive governments and civil society have for a long time worked on

tobacco control. And there is still room for more introduction of tax-related measures, as price is one of the most effective interventions for bringing down tobacco consumption. Moreover, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases across the globe still pose a great threat to human health. A recent example is last year's H1N1 pandemic influenza, which has taught us a great lesson that we must always be on full alert. With continuous urban growth, environmental health problems are intensifying. We also face many new diseases as the world faces climate change, and in times of natural disaster, providing quality and affordable health care is a highly challenging task. Indeed, we have to be very strategic in our health policies, in both planning and implementation.

As part of our international commitment, Thailand will actively share and exchange its experiences and expertise with our friends in the region. We will continue to render close cooperation to the WHO on health issues, and jointly tackle new diseases before they attack. Thailand will continue to reach out to countries to together solve global, regional and trans-national health threats. This collaborative effort requires a strong and effective platform, and an active engagement with multi-stakeholders to ensure that health implications are considered thoroughly in all public policy dimensions.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/195136/working-closely-with-who-to-tackle-threats>

- **Cyber world**
- **Software Park thinks globally**

As software is a global business that has untold value to drive the IT industry and strengthen the nation socially and economically, software developers need to capture the demand in the market and build distribution channels through physical partners and deliver their software as a service through the cloud computing, according to Suwipa Wanasathop, Director of Software Park Thailand.

Locally, Software Park leverages its partnering network through eight software parks, both private and public, around the country and matches Bangkok-based businesses to expand its market in upcountry regions by selecting local resellers and implementers, which creates IT-related jobs. "Demand in the domestic market is still strong, especially in banking and finance, including business continuity planning services for enterprises," Suwipa said.

In order to reach globally, Software Park has established a partner network at the government and private levels with the Asian Oceanian Computing Industry Organization (ASOCIO) through the Association of Thai ICT Industry (ATCI). To continually leverage the global network, Software Park and the ATCI have joined forces to organise Thailand's first Asian Oceania software promotion event under the theme of "Software:

The Untold Value Maker" to underscore the ever-increasing power of software, which is dramatically altering the world's economic, social and political values. The event will be held on Sept 22 at Queen Sirikit Convention Center.

Bunrak Sarakanond, ATCI President, said the association plans to organise this international event over the next three years, which aims to gain regional recognition for Thailand's software industry and create trusted business partners across the region."The event will be a meeting place for business-matching, allowing supply to meet demand and signing bilateral agreements as well as collaborating on marketing strategies in third countries which need a long-term relationship. This is why we need to host the international event for three years," Bunrak said.

This a great opportunity to bring delegates from 10 countries in the Asia Pacific region to participate in the event and it is anticipated that at least 50 companies will take part, while Thailand will bring award-winning software houses to showcase their products and services. The Asia Pacific region shows opportunities in a variety of areas. For example, Japan still outsources quite heavily but mostly looks at China, Vietnam is developing e-logistics, Bangladesh is quite active in investing in ICT, while Singapore is strong in marketing.

One of the highlights is the signing of an agreement between the ATCI and the Chinese Taipei Information Service Industry Association "This is big chance to pave the way to the China market for Thai software through partnering with Taiwan's business network," Bunrak said. Suwipa added that Software Park currently has a bilateral agreement with Malaysia to match business opportunities in agriculture, manufacturing and other services. Partnering with Malaysia and Brunei will help Thailand pave the way to the halal market in other countries.

"The event will be a stage for the Thai software industry to show its capabilities to the global market, building on the success of previous Software Park annual conferences. And this year, both the minister of Science and Technology and the minister of Information and Communication Technology will be guest speakers," Suwipa said. Jirawit Maeprasart, Strategic Enablement Manager/Software & Service Group at Intel Microelectronics (Thailand), suggested that Thai developers should consider developing mobile applications and selling them through the Application Center marketplace, which global mobile vendors have created to provide services to mobile users.

Intel also introduced the beta version of the Intel AppUp Center, which is a marketplace for consumers to download applications and it will support new tablet and slate devices and smart phones including Internet TV and embedded devices which use Atom-based software. Currently, there are 40 million netbooks globally and the figure is expected to

reach 140 million units in the next three years, which is a potentially highly lucrative market. With global partners such as Asus and Acer, the AppUp Center supports a multi-hardware and multi-operating system environment.

Thai developers can leverage and learn more the trend by attending the Intel Atom Developer Program as well as learn programming techniques in parallel programming that leverages multi-core CPU and cloud computing.

Prinya Hom-anek, president and founder of ACIS Professional Center, said the mobile phone will be the new PC and it will become a big market for software. Developers need to build secure software as a must and embed it in products. Secure software, starting from design, testing and evaluation, will help to create quality software while adding value to differentiate competitors.

Moreover, Thailand should consider joining the Certified Secure Software Lifecycle Professional (CSSLP) certification, which is a new vendor-neutral application security certification to validate secure software development knowledge and best practices.

Meanwhile, Patama Chantaruck, Managing Director of Microsoft (Thailand), said Thai software developers both in software houses and individually as well as students who are interested in creating their own applications for commercial use or competing in the Imagine Cup, should look at upcoming technology trends.

For example, Microsoft will launch Kinect for Xbox 360 in November and Windows Phone 7 technology will bring a new control-free experience to interactive game users called "Natural User Interface". The company plans to introduce the product by the holiday season and is showing its game title demonstration at Microsoft Experience Centers and it has authorised resellers to accelerate demand for game titles in the market.

Teerawat Jaishuen Tivoli, software manager at IBM Thailand, said that the company is in discussions with Software Park to implement its Smart Test and Development Cloud in the park and offer a pooling of computing and storage as well as development tools for software houses to deploy or test the product without wasting time for preparing the IT resource and reduce time to market from two to three weeks to 10 minutes.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com./tech/technews/195172/software-park-thinks-globally>

Vietnam

- **Political Front**
- **Vietnam as a Lesson**

On the 2nd of September, the people of Vietnam celebrated along with their many friends from all other countries around the world, 65 of them having declared their national independence. A historical fact that in most cases in other countries it shines like something natural even for their own people. It may be said that in the case of Vietnam it

has and will always have a global significance.

That declaration of independence of a people who had only had been known under the name of Indochina, as part of the extensive colonial world then under the domination of France, went virtually unnoticed here and in other countries like ours, the neocolonial world controlled by the United States and baptized in a contemptuous form as the Yankee backyard.

I remember well, personally, as I was in France in the year 1946, for the first time I could read in the press the name of Vietnam, and then with major emphasis, I listened to it in Prague, and the following year, during the First World Youth and Students Festival.

Here in our Venezuela, however, it was in the 60s and with the motive of our failed attempts at armed struggle, already with our young Communists and Miristas - with weapons in their hands - led by Rómulo Betancourt and Raúl Leoni against a whole range of yankee stooges, when people began speaking, on a frequent basis about the case of Vietnam, which they praised.

In truth, the people of Vietnam have given humanity a great example of the highest morality, in many ways, and valuable especially not only for revolutionaries, but also for people with patriotic feelings in general. What I have written on other occasions, the lesson of ethics, wisdom and simplicity that Ho Chi Minh, the great Uncle Ho, has left us in my opinion is now and will forever be insurmountable.

Let's see how that struggle is explained today by his own Vietnamese people. In a formidable 906 page book recently published, we found there: "The Vietnamese people began the war against American intervention to liberate the South and unite their nation (1954-1975) in very difficult international conditions. The socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union and China, were divided and held different views. The international communist movement and workers were plunged into crisis, and the national liberation movement was being undermined by neo-colonialism."

And he adds: "Vietnam fought two wars of resistance from 1945 to 1954 and from 1954 to 1975. During that period, the Cold War prevailed throughout the world." Then to add this: "In this struggle of life and death, the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Communist Party, gradually achieved their own experience and finally reached a glorious victory. Several factors contributed to this victory.

Between them there was the wise and visionary leadership of Ho Chi Minh, who creatively applied his own independent policy in foreign affairs, and he knew how to handle those relationships wisely and with tact. Thanks to his guidance and that of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the wars of resistance in Vietnam achieved great support and encouragement from the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries, of

national-independent countries, and peace-loving and progressive forces in the world, including people from France and the United States. "(Mai Ly Quang, from Past to future Viet Nam or Vietnam from past to future editions Thé Gioia, published in Vietnam, 1st edition, 2007 English)." Comments rest, I say.

<http://english.pravda.ru/history/07-09-2010/114870-vietnam-0/>

- **Economic Front**

Cambodia

- **Political Front**
- **Geo-strategic Front**
- **No date set for border talks with Thailand: Cambodian official**

The Cambodian government said on Monday that there is no date has been set for the next border talks with Thailand. Nem Sowath, chief of cabinet of Tea Banh, deputy prime minister and minister of national defense said that, as of Monday, no date yet has been set for the General Border Committee meeting.

Thai media has carried out reports citing the Thai government's statement as saying that the 7th General Border Committee meeting between Cambodia and Thailand would start on Sept. 8 in Bangkok, Thailand. But Nem Sowath said Thailand has not sent any letter or intend for the meeting as it was reported.

However, he said, Cambodia is ready to hold talks at any technical level to help solve any remaining issues between the two countries. The GBC is co-chaired by defense ministers from the two countries and the forum is designed to help solve any problems arising along the border of the two nations including transnational crimes, drug smuggling, security, terrorism among others. Cambodia and Thailand has had border conflict just one week after Cambodia's Preah Vihear Temple was registered as World Heritage Site in July 2008. Since the conflict started, military standoff has been on and off along the two countries' border and several military clashes have already been happened with recorded small casualties from both sides. The International Court of Justice on June 15, 1962 ruled in favor to Cambodia, saying Preah Vihear Temple is belonging to Cambodia, but after July 2008, Thailand has claimed the surrounding land covering over 4.6 square km near the temple.

This border conflict has not been resolved yet.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7122473.html>

- **Economic Front**
- **Cambodia considered a successful post-conflict country: PM Hun Sen**

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen said Saturday that his country is considered as a "successful post-conflict country". Giving speech at the forum on 2010 Asialink Conversations- Cambodia, Hun Sen said "Cambodia can be considered as a successful

post-conflict country," saying the reforms and economic growth plus other development schemes and plans are on right track.

He said, after the post conflict that only ended in late 1990s, and with the support from development partners and the private sector, Cambodia has made giant strides in development in the last decade. With the return of full peace in 1998, a sense of confidence and pride pervades the country, a feeling that bodes well for birth prospects for economic growth and job creation and a concrete vision of a promising future. "Since then, the Cambodian economy has undergone a dramatic and rapid transformation. Economic growth during 1999-2003 averaged 8.8 percent, and although official development assistance (ODA) continued to finance growth, foreign direct investment (FDI) particularly investments in garment and tourism, was key to promoting growth," he said. Hun Sen said that with the implementation during the last 5 years of the public financial management reform program, government revenue more than doubled from 2,220 billion riels (553 million U.S. dollars) in 2004 to 4,928 billion riels (1.2 billion U.S. dollars) in 2009.

In 2009, the gross domestic product experienced a positive growth, though very small, as agriculture and services sector maintained robust growth, he added. On the per capita income, Hun Sen said since 1993, Cambodia's gross domestic product (GDP) increased fourfold from 2.4 billion U.S. dollars in 1993 to 10.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2008, and during this period, per capita income has more than tripled from 229 U.S. dollars to 739 U.S. dollars.

The prime minister also expressed his optimism over the Asia's growth despite global economic recovery remains fragile. "Although the global recovery remains fragile, we can see the positive signs of the recovery of the world economy," he said, adding "We expect growth in Asia excluding Japan in 2010 to be around 7 percent."

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7129250.html>

- **Cambodia to get \$3b investment**

A Chinese company plans to pump \$3 billion into Cambodian energy, property, and aluminum processing projects, an official said on Thursday. The proposed investment by China Inner Mongolia Erdos Hongjun Investment Co emerged after a meeting on Wednesday in Phnom Penh. The firm plans to build a 700-megawatt coal power plant in the popular seaside resort of Sihanoukville.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90778/90858/90863/7136144.html>

- **Cambodia denies media's report on nuclear power plant**

Cambodia Monday denied media's report that suggested the country might have deal with Iran to build a nuclear power plant.

Koy Kuong, spokesman of Foreign Ministry said Monday that Cambodia has not made any deal with Iran on anything related to nuclear power plant. Koy Kuong made the statement following media's report that suggested during the recent visit to Iran. Hor Namhong, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs might have discussed any issue on nuclear power plant.

Koy Kuong said, during the visit, there were only three documents were signed: cooperation in petroleum, economic cooperation and visa exemption. Hor Namhong made an official visit to Iran early this month.

Cambodia has earlier expressed its interest, for the future, to access a nuclear power plant in order to secure sufficient power supply, but stressed it would not be any time soon.

Since June, Iran has been imposed with new sanctions by the United States, European Union and the United Nations in a way to stop its sensitive uranium-enrichment program which they fear of nuclear weapons production. But the Iranian government had denied the charge, saying the program was only for a peaceful purpose.

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7122194.html>

- **Social Front**

Singapore

- **Political Front**
- **Economic Front**
- **Business - Business - Nation**

Singapore's economy will likely expand at a record pace of 14.9 percent this year as a surge in demand for the city-state's exports fuels manufacturing, according to a central bank survey of analysts. In June, analysts had forecast just 9 percent growth.

DRIVERS: Singapore's economy - which relies on trade, finance and tourism - will likely be led this year by a 29 percent expansion of the manufacturing sector as non-oil exports soar. Financial services is seen growing 10.6 percent and wholesale and retail trade by 16 percent.

OTHER FACTORS: The opening of Singapore's first two casino-resorts has helped fuel tourist spending.

<http://www.thestate.com/2010/09/01/1444207/summary-box-growth-seen-for-singapore.html>

- **Research and Markets: Singapore Defence Industry 2H10 Includes the Leading Players in Singapore's Defence Industry Singapore**

Singapore Defence includes the country's defence environment, military expenditure, import and export of arms and others. As a country that is one of Asia's best equipped militaries, Singapore plans to spend a staggering SGD11.46bn on its defence during FY2010 after slight increase of SGD8mn from the previous fiscal of SGD11.45bn.

In order to enable its army forces to possess capabilities to combat decisively in wars to counter terrorism as well as conduct peacekeeping and humanitarian operations through interconnected land, air and sea defence operations, the operation of the 3rd Generation RSAF was undertaken. In which, F-15 fighter, Boinix II, F-16D 52+ Fighting Falcon were added to its fleet.

Also, this report includes the leading players in Singapore's defence industry Singapore Technologies Engineering (ST Engineering), DuPont, Eagle Engineering Aerospace and Strategic Marine. ST Engineering specialises in providing solutions in the aerospace, electronic, land systems and marine industries. Despite a challenging economic environment, ST Engineering registered robust growth of 3.78% in its turnover in 2009 to reach SGD5.55bn, over previous years SGD5.35bn.

<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20100903005296/en/Research-Markets-Singapore-Defence-Industry-2H10-Includes>

- **Singapore and Thailand, Two Asian Economies Flying Under Investor Radar**

Jon D. Markman writes: You know about China, India, and maybe even Korea, but there are two other Asian economies making waves in the South China Sea. I'm talking about Singapore and Thailand.

While the U.S. economy would be really lucky to poke along at a 3% annualized rate this year and next, the fast-growing countries on the other side of the globe are ripping higher. Regional analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News survey said they see Singapore expanding at a record pace this year of 14.9% due to improving demand for the city-state's exports. That's up from an estimate of 9% published three months ago. Singapore's economy relies on trade, finance and tourism. Its central bank said the surge would be led by a 29% expansion of manufacturing.

The two new casino complexes that were opened earlier in the year also have given the economy a boost. They were built at a cost of \$10 billion in an effort to expand the Singapore's stature as a destination rather than just a waypoint for global travelers. The M Hotel in Singapore's business district once struggled to fill its rooms on weekends as visiting executives tended to leave by Friday, according to The China Post. Now it enjoys 90%-plus occupancy rate. "I'm looking out of my window at the new skyline. What has developed over the last five years has been amazing," Hanspeter Brummer, chief executive for Asia at Swiss private bank BSI, told the newspaper from his office, which overlooks the new Marina Bay financial district.

The new business district was built on reclaimed land around the mouth of the Singapore River, and comprises not just office skyscrapers but also shops, condos, theaters and the

Marina Bay Sands, which was built by Las Vegas Sands Corp. (NYSE: LVS). The district sports the world's biggest Ferris wheel, restaurants that feature celebrity chefs, and the world's first Formula One circuit where races can run at night.

Singapore felt it had to develop into a regional hub because it was losing its low-wage factory jobs to China, Malaysia and Vietnam. But it also went upscale with manufacturing, and a retooled factory base now accounts for a quarter of the economy. The bottom line is that this is where some of the most exciting growth is occurring in the world. It's not an over-hyped sideshow - it's real, and I hope you are participating.

At least check out the iShares MSCI Singapore Index Fund (NYSE: EWS), if you haven't already.

The South Asian Steel Giant

Singapore obviously isn't the only South Asian economy worth a look. Over the weekend I ran across a very interesting article in the British newspaper The Sunday Sun that said a mothballed blast furnace in the English seaside town of Redcar could be up and running by Christmas because it has been purchased by a Thai steel company that has big plans for its production.

The blast furnace, which had been the biggest employer in the city, went quiet in February and 1,600 workers lost their jobs. The Teesside Steelworks had been launched in 1917, and its steel was used to build bridges, warships and skyscrapers throughout the Commonwealth. The company was purchased by Dutch-British conglomerate Corus Group Ltd. in 1999, and then sold to India-based Tata Steel Ltd. in 2007.

Tata decided to close the plant as part of a global consolidation, but it was rescued when Sahaviriya Steel Industries PLC (SSI) of Bangkok bought it for \$490 million (320 million pounds). A union leader told the Sunday Sun that SSI planned to make a long-term commitment to the plant, and would help train a new generation of workers to begin careers in the industry.

SSI - the largest steel producer in Thailand - is expected to take over the Redcar and South Bank coke ovens, power generation facilities, the Redcar blast furnace and the nearby Lackenby steel-making facilities, as well as a bulk terminal at the Redcar wharf.

"We've known Teesside Cast Products for some time and we're very satisfied with the quality of the product and have a high regard for the skilled workforce," said SSI President Win Viriyaprapaikit.

This kind of deal epitomizes the reality of the growth that is occurring in Thailand. It's not just a paper-trading, stock-market phenomenon, but real managers building real global businesses brick by brick. SSI makes up just about 1% of the holdings of iShares MSCI Thailand Index Fund (NYSE: THD), but it's emblematic of the country's potential

as an industrial leader. THD is still a good buy on dips.

<http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article22516.html>

- **.S. Economy Losing to Sweden & Singapore**

The U.S. has slipped down the ranks of competitive economies, falling behind Sweden and Singapore due to huge deficits and pessimism about government, a global economic group said Thursday. Switzerland retained the top spot for the second year in the annual ranking by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum. It combines economic data and a survey of more than 13,500 business executives.

Sweden moved up to second place while Singapore stayed at No. 3. The United States was in second place last year after falling from No. 1 in 2008. The WEF praised the United States for its innovative companies, excellent universities and flexible labor market. But it also cited huge deficits, rising government debt and declining public faith in politicians and corporate ethics. "There has been a weakening of the United States' public and private institutions, as well as lingering concerns about the state of its financial markets," the group said.

Mapping a clear strategy for exiting the huge U.S. stimulus "will be an important step in reinforcing the country's competitiveness," it said. The report was released in Beijing ahead of a WEF-organized gathering of global business executives next week in neighboring Tianjin. The group is best known for its annual Davos meeting of corporate leaders.

The report ranks 139 countries by assessing business efficiency, innovation, financial markets, health, education, institutions, infrastructure and other factors. The United States was followed by Germany, Japan, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Canada.

Switzerland held its top rank due to its strong innovation, evenhanded regulation and one of the world's most stable economic environments. The WEF cited education and regulation as key areas for improvement in a number of economies and warned leaders not to lose sight of long-term needs as they struggle with the global crisis.

"For economies to remain competitive, they must ensure that they have in place those factors driving the productivity enhancements on which their present and future prosperity is built," one of the report's co-authors, Columbia University economist Xavier Sala-i-Martin, said in a statement. China performed best among major developing economies, rising two places from last year to 27th based on its large and growing market, economic stability and increasing sophistication of its businesses. Japan gained two places, helped by strong innovative abilities, though its status was hurt by the country's two-decade-old financial malaise.

Greece plunged 12 places to 83rd, plagued by a debt crisis and mounting public concern

about corruption and government inefficiency, according to the WEF

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/09/09/business/main6850175.shtml>

- **Social Front**

Brunei

- **At political Front**
- **At economic Front**
- **Brunei raises global competitiveness rank**

BRUNEI further improved on its Global Competitiveness ranking this year to 28th out of 139 economies, the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR 2010-2011) said.

Released by the World Economic Forum yesterday, the report showed that Brunei made a four-step rise from 32nd out of 133 economies last year. "The four-step rise in ranking was due to improvements in many of the areas measured by the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). Brunei was able to maintain its number one position in macroeconomic stability and further enhanced its ranking in five of the 12 pillars of the GCI," said the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR), which is the partner institute of the Geneva-based World Economic Forum's Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance (CGCP) in Brunei.

Minister of Industry and Primary Resources Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Haji Yahya Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Haji Bakar said that the continuing improvement of the country's ranking is indeed a welcome development.

"This is a reflection of the excellent leadership of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in putting in place the necessary elements for achieving the National Vision 2035 for the country to be recognised everywhere for the accomplishments of its well educated and highly skilled people, its quality of life and lastly, a dynamic, sustainable economy," said Pehin Dato Hj Yahya. The minister added that while the current achievement of the country is a cause for rejoicing, there is still need for various stakeholders in the government and business communities to strengthen their resolve to further advance the country's competitiveness. Areas on which the Sultanate has improved are: health and primary education (+10), goods market efficiency (+22), financial market development (+13), technological readiness (+13) and innovation (+6).

However, there was a decline in three pillars, which are infrastructure (-11), higher education and training (-2) and market size (-3). The GCR 2010-2011 stated that the economy is categorised as one in transition from stage one to stage two because of its economy's dependency on oil and gas, accounting for 83 per cent of exports. "Brunei continues to do well in the categories that matter the most given its stage of development,

namely institutions (36th), health and primary education (32nd), and the macroeconomic environment (1st). While the basic requirements are in place, the overall environment for doing business remains challenging. Goods markets are improving but continue to lack efficiency (78th) and financial markets could be further developed (55th). Competitiveness would also be enhanced through improvements of the higher education system (64th)," the report added.

Neighbour Singapore maintained the same rank at third place from last year. Sweden managed to edge up two ranks to second place, which saw United States fall to fourth place and Switzerland maintaining its number one rank again.

China, ranked 27th, continues to lead the way among large developing economies, improving by two more places this year, and solidifying its place among the top 30.

The GCR's competitiveness ranking is based on the GCI, developed for the World Economic Forum by Xavier Sala-i-Martin, introduced in 2004.

Sala-i-Martin, a professor of economics at Columbia University, USA and co-author of the report, said: "Amid concerns about the outlook for the global economy, policymakers must not lose sight of long-term competitiveness fundamentals amid short-term challenges. For economies to remain competitive, they must ensure that they have in place those factors driving the productivity enhancements on which their present and future prosperity is built. A competitiveness-supporting economic environment can help national economies to weather business cycle downturns and ensure that the mechanisms enabling solid economic performance going into the future are in place."

The GCI is based on 12 pillars of competitiveness, providing a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world at all stages of development. These are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation.

The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of partner institutes (leading research institutes and business organisations) in the countries covered by the study. This year, over 13,500 business leaders were polled in 139 economies. The survey is designed to capture a broad range of factors affecting an economy's business climate. The report also includes comprehensive listings of the main strengths and weaknesses of countries, making it possible to identify key priorities for policy reform.

The report contains a data section with a detailed profile for each of the 139 economies featured in the study, providing a comprehensive summary of the overall position in the rankings.

<http://www.bruneitimes.com.bn/news-national/2010/09/10/brunei-raises-global-competitiveness-rank>

- **HALAL / ISLAMIC Printer Friendly Version**

In our ever progressive world, it has become increasingly challenging for Muslims to determine whether the products they consume are religiously acceptable or ‘Halal’. Halal and non-Halal classifications are not only limited to food and beverages but also to other products such as health supplements, pharmaceutical products, personal care and cosmetics products.

As Brunei prides itself on its status as a Malay Islamic Monarchy, the role of Halal products is extremely important. Brunei’s standards for Halal certification is known to be one of the strictest in the world- the credibility of Brunei Halal Certification brings confidence to Muslims worldwide and also guarantees safety and quality assurance to the general consumer market.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM'S COMMITMENT TO HALAL DEVELOPMENT

The Brunei Government has invested its efforts in the development of the Halal industry through a number of initiatives, including the establishment of the Halal Food Standards, Halal Pharmaceutical Guidelines and the launching of the Brunei Halal Brand.

The Brunei Halal Brand provides an avenue for businesses to penetrate into the Muslim market; consumers can depend in products’ safety and quality produced under Brunei’s Halal brand name.

The Brunei Halal Brand and the establishment of both the Halal Food Standards and Halal Pharmaceutical Guidelines were projects initiated by the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources, with the cooperation of the Brunei Islamic Religious Council, Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Health. The Halal Pharmaceutical Guidelines is said to be the first of its kind in the world. Another emerging Halal cluster with a vast market potential is the Halal Personal Care and Cosmetics industry.

Brunei offers a potential location for the development of a Halal processing hub and supporting manufacturing industries, next to the planned port development at Pulau Muara Besar (PMB). The port will be operational by 2012 and this location is especially ideal for export-oriented industries. Another initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources is the development of the Agro-Technology Park (ATP). Phase 1 includes plans to develop a Halal Science Centre, Research and Development, Food Incubator and Botanical Gardens.

http://www.bedb.com.bn/index_halal.php

- **OIL & GAS / PETROCHEMICALS Printer Friendly Version**

Brunei is known for its oil and gas resources, being the 4th largest oil producer in ASEAN and the 9th largest exporter of LNG in the world. Brunei's well-established oil and gas industry dates back 80 years and forms an ideal foundation for further downstream development, making Brunei the perfect location for your petrochemical investment.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM'S COMMITMENT TO PETROCHEMICAL DEVELOPMENT

Brunei's Government is committed to the development of the petrochemical industry within the country and is demonstrated through the development of the Sungai Liang Industrial Park (SPARK). In SPARK, the Government has invested in and developed a ready-to-use industrial park, ideal for petrochemical and supporting industries.

Strategically located next to Brunei's well-established oil and gas industry, this 270 hectare site is ideally positioned to flourish as a world class petrochemical hub. SPARK is administered by the Sungai Liang Authority (SLA) to support the development of a globally competitive industrial hub, through a streamlined administrative process (single-point access), centred in a business-friendly environment.

In addition to its competitive advantages and other incentives, Brunei offers investors further value in:

http://www.bedb.com.bn/index_oilandgas.php

Laos

- **Geo-strategic Front**
- **Laos, Cambodia agree on border demarcation project**

Laos and Cambodia have agreed to allow technical officials from the two nations begin a border demarcation project in six locations along their common borderline in December this year. The agreement was reached at a meeting between border officials of both countries held on August 27-29 in Stung Treng province of Cambodia to discuss the demarcation project.

A Lao delegation, led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bounkeut Sangsomsak, held discussions with Cambodian officials, headed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Long Visalo.

The locations set for demarcation include the source of the Lamphao River, the Veunkham area, the area between the Road No.13 South in Laos and Road No.7 of Cambodia, and the area of Nachampa village.

After completion of the project in the six agreed locations, the two nations will continue conducting a survey in other border locations, including near the Ta-ngao stream. Meeting participants advised local authorities in the respective nations to maintain cooperation in protecting the environment and educating villagers living near the shared border to respect immigration laws and related regulations of both countries.

The meeting was held in an atmosphere of friendship, mutual understanding and neighbourly amity. The meeting also saw an agreement to continue conducting border surveys and demarcation in locations already decided upon by the governments of Laos and Cambodia.

The project will significantly contribute to clearly defining the borderline between the two nations as well as contribute to making the shared border an area of peace, stability, mutual trust, friendship and cooperation between Laos and Cambodia.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/01.09.2010/edn11.htm>

- **Indian President arrives on state visit in Laos**

Her Excellency Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of the Republic of India, and her delegation arrived here yesterday afternoon on a special plane on a state visit to the Lao PDR on 9-13 September.

The visit is in response to an invitation of Lao President Choummaly Sayasone. President Patil and her party were greeted at Vientiane's Wattay International Airport by Ms Khempheng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Vice-Mayor of Vientiane, Lao ambassador to India, senior officials from the Presidential Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Indian embassy in Laos.

A dinner reception to welcome the Indian President and her delegation was also held at the Lao Plaza Hotel in Vientiane by Indian residents in Vientiane on 9 September evening. Besides, Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil will receive courtesy calls of Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, President of the National Assembly and Mr. Bouasone Bouphavanh, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, respectively. The Indian President will visit the world heritage town of Luang Prabang in northern Laos where she will receive a courtesy call of Mr. Bounheuang Duangphrachanh, Governor of Luang Prabang province.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/edn1.htm>

- **Economic Front**
- **Lao-Vietnamese trade hits 1.7 trillion kip**

The two-way trade between Laos and Vietnam in the first six months of this year amounts to over 1.7 trillion kip (USD\$ 212 million), up by 8 per cent year on year. Laos's export to Vietnam in the first half of this year is valued at 992 billion kip (USD\$121

million), a rise of 10% over last year's same period and import is 746 billion kip, also up by 5.8%.

Vietnamese investors have invested in 219 projects in Laos with a total investment of 19,786 billion kip (USD\$ 2.4 billion). From October 2009 to May this year, 12 projects of 1,394 billion kip (US\$170 million) by Vietnamese investors have been approved by the Lao government. Seven of these projects, worth 902 billion kip (USD\$110 million), are direct investment by Vietnamese companies.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/07.09.2010/edn4.htm>

- **Lao officials learn WTO standards for food safety**

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the US Embassy in Laos and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) held on September 8 a workshop on promoting the use of standards and regulations for food safety and product quality to improve the business environment in Laos and advance Lao efforts to accede to the World Trade Organisation.

The workshop was aimed at increasing awareness among the key government officials and the private sector who will be most involved in implementing the recently approved Prime Minister's decree on establishing SPS=Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary and TBT Enquiry and Notification Points. TBT=Technical Barriers to Trade. The establishment of enquiry and notification points will introduce significant changes in the Lao SPS and TBT legal frameworks, most importantly improving the transparency and predictability of decision making.

This will provide domestic and foreign business easier access to SPS, laws and regulations affecting food safety and plant and animal health, and to technical regulations, standard and conformity assessment processes for industrial goods under TBT.

The EPS enquiry point will be established in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the TBT enquiry point will be in the National Authority for Science and Technology. A notification point will be established in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to report Lao policies on SPS and TST to the WTO.

The workshop is part of larger United States Government funded programme=USAID /LUNA Lao project, the Lao United States International and ASEAN Integration Project that is designed to provide technical assistance to support Laos to implement the US-Lao Bilateral Trade Agreement, to accede to the WTO and to meet the obligations in the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/08.09.2010/edn4.htm>

- **Social Front**

- **AIDS kills over 1,000 in Laos**

Over 1,000 people have died of AIDS in the country over the past nine years (1990-2009) and it is estimated that the number of HIV infected people would reach 7,000 over the half decade, said an official. The HIV infection is attributed to unsafe sex, according to Director of Centre for HIV/AIDS/STD Dr. Chansy Phimpachanh.

"At present, AIDS has increased on an annual basis. Vientiane, ranking the second province with the largest number of HIV/AIDS infected people after Savannakhet, has 3,659 people dying and infected with HIV/AIDS since 1990," said the official. One thousand and thirty-eight people have reportedly died of AIDS in Vientiane over the past nine years.

Most of the infected are men, accounting for 66 per cent of the entire infected. However, the HIV infection for women has increased by one per cent annually. Savannakhet province has 1,431 people infected with HIV/AIDS and Champassak says it has 357 people with HIV/AIDS. One of the most high risk groups of HIV/AIDS is migrant workers who usually avoid using condom when having sex with call girls. "Everyone should pay attention to preventive measures against HIV/AIDS infection such as condom use and safe sex. If doubtful to be infecting with HIV/AIDS seeing doctor is advisable," said the doctor.

Laos has a low rate of infection of HIV/AIDS as compared to other countries in the world. The percentage of HIV/AIDS infection for general people is 0.2 per cent. That of prostitute is 0.4 and that of men who have sex with men is 2.5 per cent. Meanwhile the HIV/AIDS infection amongst drug users is 1.5 per cent.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Public Health has received antiretroviral (ARV) drugs from the World Fund and it has distributed to the Savannakhet Provincial Hospital, Mahosot Hospital, Setthathirath Hospital, Luang Prabang Province Hospital and Champassak Province Hospital. The 9th Ordinary Session of the National Assembly's Sixth Legislature approved a law on AIDS. But this legal document is waiting for endorsement by the Lao President.

<http://www.kpl.net.la/english/news/newsrecord/02.09.2010/edn8.htm>

ASEAN

- **At political Front**
- **At economic Front**
- **Asean overtakes EU as Viet Nam's largest export destination**

For the first time Asean has surpassed the EU in importing Vietnamese goods, reported the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In July, Viet Nam exported US\$6.21 billion worth of goods to Asean while the export value to the EU was \$5.98 billion.

Nguyen Thanh Bien, deputy minister of Industry and Trade, attributed the EU's smaller import consumption to the debt crisis.

Export turnover to Asean is expected to hit \$8.88 billion by the end of the year while the estimated figure for the EU market will be \$10.9 billion, according to export plans from the ministry. Viet Nam will have a difficult time boosting its exports to the Southeast Asian block because Viet Nam and Asean countries produce similar, competitive commodities. "Viet Nam can capitalise on opportunities to enhance exports to other markets via the free trade agreements with Asean nations rather than approaching a strong export growth in the block," said the ministry's multi-lateral trade policy department director Tran Quoc Khanh.

About 13 sectors' export values were higher than \$1 billion each during the first eight months of the year, reported the ministry. Staple exports include textiles and garments, footwear, wooden furniture, seafood and coffee. Traditional markets, including the EU, the US, Japan, mainland China and South Korea, continue to be the largest consumers of Vietnamese exports.

Demand fluctuations in these markets would directly impact Viet Nam's exports, said experts. Nguyen Son, deputy general secretary of the Viet Nam Textile and Apparel Association (Vitas), said the US economy's poor performance in July resulted in lower demand.

Nguyen Ton Quyen, deputy chairman of the Viet Nam Timber and Forest Product Association, said Viet Nam aims to earn \$1.3 billion from wooden furniture exports to major markets this year.

Russia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and North America markets have been difficult to penetrate, especially during the global economic crisis. The textile and garment industry has had difficulty tapping into the Russian market because of the country's high import taxes. Africa has a large amount of demand for clothing, but enterprises have had difficulties negotiating payment methods. Experts warned local firms about technical barriers in large markets. New legislation in the US and the EU are likely to have an adverse impact on Vietnamese exports, said experts.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=14229&sec=2>

- **ASEAN deal expected to lead to full potential in ties with Turkey**

According to Vietnamese Ambassador to Turkey Duong Huynh Lap, the increasingly developed bilateral relations between Vietnam and Turkey will reach their full potential as the latter has taken a key step toward expanding its diplomatic outreach to Southeast Asia, signing a cooperative agreement with the main forum in the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Late last month, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu signed a deal on Turkey's accession to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Vietnam, where a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, a group comprising the 10 ASEAN nations in addition to 17 others, took place. "Accession to the treaty marks a historic step in Turkey's process of opening up to the Southeast Asian-Pacific region," a statement from the Turkish Foreign Ministry said. "Thus, our country has established, for the first time, an institutional relationship and has the opportunity to further deepen its political, economic and cultural ties with the region."

Turkey's efforts to build institutional ties with ASEAN date back to 1999, but it was in 2008 that they gained momentum when Turkey formally expressed its readiness to accede to the TAC in a letter to the Foreign Ministry of Thailand, which chaired ASEAN activities that year.

"Turkey is a member of the G-20, the 17th largest economy of the world, a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a country with an important location connecting two continents -- Europe and Asia," Ambassador Lap first noted when asked in an interview with Today's Zaman to assess the aforementioned development and its probable impacts on relations between Turkey and the region as well as on relations between Vietnam and Turkey. 'On the basis of available multifaceted cooperation and friendship and the tendency of more effective cooperation, Vietnam and Turkey will be able to raise their current relations to the level of partnership relations,' says Vietnamese Ambassador to Turkey Lap

"This important development will contribute to the further strengthening and the consolidation of friendship and cooperative relations with full potential between Turkey and ASEAN member countries, especially Vietnam as a chairman of ASEAN in 2010," Lap added. ASEAN was founded in 1967 and currently comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The TAC, ASEAN's founding pact of non-aggression, was signed in 1976. It was amended on Dec. 15, 1987, by a protocol to open the document to accession by states outside Southeast Asia. China joined the TAC in 2003, being the first country outside the region to accede. A number of countries have also taken part in the TAC, including India, Japan and Pakistan, among others; the US joined last year, while the European Union is currently in the process of joining.

ASEAN spans an area of about 4.5 million square kilometers with a population of approximately 580 million people, or 8.7 percent of the world's population. As for bilateral relations between Vietnam and Turkey, Ambassador Lap believes these relations are increasingly being developed in various fields, such as in the diplomatic, political

and, especially, economic field.

Gül invites Vietnamese president to Turkey

Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Thi Doan's visit to Turkey to attend the third summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), held in İstanbul in June 2010, is a landmark example of the development in relations, Lap argued.

During the summit, along with Iraq, Vietnam joined as member country of CICA and raised the number of members to 22. Lap noted that Doan and Turkish President Abdullah Gül had a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the CICA summit.

"During the talks, the vice president of Vietnam highly appreciated Turkey's important role in the region and congratulated Turkey on being the new president of the CICA. She attached importance to promoting multifaceted relations between Vietnam and Turkey and their sharing experience in the field of tourism and working to establish direct flights between the two countries. The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the current developments in bilateral relations and hope that the relations continue to be further strengthened. Turkey's President Gül spoke highly of Vietnam's role in ASEAN. President Gül also invited Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet to pay a state visit to Turkey," Lap explained during the interview with Today's Zaman.

Listing recently and mutually paid and planned official visits between the two countries and figures displaying a concrete development in bilateral trade, Ambassador Lap expressed his confidence in having better multifaceted cooperative relations between Vietnam and Turkey.

At the invitation of Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün, Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Nguyen Thanh Bien will visit Turkey to attend an international fair and attend the Vietnamese-Turkish Business Forum, to be held in İzmir on Aug. 26-27. The fifth meeting of the Vietnam-Turkey Joint Commission will be held in Hanoi in November of this year.

Rıfat Hisarcıklıoğlu, the president of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), visited Vietnam in late October 2009 to attend the Vietnam-Turkey Business Forum, contributing to promoting trade ties between the two countries, Lap said.

"The Association of Social and Economic Solidarity with Pacific Countries [PASİAD] also plays a role as a bridge in promoting the relations between the two countries. Hanoi People's Committee Chairman Nguyen The Thao has invited Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek to visit Vietnam in October to attend the ceremony of the 1,000th year anniversary of Thang Long [Hanoi]. Beautiful natural places in Vietnam such as Ha Long

Bay now attract more and more tourists from Turkey. The Vietnamese Embassy in Ankara plans to open a traditional painting exhibition in Ankara in the coming months to let the Turkish people know more about Vietnamese culture,” he said.

“In 2009 bilateral trade volume gained \$426.07 million, in which Vietnam’s exports to Turkey were \$281.87 million and imports from Turkey were \$144.20 million. In the first five months of 2010, Turkey’s exports to Vietnam were nearly \$60 million, increasing by 94 percent compared to the same period of last year, and Vietnam’s exports to Turkey amounted to \$295 million, increasing by 85 percent compared to the same period of 2009,” Lap explained.

Lap maintains that an agreement signed between Turkey and ASEAN ‘will contribute to further strengthening and the consolidation of friendship and cooperative relations with full potential between Turkey and ASEAN member countries, especially Vietnam as a chairman of ASEAN in 2010’

“In the first six months of 2010, as part of cooperation projects with international organizations, Vietnam sent a delegation led by the deputy governor of the State Bank of Vietnam and a delegation of officials from Vietnam’s Finance Ministry to visit and work in Turkey to gain experience in bank systems and financial and monetary policy. In the political arena, we must mention a political consultative meeting between the two foreign ministries that was held in January 2010. An action plan for the promotion of cooperative relations between the two countries was agreed upon at the meeting.”

From multifaceted cooperation to partnership

Vietnam and Turkey established diplomatic relations in June 1978, and Turkey opened an embassy in Hanoi in December 1997. Vietnam launched its commercial office in İstanbul in October 1999, its consulate general in İstanbul in July 2002 and its embassy in Ankara in October 2003.

The two countries, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2008, have signed many bilateral cooperation agreements over the last three decades. The agreements include the Agreement on Commercial, Economic and Technical Cooperation; the Agreement on Visa Exemptions for Diplomatic Passports; the Agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Educational Cooperation; the Agreement on Tourism Cooperation; and the Agreement on Fighting International Terrorism and Organized Crime.

When asked about his expectations regarding the future of bilateral relations both in the short and medium term, Ambassador Lap sounded highly optimistic. “In the future, multifaceted cooperative relations between Vietnam and Turkey will be very good. In the short term, the two countries will exchange high-ranking visits of the leaders of both

sides to discuss great directions for the development of friendship and multifaceted cooperative relations.

Vietnam and Turkey will try to conclude negotiations to sign two important agreements - - one on double tax avoidance and one on stimulation and protection of investment -- in 2010 to bring a legal framework to economic, commercial and investment cooperation, promote trade ties and raise the bilateral trade volume to \$1 billion in the coming year. In the medium term, on the basis of available multifaceted cooperation and friendship and the tendency of more effective cooperation, the two countries will be able to raise current relations to the level of partnership relations,” Lap said.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-217988-8-asean-deal-expected-to-lead-to-full-potential-in-ties-with-turkey.html>

- **S'pore hopes to play a bridging role between China and ASEAN: PM Lee**

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said Singapore hopes to play a bridging role between China and ASEAN.

He added this is because Singapore is a Southeast Asian country that shares a deep cultural affinity with China. In an interview with Xinhua newspaper before his upcoming visit to China, Mr Lee said the Singapore-China Free Trade Agreement was a pathfinder for the China-ASEAN FTA. It has helped to strengthen economic links between ASEAN countries and China.

On the 20th anniversary of China's relations with ASEAN, he said that this relationship is one of the most substantive among ASEAN's dialogue partnerships, and that Singapore welcomes China's growing engagement and investment in ASEAN. As for his trip to China, Mr Lee said that he plans to observe first-hand the developments in cities in Central China to better understand the role these cities play in China's strategy to direct development from the coastal to inland regions.

He also wants to get an update on the progress of the Suzhou Industrial Park and visit the Shanghai Expo. Mr Lee said that to mark 20 years of Sino-Singapore ties, Singapore will unveil a Deng Xiaoping commemorative marker, and do the groundbreaking for the China Cultural Centre.

Mr Lee said that Singapore wishes to participate in China's development, both to help China as well as to ride on its growth. He also suggested that both sides should deepen their partnership in existing areas, continue to search for new areas of cooperation and encourage their youth to build lasting friendships with one another.

Mr Lee added that Singapore enjoys excellent ties with China and he is confident that both countries will build on this strong foundation and continue strengthening their bilateral ties.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1079310/1/.html>

