CSIS Southeast Asia 1Q Update:  
Director’s Report

ERNEST BOWER

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One year and a quarter into its existence, CSIS Southeast Asia has established its program and is accelerating its research, programming, and outreach. Here is a First Quarter 2011 report to update you and invite you to get even more fully engaged.

U.S.-ASEAN STRATEGY COMMISSION

The Commission is cochaired by Maurice R. “Hank” Greenberg, chairman and CEO of C.V. Starr Company, and former secretary of defense William S. Cohen. Its objective is to understand American interests in Southeast Asia based on extensive research and then to make recommendations for a long-term American strategy for engagement in the region. The Commission has met several times and regularly consults with ASEAN’s top leaders, ministers, executives, and civil society advocates. An interim report will be published soon and the chairmen will lead missions to the region this summer. Findings will be presented to the Obama administration and Congress in early fall ahead of President Obama’s hosting of APEC and visit to Indonesia for the East Asia Summit and 3rd US ASEAN Leaders Meeting. For regular updates and more information, click [here](#).

ADVISING POLICY WITH WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH

CSIS published its study *Pacific Partners: The Future of US New Zealand Relations* in March and launched the study at the Partnership Forum in Christchurch. The study was jointly prepared with the New Zealand
Institute of International Affairs and presents core recommendations on trade and investment, security and political issues, and people-to-people ties for policymakers. To review the study, click here.

CSIS Southeast Asia launched its “Energy Futures in Southeast Asia,” study on March 31. The study is a joint effort by the CSIS Southeast Asia and Energy and National Security teams at CSIS and is being supported by grants from GE, Shell Petroleum, and Guardian Industries. The study is a research-based analysis of key energy-mix decisions facing the region’s energy policymakers, and it projects scenarios based on various choices and decision points. For more information on the study or to get engaged in our roundtables, click here.

CONVENING LEADERS TO EXPLORE IDEAS

CSIS Southeast Asia is proud to be the premier venue for convening with U.S. and ASEAN leaders who want to discuss policy options, new ideas, and initiatives. We have developed a range of formats to accommodate the interests and needs of those in government seeking new ideas, outside-the-box thinking, and research-based analysis.

The Cloister. This is a newly added format that visiting policymakers have wholeheartedly embraced. It provides them with an off-the-record, Chatham House-rules format enabling candid discussions with top experts on a range of policy options, challenges, and new initiatives. Recent visitors have included Cesar Purisima, Finance Secretary, Republic of the Philippines; Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, Indonesian Ambassador to the United States; BG Gary Ang, Deputy Secretary (Policy), Singapore Ministry of Defence; and Dr. Wawak Adek Hussin, Deputy Finance Minister of Malaysia. Upcoming discussions will be held with General Dato’ Zulkifeli bin Mohamed, Chief of the Malaysian Army; Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN Secretary General; and others.

Dialog. Dialog is a series of video and audio interviews conducted by our senior adviser Ernie Bower with leaders and top officials from around the region. The Dialog is available on the CSIS Southeast Asia home page or via iTunes. Leaders, ministers, and ambassadors welcome this platform, which supersizes their messaging by accessing CSIS’s unique audience which includes the more than seven million visitors per month to CSIS’s website and the more than 600,000 viewers per month on CSIS’s iTunes page. To view recent interviews with experts and leaders like Carlyle Thayer, Dato’ Dr. Jamaluddin Jarjis, and Dr. Dino Djalal, click here.
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The Banyan Tree Leadership Forum. The most prestigious venue for U.S. and Southeast Asian leaders is the Banyan Tree Leadership Forum at CSIS. The forum convenes a unique and high-level audience for leaders to share new ideas and perspectives with the U.S. government, Congress, private sector, civil society, and the media. Recent speakers include Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia, Foreign Minister Marty Natagelawa of Indonesia, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, and US EXIM Bank chairman Fred Hochberg. Click here for copies of their remarks and videos of their presentations.

PRACTICAL POLICY IMPACT

CSIS Elite Executive Education Seminar. Current and fast-tracked leaders from Southeast Asia visit CSIS for intensive one to two week-long educational seminars including face-to-face sessions with U.S. government leaders in diplomacy, national security, trade, and other sectors. They also consult with congressional leadership and staff, thought and civil society leaders, the private sector, and the media. Our inaugural class of 10 high-ranking Indonesian military officers will visit Washington, D.C., June 13-20, 2011. For more information contact Mary Beth Jordan at mjordan@csis.org.

Seminar Series. The CSIS Southeast Asia Program convenes policymakers, policy influencers, and experts to explore challenges ranging from foreign policy to security to trade and investment issues. Recent seminars include the “East Asia Summit Dialogue: Preparing for the 2011 Summit” and the “US-Japan-ASEAN Trilateral Dialogue” in Maui, Hawaii. Upcoming seminars include "Maritime Security in the South China Sea" on June 20-21, 2011, in partnership with the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam.

Congressional Visits to ASEAN. CSIS is initiating highly focused policy visits to Southeast Asian countries for members of Congress and staff. The program will kick off this summer with a visit to Malaysia. For more details on this program and how to become engaged, contact southeastasiaprogram@csis.org.

OUTREACH – HOW TO PLUG IN

We want to encourage you to become engaged, think, connect the dots, and participate in our programs. We’ve made that easy, fun, and dynamic—whether you are a member of the cabinet and want to track key trends or get a fact for a speech, or a top executive seeking input for
an investment decision, or an academic fact-checking a coming lecture or a grad student preparing her thesis, you can plug in, get engaged, answer your questions, and provide organic input to our research.

cogitASIA – The CSIS Asia Policy Blog. Our policy blog provides hard-hitting, fast reads into breaking developments and analysis of vital trends affecting Southeast Asia and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region. Contributors come from CSIS’s world-class Asia team including Mike Green, Japan Chair; Victor Cha, Korea Chair; Charles Freeman, Freeman Chair in China Studies; and Amb. Karl Inderfurth, Wadhwani Chair in Indian Studies, who join Ernie Bower, leader of the Southeast Asia Program. Check out this week’s post exploring whether Philippine president Aquino can simultaneously address corruption in the military and modernize its equipment. Click here to get engaged. You can sign up to receive automatic updates when new blogs are posted.

CSIS Southeast Asia on Facebook. If you don’t want to miss breaking news, new developments like changes in USG personnel, or new cabinet members in Jakarta, then you need to become a FRIEND of the CSIS Southeast Asia Facebook page. Joining is easy, just click here to explore. The page has begun some polling and now has over 7,050 fans.

Twitter. For those who are in the flow on Southeast Asia and want up-to-the-minute updates on news, trends, and insights, we offer two channels of access and insight. For constant news and development, follow @SoutheastAsiaDC. If you prefer deeper and more personal insight through the eyes of our senior adviser, you can follow Ernie Bower directly on @BowerCSIS.

Southeast Asia from the Corner of 18th & K. If you are reading this, you already know about our signature newsletter that we call “18th & K.” This is a comprehensive note covering new developments around the entire region every two weeks. It tracks important themes and focuses on Southeast Asia from the Washington policy lens. We have more than 5,000 readers including some of the most senior policymakers, key advisers, top executives, leaders of nongovernment organizations, media outlets, bloggers, and professors and their students. If you know others who might like to subscribe, the note is free and you can sign up by clicking here.
INDONESIA

- **ASEAN sets precedence in problem solving.** Indonesia, by promoting a cease-fire and facilitating talks between Thailand and Cambodia, set a precedent for ASEAN by being directly involved in a conflict through peacemaking. According to Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa, ASEAN’s stance of noninterference in internal affairs has continued to raise questions about the group’s effectiveness as a regional problem solver, but he is optimistic about the potential for having a positive impact. Extending its commitment in the area of conflict resolution, Indonesia also decided to join international peacekeepers to safeguard a cease-fire and foster talks between the Philippine government and the Mindanao Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

- **Indonesian Military Executive Education Delegation to the United States.** CSIS and the Jakarta-based Ancora Foundation have joined forces to organize the inaugural visit of 10 senior Indonesian military officers to the United States for a week of intensive advanced education. The visit is part of a series of such visits designed to support the long-term deepening of U.S.-Indonesia military-to-military ties. The elite officers will take part in high-level briefings on U.S. policymaking, strategy development, and national security. The delegation will visit Washington, D.C., June 13–17, 2011.

- **Indonesia to purchase trainer jets from Korea.** Indonesia announced its plans to purchase 16 T-50 supersonic trainer jets from Korea. According to Indonesian Air Force chief of staff Imam Sufaat, Jakarta will use the jets to form a fighter squadron. However, Korea’s Defense Acquisition Program Administration said they have not yet received any formal notification from Indonesia.

- **Indonesia imposes antidumping duties to protect local producers.** The Indonesian government has imposed antidumping duties to protect local products from cheap Chinese goods. A number of Chinese products, such as wire, iron, steel, textiles, and garments, are allegedly sold in Indonesia below production costs, which threatens the sales of the local producers. Indonesian trade minister Mari Pangestu said that a committee is now investigating the dumping cases and monitoring the implementation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement.
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• Indonesian ambassador Djalal on “The Future of the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship” at CSIS. On April 11, the CSIS Southeast Asia Program held an off-the-record session of “The Cloister” with Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, Indonesian ambassador to the United States. This format allows leaders and top policymakers to consult with experts, officials, and legislators in a format that promotes exploration of new ideas. At the roundtable, Djalal discussed prospects for the U.S.-Indonesian relationship, the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, and Indonesia’s role as the current ASEAN Chair, as well as critical issues to be raised at the upcoming East Asia Summit. Click here for CSIS Southeast Asia Program director and senior adviser Ernest Bower’s interview with Ambassador Djalal after the session.

BURMA/MYANMAR

• Thailand plans to close refugee camps. Thailand recently announced its plans to close border camps and send more than 100,000 refugees back to Burma. Thai National Security Council chief Tawin Pleansri explained that the refugees have been in Thailand for more than 20 years and have become a “burden” to the Thai government. The Thai and Burmese governments are currently in the process of determining a date for expatriation.

• U.S. Human Rights Report condemns alleged abuses in Burma. In the U.S. Annual Human Rights Report, the State Department pointed to “severe” abuses in Burma, including the frequent killings of ethnic minorities and the detention of more than 2,000 political prisoners. Despite the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from detention, U.S. officials said that Burma still has “a long way to go” with its efforts to improve human rights.

• Top Chinese official meets Burma’s new president. Jia Qinglin, the fourth-ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China, became the first high-ranking foreign visitor to meet with Burma’s new president, Thein Sein, since the new government took office on March 30, 2011. The two officials pledged increased cooperation for political and economic development. In recent decades, China has been the main ally of Burma and has invested heavily in pipelines, military installations, and various industries despite the junta’s poor record on human rights and governance.

THAILAND

• Opposition may field Thaksin’s sister as PM candidate. Thailand’s political parties are gearing up for elections this July. The incumbent six
party coalition led by the Democrat Party and Prime Minister Abhisit is performing strongly in polls, taking advantage of an economic upswing. The opposition Puea Thai party candidate for prime minister may be Yingluck Shinawatra, sister of the deposed former premier, Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra. Elections are expected to be closely contested. Army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha has repeatedly stated there would be no coup if the opposition wins the election; however, rumors to that effect persist.

- **Emergency rule extended in the South.** The government extended its six-year-old emergency decree in the three southern provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. The decree allows the military to detain suspects for questioning without charge. It has been criticized by rights advocates who are particularly concerned that it gives the army legal immunity. Many do not realize the conflict has claimed more than 4,500 lives since 2003.

- **Thai government combats inflation.** Fuel prices and a growing economy have led to inflationary pressures. Finance Minister Korn Chatikavanij said 2.95 percent inflation is a concern of the central bank but not a major threat. The government enacted multiple long-term solutions such as gradually increasing the minimum wage, reforming the tax structure to accommodate entrepreneurs, and issuing inflation-linked bonds to help investors hedge risk. The government says it will also phase out oil subsidies to cut its deficit.

MALAYSIA

- **Barisan Nasional wins Sarawak state elections.** Prime Minister Najib’s ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) won the crucial Sarawak state elections, taking two-thirds of the 71 seats in the state legislature but losing 8 of the 63 seats it had held entering the election. The opposition alliance— at 16 seats—doubled the number of seats won since the previous election. However, these seats were won in mainly urban areas and focused on the Chinese population, whereas BN managed to maintain support from the rural voters. Prime Minister Najib remarked that he was “satisfied” with the outcome, but analysts believe the Sarawak state elections will complicate Najib’s decision to call early elections before the 2013 deadline.

- **Accenture report: 90 percent of Malaysian firms refocus on growth.** According to a report by Accenture, 90 percent of Malaysian firms are refocusing on growth compared to just two years ago, when 66 percent of companies prioritized cost reduction as the driver of organizational initiatives. Malaysian firms face a complex market full of opportunities,

“...analysts believe the Sarawak state elections will complicate Najib’s decision to call early elections before the 2013 deadline.”
catalyzed by the 10th Malaysia Plan. The study concluded that Malaysia’s replication of competitors’ strategies and products had traditionally been the easy way to upward growth, but the key factor in the current high-growth environment is a strong management team and educated workforce.

- Malaysian spring in Washington. U.S.-Malaysia relations have reached new heights since President Obama and Prime Minister Najib met for the first time during the Nuclear Security Summit last year. This month, CSIS Southeast Asia is honored to host the Deputy Finance Minister of Malaysia Dato’ Dr. Awang Adek Hussin and Chief of the Malaysian Army General Dato’ Zulkifeli Bin Mohamed Zin. Their visits come ahead of May visits by Prime Minister Najib and Trade Minister Mustapa Mohamad to the United States. These high-level visits indicate a new robustness in the U.S.-Malaysia relationship and underline the serious discussions about expanded cooperation.

VIETNAM

- Vietnam to reap major advantages in FTA with EU. The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam (ICHAM) released a study concluding that Vietnam will gain competitive advantage from a free trade agreement with the EU. Vietnam’s textiles, seafood, and footwear would have greater access to the $20 trillion EU market, and Vietnam would attract more investments and advanced technologies from European companies. However, Vietnamese exporters must focus on environmentally friendly means of production in order to meet the EU’s high requirements on quality and product origin—a step they will eventually need to take to comply with a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. EU imports from Vietnam nearly tripled in the past five years, from $5.6 billion in 2005 to $15.4 billion in 2010.

- Vietnam to ensure nuclear weapon-free ASEAN. In a speech delivered at the UN Disarmament Commission on April 7, 2011, Deputy Head of the Vietnamese Delegation to the United Nations Pham Vinh Quang called on nuclear weapon states to recognize the 1995 Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. Vietnam urged the Commission to set up an ad hoc committee to accelerate disarmament, but also emphasized the need to ensure countries’ rights to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Vietnam is implementing plans to install up to two nuclear power plants in the next 10 years, although the recent disaster in Japan has triggered new levels of regulatory rigor in the process.
Vietnam releases dissidents. Vietnamese authorities released lawyer Le Quoc Quan and Dr. Pham Hong Son after nine days in detention. The two were accused of causing “public disorder” during the Hanoi trial of Cu Huy Ha Vu, a prominent activist sentenced to seven years in prison for “propaganda against the state.” Quan and Son are two of Vietnam’s most well-known pro-democracy activists and their arrests drew criticism from the United States and the European Union. Both dissidents previously spent time in prison for alleged “activities to overthrow the people’s government.”

SINGAPORE

Singapore elections to be held on May 7th. Singapore will hold its general elections on May 7, 2011. President SR Nathan dissolved parliament on April 19, and candidates will file their nomination papers and $16,000 deposit on April 27. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said that the time was ripe for him to ask voters for a fresh mandate to take Singapore forward for the next five years. The opposition will contest all 87 seats in 27 constituencies this year, although the People’s Action Party (PAP) is expected to maintain its majority. About 2.3 million Singaporeans are eligible to vote. More than one in four voters will be aged 21 to 34, which means that some 200,000 are first-time voters.

Australia blocks merger between Oz and SG stock exchanges. Australia’s treasurer, Wayne Swan, blocked the proposed $8.74 billion takeover of the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) by Singapore Exchange Limited (SGX), calling the decision to kill the plan a “no-brainer.” He said the deal would see “Australia’s financial sector become a subsidiary to a competitor in Asia.” Both exchanges had agreed on the deal in order to cut costs, combat alternative trading platforms, and avoid being overtaken by European and North American exchange mergers. Analysts claim that Australia’s attitude could see the ASX fall behind its peers in the current climate of exchange consolidation.

Ministry says Japan and Middle East crises unlikely to influence Singapore’s economy. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) has indicated that disasters in Japan and political turmoil in the Middle East are unlikely to significantly affect Singapore’s economy. Minister Lim Hng Kiang said that less than 10 percent of Singapore’s electronics imports come from Japan and that unrest in Libya and Bahrain was not likely to significantly affect global oil supply. Singapore’s domestic economic growth is forecast to remain between 4.0 and 6.0 percent.
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- **Yale coming to Singapore.** Yale University and the National University of Singapore (NUS) have launched Yale-NUS College, Singapore’s first liberal arts college. The college will be an autonomous college of NUS and will welcome an inaugural class of 150 students in 2013. Yale-NUS College will develop a new curriculum and an integrated residential educational model that it hopes will serve as a catalyst for liberal arts education in Asia.

**PHILIPPINES**

- **President Aquino: United States and Japan are Philippines’ best allies.** On April 9, 2011, Philippine president Benigno Aquino III reaffirmed that the Philippines has “no greater friends” than the United States and Japan. President Aquino delivered his speech at the Araw ng Kagitingan rites in Bataan province on the 69th anniversary of the “day of valor.” Ambassadors Makoto Katsura of Japan and Harry Thomas Jr. of the United States reiterated their nations’ commitment to maintaining close ties with the Philippines. Ambassador Thomas noted, “The Philippines and Japan are among the United States’ most steadfast allies.” For more detailed analysis, please read CSIS senior adviser Ernie Bower’s commentary, “U.S.-Philippine Alliance: A Statesman is Born.”

- **Philippines steps up anti-corruption drive.** President Aquino stressed that beginning in April 2011, the government would step up convictions of tax evaders and corrupt officials to improve the country’s finances and restore public faith in government institutions. President Aquino reiterated he will use his extensive powers to make appointments to reform the judiciary. In March 2011, national ombudsman Merceditas “Merci” Gutierrez, responsible for fighting graft, was impeached for failing to prosecute key figures in the Arroyo administration. Commenting on her trial President Aquino said, “The attempt to impeach the ombudsman sends a clear message that the government really has the teeth to prosecute and go after officials.” President Aquino has also committed to fight corruption in the Armed Forces of the Philippines as he invests in new equipment and arms to enhance national security. Expert Victor Manhit examines developments in modernizing the Philippine military in his note “In the Philippines, Can the President Buy Arms and Fight Corruption at the Same Time?” on the CSIS Asia policy blog cogitASIA.

- **Finance Secretary Purisima visits Beijing and Washington.** Philippine finance secretary Cesar V. Purisima made stops in Beijing and Shanghai last week to promote the Aquino administration’s public partnership program (PPP) on infrastructure. Public works secretary Rogelio
Singson, who joined the delegation, said projects discussed with the Chinese investors included 25 public works projects worth at least $12 billion. Chinese vice premier Wang Qishan said “China is open to the PPP concept,” while Secretary Purisima added that the Philippines was open to Chinese investment in the Philippines. Secretary Purisima traveled from China to Washington, D.C., to represent the Philippines at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings, April 16–17, 2011, and held a consultation with CSIS Southeast Asia. Secretary Purisima’s interview with CSIS senior adviser Ernie Bower, part of the Dialog Series, can be viewed here.

AUSTRALIA

- **New trade policy met with union anger.** Prime Minister Julia Gillard is backing Trade Minister Craig Emerson’s new trade policy launched on April 12, 2011, advocating a more active pursuit of trade liberalization. The policy report is available here. The business community welcomed a new trade agenda de-linking trade negotiations from political, environmental, and labor concerns issues. The move was strongly opposed by the Australian’s Workers Union, one of the Labour Party’s main supporters. Union leaders said the new policy violated Labour’s official platform and vowed to challenge the position forcefully at Labour’s national conference in December 2011.

- **Labour to give $6.29 billion carbon rebate to households.** Climate change minister Greg Combet revealed that more than 50 percent of the revenue raised from the carbon tax would compensate households at $6.29 billion annually. The rest of the carbon tax revenue will go to support jobs in the industries most affected and encourage the transition to cleaner energy. Critics have argued for compensation to be pegged at 45 percent.

- **Gillard to visit Japan.** Prime Minister Julia Gillard will make a four-day trip to Japan later this month. She will meet Prime Minister Naoto Kan, emphasize the importance of close ties, and underline Australian disaster relief efforts for the March 11 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster. Australia sent search and rescue teams to Japan in the aftermath of the disaster, together with donations of aid and supplies. The two leaders will also discuss the bilateral economic partnership.
NEW ZEALAND

- **Reconstructing Christchurch.** New Zealand finance minister Bill English said the cost of rebuilding Christchurch would be approximately $66.76 billion. Funds will be prioritized for local government infrastructure, roads, insurance excesses on schools and hospitals, temporary housing and land remediation, demolition costs in the central business district, accident compensation costs, and the business support package. Prime Minister John Key said the reconstruction process would employ 12,500 full-time workers.

- **American Friends of Christchurch raises $200,000 at dinner.** The New Zealand Embassy in Washington D.C. hosted a black-tie gala dinner on April 14, 2011, to raise funds for earthquake relief efforts. Hosted by New Zealand ambassador Mike Moore, the dinner raised $200,000. Donations for the Christchurch earthquake can be made to the official New Zealand Government supported appeal or to the American Friends of Christchurch, an activity of the U.S.-NZ Council.

CAMBODIA

- **Cambodia to grow 6.5 percent in 2011.** According to the 2011 Asian Development Outlook (ADO) compiled by the Asian Development Bank, Cambodia’s GDP is set to expand by 6.5 percent in 2011 and 6.8 percent in 2012. While the agriculture and tourism sectors are expected to contribute to a surplus in trade, the report says Cambodia still needs to increase rural-urban links and regional cooperation if it is to reach its poverty reduction goals and sustainable growth.

- **Thailand admits cluster bomb use in Cambodia.** Thailand admitted using cluster bombs on Cambodian territory in February 2011 in contravention of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) banning their use. According to the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), Thailand’s use of cluster bombs killed two people, and now thousands of villagers are at risk of death or serious injury because of unexploded ordnance near their homes. Neither Thailand nor Cambodia has signed the convention.

LAOS

- **Laos and Vietnam enhance bilateral cooperation on trade and education.** At the 33rd session of the Intergovernmental Committee held in Hanoi, Laos and Vietnam agreed to raise their two-way trade value to $2 billion
by 2015. Vietnam also will increase its scholarships to Lao students by 10 percent annually; in return, Laos will train Vietnamese students in graduate and postgraduate programs. In the long run, the two countries hope to concentrate on strategic projects to help Vietnam industrialize within the next decade and bring Laos out of underdeveloped status by 2020.

- **Construction of first railway leads to resentment.** The Boten-Vientiane line, funded by Beijing, is the first railway in landlocked Laos. While the railway will facilitate the transport of goods and services, it has also created resentment against the Chinese among the people of Bopiat. Thousands of the people of Bopiat have been told to relocate by April as a result of construction, though they have no idea where to move to and how much they will be compensated for their loss of homes. There are also reports that China has exported Chinese labor to construct the railway, causing Lao workers to claim lost job opportunities.

**BRUNEI**

- **Three royal princes and two former ministers appointed to Brunei’s Privy Council.** Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah has appointed five new members to the Privy Council. The new appointees consist of three of the Sultan’s sons, namely Prince ‘Abdul ‘Azim, Prince ‘Abdul Malik, and Prince ‘Abdul Mateen, as well as two former ministers, former education minister Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Aziz and former religious affairs minister Pehin Dato Haji Mohamed Zain Serudin. The Privy Council advises the Sultan on the amendment or revocation of any legal changes to Brunei’s constitution.

- **Brunei to build more tertiary education institutes.** Brunei’s minister of education, Pehin Dato Haji Abu Bakar, has announced that his ministry seeks to build a new polytechnic and two technical schools and is looking for land for their construction. The minister stressed the importance of technical and vocational education, which would give high school students a chance to pursue careers in the technical and engineering fields. He also emphasized that technical education was essential in the industrial and economic development of the country.

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

- **PNG finance minister to meet with top World Bank officials.** Papua New Guinea’s treasury and finance minister Peter O’Neill is in Washington, D.C., for the spring meeting of the World Bank, where he will hold discussions
with top bank officials. O'Neill said that the bank was impressed by his country’s strong economic growth and that he would discuss the impact of the global economy on Papua New Guinea during the meetings. The PNG economy is forecast to grow by more than 8 percent this year, easing to 6.5 percent next year.

- **Foundation laid for LNG plant.** The first foundation for Papua New Guinea’s liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant has been poured. This marks a milestone in the development of the project, which has been progressing with site building and infrastructure development for the past two years in preparation for the plant’s construction. The plant is located 20 kilometers northwest of Port Moresby and will liquefy and store natural gas from the Southern Highlands and Western Provinces.

**TIMOR-LESTE**

- **Timor-Leste puts financial data online.** In an effort to increase transparency and accountability, the Timor-Leste government has placed all of its public financial information online. Information is hosted on the a website called the Timor-Leste Transparency Portal, which offers access to historical and recent government fund disbursement from the last decade. Details on the website include amounts allocated, expenditure location, and program data.

- **Timor-Leste rejects Australian troops after 2012.** President Jose Ramos-Horta dismissed the recommendation of the Australia Strategic Policy Institute (APSI) that a small Australian military presence stay in Timor-Leste after 2012. The Timorese government admitted that there are minor problems, but political tensions are not an issue.

**ASEAN**

- **ASEAN-Japan disaster management agreement.** Foreign ministers from ASEAN and Japan met on April 7, 2011, in Jakarta to discuss their response to the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis that hit Japan. Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa said, “What ASEAN did was to create collaboration among ASEAN members, so that the bilateral help to Japan from each ASEAN country can be formed into a more cohesive, regional assistance.” During the meeting Japanese foreign minister Takeaki Matsumoto welcomed ASEAN’s help, saying Tokyo would continue to foster growth and development in Southeast Asia.
ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting in Bali. The 15th ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting was held in Bali, Indonesia, on April 7–8, 2011, to discuss steps for the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. Under the theme “ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations,” the ministers agreed to implement measures for financial and capital liberalization in the region. ASEAN will use a bond market development scorecard to determine the market’s liquidity and openness and identify ASEAN standards in facilitating cross-border offerings and investment. The finance ministers also noted that the $700 million Credit Guarantee and Investment Facility and the ASEAN Forum on Taxation (AFT) will be implemented this year.

ASEAN-EU to hold first-ever Business Summit. Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will open the first-ever Business Summit between ASEAN and the European Union. The summit will be held on May 5, 2011, in Jakarta, Indonesia, one day before the 10th annual ASEAN-EU Economic Ministers Consultation. Julian Wilson, EU ambassador to Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and ASEAN, emphasized that the ASEAN-EU Business Summit will create a new milestone in the relationship between the two regions. Trade between the two regions now tops $213 billion. The EU is ASEAN’s second-largest trading partner (excluding intra-ASEAN flows) and the biggest foreign investor in the region in 2009.

EAST ASIA SUMMIT

Foreign Ministers discuss ASEAN centrality in EAS. The Special Informal ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting was held in Bangkok on April 11, 2011, to discuss the future direction of the East Asia Summit (EAS). The ministers stressed that ASEAN would maintain the central role in the EAS, discussed how the EAS can contribute to a stable and peaceful regional architecture, and reaffirmed ASEAN’s commitment to strengthening the EAS process, particularly in the EAS priority areas and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA).

CSIS held an off-the-record EAS policy dialogue on April 13 in Washington, D.C., and convening co-chairmen Ernie Bower and Mike Green will issue findings and conclusions from that session in early May 2011.
APEC

- APEC-Singapore disaster management partnership. APEC is partnering with Singapore’s Civil Defence Force as part of ongoing efforts to increase emergency preparedness in the Asia-Pacific region, which experiences more than 70 percent of the world’s natural disasters. Officials and experts from seven APEC economies took part in a two-week international disaster management course in Singapore last month. The course provided participants with an overview of Singapore’s approach toward disaster management and with training in mass casualty management and police operations. For a more detailed report, please read the APEC press release here.

- Kurt Tong confirmed as U.S. ambassador to APEC. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmed Kurt Tong on April 2011 with the rank of ambassador during his tenure as U.S. senior official for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. During his 21 years as a career foreign service officer, Ambassador Tong has served as director for Korean affairs at the State Department and director for Asian economic affairs at the National Security Council. He has also handled trade, finance, and development issues at U.S. embassies in Manila, Tokyo, Beijing, and Seoul. During his hearing, Ambassador Tong reiterated that the Asia-Pacific region represents the future of the global economy and that the United States should work through APEC to promote growth and job-creating opportunities in the Asia Pacific for U.S. businesses and citizens. His hearing testimony is available here.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

- Admiral Willard says China’s navy less aggressive. The commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Robert Willard, noted that the Chinese navy has been less aggressive concerning contested waters in 2011. The admiral called the development “positive” and attributed the change in posture to the resumption of military talks. However, the admiral noted with some concern that China’s trial of its first aircraft carrier would have a profound effect on the balance of forces in the region, and that regional partners have regarded this move as “significant” in light of the remarkable growth in China’s military capability.

- Vietnam and Philippines seek accord amid tensions with China. During a visit to Vietnam on April 5, 2011, where he met with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his counterpart, Pham Gia Kiem, Philippines foreign affairs
secretary Albert Del Rosario reaffirmed the two countries’ commitment to resolving South China Sea claims in a peaceful manner and agreed to enhance confidence-building measures. The new commitment to strengthen Philippine-Vietnam cooperation rapport was overshadowed by tensions between the Philippines and China regarding China’s statements declaring indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea. On April 5, the Philippines lodged a diplomatic protest against China’s “9-dash line” claim. The protest, submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, was the second filed within a month. On March 3, the Philippines protested a Chinese incursion into Reed Bank, 250 kilometers west of Palawan.

MEKONG RIVER

- **Laos dam proposal was “poorly researched.”** According to a technical report commissioned by the Mekong River Commission, the impacts of the planned Xayaburi hydropower dam were poorly researched. Despite opposition from environmentalists in Thailand and Laos, the Laos government told the Mekong countries in February that it would go through with the construction of the dam. Experts conducted a technical review of the proposed dam, concluding that the design and operation models failed to meet best international practices. The report also claims the project’s impact on river flows and ecosystem has been understudied.

- **Activists fight to stop Mekong dam.** Activists claim the Xayaburi dam will force the resettlement of 2,100 villagers, disrupt fish migrations, block nutrients for downstream farming, and allow seawater to encroach into the Mekong Delta. In March 2011, 263 nongovernmental organizations from 51 countries sent letters to the governments of Laos and Thailand urging that the project be shelved. The Laos government has countered, claiming the dam will be the “first environmentally friendly hydroelectric project on the Mekong.”
• “Transnational Advocacy Networks and Combating Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia.” George Washington University Sigur Center for Asian Studies and the Asia Society on April 19, 12:30 p.m.–1:45 p.m. For more details and to RSVP, click here.

• “The Annual ANZAC Lecture: On ANZUS Turning 60.” The Honorable Kim Beazley, Ambassador of Australia to the United States, at Georgetown University Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies on April 20, 6:30 p.m. For more details and to RSVP, e-mail canz@georgetown.edu.

• 60th ANZAC Day on April 25. Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) day marks the anniversary of the first major partnership between Australia and New Zealand during the First World War in Gallipoli, Turkey. The partnership has proven to be enduring and will continue to be vitally important to support peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Both countries have prepared for dawn services at various war memorials as members of the defense services march to their local memorials. Ambassador Kim Beazley of Australia and Ambassador Mike Moore of New Zealand will host a similar memorial at Washington National Cathedral for invited guests.

• “Poverty, Climate Change, and Health in the Pacific Islands.” A seminar held by the Georgetown University Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies on April 28, 5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. For more details and to RSVP, e-mail canz@georgetown.edu.

• “Access to Opportunity in Southeast Asia.” OPIC conference on May 3–5, 2011, in Jakarta. CSIS senior adviser and Southeast Asia Program director Ernie Bower will be speaking on the first day of the program. Conference website: http://opicevents.linderforms.com

• “Asia's Rising Energy and Commodity Nationalism.” NBR 7th annual Energy Security Conference to be held May 4, 2011, in Washington, D.C. If you would like to request an invitation, please contact Dave Herron at eta@nbr.org.

• “Democracy, Political Change, and Global Governance in Asia: A Discussion with ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan.” Presented by the Asia Program and the School of International Service, American University, on May 19, 2011. Please RSVP here.
• “The Cloister featuring Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN Secretary General.” to be held at CSIS on May 20. The Cloister is a series of private, top-level, off-the-record roundtable briefings for senior statesmen and policymakers. These are strictly invitation only and designed to engender substantive discussion. For more details, please contact southeastasiaprogram@csis.org.

• “Pacific Night.” An annual showcase of Pacific culture, food, entertainment and ideas, organized by the Embassies and Missions of Pacific Island Countries and Territories based in Washington and New York. This year, it is being held at the New Zealand Embassy in Washington on the evening of June 22. It will start with a seminar on “the Future of the Pacific”, featuring a panel of speakers from a variety of backgrounds on the challenges facing the region, to be followed by a reception featuring entertainers and national dishes from countries from around the Pacific region. For more information, contact Michael Appleton, Second Secretary at the New Zealand Embassy, at michael.appleton@mfat.govt.nz.
SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM THE CORNER OF 18TH & K STREETS

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