



# Indochina

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## Digest

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### TRADE/INVESTMENT

#### Vietnam sweet deals

♦ **Britain** - British sugar firm Tate & Lyle has signed a joint venture agreement to build a US\$71.5 million sugar cane processing plant in Nghe An. A company executive reports the plant will have a processing capacity of 6000 tons of sugarcane per day. The deal was signed on 18 October and is awaiting licensing and final approval.

♦ **France** - Group Sucreries de Bourbon and a Vietnamese partner have been given the go-ahead for a US\$95 million sugar joint venture in Tay Ninh province. The facility will have a processing capacity of 8000 tons per day, making it the biggest project of its type in Vietnam.

#### Vietnam updates

♦ **Mother may bank?** - Malaysia's Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) has announced it will be opening a branch office in Hanoi. The branch will provide services from deposits and loans to fund transfers and financing.

♦ **Paint your wagon** - On 17 October, Mitsubishi Motors Corp said that the company is considering a cooperative agreement to paint vehicles assembled by Mercedes-Benz AG in Vietnam. The Mercedes vehicles will be painted by VinaStar Motors, Mitsubishi's joint venture with Vietnam's Vietranscimex.

♦ **Halla've deal** - On 16 October, a representative of South Korea's Halla Group told *Reuters News Agency* that the company has completed a feasibility study for a US\$262 million cement venture in Quang Binh province. "The plant would have 4000 tons daily production," the representative said. "We're hoping to sign the agreement by year's end. I see no problems which could get in our way."

#### Regional tourism

On 7 October, officials from Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate more effectively in developing regional tourism. The agreement was signed following a four-day conference on tourism in Hanoi. The officials agreed to urge their governments to improve two roads connecting northeastern Thailand with central Laos and Vietnam. They also pledged to encourage private investment in the tourism sector and cooperate on the training of tour guides.

### VIETNAM

#### Freed samples

On 16 October, Dr. Arnold Schecter of the State University of New York Health Science Center said that he received a facsimile message from Dr. Hoang Dinh Cau, chairman of Vietnam's Agent Orange Scientific Coordinating Committee, advising that documents and research specimens seized by customs last summer have been released [see *Digest*, 7 Jul]. Vietnamese customs officials seized the items as members of a US scientific delegation, led by Dr. Christopher Portier of the National Institute for Environmental Health Services, were departing Vietnam following a 10-day visit.

The mission had discussed establishing an Agent Orange Coordinating Center at a US university with an office in Vietnam, exchanging scientists, and conducting workshops and joint research - efforts that were delayed due to the actions of the Vietnamese customs. According to Dr. Schecter, "the anticipated return of the documents and specimens clears the way for signing a high level joint memorandum of understanding for such public health research and funding from Congress for money targeted towards Agent Orange and dioxin research in Vietnam by US and Vietnamese scientists."

#### Copy? - wrong

On 20 October, the *Vietnam Investment Review* reported that the Ministry of Culture has worked out a plan aimed at reducing copyright infringements by strictly controlling the production and sale of audio and video cassettes and CDs. Their plan for "restoring market order" has been submitted to the cabinet for approval. The *Review* reports that authorized sales of audio and video products fell 30 to 50 percent last year although domestic demand for the products doubled. The government also loses money from such activities in the form of lost tax revenue.

#### Floods

Flash flooding in the Mekong delta claimed well over 100 lives last week, according to official figures [see *Digest*, 13 Oct]. The floods have also badly damaged houses, bridges and roads. Water levels in upstream districts are reportedly still rising, and government officials are calling on the entire country to aid flood victims. Separate flooding in the central coastal region has killed at least an additional 75 people.



## Don't call it a comeback

Four Vietnamese men were deported from Germany 17 October in the first stage of an agreement between Vietnam and Germany [See *Digest* 7 Jul]. Under terms of the pact, Vietnam will accept 40,000 expatriates in exchange for US\$140 million in aid. 2500 are scheduled to be deported this year, and all 40,000 will be deported by the year 2000. German authorities have said that they will deport criminals first, and at least one of the deportees was taken from jail to the airport.

## Fellow travelers

President Le Duc Anh finished an official visit to Cuba 17 October [see *Digest*, 13 Oct] by signing an agreement to strengthen economic ties with the island nation. Despite good relations, trade between the two nations is currently only US\$40 million a year. Anh and his delegation proceeded to Columbia to attend a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), before going to New York.

## Official visitors

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger will pay official visits to Vietnam in mid-November. Both come at the invitation of Prime Minister Vo van Kiet and will sign agreements on cooperation between Vietnam and their respective governments.

## No smugglers blues here

On 16 October, a state planning official reported that nearly US\$1.4 billion worth of goods have been smuggled into the country from China this year. This is despite a government crackdown on contraband offenses that has seen approximately 3700 people arrested during the first half of 1995. The official added that only US\$54,000 worth of goods have been smuggled in by sea, according to official figures.

## Refrain brain drain

Dr. Vu Dinh Cu, director of the National Assembly's Commission for Sciences, Technology and Environment, spoke to the assembly 17 October, warning about the trend of talented scientists and engineers leaving government sectors for joint ventures. He urged the assembly to issue policies and plans to reverse the trend and ensure the country's intellectual future.

## Workers of the world . . .

A strike at Haiphong's joint venture steel works ended 14 October after management agreed to the demands of workers. The Korean-Vietnamese owned mill went into operation last month, and workers had been asked to work overtime without extra pay during a 15-day trial period. The steel works' CEO has agreed to pay the workers for overtime, as well as for the strike period.

## . . . Strike at the casino

On 15 October, 130 workers at the Do Son casino, near Haiphong, staged a 24-hour strike to demand the signing of their contracts entitling them to a range of labor rights. The *Lao Dong* newspaper reported that workers were unhappy with the way tips were shared between staff and the casino manager. An official of the Haiphong Federation of Trade Unions told the *Vietnam News* that the main complaints also included the bullying behavior of foreign staff toward the Vietnamese workers. The casino management said that they have been treating the workers well despite the absence of labor contracts, and denied allegations that have refused to pay medical bills for employees. The US\$25 million casino, which was opened one year ago by Macau magnate Stanley Ho, is only open to foreigners.

## CAMBODIA

### Logging concession granted

Indonesia's Panin group has been awarded a logging concession covering approximately 3.5 million acres (1.4 million hectares) of forest in the northeast province of Ratanakiri. This is the largest logging pact granted by the Cambodian government in its brief history, encompassing approximately one fifth of the country's forested land. A government official reports that the company will selectively harvest rather than clear cut. King Sihanouk, speaking in Beijing, urged logging companies to plant three trees for each chopped down. He warned that if logging continues unchecked, Cambodia could become a "desert nation in the 21st Century and the great lake Tonle Sap will become no more than a vast muddy waste."

### Chamber of Commerce

Members of Cambodia's business community met in Phnom Penh 14 October to elect 24 members for the board of directors of the country's first chamber of commerce. Teng Boonma, managing director of Thai Boon Roong Group, was named president by the directors after their election. Boonma will lead a delegation of 20 chamber members to China in November. Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh presided over the elections and expressed optimism concerning interaction between the government and the chamber.

### Bored of lawyers

On 16 October, Justice Minister Chem Snguon told a group of 29 lawyers at a graduation ceremony that Cambodia is planning to establish a board of lawyers to help insure the country has an independent judiciary. The board will consist of the 29 lawyers and 10 government lawyers. The justice minister said that he hopes that by the end of 1996, "we will be able to have a new judicial system with independence and capability," adding that "when we have more lawyers people will have confidence in us."



## REGION

### ASEAN summit plans

On 16 October, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay Virawan spoke on plans for the ASEAN summit meeting on 14-15 December in Bangkok. Amnuay said that leaders will focus on speeding up an ASEAN agreement on the liberalization of services. The agreement will include banking and finance, airlines, construction, and shipping, and will be more comprehensive than the World Trade Organization's agreement on international service sector business. Amnuay also said that Thailand will support a proposal, initiated by Brunei [see *Digest*, 4 Aug], to speed up implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) from the year 2003 to 2000. Earlier, Thailand announced it was opposed to accelerating the implementation of AFTA [see *Digest*, 29 Sep]. The ASEAN leaders are also expected to sign an agreement to make the region a nuclear weapons free zone.

### Spratlys code of conduct

On 18 October, Philippines Foreign Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino said that the Philippines will explore establishing a code of conduct with Vietnam over the Spratly Islands next month. Severino led a delegation to Hanoi for a three-day meeting with a Vietnamese delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Khoan starting on 30 November. The Philippines signed a code of conduct agreement with China in August [see *Digest*, 11 Aug]. "We are exploring the possibility of drawing up a similar code of conduct with Vietnam," Severino said.

### Mekong es sukong

Government leaders from the six countries that border the Mekong River will hold three days of talks in Bangkok beginning 22 October. The talks, which include representatives from Burma, Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, will also include private sector representatives and will focus on integrating the six nations' infrastructure development and intra-regional trade. The representatives will also discuss the development of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, an organization that, with a total market of 325 million people, could rival the EU and NAFTA.

## REFUGEES

### Fire in the Philippines

On 14 October, a fire broke out at a Vietnamese refugee camp in Puerto Princesa, southwest of Manila, when a kerosene lamp was accidentally tipped over. The fire destroyed 174 homes, leaving 1129 of the 2000 boat people without homes. There were no casualties reported. Camp officials said that the homeless boat people would be placed temporarily in vacant houses inside the camp. The Vietnamese are scheduled to be repatriated by the end of the year.

## Belly up

On 16 October, the Cambodia Bar Association was established with the swearing-in of bar members. The association selected a nine-member council. Say Bory was elected the bar's first president, by receiving 32 of the 36 votes cast. Bory was trained in Cambodia and France. Bory said that the bar's first task will be to establish internal regulations and a code of ethics. Other projects for the bar include providing opportunities for training programs abroad, and the establishment of an arbitration court.

## Who'll watch the watchers?

For the period during the 1998 campaign and elections, First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh has suggested placing all security forces under the control of his father, King Norodom Sihanouk. In doing so, Prince Ranariddh stated he hopes to ensure the neutrality of the forces during the elections. Ranariddh said that he welcomes the presence of foreign observers to the election, but stressed that "the Cambodian people should do it by themselves."

## British trade mission

On 18 October, a ten member delegation from the British Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (BCOCT) arrived in Cambodia to begin a four day trade mission. The delegation includes representatives from varied business sectors and will hold talks with officials from the Ministries of Industry, Mines and Energy, Finance, Tourism and the Cambodian Development Council.

## Headed off at the pass

On 16 October, ten Khmer Rouge rebels were detained in Thailand by Thai troops after being captured on their way to attack the Cambodian government controlled town of Poipet. The ten surrendered without bloodshed and were returned to rebel-held territory in Cambodia on 17 October.

## Mine clearance

On 13 October, Sam Sotha, Director of the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC); reported to the third steering committee meeting of the CMAC trust fund in Phnom Penh that during the first nine months of this year, 20,371 mines and 40,470 unexploded shells were destroyed, clearing over 8.3 square kilometers of land. However, Sotha said that the number of new casualties has remained constant at approximately 300 per month.

## Kompong Cham U.

On 16 October, Education Minister Tol Lah announced that the government plans to reopen an agricultural university in Kompong Cham province early next year. The minister said that this would be the first of a series of institutions that Cambodia plans to reopen in the provinces. Most schools and institutions of higher learning were closed under the 1975-1978 Khmer Rouge rule.



## Hong Kong repatriations

On 17 October, Hong Kong deported a group of 85 Vietnamese boat people under the Orderly Repatriation Program (ORP). The repatriation flight proceeded without incident. Hong Kong has forcibly returned 1541 Vietnamese since the ORP flights began in November 1991.

## Dispute over land people

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, the head of the Chinese delegation said that about 5% of the 280,000 ethnic Chinese who went to China in the late-1970s want to return to Vietnam. However, the head of the Vietnamese delegation, Le Luong Minh, denied that those who went to China are refugees. "At the call of their home government, hundreds of thousands of citizens of a neighboring country who had come to Vietnam to earn their living left our country for their native country," Minh said.

## FYI

### From the bookshelf

◆ *After Sorrow - After Sorrow: An American Among the Vietnamese*, a book by Lady Borton, who lived in a Vietnamese village from 1989 to 1993, has just been released. Borton worked in Vietnam before 1975 with the American Friends Service Committee, and in a Vietnamese refugee camp in the early 1980s. Her first book, *Sensing the Enemy*, is

based on her work with Vietnamese refugees. Her new title relates her experiences living in Vietnam. The book is published by Viking, and is available at local bookstores, or contact Viking-Penguin at 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014.

◆ **MIA book (I)** - *Imprisoned or Missing in Vietnam: Policies of the Vietnamese Government Concerning Captured and Unaccounted for United States Soldiers, 1969 - 1994*, by Lewis M. Stern, published by McFarland & Co Inc. Stern is the country director for Indochina, Thailand, and Burma in the office of the US Secretary of Defense, and has been involved with US Department of Defense policy-making on the POW/MIA issue since 1989. The book costs US\$32.50 plus shipping. For information, contact McFarland & Co, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; Tel: 910-246-4460, 1-800-253-2186 (orders only); Fax: 910-246-5018.

◆ **MIA book (II)** - *M.I.A.: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia*, by Paul D. Mather, has been published by the Institute for National Strategic Studies, and is available from the Government Printing Office (GPO). Lt. Col. Mather served with the Joint Casualty Resolution Center in Southeast Asia from 1973 to 1988. For more information contact the GPO at 202-783-3238.

◆ **US-Vietnam relations** - *The United States and Vietnam 1787-1941*, by Robert H. Miller, was published by the National Defense University Press, and is available from the Government Printing Office (GPO). Ambassador Miller, a retired career diplomat with extensive Southeast Asia experience, provides an interesting overview of the history of relations between the US and Vietnam. For more information, contact the GPO at 202-783-3238.

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