

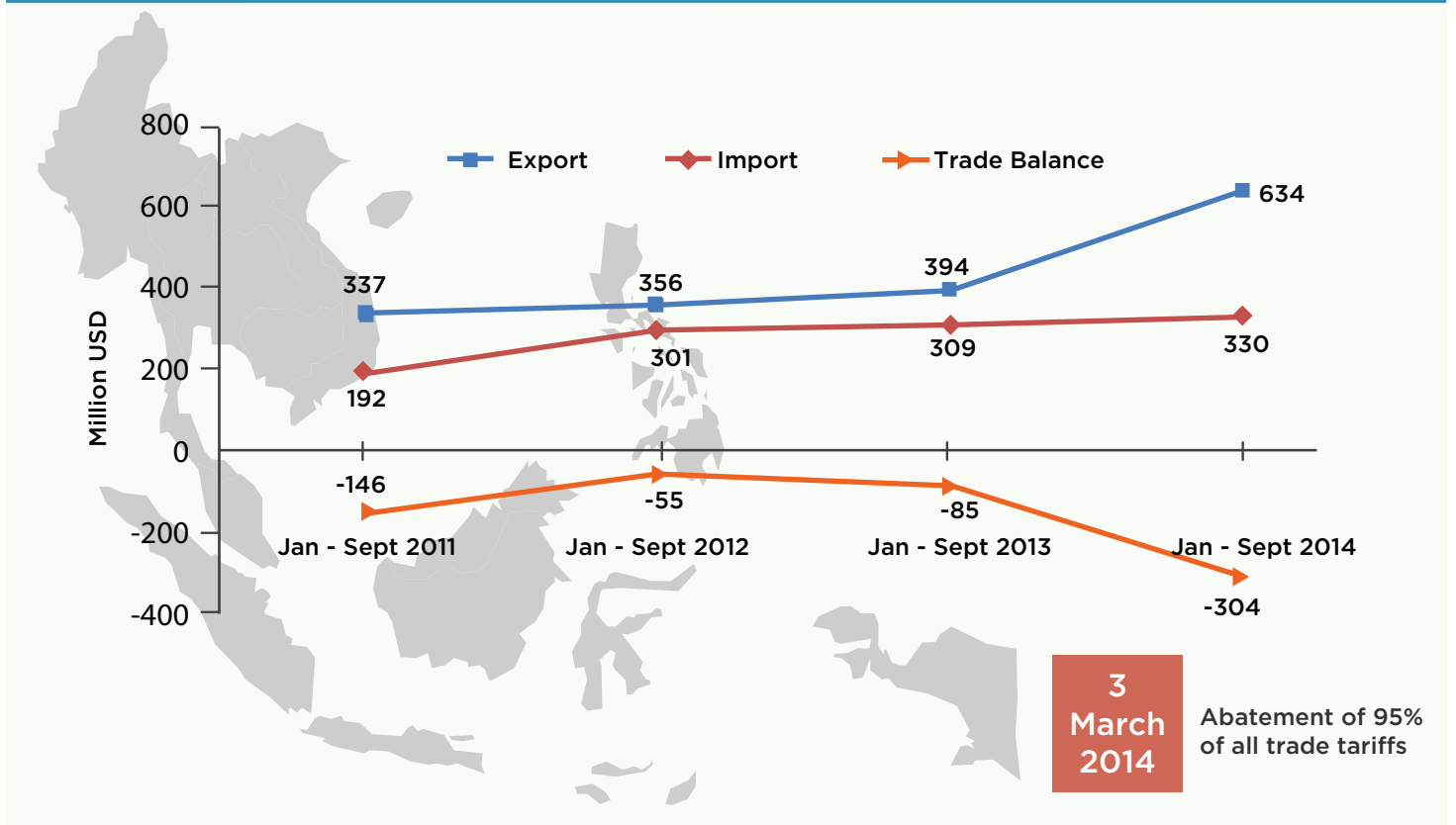
# CARI CAPTURES



## 01 VIETNAM, LAOS STRENGTHEN BILATERAL TIES



Recent Trade between Vietnam and Laos



[Vietnam Customs](#)

**In a joint statement with Party General Secretary Sayasone of Laos, President Sang of Vietnam affirmed Vietnam’s commitment to making relations with Laos their highest foreign policy priority.**

▶ The two leaders pledged to continue to advance exchanges on all levels between their respective countries, in particular to strengthen the cooperation in defense, security, investment, and trade; in the vein of tangible agreements, both presidents also pledged to complete border marking before the end of 2015 in celebration of the 85th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of Vietnam

▶ The leaders also noted that both nations were greatly encouraged by the great strides made in bilateral trade and investment; trade grew by 24.5% in 2014 to US\$1.4 billion, whilst Vietnamese investment into Laos reached a total of US\$5 billion in 2014, funding over 400 projects

▶ Current estimates from the Association of Vietnamese Investors in Laos (AVIL) expect Vietnamese investment into Laos to reach US\$5.8 billion in 2015, whilst total bilateral trade value is projected to total US\$2 billion on current trends

[Tuoitrenews \(24 March 2015\)](#)

## 02 INDONESIA SEEKS MAJOR ROLE IN CHINESE-LED INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

### INDONESIA

Indonesia wants to play a major role in a new Chinese-led Asian infrastructure bank, with at least the vice-president's position reserved for the Southeast Asian country, the finance minister said. The \$50 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), expected to start operations by the end of the year, is attracting a growing list of countries from Britain to India to New Zealand.

- ▶ The bank's interim chief, Jin Liqun said that at least 35 countries will join the AIIB by the deadline of 31 March
- ▶ Under President Joko Widodo, Indonesia is expected to be one of the main beneficiaries of the bank as it seeks significant funding to build

new roads, ports and bridges in the vast archipelago. Indonesia is also fighting for a place in AIIB as they expect to develop into the biggest client

- ▶ Besides that, Jakarta is also vying with Beijing to host the AIIB headquarters. However, Chinese Deputy Finance Minister Shi Yaobin said it had already been agreed that the bank would have its headquarters in Beijing
- ▶ On the side, the United States expressed concern about China's growing diplomatic clout, and questioned whether the AIIB will have sufficient standards of governance and environmental, and social safeguards

[Reuters \(25 March 2015\)](#)

## 03 THAILAND TO PROMOTE ELECTRIC VEHICLE PRODUCTION

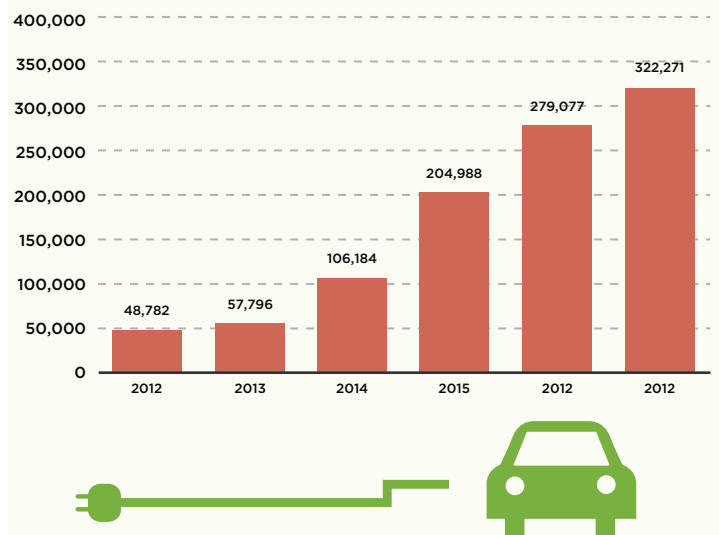
### THAILAND

Thailand's energy ministry further affirmed its commitments to making Thailand a hub for both electrical vehicle production and use through the passing of key regulations and laws to facilitate the infrastructural initiative.

- ▶ The pilot program seeks to install electrical charging stations in Bangkok, Chon Buri, Rayong, and Ayutthaya in a bid to expand the use and availability of electrical vehicles domestically, following which in five years a review of the program will take place and further commitments made depending on its outcome
- ▶ The board of investment is also seeking to introduce a policy package with privileges towards EV investment; additionally, the areas of adequate infrastructure, domestic demand, and support from local governments are fundamental areas to be targeted in order to achieve Thailand's goal in promoting the usage and production of electrical vehicles
- ▶ The incentives envisaged would include a 10% tax credit for excise taxes on component parts such as air conditioners, car batteries, and traction motors; electrical vehicles being considered under said production incentive policy currently span flex-fuel vehicles, hybrids, fuel-cell vehicles and fully electric vehicles

[Bangkok Post \(27 March 2015\)](#)

### Projected assembly of electric transmission-equipped automobiles in Asia Pacific from 2012 - 2017



This statistic displays the number of light vehicles produced with electric transmission in Asia Pacific from 2012-2017. Some 322,300 automobiles are predicted to be built with electric transmission in Asia Pacific.

[Statista 2015](#)

## 04 PNOY TAPS TAGLE, DAVIDE, AYALA FOR BANGSAMORO REVIEW

### PHILIPPINES

President Benigno Aquino III said Friday that a national peace summit will be convened to look into the controversial Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in a calm and responsible manner so to not incite anger and despair from the Mamasapano event. He said that the national peace summit will come up with a report to help the public understand better the BBL.

- ▶ In a national address, President Aquino said he has invited citizen leaders to stand as independent conveners of the summit. Among them are Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, former Chief Justice Hilario Davide, and business tycoon Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala
- ▶ Congressional deliberations on the BBL however were derailed following the controversial anti-terror operation in Mamasapano last January 25 that killed at least 67 individuals including 44 police commandos

- ▶ Aquino said the public should not lose faith in the peace process, as failure to pass the BBL will lead to more violence in Mindanao. He also urged the public to prepare for more attacks on the BBL and said Filipinos should look into the real motives of those opposing the measure
- ▶ The country marks today the anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the final peace agreement signed between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 27 March 2014, concluding the over 17 years of negotiations
- ▶ The respective peace pact resulted in the creation of the draft BBL, which will serve as the enabling law for the proposed political entity that would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

[Philstar \(27 March 2015\)](#)

# 05 PRIME MINISTER WANTS STRONGER REFORMS TO GET VIETNAM AHEAD OF NEIGHBORS



**Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung told government agencies to speed up administrative reforms in order to make Vietnam more competitive and more business-friendly. Although Vietnam has tried to improve its business environment and increase the competitiveness of local businesses and products, the efforts are still weak and have many shortcomings, he conceded.**

▶ Vietnam's competitiveness is now the lowest among the ASEAN-6, which is comprised of the bigger economies in Southeast Asia. The PM expresses concern that in some areas Vietnam is even behind Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, and further states that "We cannot let

Vietnam remain at the bottom of ASEAN"

- ▶ For example, Vietnam recorded nearly 7.9 million foreign arrivals last year, up 4 percent from the year before, but Thailand had between 22-23 million tourists.
- ▶ Vietnam's economy highly depends on the trade of its exports and imports, proven by fact that the turnover nearing US\$300 billion last year, twice its gross domestic product
- ▶ However, the shortcomings that Vietnam faces highly relate to its main economic activities, specifically, the customs policies and procedures are hindering the country's ability to attract investment; other shortcomings are paperwork related to tax, insurance and construction

[Thanhien News \(26 March 2015\)](#)

# 06 ADB AFFIRMS CAMBODIAN ECONOMIC GROWTH

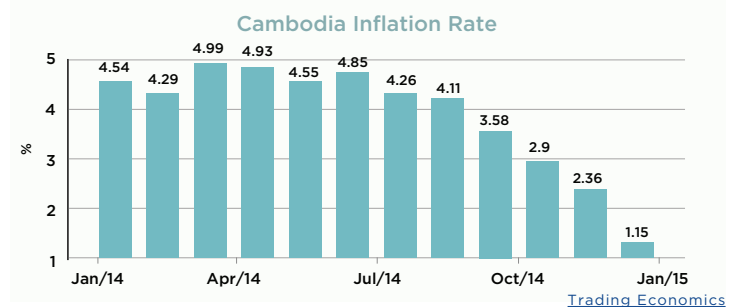
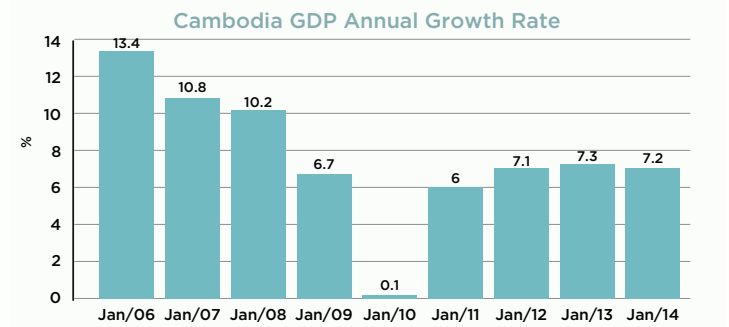
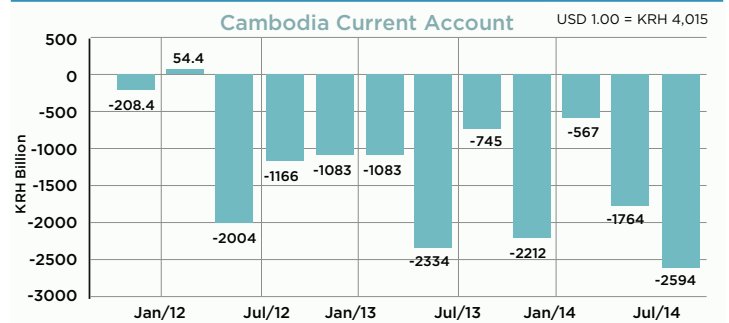


**According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), prospects for Cambodian economic growth are positive through to 2016 due to increasing domestic stability and foreign trade.**

- ▶ The Cambodian economy is projected to grow by 7.3% in 2015, and 7.5% in 2016, allowing the government to narrow its fiscal deficit whilst growing its foreign and domestic deposits; the positive outlook was based on several key fundamental factors defining Cambodia's continued economic success
- ▶ Whilst strong global economic trends and growth in foreign trade were pivotal points in forming projections of Cambodia's economy, the quelling of domestic labour and political tensions as well as cheaper fuel costs were cited as the keystones of Cambodia's future economic success; at the same time, burgeoning domestic demand, as well as a private sector that expanded by an average of 27.3% between 2010 and 2013 were all key reasons as to why the nation state's economic prospects were praised
- ▶ Furthermore, the strengthening of regulatory frameworks within the banking sector, as well as falling inflation and increased FDI inflows are helping to maintain the Kingdom's strength in economic fundamentals

[Cambodia Daily \(25 March 2015\)](#)

## Cambodian Economic Growth



[Trading Economics](#)

# 07 BRUNEI, SINGAPORE INK SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT MOU



**Brunei signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral partnership for a sustainable built environment with Singapore. The MoU will not only maintain and build close relationship between Brunei and Singapore, but also facilitate a closer collaboration particularly in areas of research and development for urban planning, construction industry and in developing the green building concept.**

▶ Held in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the MoU will organise a study trip which is aimed at improving and building the capacity of Public Works Department (PWD) officials

in developing green and energy efficient building policy as well as in making decisions for new and existing buildings

- ▶ The respective study trip is participated by Brunei's PWD like architects, engineers and quantity surveyors to visit Singapore's Building and Construction Authority Centre for Sustainable Buildings
- ▶ Besides that, the Brunei and Singapore ministers noted that the two countries have also strengthened the exchanges in general areas of collaboration through the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices

[News Asia One \(24 March 2015\)](#)



08 MYANMAR MONITOR 

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

▶ Myanmar has accepted responsibility and apologised for bombs dropped in Yunnan province, south-western China last month that killed five people, China's Foreign Ministry said on 2 April. The Chinese government was infuriated by the deaths and warned of a "decisive" response should there be any repetition. The incident happened during clashes between the military and a rebel group Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), which has less than 10,000 refugees to flee to China.

[Reuters \(2 April 2015\)](#)

**POLITICS**

▶ Myanmar received international praise on 31 March after the government signed a draft ceasefire accord with ethnic rebel groups to end 65 years of armed conflict in the country. The signing came at the end of the latest of seven rounds of negotiations since 2013, but the government had aimed to make the deal before the general election in November this year.

[Reuters \(31 March 2015\)](#)

▶ As Aung San Suu Kyi faces an election year that could hand her the leadership of Myanmar, she has maintained her unwillingness to condemn the country's human-rights abuses against Muslims - a politically safe stance at home - by playing down her role as the conscience of her nation. "I've always been a politician. I've never said that I was a moral organisation or anything like that," she said in an interview on 3 April.

[The Globe and Mail \(3 April 2015\)](#)

**ECONOMY**

▶ Myanmar is considered one of the top ASEAN investment destinations in 2015, with growth forecast at 8.5%, according to the UOB Asian Enterprise Survey 2014 conducted by the United Overseas Bank (UOB). The survey, which was conducted among key decision makers of middle market Asian companies with an annual turnover of US\$50 million or more, found that seven out of 10 Asian firms planned to expand into Myanmar and establishing a market presence in the country.

[Deal Street Asia \(6 April 2015\)](#)

▶ Singapore's OCBC Bank is one of the first three foreign banks to have received final regulatory approval from the Central Bank of Myanmar to open a branch in Myanmar, the bank announced in a news release on 2 April. The approval follows the award of provisional banking licenses on Oct 1, 2014 to nine foreign banks. OCBC's Yangon branch will start operations on 23 April and offer services such as cash management, project financing, and trade finance, as well as treasury and capital markets advisory and services to foreign companies, joint ventures, and domestic banks.

[Channel NewsAsia \(2 April 2015\)](#)

09 MALAYSIA PROPOSES JOINT ASEAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE



**Malaysia proposed that Southeast Asian countries form a joint peacekeeping force, saying it would help rebuild trust after bitter arguments over how to handle China's territorial challenges in the South China Sea. Establishing the force will be a key focus of Malaysia's 2015 ASEAN chairmanship, said Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin. Its size and makeup have yet to be determined, he said.**

- ▶ But Tim Huxley, executive director of IISS-Asia, a Singapore-based security think tank said that Malaysia will find it difficult to persuade other Asean members to join, "There isn't a great deal of trust on security matters between Asean members," he said. "The trust has to come first, then the cooperation."
- ▶ Even if not aimed at resolving tensions around South China Sea issues, the Malaysian proposal could exacerbate tensions between Asean and China, which has long maintained that territorial disputes should be resolved bilaterally between claimant states, rather than through multilateral bodies
- ▶ Hong Lei, China's foreign ministry spokesman in response to criticisms said, "We support the building of the Asean community, but Asean is not a party concerned to relevant disputes over the South China Sea,". He urged Asean to take a neutral stance on the South China Sea issue
- ▶ Besides that, Malaysia is also working to establish joint monitoring and patrols of the Sulu Sea involving Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, Mr. Hishammuddin said, in hope of replicating a similar joint effort in the Strait of Malacca

[Wall Street Journal \(18 March 2015\)](#)











10 SINGAPOREAN GOVERNMENT RANKS 25TH MOST OPEN



**According to a US-based advocacy group, the World Justice Project (WJP), the Singaporean government was ranked 25th out of 102 nations in terms of openness based on public experiences and perceptions.**

- ▶ The WJP government index also ranked Singapore the 6th amongst 15 countries in Southeast Asia, and 24th amongst 31 high-income countries in terms of openness; rankings were based on publicised laws and government data, the right to information, petition, and citizen participation, as well as the handling of dissidents
- ▶ As a nation state often criticised by the west for having authoritarian laws and limited civil liberties, Singapore was still commended on its transparency with regards to the availability and awareness of laws and legal rights amongst its citizens
- ▶ However, Civic participation was Singapore's lowest-ranking area, where the nation was ranked 70th out of 102 nations in terms of the government's civic participation mechanisms, such as the protection of the freedom of expression and assembly

[Asia One \(27 March 2015\)](#)

ASEAN Government Openness					
	RANKING	SCORE		RANKING	SCORE
	25	0.63		88	0.43
	32	0.58		98	0.36
	50	0.54		100	0.32
	68	0.49		N/A	
	86	0.43		N/A	

[World Justice Project](#)

