

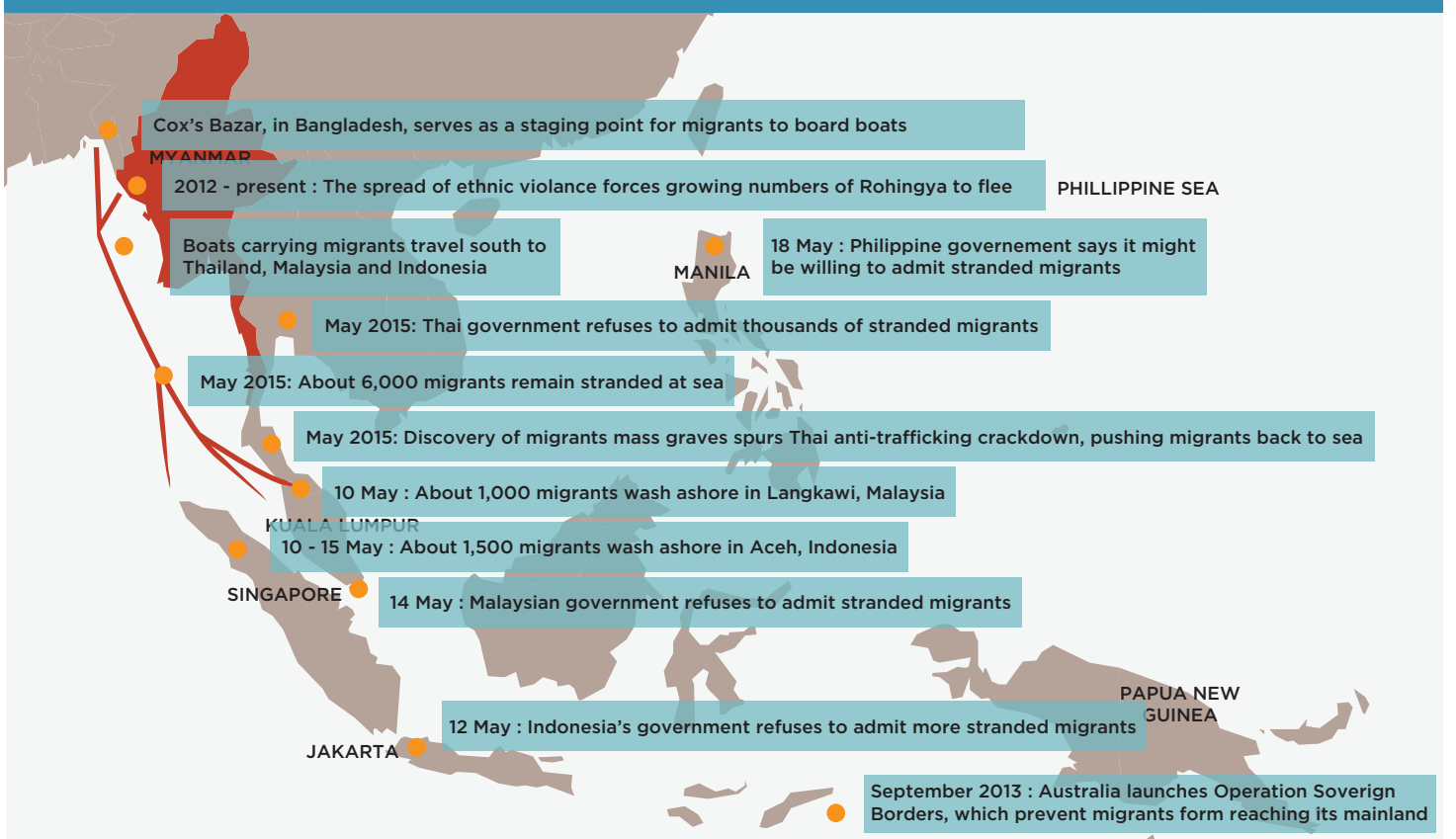
CARI CAPTURES



01 ASEAN'S ROHINGYA REFUGEES AT RISK



Refugees at Sea



foreignpolicy.com

With the death toll reaching above a hundred, the fate of Rohingya refugees continues to remain undecided as surrounding nations continue to provide limited aid.

- ▶ The Rohingya, refugees whom were persecuted in Myanmar for their Muslim affiliations, are believed to have first been discovered on 13 May 2015 in the seas of Southeast Asia following their escape through Thailand's Southern borders
- ▶ According to the BBC, as of 18 May 2015, 84 children and 50 women have been confirmed as part of the total manifest of refugees aboard a single vessel; it is believed that the decrepit fishing vessel housing these individuals originally housed up to 350 migrants whom suffered from hunger, thirst, and general inhumane living conditions for two and a half months

- ▶ Currently, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates more than 8,000 migrants are currently adrift on illegal vessels in waters surrounding Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia; whilst a total of 2,606 migrants have been saved over the month of May alone, troubling reports concerning Indonesian and Malaysian navies initially turning refugees away has lead to calls for immediate and sufficient aid to be provided to the refugees

02 KRA ISTHMUS CANAL GETS GREEN LIGHT



As part of China's vision for a new silk road economic belt, the canal would enable ships to pass from the Gulf of Thailand in the Pacific directly into the Andaman Sea in the Indian Ocean, cutting current shipping routes by at least 1,200 Kilometers and allowing certain routes to avoid the Straits of Malacca completely.

▶ The project, which will cost US\$28 billion and a decade to complete is set to commence in the short term future as dictated by the Guangzhou agreement signed bilaterally between Thailand and China; with 80% of China's oil flowing from the Middle East through the piracy prone Straits of Malacca, the canal represents both economic and strategic Chinese interests in the region

- ▶ The canal project, when coupled with China's ongoing push for a Sino-Pakistani economic corridor, and high speed rail project with Russia, represents China's expanding economic influence within the region
- ▶ According to Liang Yunxiang, a professor at the School of International Studies of Peking University, the move to build the Kra Isthmus Canal is highly motivated by China's ongoing bid to sway Sino-ASEAN relations, as well as to diffuse the threat of a US blockade within the strait itself should global politics demand it
- ▶ However, based on the report from Channel News Asia (19 May), Thailand denies Kra Canal deal due to the national security. Besides, the plan could never be materialised due to its enormous cost and possible damage to the communities as well as environment in southern Thailand

[Wan China Times \(18 May 2015\)](#)

China's Vision For A New Silk Road Economic Belt



[wantchinatimes.com](#)

03 CHANGES TO HOUSING DEVELOPERS ACT TO KICK IN FROM MAY



The amendments will aim to better protect private home buyers, and help them make more informed choices by providing the public with more comprehensive and timely information on the private residential property market.

- ▶ Parliament had passed amendments to the Act to improve and update legislative safeguards for buyers of uncompleted private residential properties in April 2013. Since then, the Ministry of National Development (MND) has worked on the subsidiary law, the Housing Developers Rules, to effect the policy changes
- ▶ Property analysts said that the new rules will help homebuyers make better comparisons. From 5 June, the weekly data made available on the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) website will help homebuyers make better comparisons when deciding which units to buy. Overall, it is a positive move for the Government to instill more confidence in the market
- ▶ The most meaningful data for buyers would be the level of discounts in the form of vouchers, cash rebates, absorption of legal fees or stamp fees, rental guarantees and furniture vouchers

[Channel News Asia \(18 May 2015\)](#)

04 MALAYSIA TO PRICE ROUND-TRIP HSR TICKET FROM KL-SINGAPORE AT UNDER RM400



Malaysia is looking to price the new high-speed rail (HSR) service linking Kuala Lumpur to Singapore at under RM400 (S\$148) for a round trip ticket, according to a report citing the country's Land Public Transport Commission.

- ▶ The planned high-speed rail from Jurong East in Singapore to the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur is expected to shorten travel time to as little as 90 minutes. There will be seven stops in Malaysia and the 340km line is estimated to cost RM40 billion to build
- ▶ Currently, people travelling from Singapore to KL pay between S\$25 and S\$50 for a five-hour bus ride, about S\$80 for a 45-minute budget flight, and about S\$250 for a full-service flight
- ▶ Land Public Transport Commission chief executive, Mr. Mohd Nur Ismail said he expected the HSR to give a massive boost to the local tourism industry. "It would allow tourists to visit both Malaysia and Singapore as one package," he said

[Straits Times \(12 May 2015\)](#)

05 CAMBODIA SEEKS TRADE POLICY REFORM



Due to the increasingly volatile nature of ASEAN's trade environment as catalysed by the impending finalisation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), Cambodia seeks to develop a more robust trade agenda under the advice of the United Nations Conference On Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

▶ The TPP, which is aimed at facilitating trade between select nations within the ASEAN region, EU, and the Americas will not include Cambodia in its list of original signatories; this places the nation state in a disadvantaged state as neighbouring Vietnam, who is party to the TPP, is set to receive a greater incidence of trade within the region

▶ The partnership with UNCTAD has already yielded preliminary discussions regarding a paper titled "Towards a new trade policy on market access for Cambodia: Identifying a positive agenda among challenges and opportunities"

▶ Currently, it would be prudent for Cambodia to continue to leverage upon its existing bilateral and multilateral trade agreements within the ASEAN region and the US and EU, which are its two largest trading partners; further liberalisation into foreign ownership and trade would also aid in facilitating greater trade for the nation

[UNCTAD \(18 May 2015\)](#)

Cambodian Trade as of 2013

MERCHANDISE TRADE	Value (USD Million)		Annual Percentage Change	
	2013	2005-2013	2012	2013
Merchandise export, f.o.b	9300	15	17	19
Merchandise import, f.o.b	13 000	16	18	18
	Value (USD Million)			
Share in world total exports	2013			2013
	0.05			0.07
Breakdown in economy's total exports		Share in world total imports		
By main commodity group (ITS)		Breakdown in economy's total imports		
<i>Agricultural products</i>	5.2	By main commodity group (ITS)		
<i>Manufacturers</i>	0.1	<i>Agricultural products</i>		5.3
By main destination	94.3	<i>Fuels and mining products</i>		9.8
1. European Union (28)		<i>Manufacturers</i>		48.0
2. United States	27.2	By main origin		
3. Hong Kong, China	23.5	1. China		32.6
4. Singapore	17.2	2. United States		12.2
5. Canada	8.6	3. Thailand		11.9
	5.2	4. Vietnam		10.7
		5. Hong Kong, China		7.2

[World Trade Organisation](#)

06 THAILAND FUNDS DRUG TREATMENT CENTRE IN LAOS



The Thai government yesterday provided grant assistance worth some 50 million baht (almost 12 billion kip) to fund the construction of a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre at Phonhong district hospital in Vientiane province. The Thai funding will also be used to improve the outpatient building at the hospital and buy medical equipment to treat road accident victims.

▶ The project to build a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre is part of the Lao government's plan for the development of the health sector, as it needs to provide health services for the victims of drug addiction in Vientiane province and surrounding areas

▶ The Lao government is strongly committed to fighting drugs and crime as well as addressing the long-term harmful impacts of drugs on society, national security, stability and socio-economic development, especially educating the children and young people of the dangers of illicit drugs

▶ Last year, senior government officials, United Nations representatives and personnel from international organisations burned drugs worth US\$17.5 million (about 135 billion kip) at That Luang esplanade to mark the 27th International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

[Vientiane Times \(17 May 2015\)](#)

07 NORTH SUMATRA'S INVESTMENT POTENTIAL BEING EXPLORED BY 22 INVESTORS



As many as 22 foreign investors came from Japan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and China, among others are exploring areas of investment in North Sumatra province which they believe has huge business potential. Among them, ten foreign investors had expressed interest in the energy sector.

▶ North Sumatra is an attractive place to invest as it is one of the top ten investment destinations, and is ranked eighth in terms of foreign investment destinations in the country and tenth in terms of domestic investment destinations

▶ Head of the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) Franky Sibarani stated that North Sumatra's improving infrastructure has been one of the key factors in attracting investment, "These all will help to improve North Sumatras image as an attractive investment destination," he added

[Antara News \(19 May 2015\)](#)

08 MYANMAR MONITOR

POLITICS

▶ A few hundred Myanmar citizens and Buddhist monks staged a rally in Yangon on 27 May to protest the United Nations and foreign media over their continued pressure for the repatriation of illegal migrants in the region. They said most of the migrants found at sea belong to Bangladesh and not Myanmar, and their country should not be singled out for blame.

[Channel News Asia \(27 May 2015\)](#)

▶ An international meeting about the plight of Rohingya Muslims at the Nobel Institute in Oslo includes three Nobel Peace Prize winning laureates, but is missing Aung San Suu Kyi, who was not invited. Norway has pledged US\$1.3 million to help Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine state by improving living conditions. Aung San Suu Kyi has said that she is a politician and never sought out to be a human rights champion.

[ABC News \(26 May 2015\)](#)

▶ The popularity of its rival, the National League for Democracy (NLD), does not seem to faze Myanmar's ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Scores of smaller parties will also compete in what could be the country's first free and fair general election in 25 years and a milestone in its unfinished journey from dictatorship to democracy. Many people in Myanmar feel the reforms have stalled, and see the upcoming election as an opportunity to vote against the USDP and the unpopular military elite it represents.

[Reuters UK \(25 May 2015\)](#)

ECONOMY

▶ Myanmar will give the green light to new hotels in the largely unspoiled Mergui archipelago by the end of the year, said Sai Kyaw Ohn, deputy minister for hotels and tourism. Some 27 local companies and joint ventures are awaiting approval from the Myanmar Investment Commission for new hotel and resort projects on the islands, he said.

[Bangkok Post \(25 May 2015\)](#)

▶ Even though Myanmar is abundantly rich in natural energy resources, the investment of capital and technology will not be able to unlock these resources in time to fulfil the growing need for power. In the meantime, the Ministry of Energy is considering other options, including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports, which could provide a short-term solution without the negative impacts of other resources such as coal or hydropower.

[Myanmar Times \(26 May 2015\)](#)

09 BRUNEI TO ESTABLISH SECURITIES EXCHANGE

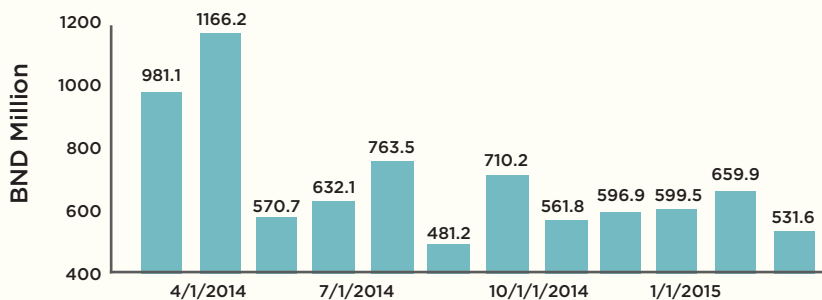
BRUNEI

To be launched in 2017, Brunei's securities exchange will be a governmental move to diversify the country's economy away from oil production and to catch up to more mature markets in the region.

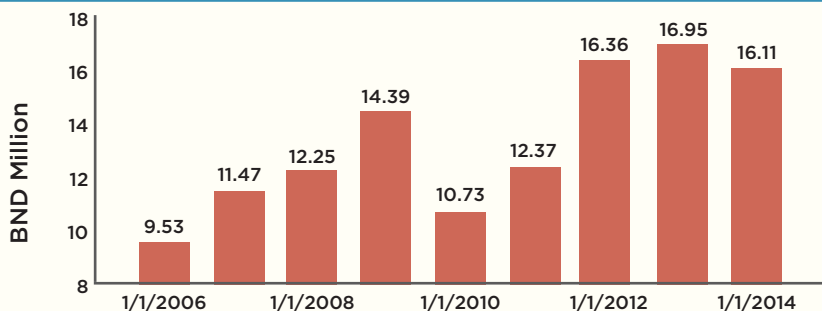
- ▶ Whilst amongst the world's richest countries on a per-capita basis, Brunei risks being left behind with regional economic integration as it has failed to set up a securities exchange in the interim
- ▶ Whilst the exchange has been discussed for years, efforts are gathering pace with new capital market rules introduced in February and other initiatives now underway by the Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD)
- ▶ Currently, Brunei's economy has focused on developing sectors such as tourism, halal products, and manufacturing; however, GDP is expected to shrink by 1.5% in 2015, the third year of consecutive contraction, according to the Asian Development Bank, mainly due to daily oil output falling by almost half since 2006 and a drop in global crude prices

[Brunei Times \(8 May 2015\)](#)

Brunei Balance of Trade



Brunei GDP



[Trading Economics](#)

10 NEW MAPS SHOW METRO MANILA'S QUAKE DANGER ZONES

PHILIPPINES

Government agencies launched the most detailed and updated map, the Valley Fault System Atlas of two major faults, East Valley Fault and West Valley Fault within Greater Metro Manila in preparation for a possible 7.2-magnitude earthquake that may happen within our lifetime, possibly 43 years from now.

- ▶ Cities and towns traversed by the 100-kilometer West Valley Fault, may experience earthquakes of up to magnitude 7.2. On the other hand, areas traversed by the shorter 10-kilometre East Valley Fault are due for, at most, a 6.2-magnitude earthquake
- ▶ Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology warned that buildings should not be built on top of active faults or within a 5-meter bufferzone on either side of the fault. Nevertheless, ensuring buildings outside the bufferzone are earthquake-resilient is the best preparation for an earthquake
- ▶ In Metro Manila, the death toll could be around 33,500 with at least 100,000 injured, according to a study. Some 40% of residential buildings are likely to be heavily or partially damaged. Total cost of damage could reach P2.3 trillion

[Rappler \(18 May 2015\)](#)

