

ARGENTINA, VENEZUELA SIGN ACCORDS FOR CLOSER COOPERATION

The Presidents of Venezuela and Argentina, their Excellencies Hugo Chavez and Nestor Kirchner, signed a series of 17 mutual cooperation agreements in Caracas on 21 February 2007. The agreements cover a wide variety of issues, such as a commitment to create Banco del Sur **BancSUR** (Bank of the South,) trade deals in the areas of agriculture, health, and technology, and cooperation in energy, communications and construction.

In a related financial agreement, the two countries jointly issued bonds for US\$1.5 billion. This was the second time that a joint bond was floated after last year when the two countries issued US\$1 billion worth of bonds. Venezuela is hoping that this bond will absorb excess liquidity in its economy and thereby help restrain inflation.

With regard to trade, the two G-15 leaders committed their countries to a variety of oil for food deals. For example in exchange for oil, Argentina will provide Venezuela with 10,000 tons of beef and 5,000 tons of chicken. Another agreement involves Venezuela's commitment to loan US\$135 million to an Argentinean powdered milk production cooperative, Sancor, which will, in return, supply Venezuela with 15 million tons of powdered milk over the next 12 years. Also, Argentina agreed to help Venezuela set up factories for the production of agricultural machinery and of gas-powered buses.

These agreements were signed shortly after the two Presidents had inaugurated the first oil well in the Orinoco Oil Belt that is the result of a Venezuelan-Argentinean-Uruguayan joint venture.

Source: venezuelaanalysis.com

NIGERIA TO PROMOTE G-15 COLLABORATION ON NON-MINERAL RAW MATERIALS

Nigeria proposes to assist G-15 and G-77 countries in developing a raw materials information system that shows the various non-mineral resources and capacities of the member countries. The Director-General of Nigeria's Raw Material Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Professor Peter Onwualu said during a meeting with the Science Journalist Association in Abuja, Nigeria that the aim of the collaborative venture was to solve the problem of information dissemination on raw materials availability as well as to encourage networking and technological exchanges between member countries operating under the two bodies. He said the Nigerian Federal Government has assigned the responsibility of relating with the bodies in the area of promoting raw materials development and utilization, adding that the council has been charged with the task of developing a website aggregating each country's raw material bases and their technical capacities.

Source: This Day, 20 February 2007.

INDONESIA, IRAN BOOST TIES

Indonesian President H.E.Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono expressed his country's readiness to expand cooperation with Iran in a number of areas, including technology, investment, tourism and culture. He also expressed his country's willingness to benefit from Iran's experience in application of nuclear technology for peaceful uses. President Yudhoyono made these remarks in a meeting with Iranian Majlis Speaker Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, who was in Jakarta for an official three-day visit during 17-19 February 2007. The two leaders also discussed implementation of joint venture projects such as the construction of a fertilizer plant in Iran and an oil refinery in Indonesia, and a direct flight between Tehran and Jakarta.

Source: Eye on Asia, 18 February 2007.

THREE G-15 COUNTRIES GET CENTRES FOR SOUTH-SOUTH INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION

UNIDO Director-General Kandeh K. Yumkella was in New Delhi on 15 February 2007 for the launching of the first *UNIDO Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation*. The Delhi Centre is part of a major new UNIDO South-South cooperation initiative in several of the more advanced developing countries. In the near future, a second centre will open in China. It is anticipated that further Centres will be established in Brazil, Egypt and South Africa. The Centres will stimulate the development of mutually beneficial partnerships between the more advanced developing countries hosting them, and least developed countries.

Source: www.unido.org/en/doc/61918

IRAN, ALGERIA DISCUSS REMOVAL OF DOUBLE TAXATION

Iran's Ambassador to Algiers Hossein Abdi Bayaneh conferred on 8 February 2007, with the Algerian Finance Minister Mourad Medelci on removal of double-taxation agreements between the two countries. The Algerian minister expressed satisfaction with the current level of regional and international cooperation between the two countries. "Agreement on removal of double taxation between Iran and Algeria could help promote investment opportunities by Iranian investors in the country," he said. He added that oil, gas and housing are among significant sectors in Algerian economy, and invited the Iranian investors to invest in the country.

The Iranian ambassador, for his part, called for the expansion of banking cooperation and promotion of investment opportunities by Iranian businessmen, which, he pointed out, are among Iran's priorities.

Source: IRNA, 8 February 2007.

NIGERIA NEGOTIATES COMMERCIAL DEALS WITH G-15 COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC FUEL SUPPLY

Despite being a leading oil producer and OPEC member, Nigeria has long had insufficient crude refining capacity to meet domestic demand forcing it to spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year on importing refined oil products. Several initiatives are however underway to improve this situation.

According to Minister of Petroleum Resources, Edmund Daukoru, Nigeria is negotiating with several oil companies including state-run firms from Venezuela and Iran, on the establishment of two refineries that will cost about US\$6 billion. The Minister further said that India, which has already been looking at other energy investments in Nigeria, is also looking at the possibility of taking stakes in the refineries as are U.S. oil major Chevron Corp. (CVX), Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell PLC (RDSB.LN) and France's Total SA (TOT).

The negotiations also entail discussions with some of the companies about building production facilities to convert cassava, a root vegetable that is a staple food in Nigeria, into ethanol. A related report from Brazil in February 2007 says that Brazil's Petrobras is sending its first shipment of anhydrous alcohol to the country after the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Petrobras finalized their proposal to add 10% ethanol to Nigerian gasoline.

Source: Daily Trust, 7 February 2007 and Brazzilmag.com, 9 February 2007.

JAMAICA, ZIMBABWE SET TO RECEIVE INDIAN INVESTMENT

The Government of India has extended a US\$10 million credit line for a major water supply project in Jamaica. The project, which will be implemented by leading Indian pump manufacturing company Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., is to provide drinking water supply to households in Jamaica. The company's Director J.R. Sapre told the media in New Delhi on 17 February that the project is likely to begin by September this year and would be completed by March 2008.

India has also signed an agreement with another G-15 country, Zimbabwe, to provide US\$5 million for the funding of a project on small and medium enterprises. The Indian Ambassador to Zimbabwe Mr Ajit Kumar disclosed this on 2 February in Harare. Under the agreement, an Indo-Zimbabwe Technology Centre would be established at the Harare Institute of Technology while a similar one would be set up at the Bulawayo Polytechnic.

Source: The Herald, 5 February 2007 and The Economic Times, 18 February 2007.