

BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA STRENGTHEN BILATERAL INTEGRATION

The President of Brazil, Lula da Silva, and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez met in Caracas on 27 June 2008 to discuss bilateral issues. The two Presidents signed an accord to commercialize liquid natural gas from Venezuela in a refinery in northern Brazil. They also discussed how to further connect the electricity grids between the southeastern Venezuelan state of Bolívar, where dams produce more than 70% of Venezuela's electricity, and northern Brazil. Another item on the agenda was to work out the details of the joint enterprise formed by Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA and Brazil's PETROBRAS for the construction of the Abreu e Lima oil refinery in northern Brazil. Presidents Lula and Chávez also signed food cooperation accords by which Venezuela will import 12,000 tons of soy oil and 20,000 tons of chicken meat from Brazil. This agreement is in addition to the \$51 million technological cooperation agreement the two countries signed in March 2008, which is aimed at bolstering Venezuela's agricultural sector and promoting food security.

The two G-15 Heads of State also discussed their plans to streamline border controls and customs laws in order to facilitate the transit of people and merchandise between the two countries. In a follow up to educational exchange accords signed three months ago, Presidents Lula and Chávez signed an agreement to allow 2,000 Venezuelan students to study in Brazilian universities.

The Meeting between the two Heads of State was the fourth of its kind since Presidents Chávez and Lula agreed to meet every three months to manage bilateral cooperation.

Source: venezuelaanalysis.com, 1 July 2008

INDONESIA, BRAZIL TO COOPERATE ON BIOFUEL ENERGY

The leaders of Indonesia and Brazil agreed that both G-15 countries, home to much of the world's remaining tropical forests, would cooperate on bio-fuels energy production. The two countries signed an agreement for Indonesia to send experts to Brazil to study developments in its bio-fuel industry. The agreement was signed during President Lula da Silva's official visit to Indonesia on 12 July 2008.

Brazil, a pioneer of mass ethanol usage in cars, has been mixing the sugar cane-based fuel with gasoline for decades, as well as running a vast fleet of vehicles on pure ethanol. Indonesia, the world's biggest palm oil producer, has also been promoting bio-fuels to cut the use of costly petroleum products, and aims to make mandatory the use of a 2.5 percent blend of bio-diesel by September 2008.

Source: Reuters, 12 July 2008

INDIA, EGYPT REINFORCE BILATERAL TIES

Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs of India, visited Egypt from 1-3 July 2008 at the invitation of Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The two G-15 Foreign Ministers recognized the immense potential for enhancing economic cooperation between India and Egypt. The two sides reiterated their commitment to diversify and deepen the scope of their economic, trade and investment linkages. Both sides noted the evolution of economic relations between India and the Arab Republic of Egypt in recent years.

India emerged as Egypt's third largest trading partner behind the US and Italy in 2006. In 2007, India's rank was fourth behind the US, Italy and Saudi Arabia. For both the years, India was the largest importer of Egyptian products. According to Egyptian trade figures, India's exports to Egypt amounted to USD 534.00 million in 2007, a growth of 51% over 2006. India's imports from Egypt stood at USD 1,882.64 million during 2007, showing a growth of 35% over the previous year. Nearly 95% of Egypt's exports to India comprise oil and gas, while coking coal, raw cotton, rock phosphate, and marble constitute the other items of import. The principal Indian exports to Egypt are frozen meat, cotton yarn and synthetic yarn, rice, diesel, tobacco, electrical machinery, soybean, chemicals, automobiles and components, sugar, pharmaceuticals and tea.

The Ministers expressed concern at the phenomenal rise in food and fuel prices in recent months and resolved to work together in addressing these challenges. They emphasized the importance of food security and energy security, especially for developing countries like India and Egypt. The Ministers also underscored the continuing consultation and co-ordination between the two G-15 countries in the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international forums.

Source: Press Release of the Ministry of External Affairs, India. 3 July 2008

IRAN, SRI LANKA EXPRESS SATISFACTION AT EXPANDING RELATIONS

Iran will expedite the implementation of all development projects it has undertaken in Sri Lanka. Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran assured a delegation from Sri Lanka that projects Iran has undertaken in Sri Lanka would be speedily concluded. This assurance was given to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Mr. Rohitha Bogollagama, when he called on the Iranian President during his visit to Tehran to attend the 15th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Conference on 29 July 2008.

President Ahmadinejad told the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister that his government would stand by Sri Lanka in its ongoing efforts to achieve peace and prosperity in the country. The Iranian President and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister expressed satisfaction at the steadily expanding bilateral relations and partnership between the two G-15 countries.

Source: Asiantribune.com, Colombo, 30 July 2008

JAMAICA, VENEZUELA TO PURSUE MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

Representatives of Jamaica and Venezuela have commenced discussions aimed at developing a media partnership to exchange news and programmes between both G-15 countries. This was announced by the Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Jamaica Information Service (JIS), Neville James, after a meeting with the Director General of Radio Nacional in Venezuela, Helena Salcedo. It is hoped that such partnerships will stimulate cooperation among Southern countries on economic, social, and political issues to increase trade, enhance and share technical expertise, build capacity, and spearhead development, he stated.

The decision was taken in the backdrop of the 7th Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held at Margarita in Venezuela on 3-4 July 2008. The Conference featured some 70 countries including G-15 and NAM members like Malaysia, Nigeria, Iran, and India. Other G-15 Countries such as Brazil, and Mexico participated in the conference as observers.

Source: Jamaica Information Service, 21 July 2008

MALAYSIA, INDONESIA SIGN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENTS

Malaysia and Indonesia signed six memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the field of science and technology on 19 July 2008. The agreements related to joint research in the field of microelectronics and optoelectronics for data security, cooperation aimed to develop and commercialise fuel from the jatropa fruit and other sources of renewable energy and the exchange of experts in nuclear energy to enhance human resources competency and bolster nuclear safety in the region.

The agreements were concluded between agencies under the ministry of Science and Technology of Malaysia and Indonesian institutions like the Bandung Institute of Technology, Sepuluh Nopember Surabaya Institute of Technology, and Universitas Indonesia. Malaysian Deputy Minister for Research and Technology, Teguh Rahardjo, who witnessed the signing ceremony, hoped that the cooperation would enrich the knowledge heritage of both G-15 countries through a strategic partnership.

Source: Bernama, 19 July 2008

MALAYSIA-VENEZUELA BUSINESS COUNCIL CHARTER SIGNED

The Charter of the Malaysia-Venezuela Business Council was signed on 1 July 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in the presence of the Malaysian Deputy Trade Minister, Datuk Jacob Dungau Sagan and the Venezuelan Ambassador to Malaysia Manuel Antonio Guzman. The establishment of the Council is expected to further enhance commerce between both countries. Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Venezuela jumped 41.1 % to US\$83 million

last year, with exports amounting to US\$54.4 million and imports US\$28.6 million. Currently, Malaysia mainly exports electrical and electronic products to Venezuela. Imports from Venezuela are mainly crude petroleum and iron and steel products.

Venezuela's national oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela SA, has plans to develop the Pateo and Dragon offshore gas fields in Malaysia. Malaysian firms like Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) and Scomi Group Bhd also have operations in Venezuela. According to Mr Sagan, besides the oil & gas industry, Malaysian companies could also tap into business opportunities in Venezuela's other sectors like iron ore mining, construction, materials, food processing, textiles, steel, aluminium and motor vehicle assembly.

Source: NST Business Times, 2 July 2008