

## MALAYSIA AND SRI LANKA EXPAND TIES IN TOURISM SECTOR

**March 01, 2007:** Malaysian and Sri Lankan tourism authorities came closer as the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Malaysia, Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan bin Tengku Mansor recently concluded a working visit to Sri Lanka. During talks with the Sri Lankan Tourism Minister, the Hon. Milinda Moragoda, the issues discussed include a move to speak in one voice on issues that negatively affect the tourism industry of both countries.

Both ministers also agreed to establish an inter-governmental mechanism to enhance bilateral tourism.

Source: [traveldailynews.com](http://traveldailynews.com).

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## TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR NIGERIAN SCHOLARS IN INDIA MAY EXPAND

**Abuja, 5 March 2007:** The Indian High Commission in Nigeria will make a case for increase in the number of scholarships awarded to Nigerians under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme to reward the positive attitude of Nigerians towards the scholarships. According to press reports in Abuja, India has been offering over three dozen scholarships, which are fully funded and span across over 200 training programmes to Nigerians every year. In addition, several Nigerian defense personnel also go to India for training and under exchange programmes within the overall ambit of the ITEC. The entire quota of training slots is fully utilized every year.

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, popularly known as "ITEC" was launched in 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India. Under it, citizens of 156 countries in Asia, Africa, East Europe, Central & Latin America, Pacific and Small Island countries are invited to share in the Indian development experience acquired over five decades of its existence as a free nation.

Since 1964, India has provided over US \$2 billion worth of technical assistance to developing countries.

Source: Daily Trust.

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## BRAZIL AND INDONESIA IN ETHANOL PACT

**Brazil, 15 March 2007:** Brazil will provide Indonesia with technical help to produce sugarcane ethanol under a pact just concluded by the two nations. Indonesia, with the fourth-largest population in the world, wants to revitalize its agricultural sector and reduce its dependence on oil. A member of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), Indonesia became a net importer of oil in 2004.

The Indonesian government has earmarked US\$1.42 billion for agricultural subsidies and signed agreements that will bring in another US\$12.4 billion for bio-fuels development. Indonesia currently produces mainly bio-diesel, but wants to expand ethanol production from sugarcane and cassava. It is dedicating 2.25 million hectares of land to grow those crops for fuel.

The pact between Indonesia and Brazil comes among a number of recent developments—both domestic and international—for the Brazilian bio-fuels industry.

Source: [www.greencarcongress.com](http://www.greencarcongress.com).

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## INDIAN STEEL FIRM TO INVEST \$6 BILLION IN NIGERIA

**19 March, 2007:** Global Infrastructure Nigeria Limited (GINL) said on 16 March 2007, that it would invest \$6bn in three different iron and steel companies in Nigeria over the next three years. The company, which is a subsidiary of Global Infrastructure Holding, India, had, in 2006, secured rights to manage the three steel plants on concession.

Commenting on the prospects of the development projects in the steel sector, the President, Business Development of GINL, Mr. Sunil Manwati, said apart from the profitability of the venture, Nigeria stands to gain a lot in terms of its capacity to generate employment and indirect skills acquisition. "We have in our employment more than 30,000 workers, directly and indirectly including contractors and we hope that once the new projects come on we will probably become one of the largest employers of labor in this country" he stated.

Source: [Allafrica.com](http://Allafrica.com).

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## CHILE SIGNS STRATEGIC ASSOCIATION ACCORD WITH MEXICO

**Mexico City, 20 March 2007:** Bilateral relations between Chile and Mexico were raised to a new level during the visit of Chilean President Michelle Bachelet to Mexico on 20-21 March 2007. The two countries have put into effect a "strategic association accord" aimed at bolstering trade, political, diplomatic and cultural relations between the two countries as well as ties with civil society. The agreement also creates a fund that will provide two million US dollars a year for development projects in Chile, Mexico and third countries. President Felipe Calderón of Mexico stated that the two countries would push for "a new, outstanding Latin American presence on the international scene."

Chile and Mexico are the most open economies in the region. They are the only countries of Latin America to have signed free trade agreements with the European Union and the United States. And along with Peru, they are the only Latin American members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. In addition, they have signed dozens of other free trade deals, including the one freeing up trade between Mexico and Chile themselves. From 1999, when the Mexico-Chile free trade agreement went into effect, to 2006, bilateral trade climbed from 1.4 to nearly 3.3 billion dollars — a more than 130 percent increase. Mexican internationalist academic Rolando Chacón told the press that the closeness between the two countries is encouraged by the fact that they are "highly complementary in terms of foreign trade," and do not compete in similar niches. Mexico sells Chile mainly electronic products, and buys minerals, fruit and seafood.

The Chilean President was decorated with Mexico's highest award in a solemn ceremony in Parliament, received the keys to the capital city, and met with leaders of the governing National Action Party (PAN) and the opposition.

Source: Inter Press Service.

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## G-33 COUNTRIES ADOPT COMMON POSITIONS IN JAKARTA MEETING

**Jakarta, 21 March 2007:** Ministers of 33 developing countries met in Jakarta on 20-21 March 2007 to assess the progress of negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) of the WTO and to reflect on their course of action on a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) and other current issues of agricultural trade negotiations. According to the communiqué issued at the end of the Meeting, the G-33 Ministers welcomed the renewed political commitment of all WTO members to reinvigorate the negotiations in order to achieve a breakthrough.

The Ministers also reaffirmed that the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) is an integral part of the modalities of the WTO agriculture negotiations. They underscored that, in the absence of safety nets in developing countries, an effective Special Safeguard Mechanism would be the only instrument that can cushion developing country farmers against import surges or price declines. They emphasized that SSM should be available to all agriculture products and that the import price and import volume triggers applied separately should alone determine which product needs the invocation of the SSM at any given time. They reiterated that to uphold the integrity of special and differential treatment, the terms and conditions of the mechanism should be more favourable than the existing provisions of Article 5 of the Agreement on Agriculture.

Ten G-15 countries, namely, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Zimbabwe are members of the G-33, a group of developing countries that coordinates positions on trade and economic issues within the WTO.

Source: G-33 Ministerial Communiqué.

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## MEXICAN COMPANY TO INVEST IN COPPER PROJECTS IN PERU AND CHILE

**23 March 2007:** Southern Copper Corporation, one of the world's largest copper producers, announced its plans to invest over \$500m in its mining operations. The company, controlled by the Mexican conglomerate Grupo Mexico, operates mining units and metallurgical facilities and conducts exploration activities in Peru, Mexico and Chile. Apart from US \$290m that will be invested within Mexico itself, its copper mines in Peru would receive another US \$210m worth of capital. An additional US\$30 million will be designated towards exploration activities in Peru, Mexico and Chile.

According to Oscar Gonzales, Executive President of Southern Copper Corporation, the company expects to surpass last year's combined copper production by 15% at the end of 2007. Gonzales affirmed that the projected copper production between its Peruvian and Mexican mines would reach 696,000 tons, 93,000 tons more than in 2006.

Copper prices have risen to record levels in recent times following a global surge in demand, especially from China.

Source: LIP-j.

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## **NIGERIA SEEKS IRAN'S ASSISTANCE ON POWER PLANT REHABILITATION**

**Nigeria, 29 March 2007:** The Nigerian and Iranian governments have decided to sign an agreement for the rehabilitation of Kainji Hydro Power Plant as part of efforts to find a lasting solution to the uncertain power supply situation in Nigeria. Nigeria's Minister of State for Power and Steel, Alhaji Ahmed Abdulhamid, disclosed this while speaking with journalists in Dutse at the weekend. Under this agreement, the Iranian government will assist Nigeria with new machines, equipment and manpower for reinvigorating the plant.

Mr. Abdulhamid stated that this initiative was in line with the government's determination to provide 10,000mw power supply in the country this year.

Source: [www.independentngonline.com](http://www.independentngonline.com).

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## **MALAYSIAN FIRM SIGNS JOINT VENTURE DEAL FOR ALGERIA DESALINATION PLANT**

**Kuala Lumpur, March 30, 2007:** A Malaysian private company, Malakoff Bhd and Singapore firm Hyflux Ltd have signed a joint venture agreement with Algerian Energy Company to construct a US\$238 million desalination plant in Algeria. According to a company spokesperson of Malakoff, the project involves construction, operation and maintenance of a 200,000 cubic metres-per-day seawater desalination plant using reverse osmosis technology.

The agreement provides a 25-year right to supply 200,000 cubic metres per day of drinking water to L'Algerienne des Eaux, the state-owned national public water entity of Algeria and Sonatrach SPA, the national oil company of Algeria.

Source: Business in Asia Today.