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Resources for China-ASEAN Relations, April to November 2003:
Chronology of Events

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Resources for China-ASEAN Relations

As a research institute based in Singapore, EAI keeps track of developments in relations and interactions between China and the individual countries of Southeast Asia as well as the ASEAN grouping as a whole. Two particular items are presented: (1) chronology of events in China-ASEAN relations, and (2) important documents, such as speeches and agreements.

– the Editors

CHINA-ASEAN RELATIONS, APRIL TO NOVEMBER 2003: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Compiled by YOW Cheun Hoe

APRIL

- 1st The Thai Government is pushing hard for free trade agreements with China and India because it believes Thailand could as a result achieve a growth rate of up to eight per cent. A committee to implement the FTA has been established under Commerce Minister Adisai Bodharamik and two country-specific trade policy boards. Fruit and vegetables would be the first sector covered by such an agreement with more sectors to be determined in due course. Thailand will shortly open a Board of Investment office in Shanghai. Progress on a similar agreement with India is expected by the end of the year. If negotiations are successful, Thailand's exports to India could double to US\$2 billion (S\$3.5 billion). Bangkok's attempts to engage more closely with China and India dovetail with plans to open up a road link to India and convert Chiang Mai into a regional travel hub. There are also plans, albeit delayed, to open up a highway from Thailand through Myanmar to India.

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- China announces that the Lao Government has given a 30-year concession to a Chinese company for copper mining in Phongsaly province. China's initial investment will be \$950,000.
- 7th Xu Rongkai, governor of Yunnan province, meets with Laotian Deputy Prime Minister Asang Laoly. He notes that "some cooperation programmes between Yunnan and Laos are faring well", and promises to encourage more Chinese investment in Laos.
- 7–11th General Secretary Hu Jintao of the Central Committee of the CCP holds talks with General Secretary Nong Duc Manh of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in Beijing. The two sides exchange opinions and reach broad consensus on bilateral relations between the two parties, the two countries and issues of common concern. Hu tells Manh of China's consistent stance on Iraq and the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. He stresses that despite the changing conditions in international circumstances, China will adhere to its independent foreign policy of peace, safeguard world peace, promote common development and work unremittingly for a just and rational new international political and economic order. Manh says the world situation is now very complicated. Regardless of the result, the ongoing war in Iraq will exert a negative impact on international relations and further destabilise world economic prospects.
- 8th A Malaysian company signs an agreement with the Shanghai municipal government to invest an initial \$400 million to set up a computer chip factory with additional funds in later phases.
- A Chinese police official in Yunnan announces the destruction of a major drug factory in Myanmar's Shan state by police units of the two countries. The Chinese media report that another joint police operation destroyed a drug factory "deep in a forest" in Myanmar on 28 April.
- 10th Vietnam holds a ceremony on Grand Spratly Island, led by Deputy National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Phuc Thanh, to commemorate the "28th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Spratly Archipelago". (Hanoi's forces seized a large part of the archipelago on 29 April 1975, a day before Saigon fell.) At about the same time, Lt. Gen. Phung Quang Thanh, chief of the general staff of the Vietnam People's Army, visits several Spratly islands to observe military units stationed there.
- 24th PetroChina announces it will join Malaysia's Petronas to buy an additional stake in Amerada Hess oil and gas rights in East Java.
- 25th China announces it will donate 1,000 motorcycles worth \$1 million (\$1.79 million) to help cash-strapped Indonesian police carry out their duties.
- 26th Health ministers from ASEAN, Japan, China and the ROK meet in Kuala Lumpur to discuss SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). They propose

a slate of strict measures to combat the deadly virus. Departing passengers at airports, seaports and river ports were to be screened, and anyone showing symptoms would be barred from travel. In addition, visitors from affected countries would be required to submit forms declaring that they are in good health. This special ASEAN meeting amounted to an unprecedented regional effort to halt the spread of the virus that killed at least 293, mostly in Asia, and infected more than 4,600 worldwide.

- 29th During an Emergency Summit on SARS held in Bangkok, the leaders of the 10 ASEAN nations and China agreed to set up a ministerial-level joint task force to monitor the implementation of the agreed upon collective steps. They vow to develop and strengthen co-operation on SARS, taking into account the practical measures adopted by the ASEAN+3 Ministers of Health Special Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 26 April. Aware of the toll SARS was taking on their economies, ASEAN and China leaders call on the international community to avoid indiscriminately advising people not to visit SARS-affected countries as this will choke economic growth.

MAY

- 2nd The Indian media report that the country's security establishment is unnerved by China's construction of an airport in Myanmar across the border from Nagaland, a sensitive region in northeastern India.
- 3rd Thai Prime Minister Thaksin says he will ask China to take action against narcotics factories that have moved from the Thai border area into China in response to Thailand's crack down on drugs.
- 6th After four years of negotiations, the FTA between Singapore and the US is signed in Washington. It is the first between the US and one country in Southeast Asia, and will focus on removing Singaporean restrictions on a wide range of sectors including high technology, bio-science, e-commerce, information technology, as well as financial, legal, engineering, education and distribution services. The Agreement also makes plain Singapore's intention to keep the US engaged in Southeast Asia so as to balance the rise of the Chinese and Indian economic and political powerhouses.
- 8th The Philippines agrees to form links between China and ASEAN on free trade issues, though with some reservations.
- 9th The Bank of China officially opens a branch in Jakarta, after suspending operations in Indonesia in 1964.
- 13th Twenty-four Chinese peacekeepers (members of the PRC's civil police force) return from a one-year assignment with the UN peacemaking operation in East Timor.
- 16th Vietnam's Foreign Minister rejects a two-month ban on fishing in the South

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China Sea announced by Beijing in mid-May and warns that any action by another country affecting the Spratly or Paracel Island archipelagoes, or Vietnam's exclusive economic zones or continental shelf would violate Vietnam's sovereignty. His statement calls for negotiations to solve disputes concerning the island regions, and urges China to exercise restraint.

China joins 10 other countries in observing Cobra Gold, a joint military exercise in Thailand held each year with the US (and in recent years, Singapore). It is the largest annual US military exercise in Asia, though the US force contribution this year is only about half what it was in 2002. The focus is on peacekeeping and anti-terrorism training.

Thailand-based Ghia Tai Group donates \$1.2 million to China's Ministry of Civil Affairs to support the fight against SARS.

20th China's president, premier and foreign minister send congratulatory messages to East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao on the first anniversary of the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

26th Manila media report that Philippine Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes ordered the Philippine Air Force to keep a close watch on the South China Sea in light of reports that other countries claiming the Spratly Island group have built new fortifications there.

JUNE

1st Chinese and ASEAN immigration officials meet in Beijing and agree to place in isolation at points of entry, all land and sea travellers found to have SARS symptoms. This is an extension of a principle that applied previously to air travellers only. The purpose of this meeting is to devise ways to prevent SARS from spreading, and promote trade and tourism which had been hit hard by the SARS outbreak. It seeks to finalise an action plan following the summit held in Bangkok in April, at which initial steps to fight the disease were discussed.

2nd In a meeting held in Lausanne, Switzerland, on the margins of the Evian G-8 summit, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia and Chinese President Hu agree that the UN plays an irreplaceable role in safeguarding world peace and stability, and that all countries should "properly deal with international issues within the framework" of the UN.

China and ten other Asia-Pacific countries, including five ASEAN members, agree to establish an Asian Bond Fund worth more than \$1 billion.

3rd At a SARS symposium in Beijing, China's Vice Health Minister calls on Asian Governments to increase the sharing of information about SARS.

- 6th The World Bank releases a research report endorsing China's central role in East Asian economic integration and urges countries in the region to continue to adapt to China's emergence as a major world and regional trader.
- 10th Anticipating pressure at the ASEAN meeting in June to take a harder line with respect to Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest and detention, and especially following the 30 May violent attack on her motorcade, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson announces China will not interfere in matters that concern the Myanmar Government and the opposition parties, and that there would be no change in its support for the military regime in Myanmar.
- 12-13th Laotian Community Party leader Khamtay Siphandone visits Beijing, and meets with President Hu and Premier Wen Jiabao. Wen announces that China will play a more active role in Laos' economic development, and that China has decided to reduce or forgive certain loans, and contribute the equivalent of \$6 million in new aid.
- 13-26th Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visits Hanoi and meets separately with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, Nong Duc Manh, Vietnamese State President Tran Duc Luong, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan.
- Nong Duc Manh and other Vietnamese leaders say that in recent years, Vietnam-China relations have reached new heights on the basis of mutual trust. In the complicated international situation, it is of practical significance for Vietnam and China to strengthen unity and cooperation. The government and people of Vietnam will continue to strengthen the friendly relationship further and multi-faceted cooperation between the two countries.
- The Vietnamese leaders praise China for its achievements in reforming and opening up, and express appreciation for China's active role in the international arena. They also hope the two countries will continue to enhance the exchange of views and cooperation in regional and international issues. In return, Li congratulates Vietnam on its progress in reforming and opening up and hopes Vietnam will achieve prosperity and development. China would like to assist and wishes Vietnam early accession to the WTO.
- 14th Thai Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak announces Thailand will form a link between China and ASEAN on free trade issues.
- 15th China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing meets with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in Phnom Penh. Hun Sen thanked Li for China's development assistance to Cambodia.
- 16-17th Foreign Ministers and delegates of the ASEAN and China, the US, Japan, ROK, DPRK, Mongolia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Russia

and the European Union, attend the 10th ASEAN Regional Forum in Phnom Penh, focusing on vital regional security issues and joint efforts against terrorism. During the meeting, China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing meets with his US counterpart Colin Powell to exchange views on the DPRK nuclear issue, Iraq, the Middle East, South Asia, terrorism and disease prevention.

17th ASEAN + Three and separate + Three (ROK, PRC and Japan) countries hold meetings in Phnom Penh.

18th Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing attends the ASEAN Regional Foreign Forum meeting in Phnom Penh. The ASEAN Regional Forum calls on the DPRK to rejoin the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) and urges early release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Cai Wu, Deputy Head of the International Department of the CCP, leads a delegation to attend the general assembly of the United Malays National Organisation, the leading body of the coalition that governs Malaysia. The party leader will also visit Indonesia and East Timor.

Chinese and Thai senior health officials meet in Beijing and agree to enhance cooperation in SARS control, food safety, traditional Chinese medicine and other fields.

20th Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing holds talks with Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs Surakiat Sathirathai in Chiang Mai. The two sides exchange views on ways to strengthen the friendly Sino-Thai relations. Li suggests further exchange of high-level official visits between the two countries and consolidation of the political bases of Sino-Thai relations; expansion of bilateral trade especially initially by fully utilising the China-Thailand tariff-free agreement on vegetables and fruits; speeding up the negotiations for the establishment of a free trade zone; promotion of various forms of non-governmental exchanges and continuous development of relations with ASEAN via the comprehensive development of Sino-Thai relations; and joint advancement of regional cooperation and improving of the overall strength and status of Asia in international affairs by using Asian Cooperation Dialogue and other mechanisms as platforms. China will actively cooperate with Thailand and other ASEAN countries in implementing the various results of the Special China-ASEAN Leaders Meeting on SARS and jointly fight against SARS and other diseases.

Surakiat fully agrees with the above and concurs that Sino-Thai relations are ties of special friendship. The Thai Government pays great attention to its relations with China, and a significant part of Thai diplomacy is devoted to developing strategic cooperative relations with China.

21st Thai Prime Minister Thaksin meets with visiting Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in Chiang Mai. He welcomes Li's participation in the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and says the recent agreement between the two countries on vegetable and fruit tariffs is a good example of Sino-Thai cooperation. Thailand is willing to advance strategic and comprehensive cooperation with China, and to cooperate with China within the ACD framework in an effort to promote prosperity and stability in Asia. Li agrees that the ACD, initiated by Thaksin, is of strategic importance and promises China's further support for and participation in ACD activities. After the meeting, the foreign ministers of the two countries sign a Treaty on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.

Li also meets with the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines. He stresses that the foundation of China's policy towards neighbouring countries is to remain good friends and good partners and be ready to strengthen regional cooperation and contribute to the peace and development of Asia and whole world at large.

On the same day, Li also attends an informal breakfast meeting on anti-drug programmes involving China, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and India. The foreign ministers and delegates of these countries agree to strengthen coordination, especially in the fight against the cultivation and selling of drugs near the border areas of the five countries.

23rd A CCP delegation meets in Jakarta with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), the largest political party, and headed by President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

24th The World Health Organisation declares the containment of SARS in Beijing.

29th Mainland China and Hong Kong sign the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), which will take effect 1 January 2004. Without CEPA, Hong Kong businesses would be treated as foreign businesses and be required to wait until 2005 at the earliest for China to open its markets under the terms agreed with the World Trade Organisation. Hong Kong businessmen, who will now enjoy market access to mainland China at least a year earlier than their foreign rivals hope to receive any preferential treatment which Beijing might give to ASEAN in the proposed ASEAN-China FTA. According to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, CEPA would have a six-year lead on the ASEAN-China free trade area which is expected to be established in 2010. He assures that all concessions given to ASEAN would apply to Hong Kong.

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JULY

- 2nd China donates \$45,000 to Cambodia for protective equipment needed to prevent the transmission of SARS.
- 3rd China, together with Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, sends a narcotics inspection team to investigate trafficking across the Mekong Region from Simao in Yunnan to Chiang Khong in Thailand, pursuant to a quadrilateral plan agreed on at a joint meeting in Chiang Mai last year.
- Philippine Interior Minister Jose Lina says he will visit Beijing the following week to try to stem the flood of methamphetamine precursors into the Philippines, noting that most come from China.
- 10th Chinese President Hu Jintao and his wife Liu Yongqing meet with Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk and Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk in Beijing. Hu says that Sino-Cambodian friendship has withstood the test of changes in their domestic and international situations, and has continuously consolidated and developed. The new Chinese central leadership values Sino-Cambodian relations, and will work to promote bilateral traditional friendship and cooperation.
- King Norodom Sihanouk, with Queen Monineath, returns to Phnom Penh on 14 July after visiting China for medical treatment.
- 22–23rd China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing attends the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting in Bali.
- 24th Ministers responsible for narcotics control in Myanmar, China, India, Laos and Thailand meet in Chiang Rai, Thailand, to discuss crop substitution, information exchange and improving control of precursor chemicals.
- 25th Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing tells Singapore's leaders during a visit that China's new administration will continue to be its "good neighbouring partner". Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and others describe bilateral relations with China as "kindred relations" and Li expresses the hope that younger generations in the two countries will further promote these relations.
- 27–30th The Seventh World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC) is held in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. Almost 1,000 representatives from China participated, accounting for nearly one-third of the total number of participants.

AUGUST

- 7th ASEAN + Three finance ministers meet in Manila.

- 9th The tourism ministers of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan and the ROK convene a special meeting in Beijing at the initiative of the Chinese National Tourism Administration. Its purpose is to revitalise and expand the region's tourism industry, flow and exchange of people, economic development and social prosperity. They agree that the SARS epidemic adversely affected the tourism industries and economies of the region.
- ASEAN Deputy Secretary General Tran Duc Minh notes that tourism accounts for 10–15 per cent of ASEAN's GDP, and that China will be the biggest source of tourists in coming years. The ministers discuss mutual visa exemptions and fees reduction.
- 18th Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission Guo Boxiong tells visiting Myanmar army commander General Maung Aye that China views military-to-military relations as a major component of the bilateral relationship between the two countries, and will work for more "friendly cooperation" in this area.
- 19th Senior Foreign Ministry Officials of China and the ten ASEAN countries meet in Wuyishan, Fujian province.
- 21st CCP officials, participating in an economic management seminar in Hanoi, propose to their Vietnamese counterparts a number of institutional, economic and regulatory reforms "in the new era" based on decisions of the 16th Congress of the CCP's Central Committee.
- 22nd Myanmar police officials begin anti-narcotics training in Yunnan, the second such course for Myanmar police.
- 27th China and Thailand agree on terms under which China will participate in the construction of a large high-tech industrial zone in Chiang Rai Province. China will provide 60 per cent of the total of \$125 million investment needed for the project.
- 28th China's Vice Minister of Commerce tells a China-Malaysia trade seminar that Chinese companies should invest more in Malaysia by opening processing factories and also expanding exports. Malaysia is China's largest trading partner among the ASEAN countries, and seventh largest overall.

SEPTEMBER

- 1st National People's Congress Chairman Wu Bangguo and President of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace, opens the Fourth General Assembly of the body in Manila. He calls on delegations of the 35 member countries to replace the "unfair and unjust" system that prevails today and push for democracy in international relations.

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- 1–5th Thai Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchayudh leads a senior military delegation to China that includes Thailand’s defense minister, national security advisor and all three service chiefs.
- 2nd Director of the Royal Railways of Cambodia announces the construction of the last segment of a rail link from Poipet on the Thai border to Phnom Penh, tying Cambodia’s railways into a planned line from Singapore to Kunming.
- 3rd ASEAN + Three economic ministers meet in Phnom Penh.
- 8th Malaysian Airlines reports that it is scheduling 40 special charter flights to prepare for a flood of Chinese tourists from now until the Chinese New Year period. The Chinese cities targeted by Malaysian Airlines include Xian, Urumqi, Wuhan, Chengdu, Shenyang, Kunming, Hohhot and Sanya. During the first seven months of 2003, the number of Chinese tourists plunged to only 5.3 million compared to seven million over the same period last year, a drop of almost 30 per cent, due to the SARS crisis from March to May. In June, however, the hotel occupancy rate increased to 65 per cent from 45 per cent in May.
- 12th Singapore and China ink a deal promising consumers greater safety and accountability in the drug and health products industry. Under the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Singapore’s Health Sciences Authority and its Chinese counterpart, the State Food and Drug Administration, both countries will increase cooperation in regulating drug administration, especially in traditional Chinese medicines.
- 14th The Chinese media announce that 40 young people from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar had commenced studies at the Guangxi Zhuang International Youth Exchange Institute. The course is designated to “strengthen cooperation and deepen friendship” between young Chinese people and their peers in ASEAN.
- 14–18th Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi arrives in Beijing for a five-day visit to China aimed at strengthening bilateral and business ties. Last year, two-way trade stood at \$14 billion, and in the first six months of 2003 it had already reached \$8.7 billion. The two leaders speak at length about economic ties, and Wen envisages total trade between the two countries possibly reaching \$20 next year. During the visit, the decision was made to declare 2004 “Malaysia-China Friendship Year” to commemorate two important milestones in the historical ties between the two countries. It will be the 600th anniversary of the travels of Admiral Zheng He, who initiated the first ties between China and the Malacca sultanate. It also marks the 30th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic ties that were resumed in 1974. The two governments sign five agreements on agriculture, outer space cooperation, remote sensing, labour recruitment and tourism. Fifteen

- private-sector memoranda of understanding were also signed, including one between Malaysia's UMW Toyota Motor Holdings Ltd. and China's Baoji Petroleum Steel Pipe Company to build pipe auxiliary material production plants.
- 15th The Xinjiang Construction and Engineering Company signs a memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian firm Jasatera Berhad to co-develop a mixed commercial area in Pahang State, with a combined investment of S\$105 million.
- A senior delegation of defense technology officials from China meets with Indonesian Defense Department Secretary Air Marshal Suprihadi to discuss the sale of military equipment and future cooperation in research and production of military systems. Indonesia is seeking alternatives to the purchase of US military equipment in light of the current US ban on sales to its armed forces and what it sees as the unreliability of US supply arrangements that are subject to interruption on political grounds.
- 16th A group of Chinese academics and financiers has formed a caucus to advise the Malaysian Government on how to attract more equity and capital investments from China. The group plans to encourage Chinese companies to establish offices in Malaysia and have them listed on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange by 2006.
- Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad meets with a visiting Chinese military delegation in Putrajaya in Kuala Lumpur. He says that China is an important force for promoting regional peace and development and that Malaysia wishes to develop friendly relations further with Beijing.
- 17th Premier Wen Jiabao holds talks in Beijing with Mari Alkatiri, Prime Minister of East Timor. The two sides exchange views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern. President Hu Jintao meets with him the following day.
- Hu says that China and East Timor have enjoyed a long-term friendship, with the two countries forging diplomatic ties soon after East Timor became independent one year ago. Based on mutual respect and equality, the cooperation between the two countries has expanded while mutual trust has deepened over the past year. He expresses appreciation for East Timorese support to China on the Taiwan issue and other questions, and promises that China will support the efforts made by East Timor and the international community to stabilise and develop this new country.
- 17–19th Ministers from the six Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) — Myanmar, China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam — meet in Dali, Yunnan province, to review 11 “key initiatives” centred on infrastructure and trade. China is

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- emphasising agricultural development and trade promotion in its aid programmes to GMS.
- 19th Myanmar's Ministry of Industry-2 signs a contract with China's XJ Group Corporation of Henan province to build a \$112 million diesel engine plant at Toungoo capable of annually producing 700 engines suitable for use in ships and generating facilities.
- 22nd Amnesty International expresses serious concern over the deteriorating health of Le Chi Quang, a Vietnamese journalist sentenced to four years in prison for his criticism on the internet of Vietnam's 2002 Land Border Agreement with China.
- 23rd China accuses Vietnamese gunboats of firing at two of its fishing vessels in "traditional Chinese waters" in the Gulf of Tonkin, violating agreements on sovereignty and fishing activities in the Gulf. China demands an explanation, recalling that similar incidents have happened in the past, requiring Beijing "to repeatedly express its dissatisfaction to Vietnam". Hanoi denies the accusation, but says it has one boat and its crew in custody in Haiphong.

OCTOBER

- 6th During the 9th ASEAN summit in Bali, China and ASEAN agree on a special traffic-busting programme to launch their grand plan to establish the world's largest FTA. ASEAN trade ministers adopt a protocol paving the way for the implementation from 1 January 2005 of an "early harvest programme". It is largely a concession by China to give early benefits to ASEAN through tariff reductions on a host of agricultural and manufactured goods. ASEAN is reciprocating by giving tariff concessions to China under a traffic-harmonised system for agricultural products.

China and ASEAN countries agreed last year to create a free trade area covering 1.7 billion consumers. The Southeast Asian nations, which are in the midst of establishing their own free trade area, will also sign an FTA pact with India, the world's second most populous nation, as well as an agreement with Japan with provisions for an FTA.

- 8th On the closing day of the ASEAN summit, Southeast Asian leaders ink security and trade pacts with China, India and Japan (the region's largest countries) a day after signing a landmark accord to forge an ASEAN common market by 2020.

China and India, both "nuclear capable", sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) which pledges dialogue not force. It is to be used in settling their disputes with ASEAN countries. The two are the first non-ASEAN countries to accede to the TAC. ASEAN officers said that by July 2004, Russia could be the next to sign, with the ROK and Japan possibly following suit later.

ASEAN moves closer towards setting up a free-trade zone with China and India by 2010 and 2015, respectively. Not to be outdone, Japan also agrees to a framework for a closer economic partnership with ASEAN. While this pact does not address a free trade arrangement, officials say it could possibly be realised within the next ten years.

17th Chinese President Hu Jintao and his wife Liu Yongqing meet with Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit at the Grand Palace of Bangkok. Both sides express satisfaction over the development of bilateral relations.

18th Chinese President Hu Jintao, on a state visit to Thailand, meets with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin. The two sides participate in an in-depth exchange of views and reach a wide consensus on how to develop bilateral relations further. At the APEC Informal Leadership Meeting, Hu Jintao also meets with Thai Supreme Court President Atthaniti Disatha-Amnarj. He says Sino-Thai relations, which feature continuously expanding cooperation and frequent exchange of visits by personnel of different levels had enjoyed good development, and that bilateral relations have come to be characterised by multi-faceted, all-directional and high-level cooperation. He adds that judicial cooperation was part and parcel of bilateral cooperation, noting that the two countries had conducted very fruitful cooperation in judicial matters.

Atthaniti mentions that the judicial departments of the two countries have maintained fairly good cooperation, remarking that China stood out in terms of its judicial arbitration and civil mediation. Thai judicial departments would like to step up exchanges and cooperation with their Chinese counterparts so that they might learn from each other.

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing meets with Indonesian Foreign Minister Hasan Wirayuda in Bangkok. Li says that China attaches importance to friendly cooperation with Indonesia, and would like to work with Indonesia to promote and deepen bilateral cooperation in all fields in line with the spirit of the Bandung Conference and Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. He briefs Hasan on China's stance and propositions regarding the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Hasan replies that Indonesia would like to work with China to implement the agreements reached by the two countries on how to develop bilateral relations and strengthen consultation and coordination within the UN and Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) frameworks to safeguard the interests of developing countries.

20th At the APEC Summit in Bangkok, China's President Hu Jintao urges APEC countries to open up their markets further, warning delegates that world trade was facing increasing levels of protectionism. "This has worsened the difficulties for countries — developing countries in particular — in their development and hampers global economic recovery and growth." He also tries to project

China's image as a contributor to the global system and assure the other leaders that the world has nothing to fear from a rising China, saying, "China will forever be a force dedicated to world peace and common development."

NOVEMBER

- 2nd The Second Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference is held in Hainan province. The theme of the two-day meeting is: "Asia Searching for Win-Win: Development through Cooperation". Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao says in his speech that the only way to make Asia's renewal possible is to create a win-win situation through closer cooperation and stronger development efforts. He also outlines China's policies to assist in these. The meeting brings together more than 1,200 delegates from around the world, including incumbent and former heads of state and government, entrepreneurs and scholars.
- 2–6th Singapore's Transport Minister Yeo Cheow Tong arrives in China for a five-day visit to meet senior Chinese officials in Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen. He and his Chinese counterpart jointly officiate the opening of the Singapore-China Xiamen Aviation Academy on 6 November. In Beijing, he visits Communications Minister Zhang Chunxian, and the Minister for the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China, Yang Yuanyuan. Yeo and Zhang agree that both countries could cooperate in many areas in the maritime sector as China is a major exporter and Singapore is a hub port. "We will focus on safety and port operations because these are the two areas that will be of greatest concern to both countries", said Yeo.
- 18th Singapore and China launch a joint council to promote political and economic cooperation during Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's working visit to China. It will focus on human resource development, exchange of visits, Suzhou Industrial Park, exchange of high-tech research and expertise, development of China's western region and help China go global. Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Yi will co-chair the council. The council was launched after Mr Raymond Lim, Singapore's Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Trade and Industry) signed a memorandum of understanding with Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Three other MOUs will make for regular and structured exchange of senior officials, and start economic and trade councils with Zhejiang and Liaoning provinces.

This chronology of events in China-ASEAN relations was sourced mainly from the ASEAN Secretariat website <<http://www.aseansec.org/home.htm>>; *Comparative Connections: An E-journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/>>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/c492.html>>; *Far Eastern Economic Review*; *South China Morning Post*; *The Straits Times* and *The Star*. Unless otherwise indicated, monetary values are expressed in US\$.