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Few regions in the world can match the economic growth and development achieved in the Asia-Pacific over the last two decades. The "Asian Economic Miracle," has produced double digit growth, regional trade flows valued at US$6 trillion, and most importantly, has allowed millions to rise above the malignant poverty endemic to other parts of the world.

However, this growth, characterized by trade and investment openness, has come at great expense to the environment. The effects of rapid export-led growth have placed immense pressure on the region's environment, and moreover, has constrained responses to this destruction at the local, national, and regional levels. As a result, the region is faced with some of the world's worst air and water pollution, voracious natural resource exploitation, and growing national, regional, and global environmental threats to the health and security of the region's population.

Regional News
APEC Finance Ministers to Forge Standards April 3, 1997 - Source: Reuters/Dow Jones Business News
Ministers seek to forge common standards for financial markets among the region's economies at the APEC Finance Ministers meeting starting in Cebu on Friday. As reported in the Wall Street Journal, Ministers will work to develop a concrete plan of action to make "regulations more stable and transparent, lure more investment into the region and promote freer flow of capital". Consensus may be difficult, however, as developing countries have expressed concern over the speed of developed countries' efforts to promote financial and capital market development. "They want to liberalize it as fast as possible. They want things like cross-listing. But we are not ready yet," an Indonesian Finance Ministry official said.
Japanese officials expressed hope in achieving "visible and concrete" proposals from each member to make regulations more stable and transparent, lure more investment into the region and promote freer flows of capital. The overall agreement is expected to echo statements made by the G-7 Finance Ministers at their Feb. 8 meeting in Berlin. Also expected on the agenda are efforts to increase private-sector involvement in infrastructure (seen as a major constraint to growth in the region), investor protection measures and the strengthening of regional regulatory frameworks.
(**"APEC Finance Minister's Focus on Currency Stability" April 3, 1997,Dow Jones Business News**)
India Joins Shrimp-ban Complaint
March 26, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
According to Thailand's permanent representative to the WTO, India's request for WTO ruling on the dispute with the United States over shrimping methods will strengthen a similar complaint filed by Thailand. India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Thailand have brought the US decision to bar imports of shrimp and shrimp products from countries that fail to take proper steps to protect sea turtles to the WTO's dispute settlement body. The dispute settlement body agreed last month to establish a panel to study the issue. Thailand is no longer on the US blacklist, having satisfied the US demands to upgrade its turtle-protection methods, but the country is still pursuing the case on principle.
'Vision 2020' sees Economic Region
March 25, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
A blueprint the Association of Southeast Asian Nation招 (ASEAN) development by 2020 arose from the Fourth ASEAN Economic Ministers' retreat, held from Friday to Sunday in Cebu, Philippines. The ASEAN Economic Region would aim to reduce tariffs to zero, and cover capital transfers and services within the region by the year 2020. Officials concede that the grouping would differ from the European Union, as ASEAN would not involve customs issues, a single currency or cover personal shipments. The vision statement also includes an ASEAN Investment Area, facilitating development of the Mekong sub-region, telecommunications, information technology and transportation. The proposal for establishing the ASEAN Economic Region will be presented to the ASEAN leaders at their annual summit later this year in Kuala Lumpur.
ASEAN Fails to Sign US Turtle Pact
March 14, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has refused to sign an agreement with the US to protect sea turtles. The ASEAN representatives stated they would continue to conserve the turtles without signing the treaty, and were soon to sign their own pact on the issue. Representatives also requested Thailand to help develop ASEAN's shrimp farming industry and to counter the criticism of foreign non-government organizations which accuse the industry of threatening turtle habitats.
Tourism and Marine Trade to be Opened
March 12, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
Talks to liberalize ASEAN's tourism and maritime transport sectors are set to conclude by June. ASEAN members have agreed to negotiate liberalization of services in seven sectors; they put three - tourism, telecoms and finance - on the fast track to be completed by June.
ASEAN Plans to Counter Non-Tariff Barriers
April 2, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
ASEAN members agreed yesterday to pool their resources in countering non-tariff trade barriers on food imports. At the ASEAN cooperation meeting held in Bangkok, the central focus of debate was the use of sanitation, phytosanitation standards and environmental protection as non-tariff barriers by developed countries . The chairman of the working group for promoting ASEAN agricultural goods, said "Individual nations could not do much to force much more powerful ones to hear their complaints. So Thailand should collaborate with other ASEAN members in pressing their case." The current US shrimp dispute in the WTO was cited as an effective collaborative effort. ASEAN's five major agriculture exports are frozen chicken and prawns, tapioca, canned tuna and pineapple.
East Asia Will Resume Rapid Growth - WTO
March 26, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
According to World Trade Organization Deputy Director-General Chulsu Kim, East Asian economies remain on track for future rapid growth. The official blamed the region's current slowdown on cyclical factors, such as the "collapsed world market for computer chips, an easing of the economies of industrialized countries, the depreciation of the yen, and tight monetary policies to cool overheating economies".
However, economic growth in the region "is expected to recover to an average of 8% in coming years, with [annual] export growth of about 10-15% from this year onwards," In the past decade, the value of trade in the region rose from US$2.4 trillion to more than $6 trillion, with foreign direct investment quadrupling during the period to almost $300 billion; East Asia's economic growth has increased by a yearly average of 7% since the mid-1970s, reaching 9% in the 1990s; savings rates are upwards of 30-40% of GDP; East Asian economies now account for one quarter of the world's gross domestic product compared with one-sixth a decade ago. The official also noted that if the current trend continues, it is estimated that the region could account for one-third of the world output by the year 2005.
Asia-Pacific: Growth Won't be Green Under APEC
20th March 1997 - Source: IPS
In a report for the 'Rio+5' Conference, Focus On The Global South, said free trade within APEC conflicts with long-term environmental concerns in the Asia-Pacific region. ''The rapid industrialisation of the Asia-Pacific region has produced an environmental situation that can only be described as bordering on crisis,'' said the report written by Walden Bello and Nicola Bullar of Focus. The report claims the rapid growth in the region has come at great expense to the environment, and is likely to continue as the region embraces the free trade model supported by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Despite efforts to address environmental issues in this forum, the report concludes, ''The body's (APEC) commitment to preserving the environment in the Asia-Pacific is largely rhetorical and has not been backed up by effective programmes.'' Focus concludes that APEC is an unlikely vehicle for nature-friendly growth, or for reconciling its aims of freer trade and investment with environmental protection.
Four Countries See Huge Opportunities
March 14, 1997 - Source Bangkok Post
Leader's agreed this week to begin taking concrete steps to form a new four- nation economic group between Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh. The first senior officials' meeting is set for some time between May and July. Thailand is pushing for the formation of the new four-nation group in addition to its efforts to join the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). The founders hope the group will provide the four countries with a stronger collective voice and bargaining power at other forums such as the World Trade Organization, and serve a 'beachhead' to neighboring countries belonging to other regional fora such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
Australia
Australian Govt Plans Shift In Environment Policy
April 3, 1997 - Source: Dow Jones News
On Thursday, Australian Environment Minister Robert Hill said the government wants to shift the focus of its environment policy to issues of "national significance" and away from those of local origin. The reforms will give local and state governments greater responsibility by limiting federal government intervention to cases of 'national environmental significance'. The changes come in response to industry's calls of uncertainty and undue delays in projects. The article reports that resource industries in particular have been critical of delays in getting project approvals due to federal environmental oversight. The article did not clarify the government's definition of 'national significance'.
Burma
EU Cuts Burma's Trade Preferences
March 24, 1997 - Source: AP - Dow Jones
The European Union scrapped preferential trade benefits for Burma's industrial and agricultural exports in protest of the junta's forced labor policies. Ministers approved the Commission's proposal without debate.
Cambodia
UNCTAD and Cambodia Trade & Development Plan
March 18, 1997 - UNCTAD Press Release
During an official visit to Phnom Penh last week, the Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Rubens Ricupero, and the Government of Cambodia launched an action program promoting technical cooperation for trade and development issues. The program is to assist the Government in overcoming supply-side constraints and structural weaknesses, according to the article. Specifically, the program encompasses capacity-building for trade policy-making and implementation, institutional issues in the trade promotion field, and human resources development. Other initiatives include streamlining trade formalities and procedures, help providing access to small and medium-sized enterprises in international trade and assistance in expanding Cambodia's export supply capacities.
ASEAN Requires Major Changes in Cambodia
March 17 - 23, 1997 - Source: Cambodia Times
Major reforms will have to be implemented before Cambodia can be successfully integrated into ASEAN, according to Paul Mathews, the resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Phnom Penh. Cambodia needs new and effective inter-ministerial channels of decision-making, coordination between these ministries, and adequately paid civil servants with responsibilities and meaningful career prospects, according to the representative. Mr. Mathews made the remarks at a workshop on the implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) in Phnom Penh last week.
Chile
Chile Court Rejects Govt Approval of Logging Project
March 20, 1997 - Source: Dow Jones Business News
Chile's Supreme Court rejected the government's approval of a US$ 350 million logging project planned by a US firm, Trillium. The court ruled that the project conflicted with the 'right to live in a contamination-free environment', recognized in the Chilean Constitution. The case was brought before the Supreme Court by environmentalists suing the National Environment Commission, charging approval was granted for the project on company-provided studies that were insufficient. The ruling will throw into question dozens of the other 'big-ticket' projects in Chile, according to the article. Attorneys for the company say the ruling undermines Chile's new environmental impact assessment system, and threatens the country招 growth. Environmentalists charge that the six-year-old project is guided more by political and economic considerations, without adequate technical or environmental planning.
Chile Takes the Lead in Environmental Movement
March 26, 1997 - Source: Wall Street Journal
The Wall Street Journal reports that the recent ruling by the Chilean Supreme Court to stop a US logging company招 efforts on Constitutional grounds is an indication of the growing environmental movement in Chile and Latin America as a whole. The report says the movement has begun to affect US resource companies that have invested billions in Latin America as the region dropped barriers to foreign participation in their natural resource extraction industries. In response to the drastic increase in domestic and foreign involvement in resource extraction environmental groups have formed from Argentina to Venezuela to press for enforcement of what they consider inadequate laws and scant enforcement.
These challenges worry the business community because, despite diversification, Chile still earns 87 cents of every export dollar from copper, fish meal and low-value added wood products like pulp and chips. However, it is the environmentalists, says Sara Larrain coordinator of the National Network for Ecological Action (a coalition of 150 Chilean groups), who hold the public's support. In a recent poll conducted by the newspaper La Segunda last year, Larrain's group rated first as a force for positive change, higher even than the powerful Catholic Church.
US Firm to Proceed with Chilean Logging
March 28, 1997 - Source: ENN
US corporation, Trillium, vows to proceed with timber operations, despite being rebuffed in a Chilean Supreme Court ruling. Robert E. Manne, President of Trillium, insists that the court acted against environmental concerns in the ruling, which Manne claims stalled 200 other projects in Chile. The company claims that the ruling has nothing to do with their project but rather a technicality in which the new environmental impact assessment laws - of which they are charged with violating - were in place prematurely without the necessary regulations to implement the law. Manne claims the ruling won't halt their efforts but has delayed the project 3-6 months. Trillium now owns 825,000 acres of forest land on Tierra del Fuego.
People's Republic of China
Beijing Leaded Gas Ban
April 3, 1997 - Source: Associated Press
The Associated Press reported that Beijing will ban the sale of leaded gasoline beginning July 1 in an effort to curb car and truck pollution, according to the China News Agency. The city will convert 299 service stations to unleaded-service only in the initial stage, and beginning in 1998, will ban all vehicles using unleaded gasoline. Xiang Baiqin of the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau observed that 65 percent of the lead in Beijing's air comes from leaded-gas vehicle exhaust.
China Offers to Accelerate Liberalization for WTO Entry
March 26, 1997 - Source: Agence France Press
At the latest meeting between WTO members and China this week, the PRC offered to accelerate reductions on non-tariff barriers on auto imports as a concession in its membership bid to the WTO, according to a Japanese Foreign Ministry official. During the meeting, the Chinese proposed plans to abolish its non-tariff barriers in 12 years, rather than the 15 years it insisted on previously.
China Adopts ISO 14001 as State Policy
March 21, 1997 - Source: IIS On-line
The Chinese Bureau of National Affairs reported that the Chinese government will adopt ISO 14001(the core international voluntary standards for environmental management systems and tools) as state policy on April 1, 1997. It is anticipated that the government's actions will encourage government-run and private industry to implement and register to ISO 14001, and in turn require their suppliers to register to the standard.
Call for New Sino-US Link to Protect Environment
March 26, 1997 - Source: China Daily
During a high-level China-US Forum on Environment & Development, Chinese Premier Li Peng and US Vice President Al Gore agreed that the two nations should strengthen their cooperation on environmental protection.
The two sides plan to exchange views on environmental and development issues, and to discuss cooperation in science, technology, environment, energy and commerce at the forum. Addressing the forum, Li said "China has selected a road of invigorating the country by science and education and sustainable development, and has properly coordinated the relationship between economic construction and environment, population and resources, and is committed to the harmonious development of economy and society". Li proposed four principles in advancing Sino-US cooperation on environment and development: mutual respect and seeking common ground while shelving differences; equality and mutual benefit; learning experiences and expanding co-operation; standing from the present and viewing the future.
U.S. Policy: Pro-China or Pro-Taiwan?
March 19, 1997- Source: Asia Week
U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky announced that Taiwan's application to join the World Trade Organization is officially "de-linked" from that of China's. Until now, the U.S. and the other major WTO members had accepted China's demand to be allowed first into the WTO. The European Union, however, is expected to maintain its China-first policy.
Japan
Japan Banks Shuting Down More Offices Abroad
April 2, 1997 - Source: Wall Street Journal
Bad loans are continuing to plague Japan's banks, forcing a growing number of Japanese lenders to retreat from global markets and redirect resources toward domestic problems. Recently two big lenders, Nippon Credit Bank Ltd. and Hokkaido Takushoku Bank Ltd., said the high cost of writing off problem loans was forcing them to close all their overseas branches.
"We decided our survival hinges not on global business but on our core domestic operations," said Chuji Chuo, deputy president of Hokkaido Takushoku, one of Japan's 20 big international banks.
￼ Trillion to Raise Environmental Performance
April 5, 1997 - Source: Asia Environmental Review
A Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) study group reports that it will cost ￼ Trillion (US$8,035,000,000) to raise environmental performance lelels of Japan's neighbours to those existing in Japan.
Republic of Korea
U.S. Groups Push Trade Sanctions on Seoul for Bear Gall Trading
April 1, 1997 - Source: ENN
138 US environmental groups have asked for sanctions against South Korea to prevent the illegal trading of wild bear galls. Korea is responsible for an estimated 90 % of the illegal poachers of wild bears in the U.S. with some Korean-Americans promoting the illegal poaching, according to the article. The sanctions are requested under the Pelly Amendment - often referred to as "Green Super 301". The Pelly Amendment regulates the imposition of trade sanctions against foreign countries in cases where those countries violate international efforts to protect wildlife. In 1994 the US imposed sanctions against Taiwan under the Pelly Amendment costing the Taiwanese some $20 million in exports to the US in that year. The actions were taken in response to Taiwan's alleged illegal trade in tiger bones and rhinoceros horns in the United States.
Taiwan - Republic of China
ROC Minister Claims Environmental Regulations Effect Growth
April 3, 1997 - Source: Central News Agency (ROC)
Taiwan's Economic Affairs Minister, Wang Chih-kang, said on Thursday that he is extremely concerned about Taiwan's economy. In a speech to members of the ROC-USA Economic Council, Wang listed stringent environmental protection regulations, a reluctance of domestic enterprises to conduct technological research and development, work force problems, including a labor shortage, and government inefficiency as major barriers to Taiwan's further economic development. Wang also cited difficulties in land acquisition and the sluggish improvement in the island's water and power supplies as factors undermining the willingness of domestic and foreign enterprises to invest in Taiwan.
Taiwan Warns ROK
March 20, 1997 - Source: Korea Times
(originally reported on Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network - http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/)
Taiwan threatened retaliatory action on Wednesday after the ROK failed to honor a fruit trading pact because of Taipei's plans to ship nuclear waste to the DPRK for treatment, the state-funded news agency said. Seoul last week refused to import 7,000 tons of garlic from Taiwan as set out in a 1995 fruit exchange accord, according to the Central News Agency. Taiwanese Board of Foreign Trade Director-General Lin Yi-fu charged that the ROK was "seriously breaching a principle of faith," and threatened to stop issuing permits for the imports of Korean apples and pears if Seoul decided to unilaterally suspend imports of Taiwan fruits. The ROK did not spell out the reason for the unexpected move, but sources said it was part of Seoul's overall plan to stop Taiwan from shipping low-radiation nuclear waste to the DPRK. Seoul and Taipei have been at odds since Taiwan signed an agreement last month with Pyongyang to dispose of 60,000 barrels of low-radiation nuclear waste in two years with a provision to increase the volume to 200,000 barrels. The ROK in 1992 switched its diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing, the bitter rival of the nationalist Taiwan.
Thailand
Work Starts to Develop Competition Policy Stand
March 14, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
Thailand needs a clear competition policy as the issue is becoming more important in world trade negotiations over the next three to five years, according to Karun Kittisataporn, Director-General of the Business Economics Department. His statements were made at a recent meeting of representatives from the Thai Commerce, Industry and Finance ministries, as well as private sector participants. The meeting called for further examination of transparency in government procurement, investment, and labour standards as, participants noted, developed governments will continue pressing for negotiations on these issues. These issues are also being studied by the WTO working group, and Thailand should play a role in framing the group's direction, said Mr Karun, a veteran negotiator in world trade forums. However, some officials expressed worries that smaller businesses will face severe problems if the country allowed full competition with strong foreign industries
United States
White House Weighs Fast Track Compromise
April 2, 1997 - Source: Reuters
On Tuesday, a Clinton administration official said the administration is considering dropping its insistence that labor and environment issues be a part of its fast track negotiation authority. Dropping the explicit authority to negotiate labor and environment issues is an option the administration is weighing as it prepares to submit the legislation to Congress. "The only way fast track is going to move is to have some flexibility," the official said. "The climate in Congress among Republicans is a little more receptive to that and hopefully there is a little more flexibility among Democrats to find a position that will work." "Fast track" is a process in which Congress gives the President authority to negotiate trade agreements whereby Congress must accept or reject, but not amend, the legislation implementing the agreement.
Recently, U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, said that the dispute over labor and environment issues should not be allowed to derail fast track legislation. The legislation, largely supported by the Republicans and a handful of Democrats, would provide fast track authority for four years with a provision to reauthorize it for another four years. Democratic leaders say they will not support fast track authority without labor and environment included.
Social Link Issues Divides Congress
March 26, 1997 - Source: Bangkok Post
A bill empowering US trade negotiators to raise social and environmental issues in negotiations with other countries has been before a hearing last week, but it is not expected to be passed easily because of friction in Congress, according to Frank Kittredge, President of the National Foreign Trade Council. Opposed by Republicans and industry alike, the bill would give trade negotiators authority to include issues of environmental standards and worker rights within the "fast track" framework. Mr. Kittredge says his council opposes the measures as they believe they are a form of trade restriction and oppose their being included in the granting of "fast track" powers. The council notes that the lack of "fast track" procedures has caused Chile to distance itself from negotiations to join the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), heightening US companies' fears of lagging behind their competitors in expanding trade in Latin America.

Upcoming Events

APEC Events	Date	Location
APEC Finance Ministerial	5 - 6 April	Cebu, Philippines
PECC* Standing Committee Meeting	11-12 April	Bali, Indonesia
Human Resource Development WG: Symposium on School Based Indicators of Effectiveness *	13-16 April	Guilin, China
11th Meeting of Transportation WG	14-18 April	Seattle, United States
9th Meeting of Trade Promotion WG	15-17 April	Kitakyushu, Japan
Marine Resource Conservation: 1st Steering Committee Meeting on Ocean Information System in APEC Region	15-17 April	Taipei, Chinese Taipei
1st Working Meeting of the PECC Pacific Food Outlook (PFO) Project	16 - 18 April	Honolulu, United States
Dispute Mediation Experts Group Meeting	21 - 22 April	APEC Secretariat, Singapore
Energy Working Group: Workshop on Best Practice in Power Infrastructure Procurement Processes in APEC Member Economies	22 April	Honolulu, United States
Seminar on the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding	23 - 24 April	APEC Secretariat, Singapore
Energy Working Group: 3rd Meeting of Ad Hoc Business Forum on Regional Cooperation for Power Infrastructure	25 April	Honolulu, United States
APEC Environmental Management Standard (EMS) Seminar	29 - 30 Apr	Singapore

* PECC is the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council

^ For more information on these events contact the APEC Secretariat at info@apec.stems.com

Conference	Date	Location/ Contact Information
The Fifth Beijing International Trade Fair	3-8 April	China International Exhibition Centre (CIEC).
International Sustainable Development Research Conference 1997.	7-8 April	Manchester, England.Contact: Conference Manager at ERP Environment, P.O. Box 75, Shipley, West Yorkshire BD17 6EX, UK. Tel: +44 0-1274-530-408; Fax: +44-0-1274-530-409.
United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, Fifth Session.	7-25 April	New York, NY.Contact: United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Email:dpcsd@un.org; http://www.un.org/dpcsd
Trade and Environment in the Americas	11 April	University of California, Los AngelesContact: Atziri Ibanez, National Wildlife Federation ibanez@nwf.org
The Social, Ecological, Cultural and Political Costs of Economic Globalization	11-13 April	Berkeley, CA USAContact: University of California, Berkeley Telephone: 415-771-3037
Round Table Meeting on Rural Energy and Development	16-18 April	Washington, DC.Contact: World Bank's Power Development, Efficiency & Household Fuels Division Fax: 202-477-0542; Email: jorejuela@worldbank.org; Website

Understanding and Implementing ISO 14000 Environmental Management Systems Online interactive seminar	21April-2 May	Contact: 403-266-1030;Email: pallistj@cadvision.com;
Fourth North Pacific Rim Fisheries Conference	22-24 April	Tokyo, Japan.Contact: Steve Cowper, US Co-Chair, North Pacific Rim Fisheries Conference, ACIB, UAA, 3211 Providence Drive, BEB 203, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, USA; Tel: 907-786-4300; Fax: 907-786-4319.
First European Conference on Sustainable Island Development	23-26 April	Minorca, SpainContact: International Scientific Council for Island Development (INSULA)

Please send announcements or suggestion for the next issue to aprenet@nautilus.org

In coming weeks this space will host a regular analysis of the issues shaping the trade, environment and development debate in the Asia Pacific Region. If you wish to contribute to this section or have any comments on the Monitor please contact aprenet@nautilus.org

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