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Policy Forum 08-08A: Australia and South Korea: New Governments...New Opportunities? - Colin Heseltine

1. Free Trade Talks to Start With South Korea, Patricia Karvelas, Australian, 2008-08-12

Australia and South Korea will start free trade talks in Canberra next month, after Kevin Rudd won agreement from President Lee Myung-bak to work towards a historic bilateral deal. Mr Rudd told business leaders in Seoul he wanted to expand political and security relations as well as longstanding economic ties. Mr Rudd said an FTA could boost bilateral trade by more than $US20 billion over the next 12 years.

2. Singapore, Australia Ink Defense Cooperation Pact, Kyodo, AOL, 2008-0--12

Singapore and Australia signed a defense cooperation pact that will boost military cooperation between the two countries. It will be a framework to expand training arrangements and promote new areas of defense cooperation. The two sides will also engage in defense technology cooperation

including conducting joint trials and experiments.

- Five Power Defence Arrangements, Wikipedia

3. Smith Throws down Trade Gauntlet, Angus Grigg, AFR*, 2008-08-13

Our two-way trade with Singapore is more than double that of Indonesia at $22 billion. The reality is that Indonesia is almost at the point of discouraging foreign investment. Corruption, an uncertain legal system, and the maze of bureaucratic red tape that must be negotiated are the main culprits. A bilateral FTA is unlikely to fix these issues but it could make the climate a little more investor-friendly.
* Subscription required.

- Jakarta Elite Reject PM's Vision, Angus Grigg, AFR*, 2008-07-23
  * Subscription required.

4. Autopsy Doubt on East Timor Rebel Alfredo Reinado, Paul Toohey, Australian, 2008-08-13

Questions have been raised as to whether rebel leader Alfredo Reinado was lured down from the mountains of East Timor to be executed after it emerged he was shot dead at almost point-blank range inside the home of President Jose Ramos Horta. One of Reinado's wounds was to his left hand, suggesting he may have raised it in a defensive gesture knowing he was about to be shot.

5. Rice and Circus in East Timor, Douglas Kammen, Japan Focus, 2008-08-12

The possible loss of between $1 million and $5 million in a single contract for food security raises serious questions about the ability and even the willingness of the current government of East Timor to manage the enormous new budget now under debate. That discussion - and indeed all political discussions in Timor - should begin with and be based on one simple question: who eats what?

6. 'Sovereignty' that Risks Global Health, Richard Holbrooke and Laurie Garrett, Washington Post, 2008-08-10

A year ago, Indonesia's minister of health, Siti Fadilah Supari's assertions about "viral sovereignty" seemed to be odd yet individual views. Disturbingly, however, the notion has morphed into a global movement, fuelled by self-destructive, anti-Western sentiments. Allowing Indonesia and other countries to turn this issue into another rich-poor, Islamic-Western dispute could lead to a devastating health crisis.

- New Bird Flu Threat Could Be H9N2: Researchers, ABC, 2008-08-13

7. Policy Forum 08-08A: Australia and South Korea: New Governments...New Opportunities? - Colin Heseltine

Colin Heseltine, former Australian ambassador to the Republic of Korea, notes that despite substantial economic ties between Australia and Korea, their relationship “lacks a sense of the long-term strategic importance of the relationship which drives Australia’s relationships with its two other north-east Asian partners, Japan and China”. Both countries, Heseltine argues, have lost opportunities. “Korea’s perception is that while Australia is a great supplier of iron ore and coal to

Korean steel companies, its market for Korean manufactured products is small and limited. Hence the previous Korean administration relegated Australia well down its list of priorities for a bilateral free trade agreement." Heseltine concludes that remedying this situation will require "some changes in the mind-sets of opinion makers in both countries. Indeed power shifts in regional politics and the economics of energy including growing pressures in energy markets may well force such changes."

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