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1. Trouble in the ASEAN talking-shop, Asia Sentinel, 2009-10-27

ASEAN summits would be even less meaningful than they are but for the leaders of Japan, China, South Korea, Australia and India, whose presence far surpasses the main event. The usual Asian cooperation platitudes were almost immediately overshadowed by none other than Haruhiko Kuroda, the president of the Asian Development Bank. He bluntly noted the absence of cooperation on the one immediate economic issue of the time – currency values. The lack, he said, is leading to protectionism within the region.

2. Real China tensions need telling, Greg Earl, AFR* 2009-10-29

There has been some racy and even inaccurate media coverage of Australia-China issues in recent months in both countries. But that is what happens when a relationship gets some real breadth, depth and commercial value – it becomes simultaneously more congenial and more contestable from all sides.
* Subscription required.

- China signals end to big chill in diplomatic relations, Rowan Callick and Michael Sainsbury, Australian, 2009-10-29
- Australia-China Relations: A Long-Term View, Stephen Smith MP, ANU China Institute, 2009-10-26

3. PM push 'hurts' relationships, Yuko Narushima, Age, 2009-10-29

The relationship, firmed in joint responses to the tsunami and Bali bombings, is being tested by Mr Rudd urging his Indonesian counterpart to accept asylum seekers bound for Australia. Former diplomat Bruce Haigh supported that view. ''What no one in this country is saying is: the power of Yudhoyono does not extend that far beyond Jakarta,'' Mr Haigh said. ''The further out you go, the less control his particular parliament has.''

- Boat crisis worsens for Rudd, Tom Allard and Michelle Grattan, Age, 2009-10-29

4. Clinton Arrival in Pakistan Met by Fatal Attacks, Mark Landler and Ismail Khan, NYT, 2009-10-28

The arrival of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in Pakistan was overshadowed by a devastating car bomb that tore through a market in the northwest city of Peshawar, an attack aimed at civilians and marking a clear escalation in the Taliban campaign to undermine the government.

- U.S. Quietly Aids Pakistani Drives on Taliban, Eric Schmitt, NYT, 2009-10-29

5. Asian powers urge Afghan commitment, Aljazeera, 2009-10-27

The foreign ministers of India, China and Russia have urged the world to remain engaged in Afghanistan, with Moscow advocating a greater role for regional powers in stabilising the Central Asian nation. Russia's Sergei Lavrov, India's S.M. Krishna and China's Yang Jiechi were meeting in the Indian city of Bangalore as the United States debated whether to send more troops to tackle a rise in Taliban violence in Afghanistan. The three regional powerhouses also pledged a "deepening and strengthening" of co-operation to ensure peace and stability in the region.

- Afghanistan Faces an Election Fiasco, Spiegel Online, 2009-10-28

6. Taliban take over Afghan province, Syed Saleem Shahzad, Asia Times, 2009-10-29

The United States has withdrawn its troops from its four key bases in Nuristan, on the border with

Pakistan, leaving the northeastern province as a safe haven for the Taliban-led insurgency to orchestrate its regional battles. The province is now under the effective control of the network belonging to Qari Ziaur Rahman, a Taliban commander with strong ties to Bin Laden. This makes Nuristan the first Afghan province to be controlled by a network inspired by al-Qaeda.

- Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People, Asia Foundation, 2009-10-27 [PDF, 4129 Kb]

7. Indonesian government says oil from Australian spill has polluted parts of Timor sea, Eras Poke & Fidelis E Satriastanti, Jakarta Globe, 2009-10-28

The regional environmental management agency in East Nusa Tenggara confirmed that the waters of the Timor Sea had been contaminated by oil spilled in August from a well operated by a Thai company. Riza Damanik, secretary general of the Fisheries Justice Coalition (Kiara), urged the government to send a letter of protest to the Australian government over the oil spill. “A letter of protest would be a diplomatic step taken by the government of Indonesia to urge the Australian government to accept responsibility for its neglectful handling of marine pollution,” Riza said.

- Industry lashes oil-spill firm, Nicolas Perpitch, Australian, 2009-10-28
- Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA) statement on the Montara oil leak, Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association, 2009-10-27 [PDF, 97 Kb]

8. Iraq flags desire to resume nuclear power, Martin Chulov, Age, 2009-10-29

Iraq has started lobbying for approval to again become a nuclear player, almost 19 years after British and American warplanes destroyed Saddam Hussein's last two reactors. The Iraqi government has approached the French nuclear industry about rebuilding at least one of the reactors that was bombed at the start of the first Gulf war. The government has also contacted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and United Nations to seek ways around resolutions that ban Iraq's re-entry into the nuclear field.

- Iraq's nuclear ambition: 'There is no capacity to secure these sites', Martin Chulov, Guardian, 2009-10-28 [audio]

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