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1. Clutches of a Dictatorship, Greg Sheridan, Australian, 2008-08-07

Kevin Rudd and Foreign Minister Stephen Smith were admirably straightforward and morally right to talk about China's human rights failures yesterday. Both, however, also felt compelled to argue what they surely know is not true, that hosting the Olympics has improved the human rights situation in China.

2. Indonesian Meeting Focuses On Border Security Enhancement, Media Release, Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, 2008-08-06

Senator Evans said the commitment to mandatory detention along with the excision arrangements and immigration processing at Christmas Island signalled the Australian Government's strong stance against people-smuggling. 'The new 400-bed centre on Christmas Island is now available for use and people encouraged by people-smugglers to try to improperly enter Australia will be taken to Christmas Island for processing,' he said.

3. Gangster Nets Key Dili Project, Lindsay Murdoch, Age, 2008-08-05

An offer by a notorious Jakarta gangster to develop the site of a refugee camp in Dili has been accepted by the East Timor Government. The Timorese-born man, Hercules Rozario Marcal, has been given the go-ahead to build a mini-mart and swimming pool on the site opposite Dili's main wharf.

- A Survey of Gangs and Youth Groups in Dili, Timor-Leste, James Scambary, AusAID, 2006-09-15, [PDF, 2.91 MB]

4. Chinese Nuclear Forces 2008, Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, July/August 2008 (PDF, 725 KB)

Of the five original nuclear weapon states, China alone is believed to be increasing its nuclear arsenal.

5. US Official Says Malaysia Ready for Nuclear Energy, Zaidi Isham Ismail, Business Times Online, New Straits Times, 2008-08-05

Malaysia is well-positioned to embrace nuclear energy to power up its homes and industries due to its good power infrastructure, robust economy and strong leadership attributes in the region. US Department of Energy deputy assistant secretary Edward McGinnis said the US recognises Malaysia as a regional leader in the research and development of advanced alternative energy, including nuclear.

6. Charter Will End Ethnic Dominance, Hamish McDonald, SMH, 2008-08-07

Fiji's military regime has published its blueprint for a new electoral system that sweeps away the previous reservation of seats for racial groups, designed to ensure dominance by indigenous Fijians. How it comes into legal force is still unclear, though the military commander and self-appointed Prime Minister, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, has talked of validation through a referendum.

7. Indonesia Ignoring Cholera Outbreak, Norman Voss, UPI Asia Online, 2008-08-06

Shocking health conditions and deaths from cholera are being reported in Indonesia's most resource-rich region. As of last weekend, 173 deaths had been reported among the indigenous people in the eastern province of Papua. The victims suffered severe diarrhoea, which have been confirmed to be caused by cholera. Yet the Indonesian government is not providing sufficient support.

8. Fertile Ground for Population Panic, Angus Grigg, AFR*, 2008-08-06

Indonesia’s population would hit 300 million by 2050 if the present birth rate was maintained. The consequences of this are staggering and just a little scary, but more for Indonesia than Australia. Java would get 44 million more people. This would leave 80 per cent of the island urbanised and make for an almost continuous city between Jakarta and Surabaya.
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Richard Tanter,
Project Co-ordinator

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:
nautilus@nautilus.org