

## Rebuilding Nepal through Diaspora Bonds

Nepal is banking on its migrant workers to support efforts to rebuild the national economy. The country is still recovering from the decade-long civil war that ended in 2006.

In July, Finance Minister Surendra Pandey announced a plan to offer an Infrastructure Development Bond to Nepalese working abroad during a speech presenting the new \$3.7 billion budget in Parliament.

The Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, will issue bonds worth 7 billion rupees (close to \$90 million) at fixed exchange rates, as part of domestic borrowing for fiscal year (FY) 2009, says Mr. Pandey. The bonds will be offered only to those employed overseas through embassies of Nepal in the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Workers' remittances amounted to 17.4% of the gross domestic product in FY2008.

A Reuters report says the government plans to spend \$30 million on infrastructure development over the next 2 years. ●



**BUILDERS OF THE ECONOMY** Workers queue to pay fees for foreign employment at a government office in Kathmandu. Remittances from workers abroad accounted for 17.4% of Nepal's gross domestic product in fiscal year 2008.



**BOXING DAY** Televised matches of boxing champion Manny Pacquiao freeze his nation's productivity for the day, analysts say.

## Philippine Boxer Making an Impact on the Economy

Famous Philippine boxer Manny Pacquiao not only puts opponents on the ropes but also knocks out productivity in some parts of the Philippine economy, according to a recent report. A Pacquiao fight clears the streets, empties malls, and even brings down the crime rate, says the website FinanceManila.net.

"It's very peaceful, the crime rate is almost zero," says Manila police chief Roberto Rosales. "There should be a Pacquiao fight every day."

The increasingly common bouts—Pacquiao has been at it now for 14 years and crossed through 7 weight classifications—are a boon for the entertainment industry, too, reports the website in its 4 May 2009 report, *Pacquiao Fight Day Effect on Economy*.

Restaurants offering pay-per-view fill their establishments and hold on to excited patrons for hours—even if the bout ends early—and theaters cast aside Hollywood in favor of lucrative closed-circuit transmissions. McDonald's restaurants in the Philippines lose dine-in customers but pick up on the delivery end, says Kenneth Yang, president and CEO of Golden Arches Inc., the Philippine franchise holder of McDonald's.—*Keith Rosenblum*. ●

## Close to a Billion Asians Online

The number of Asians going online will grow to nearly a billion by 2013, says a report by Forrester Research, Inc. The continent will account for 43% of the world's online population. With 17% of the world total, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is expected to surpass the United States.

"The internet's power is as strong in the political and cultural arenas as it is in the economic one," says the US-based research company. "Multinational organizations of all kinds must understand the dynamics of the shifting global online population to ensure that they are positioned to take advantage of emerging international opportunities."

By 2013, the global online population will grow by more than 45% to 2.2 billion users. The internet user base is increasing in every area of the world, but Asia will remain the biggest global growth engine, says Forrester Research.

The report says the PRC's online population will rise by nearly 11% each year over the next half decade. Other Asian countries with substantial online growth rates include India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines. By contrast, growth rates in some of the more mature markets, such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, will rise by less than 2% each year. ●



**AN INTERNET BAR IN BEIJING** The online population of the People's Republic of China will rise by nearly 11% each year over the next half decade.

## Governments Falling Short of Commitments

**B**illions of dollars pledged by governments to help eradicate poverty and other social ills in the developing world have not been received, according to a United Nations (UN) report launched on 16 September.

The report, *Strengthening the Global Partnership for Development in a Time of Crisis*, by the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force, highlighted an annual gap of \$35 billion in the 2005 pledge made by the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized countries at a summit in Gleneagles, United Kingdom.

This amount includes a \$20 billion annual shortfall in its commitments to Africa, even though 2008 saw the highest levels of development assistance to the continent.

In a preface to the report, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon recognized that since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 there has been “great progress” in reducing poverty and hunger, and promoting access to education and health services.

“But the economic crisis threatens to reverse these hard-won gains, and time is running short,” he said. “Without strong and concerted international responses, the crisis could become a development emergency.”—*IRIN News Service* ●



**AID NEEDED** A young scavenger pushes a heavy cart full of reusable items. Government needs to follow through on their commitments to reduce poverty.



**YEARLY EXODUS** A scene at the Sukarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta. Thousands of women leave their homes in Indonesia to work as domestic workers each year.

## Migration Myths Dispelled in UNDP Report

**M**ost migrants do not move from developing to developed countries, and when they do, rather than hurting host economies, they benefit them, according to a new report by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

UNDP's *Human Development Report 2009*, launched globally on 5 October in Bangkok, dispels several myths about migration, instead underlining the economic and social benefits for countries.

“Mobility can bring large gains in development,” Jeni Klugman, director of the report, told IRIN, the humanitarian news and analysis service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “It’s presently very much constrained by a whole range of barriers, and reform [of] these barriers could allow much greater potential to be released.”

The annual report calls for several migration reforms, including for states to ensure basic rights for migrants, and the mainstreaming of migration into national development plans.—*IRIN News Service* ●

## Water Works to Improve Food Security

**U**nless Asia improves its use of water for agriculture, a new study says, by 2050 many developing countries will have to import more than a quarter of the rice, wheat, and maize they need.

“Asia’s food and feed demand is expected to double by 2050. Relying on trade to meet a large part of this demand will impose a huge and politically untenable burden on the economies of many developing countries. The best bet for Asia lies in revitalizing its vast irrigation systems, which account for 70% of the world’s total irrigated land,” says Colin Chartres, director general of the International Water Management Institute.

The institute presented the report *Revitalizing Asia’s Irrigation: To Sustainably Meet Tomorrow’s Food Needs* at the 2009 World Water Week in Stockholm in August.

The study was carried out by the institute, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and researchers from partner organizations with funding from the Asian Development Bank. They used a computer model called WATERSIM, which helps examine difficult tradeoffs between food security and the environment, specifically in relation to water supplies.

Asia’s population is expected to expand by one-and-a-half billion people over the next 40 years. To meet their food needs by 2050, the International Water Management Institute estimates that the amount of irrigated farmland in South Asia must be increased by 30%, and in East Asia by 47%. Without water productivity gains, South Asia would need 57% more water for irrigated agriculture, and East Asia 70% more. ●



**GREEN THUMBS** The best bet for Asia lies in revitalizing its vast irrigation systems, says the International Water Management Institute.