

Backgrounder: ASEM summit in figures

BRUSSELS -- The eighth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit kicked off here on Monday. The following figures can provide a rough picture of the top-level gathering of Asian and European leaders. The ASEM summit, a key forum for dialogue between Asian and European countries, is held biennially, with Asian and European countries to be the host alternately. Belgium is hosting the eighth edition of the ASEM summits in history, while the first one was held in Thailand in 1996. There are currently 45 members in the ASEM. Three new countries, namely Russia, Australia and New Zealand, are expected to join, bringing the total membership of the ASEM from 26 at its birth to 48. Among the 48



members, there are 29 from the European side, namely the 27 European Union (EU) member states, the European Commission and Russia, and there are 19 from the Asian side,

including 18 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. For the 46 country members of the ASEM, 12 Asian national leaders and 21 European counterparts are present, according to the Belgian

government. With President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, Secretary-general of the ASEAN Secretariat Surin Pitsuwan and President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso included, there are altogether 36 Asian and European leaders at the summit. The other countries all sent senior officials above ministerial level, but Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has left Brussels and returned home, following news of his mother's death on Saturday. Figures from the European Commission showed that all the ASEM partners represent half of the world's economic output, almost 60 percent of the world's population and 60 percent of global trade.

No plea in ex-PM case

New York : FORMER Prime Minister and National Farmers Union general secretary Mahendra Chaudhry and five others appeared in the Tavua Magistrates Court yesterday morning charged with one count of unlawful assembly each under the Public Emergency Regulation. Chaudhry and the five accused are accused of holding a meeting at a home in Vunikavikaloa, Ra without a permit. The accused were taken into custody at midday on Friday at the Rakiraki Police Station and held over the weekend until their court appearance yesterday at Tavua. They were released on \$500 bail each, after magistrate Faizal Koya recused himself from the bench.

Nepal foils Tibetan vote for govt in exile

Kathmandu: Nepal acted on information provided by the Chinese embassy and foiled an attempt by Tibetans trying to vote for a government in exile. China has been protesting against activities carried out under the banner of the 'Free Tibet' movement in Nepal. The police foiled the election mid-way and seized ballot-boxes after it received stern instructions from the Prime Minister's office on Sunday not to allow the voting to continue "at any cost". The voting was in progress in Bouddha, Swayambhu and Jawalakhel areas. A sizeable population of Tibetans in exile attended the event, however, they abandoned it after the police arrived. The crackdown is in keeping with Nepal's stated policy that it will not

permit its soil to be used by Tibetans for political activities. On Sunday a primary vote was on to elect a Prime Minister — a successor to the current Samdong Rinpoche — and a 44-member government in exile.

"The government acted swiftly after the Prime Minister's office received information from Chinese authorities at the embassy," a Home Ministry source told The Indian Express. Tibetan activists protested against the government's action saying it was "against the human rights of the Tibetans". "It violates the sanctity and core principle of Nepal's relations with China, and on the other hand, it also amounts to abuse of the hospitality extended (to refugees) by the host country," an official in the Foreign Ministry said.

Over 5,000 former Nigerian rebels rehabilitated: official

ABUJA — Nigeria has rehabilitated more than 5,000 former militants from the oil-rich Niger Delta who embraced a government amnesty last year, an official said on Monday. The presidential adviser on the restive region, Timi Alaibe, told reporters that 5,295 ex-oil "rebels" who were retrained at a camp set up for them in July are "certified as having imbibed the principles of non-violence." They are now being sent for vocational training in Nigeria and abroad, said Alaibe in a speech marking the first anniversary of the amnesty offer. Former president Umar'Arufu Yar'Adua granted unconditional amnesty to more than 20,000 former militants from the Niger Delta. Alaibe said that in "just one year after the proclamation of amnesty...the region has become the safest zone in Nigeria." "With peace restored in the Niger Delta, oil companies and associated companies reopened shut-in wells. Nigeria's oil production increased," he said. Militant activity in the region, which included kidnappings and attacks on oil installations, lowered the country's oil production from 2.6 million barrels a day to about one million at the peak of the unrest.



Nigeria currently produces around 2.1 million barrels daily. Nigeria is among the world's largest oil producers, but its government has been unable to provide basic services to millions living in dire poverty. The amnesty deal has led to a sharp decline in attacks, but some observers fear a return of unrest if the programme is not followed through.



Developed countries urged to act

BEIJING - Calls for concerted global efforts to combat climate change resonated on the first day of a new session of United Nations climate talks, which opened in China's coastal city of Tianjin on Monday. The weeklong talks were convened at short notice because the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) hoped a last round of negotiations between governments would help deliver tangible progress at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will start in Cancun, Mexico, on Nov 29. UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres repeated in Chinese, Qiu Tong Cun Yi, the famous quote made by the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, as she urged governments to accelerate their search for common ground to achieve strong action on climate change. "Governments need to agree on what is doable in Cancun and how it will be achievable in a politically balanced manner," she said. She added that "it is in everyone's ultimate interest to accelerate action in

order to minimize negative impacts on all". China's State Councilor Dai Bingguo also pointed out the urgency. "All countries need to renew efforts to consolidate and expand consensus and hammer out a legally-binding agreement at an early date," Dai said during his address at the opening ceremony.

Figueres asked negotiators to focus on areas with broader consensus, so as to deliver "a balanced package of decisions" at These decisions will be the "corner stones" in the fight against warming, she said at a press conference on Monday. Areas to be focused on include a fresh international framework to help small developing island states and least developed countries adapt to climate change. Another area of focus is the launch of a new mechanism to provide technology to developing nations. Figueres said that some \$28 billion had already been committed by developed countries toward the \$30 billion in fast-start finance that will assist mostly developing countries in mitigating the effects of climate change between 2010 and 2012.