

G. Thailand – Researcher: Andrea Uzans

i. Discussion

Andrea Uzans, the IMPACS' researcher stationed in Thailand, analysed the following media during the period August 30 – September 15: the Thai Rath, a tabloid-style newspaper; the Bangkok Post; and state-owned Radio Thailand.

The Thai Rath has a tabloid format and heavy focus on entertainment (roughly half the paper seems to be devoted to entertainment) which may be the primary reasons for its extremely limited coverage of APEC during the monitoring period (6 out of 925 total items – 0.6%).

The Bangkok Post, on the other hand, contained 36 APEC-related news items (3% of its total coverage) during the 2 ½ week monitoring period. The Post is targeted towards the relatively affluent segments of the Thai population, those with overseas education or foreign residents of Bangkok. That APEC was an issue of some importance in this newspaper may be attributed to its sizable business section, which is slightly larger than the news section on weekdays. However, the relatively sizeable amount of articles did not result in a wide breadth of discussion or a wide representation of opinion.

Politics of trade, that is news about the process of negotiation, and the events at the Official Summit, dominated the APEC news in the Post. Together, these main topics made up 70% of all APEC coverage. And although human rights issues appeared as the main focus of 5 items during this period (14%), several issues of importance in civil society

were conspicuously absent. For example, cultural issues, the concerns of labour or environmental issues never appeared as main topics in any of the Post's coverage, nor were they even mentioned. Furthermore, 4 of the 5 human rights issues-focused items were concerned with the situation in East Timor.

Similarly, the diversity of opinion as represented by different source types was noticeably sparse. Roughly, 60% of all sources accessed during the monitoring period were representatives of government. And, government sources were by far the most likely to appear first in any news item (70%), an important position considering that the first source cited generally sets the terms of discussion or otherwise frames the debate.

The next two most frequently accessed source types were experts or academics (12%) and APEC committee members (10%). Sources most likely to present alternative perspectives on the events or issues related to the Summit were dramatically under-represented. Members of ethnic or minority groups made up about 6% of all sources while NGO's of various types comprised only 4%. These findings suggest that The Bangkok Post presented a rather narrow spectrum of topics and viewpoints in its coverage of APEC.

Although APEC-related news made up roughly 4% of the total news segments broadcast on the state-owned Radio Thailand during our monitoring period, this number represents only 10 items. Again, format might be the primary factor in the dearth of APEC coverage as