India to open up internet service to private cos

NEW DELHI. Aug 9: India is to open up its state-run internet service to private companies. parliament was told yesterday. says AFP.

The state-run Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) is currently the only company that can link up customers to the global computer network.

Participation by licensed private companies will generate healthy competition in the field of interest services and this will help the customer to get better service," Communications Minister Beni Prasad Verma said. "This will also result in faster spread of internet all

over the country." The VSNL launched the internet in India's four main cities two years ago and has a subscriber base of 40,000. Individual subscriber fees are 468 dollars each year for a maximum of 250 hours per annum.

Manmohan Jain, head of internet group in the National Institute of Information Technology Ltd. said the decision to open up the internet service was "an extremely important one."

"There are about 20 private companies waiting to provide the internet service including joint venture firms such as Huges Escort, Sprint RPG Sand

HCL Comnet. "Most of the present companies which provide electronic mail services will jump into the internet bandwagon," Jain said.

Jain said Indian companies would have to tie-up with foreign firms to cater to the huge Indian internet subscriber base estimated to reach three million by the turn of the century.

"Presently there are half a million potential customers and the VSNL has been able to tap only about 20,000 of those, mainly corporate. Being a staterun organisation they have been ignoring individual customers.

Jain added: "The best thing that can happen to the individual customer will be the low price which will be offered to them by these new private companies due to competition." Internet's global users are es-

timated at more than 25 million in 71 nations.

Thai investors await details of IMF package

BANGKOK, Aug 9: Thai share prices would be stable next week pending more details of an International Monetary Fund (IMF)-backed economic rescue package outlined this week, analysts said, reports

Investors would be waiting on the outcome of the Thai Finance Minister's talks with the IMF and Japanese officials which start in Tokyo on Monday to finalise the terms of

package, they said. The downside on stocks would be limited, with most investors likely to be sidelined amid tight liquidity, analysts

The index dropped 2.3 per cent this week following the sudden suspension of 42 finance firms, as the government announced tough austerity measures needed to gain a 12-15 billion dollar credit line through the IMF.

The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) index declined 15.19 points during the week, closing Friday at 636.85 points, on an average turnover of 138.2 million shares worth 4.85 billion baht (154.8 million dollars)

On Monday, the bourse gained 1.8 per cent, with the market upbeat on the even of the government's announcement of the IMF package — the largest bailout since the Mexican economic crisis of the 1980s.

But share prices slipped by 2.3 per cent on Tuesday, with the shock suspension of 42 ailing finance companies — leaving nearly two-thirds of Thai finance firms temporarily closed and driving stocks in the sector down sharply. However, expectations of

embattled Prime Minister Chaowalit Yongchaiyudh standing down failed to buoy the market Friday, with the index edging down 0.2 per cent in sluggish

Japan to continue aid to Vietnam despite ODA cut

HANOI, Aug 9: Japanese loans to Vietnam will not be aflected by Japan's plans to cut overseas development aid by 10 per cent, official media reported Wednesday, says AFP.

cut during a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Phan

Van Khai. Japan became the largest development aid donor to Vietnam when it agreed to pledge more than 800 million dollars during last year's Vietnam

donors conference. was pledged to Vietnam for the 1997 fiscal year in December

that Tokyo would ensure aid to

He also said Japan wanted to see Vietnam absorb its financial assistance more quickly in

since 1993. Less than a third of that has been disbursed

Gujral promises to promote subsidies on food

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral yesterday promised to increase subsidies on food, ending months of speculation that his ruling coalition would prune a 2.5-billion-dollar outlay announced on January 26, reports AFP.

"It is shame that in our 50th year of independence a large number of people are still living under the poverty line," the prime minister said in a debate in parliament's lower house.

"We want to do something for them," Gujral said and added the subsidies offered by his predecessor H D Deve Gowda had "Certain distortions."

"We were conscious of the financial burden from the subsidies but after implementing them we found there were certain distortions in the system. The relief that was extended to

the poor was limited," he said. Gujral said each family was allowed only 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of high-subsidised cereals, adding the quantity was not enough and forced the poor to buy the remaining rations at existing market rates.

"The moment we work out alternatives, we can offer more relief to the poor," Gujral said, adding he had called chief ministers from India's 26 states to a meeting for arriving at a con-

sensus on raising the subsidy. Another report says: India plans to more than double its spending on wildlife, environment and wildlife minister Saifuddin Soz said here amid rekindled concern over the country's dwindling tiger popu-

The announcement came after 320 members of parliament in a memorandum sought guarantees from Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral on the protection of tigers.

"Let there be a debate in parliament on the memorandum and a new policy emerge on tiger protection," Soz told AFP in an interview.

"We will implement the reforms without delay.

Soz also said his ministry had sought 556 million dollars for wildlife conservation for the five years to 2002, over the 223 million dollars allocated for the five-yearly cycle ended

March 31. "We have to build more sanctuaries, increase (the) number of forest guards and provide modern equipment. The amount is not enough but we are not going to beg from donors."

"There is a new determination now to protect wildlife, specially our tigers," Soz said, adding that a census, the first in four years, had been launched and that more teeth were being added to a 1985 wildlife act.

On Monday, 320 MPs, cutting across party lines in their joint "tiger appeal" said: Mr Prime Minister, the future of the tiger lies in your hands."

"Its extinction will herald a downward spiral of ecological decay which can only escalate the misery of millions. The tiger is the greatest symbol of natural heritage, not just in India, but in the world."

Unemployment rate in Germany rising

BONN, Aug 9: The number of people out of work in Germany rose to 4,354,300 in July, the German Federal Labour Office said yesterday, says Xin-

The increase boosted the unemployment rate to 11.4 per cent from June's 11.0 per cent. While western Germany's joblessness rose by 66,000 to reach nearly 2.99 million last month, the eastern half of the country saw its unemployment increase by 65,800 to over 1.36 million.

Commenting on the latest development, Labour Office President Bernhard Jagoda said there was an increasing imbalance in the east-west job situa-

While the western German job market was stabilising slowly, the job situation in eastern Germany was still deteriorating, he said.

Industrial finance is there, say 'M Ds

Star Business Report

Top executives of commercial banks refuted reports Saturday that they were "unwilling" to provide industrial fi-

"This is not based on facts," managing directors of different banks said in a statement after a meeting of Bankers Club Ltd.

"All commercial banks are actively involved in industrial finance and are giving support to boost industrial production of

Suharto hopes ASEAN will Thailand plans \$2.4b reach its free trade targets

Bankers Club Ltd brought together the managing directors of different banks at a meeting on Thursday at the Board

JAKARTA, Aug 9: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations celebrated its 30th anniversary on Friday with Asia's longest serving leader President Suharto confident that the nine-member bloc will maintain regional stability and realize free trade reforms, reports

Room of the City Bank Limited.

In a speech that kicked off a yearlong celebration, the Indonesian leader noted that the regional organization was established with the purpose of accelerating economic growth, social progress and cultural promotion in the region.

"It is an appropriate occasion to recall the aspirations, principles and goals set by ASEAN and to renew our firm commitment to continue together our struggle aimed at re-

াব আছে সাধ্যস্থাল কৰা চোত্ৰহা

বিতাসা হলকেই 🎉

ানসৌ, সরিমাল 🐼

Md Enamul Haque, Project Coordinator (Operation) of As-

sociation for Social Advancement, presided over an annual

staff meeting held at Caritas hall in Barisal recently.

Project Coordinator (Management) Sushil Roy was

present as chief guest while Md Zahir Uddin Babar,

Associate Coordinator, as special guest. A total of 50 unit

managers from eight districts of Barisal zone participated

alizing them," the Indonesian leader said in his commemorating speech.

ASEAN was founded on Aug 8, 1967 in Bangkok with Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore as the found members.

With the admission of Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, it is now the world's third largest regional grouping after the European Union and the North American Free Trade

Nations in this region are firmly determined to preserve together regional peace and stability by respecting the principles of law and justice and adhering strictly to the precept of the United Nations Charter." Suharto said

More than 2,000 guests, in-

cluding high ranking officials and foreign ambassadors, attended the lavish celebrations held at Jakarta's Convention Center.

the economic area. ASEAN has made heartening progress, Suharto said, noting that more than 90 per cent of tariffs have been included in the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme, even though there is still five years before it becomes a free trade

He added that a series of joint efforts in the fields ranging from customs to finance and banking have been made to help the realization of the free trade area

"This is the reason why we are confident the AFTA shall be materialized by the year 2003."

HK's economy grows opc in first quarter

HONG KONG, Aug 9: Hong Kong's economy grew 6.1 per cent in this year's first quarter, faster than the 5.5 per cent rate forecast for the gross domestic product for all of 1997, the government announced Monday. says AP.

A statement said that in 1996, the GDP grew by 4.9 per cent, compared with the earlier estimate of 4.7 per cent.

The government also revised downward the full-year 1995 figure, to 4.5 per cent growth from 4.7 per cent. The growth rate in the first

quarter of 1997 was the highest since the first three months of 1994, when the economy expanded by 6.5 per cent.

budget cut for '98

BANGKOK, Aug 9: The Thai government yesterday announced plans to cut its 1998 budget by 50-75 billion baht (1.6-2.4 billion dollars), while the central bank vowed to guarantee deposits in banks and finance companies, says AFP.

Deputy Finance Minister Chaturon Chaisaeng told a news conference the cut -- an austerity measure required as Thailand seeks a 12-15 billion dollar credit line from the IMF -- would be discussed at a cabinet meeting Monday. "If the budget cut plan is ap-

proved, the issue will then be forwarded to the parliament," he said, without giving further details. It follows remarks Thursday

by Prime Minister Chaowalit Yongchaiyudh, who said the 1998 budget would be slashed by 60-100 billion baht. Meanwhile, the central bank, which earlier this week

set up a telephone hotline to take questions from the public about the suspensions of 42 finance companies moved to allay worries about the security of deposits. Siri Garncharoendee, Assistant Governor of the Bank of Thailand (BOT), said the bank's

financial institutions devel opment fund would guarantee deposits for healthy local banks, finance companies and foreign banks for two years. There was a major run on deposits earlier this week, as

public confidence in the gov-

ernment's ability to prevent economic meltdown ebbed. Nearly two thirds of Thailand's finance firms have been ordered to close and seek mergers with healthier institutions.

Siri said the fund would guarantee bank deposit rates at the average deposit rate of large banks plus a maximum of three per cent.

Finance company deposits

would be guaranteed at the av-

the country."

erage rate of finance companies plus a maximum of six per cent. On Thursday, the central bank approached foreign banks here to give loans to the depleted rehabilitation fund which the central bank announced this week had already injected 430 billion baht into

> Chaktip Nitibhon, general manager of Banque Indosuez, told reporters the central bank had asked 19 foreign banks here which have good deposit accounts and good liquidity to provide loans for the fund to support finance companies. Thailand is yet to adopt the

58 ailing finance firms.

biggest International Monetary Fund rescue package since the Mexican bailout of the 1980s. including revenue-boosting measures such as a three per cent hike in value-added tax. The credit line is needed to

shore up foreign reserves and liquidity since the flotation of the Thai currency on July 2, which led to a depreciation in its value by more than 20 per

Italian new car registration up

ROME, Aug 9: Italian new car registrations rose 54 per cent in July from the same month in 1996, according to figures released Friday by the Transport Ministry, says AP. The ministry said that some

246,500 new cars were registered last month, up from 160,007 in the year ago period. The rise follows a yearly rise of 51 per cent in June.

A government programme matching dealership discounts for consumers who give up old cars for new ones was such a success the state decided to ex-

will do something themselves.

says a policeman who requested

anonymity. "Albanians don't

to some families but will do

nothing to soothe the soul of a

people who long to know who is

ultimately responsible for their

strife. Many fear they will

never learn the truth because

wish to delve into the financial

mess or the violence because

they could end up implicating

ternational financial organi-

sations demand a complete in-

vestigation into the pyramid

schemes as a pre-condition for

aid. But the Finance Minister

was a consultant to at least two

of the schemes. Moreover, there

may be some truth to the

Democrats' claims that the So-

cialists incited people in the

going to want to go?" asks a

"Just how high up are they

Foreign diplomats and in-

The Socialists many not

the obstacles are too great.

themselves.

south to riot.

Retribution may offer relief

Shipping Intelligence

	Berth Position and P	erformance	g Port of Vess	els as on 7	7-8-97.	W Section 1
Berth No	Name of Vessels	Cargo	L Port Call		Date of Arrival	Leaving
J/1	Al Muztuba (Flag)	CI	Cal	CLA	4/8	9/8
J/2	Maritime Faith	M Seed	Vang	Rainbow	500000000000000000000000000000000000000	9/8
J/5	Danyal Express	Sugar (G)	Porta	Seacon	TO MODIFIED TO THE	15/8
J/6	Moscenice	CI	Busa	Prop	The Control of Control	9/8
J/7	Song Lin	, a	Xing	Pro	F. F	12/8
J/8	Almi/Khanak	Wheat (G)	Sing	Ancien	**************************************	9/8
J/9	Ping Shun	C Clink	Dali	USTC		12/8
J/11	Mok Ran	Rice (P)	Sing	AASS		14/8
J/12	Kota Berjaya	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD		7/8
J/13	Danis-P	R Seed	Zela	Rainbow	67-35 TEX. (170-00)	12/8
CCT/1	Padma	Cont	Sing	RSI	TO THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF	7/8
CCT/2	Diligence Contain	er Cont	Sing	QCSI.	FE SELECTION 15550	8/8
CCT/3	Kota Bintang	Cont	Sing	Pil (BD		9/8
RM/14	Chosun Hope	Idle	Lian	OWSL		10/8
യ	Mashakti	C Clink	Kara	USTC		10/8
TSP	Euro Liberty	R Phos	Anna	Litmond		12/8
RM/5	Yue Yane	Cement	Long	OLM		12/8
DOJ	Banglar Shourabh		-	BSC	71 (D-77-40-10)	8/8
DD	Ocean-1 .	Repair	Cal	Cross		16/8
DDJ/1	Tanary Star	Idle	Para	PSAL		30/8
DDJ/2	Barge: Jamuna-V	Repair	Chand	Karna		8/8
RM/8	Banglar Urmi	Repair	Viza	BSC	5 (U.) (U.) (Burellin)	13/8
RM/9	Zara	Repair	Col	Nishan		8/8
SM/10	Tug Izseel Strom	P Equip	Chand	Karna	100 to 10	7/8
CUFLJ	Blue North	Cement	Qing	PSAL		30/8
Kafco (U)	Al Swamruz	Urea		ASLI		9/8

Vessels due at Outer Anchorage Name of Vessels Date of Last Port Local Cargo Loading Arrival Call Agent Port Da Fu 31/7 Sing APL (B) Sing Cont Yong Jiang RSA Momb GI (St Coil) Joy D 10/8 M Regina 27/7 PII (BD) Cont Sing Banglar Asha Mong BSC Ballast Dona-1 Ballast Jiang Cheng **BDShip** Mong Chin QC Pintail 27/7 Sing OCSL Cont Sing Adventurer Fuja Simni Scraping Weser Star 3/8 **BDShip** Cont China Star (48) 21/7 Everett Sin Hai 31/7 11/8 Sing **GC2T** Cont Sing Navigator S hai R Phos/GI Ya Feng Lans Cement Delmure 9/8 Peleas-K Rainbow **GSSP Fert** in Bag San Yang (48) 3/8 9/8 Everett Fong Lee 24/6 15/8 Sing **BDShip** Ultima 3/8 12/8 Sing Baridhi Cont Elbe Star 3/8 10/8 CBO **BDShip** Cont Banglar Mamata 10/8 BSC GL/UK Cont -Mong Da Fa 5/8 10/8 Sing RSL Cont Fong Yun 3/8 11/8 Sing **BDShip** Cont Sing **Tanker Due**

Global Neptune	8/8	- TS	3		
Normar Spirit	12/8	- Seacom CDSC			
	Vessels	at Kutubdia	l e		
Name of Vessels	Cargo	Last Port Call	Local Agent	Date of Arrival	
Ismaya			B Bay	9/1	
Orizont	¥	Sing	B Bay	25/2	
Oil Valour			B Bay	R/A (31/7)	
	Vessels at (Outer Anchor	the state of the s		
AMERICA -		eady On			
Asha Global	Cement	Ind	Seaglory	27/7	
Eastern Mars	CI	Disease	Door	27/1	

Eastern Mars 27/7 31/7 **Grand Orient** C Clink Sing Seacom Caraka Jaya Niaga-III Beeline 27/7 Sea Elegance Pil (BD) QC Teal Cont OC2 Kuanyin Urea Everett R/A (3/8) Clipper Fedelity Sugar (G) Coat Litmond Trust-38 Sugar (G) Darb Litmond Steamer Future Cont **BDShip** Dragon Santosa Cont Baridhi Bahrah **HSD** CDSO **Vessels Awaiting Instruction**

Jet-1 Sitara ECSL R/A (30/6) Sokol Seacom R/A (18/7) Banglar Jyoti R/A (22/7)

Shifting

Al Mustuba To Kafco (U)

RM/4 Soniya To RM/3

RM/3 Global Naptune to RM/4

Motorola plans

\$200m expansion

in China

BEIJING, Aug 9: American

electronics giant Motorola

plans to spend more than 200

million dollars in expanding a

Sino-US semiconductor joint

venture in southwest China's

Sichuan province, the official

Xinhua news agency said yes-

Bill Miller said recently in the

provincial capital Chengdu,

that investment in the third

phase extension project of Le-

shan-Phoenix Semiconductor

Co. is part of the company's

plan to build the venture into

China's semi-conductor produc-

struction at Leshan-Phoenix,

First and second phase con-

tion center, Xinhua reported.

Motorola Vice-Chairman

terday, reports AFP.

J/2 Maritime Faith

J/9 Ping Shun

Asha Global

J/3 Dinisty

Movement of Vessels for 8-8, 9-8 & 10-8-97 Outgoing Incoming DOJ B Showrab RM/9 B Jyoti RM/9 Zara St Future Global Naptune J/6 Moscenice

CCT/2 QC Pintail

J/9 Eastern March

Kafco (U) Kuanying

Caraka Jaya

Dragon Santosa CCT/1 QC Teal **B** Mamata CCJ Mashakti B Kiron DOJ Asha Global **BSJ Joalmi** J/6 D Sentosa DOJ British Esk San Yang

CCT/2 D Container CCT/3 St Future

CCT/3 K Bintang

J/2 M Faith

Kafco Al Swamruz

Dragon Sentosa Da Fu Weser Star CCJ Grand Orient Da Fu

The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels of Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group,

Why a nation of eye-witnesses stays silent Agim Sadiky claims to know who caused the chaos. ernment doing something, they

those responsible for the mayhem that left one person dead and several injured at an election rally in Lushnja, a dusty, coastal Albanian town. Asked if he will testify

against them, Sadiky stares

in the meeting.

back in disbelief at what he considers a ridiculous question. "We are all eye-witnesses" is all the 34-year-old mechanic will say. "This is a small town. Everybody knows everybody

Edmund Mushi explains Lushnja's collective silence by taking a bullet from a Kalashnikov rifle he keeps in the back of his father's cafe, holding up the glinting metal and stating: "This is why there will never be justice in Albania." One million Kalashnikovs

were stolen from government arms depots in the anarchy that followed the collapse of five "pyramid" deposit-taking schemes that wiped out the lifesavings of tens of thousands of Albanians. People were lured into handing over their savings by promises of unrealistically large returns in an unrealistically short time.

While those weapons remain in the hands of a people with a notorious tradition of vengeance, it will be almost impossible to legally punish anyone for the estimated 1,600 violent deaths that have occurred since January in this small Balkan nation because people

are too terrified to testify. The violence has shattered the country's spirit and provided a further blow to the economy. Those who put the Socialist party into office with a landslide election victory in June now expect the leadership to find and try the individuals

Albanians voted socialist because they blame President Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party for the proliferation of bogus investment schemes and the imbroglio that followed their demise. They are demanding retribution for those who lost their lost money.

"I'm so sick about what happened here, watching Albanians kill Albanians," says Ermal Toto as he pauses during a rally outside Socialist headquarters. "We want to know what happened, we want transparency, we want justice."

However, the combination of guns, a corrupt judicial system, disillusioned police and backroom politics will impede investigations. The realisation that the path to justice will be long, contentious and will further divide an already despondent nation has caused some politicians to advocate a general amnesty.

"At some point, we have to put the past behind us, we have to start to forget, we have to think about the future," says Socialist party chairman Rexhep Mejdani. "There has been such suffering here already." But Kathleen Imholz, who runs a legal education pro-

gramme in Albania for a for-

eign foundation, says an

amnesty would set the wrong

precedent as the country seeks

to rebuild. "You have to teach people to be responsible for their actions," she counsels. Amnesty would be difficult for many Albanians to em-

brace. In northern Albania, many pledge allegiance to the Kanun of Leke, the common law passed

Theresa Agovino writes from Lushnja, Albania

Crime and corruption have replaced Albanian's dreams of prosperity in the wake of the collapse of five speculative investments schemes. A Gemini News Service correspondent reports on the mood of pessimism.

The collapse of the pyramids

BOSNIA/ 'Pyramid finance schemes' emerged in SERBIA Albania, Europe's MONTENEGRO poorest country, five years ago, but became a national mania in Thousands of ordinary people invested their MACEDONIA savings in the Durrée C schemes - even selling their homes and land lured by promises that their money would double in two or three months GREECE ITALY \$1bn - or more than 30% of GDP - is believed to have been invested before the schemes started Pop: 3.3m

down from medieval times, which regulates life in the community through the concept of honour and revenge. Under the code, it would be dishonourable not to avenge the murder of a relative. And while the code dictates

behaviour in the north, the

Area: 29,000 sq km

GNP per head: \$670

Life expectancy: 73
Adult literacy: 85%

concept of eye-for-an-eye vendettas permeates the whole, country. Lushanja, for example, is in

central Albania, and police there expect a spate of retaliations. tion killings if the government fails to act soon. "If people don't see the gov-

Source World Bank/Financial Times

collapsing. Thousands

of Albanians lost

everything

"There is a fear Nano will be

lawyer. Some Democratic officials suspected of contributing to the

violence, such as the heads of the Police and National Guard, have already gone abroad. There is also a worry that political witch-hunts could develop as Socialists seek revenge for indignities they suffered under Democratic rule

Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano spent three years in prison for a corruption conviction that was condemned as politically motivated by international human rights organisa-

vindictive - that you'll only see a selective justice," says Frank Dalton, country director of the independent Civic Education Other problems plague the

legal system. Justice Minister Spartak Ngjela maintains 60 per cent of the 300 judges are corrupt; he will not even venture a guess on how many of the lawyers accept bribes. Twenty-five of the country's

courts were destroyed in the violence. Only 165 of the 1,209 prisoners who were "liberated" during the chaos have been recaptured. And police do not seem motivated to arrest new suspects. A Lushnja resident who re-

ported a suspected homicide to the police station recently says none of the eight officers left to investigate. Their apathy is understandable. The doorway and window frames of the dingy two-room building bear black scorch-marks from the attempt to burn down the station. Two policemen were among the 100

fatalities in Lushnja. "We have to be careful because if we go to make an arrest we can get killed," says one officer. "We have two tasks now. The first is to protect ourselves and then to do the utmost we can to protect the citizens."

He says there is little they can do to investigate when the public refuses to cooperate. "The politicians created these problems, and it is up to

them to find solutions," he adds. — Gemini News Theresa Agovino is a freelance journalist who has lived in Budapest for two years, covering business, social and economic issues in eastern Europe.

City for nine years.

Motorola's first joint venture in China, involved more than 50 million dollars, with some 95 per cent of the venture's output earmarked for export, Xinhua said. Third phase development will enable the venture to introduce a new series of products,

including semiconductors and

integrated circuits. Most of the

new products will be exported.

Motorola plans to ensure the joint venture maintains semiconductor production on a scale with advanced world levels. Xinhua said.

Motorola is one the biggest foreign investors in China with and accumulated investment

Before moving to Budapest, she covered finance in New York since 1978 of 1.2 billion dollars.

Yoshimi Watanabe, a senior member of the Japanese parliament and financial committee, promised no aid would be

A total of 2.4 billion dollars

During Monday's meeting. the Japanese official told Khai Vietnam will not be affected. the official newspaper Vietnam News reported.

So far, aid promised to Vietnam from donor countries has amounted to 8.5 billion dollars