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Asian electronics sector holding up: analysts

By Martin Abbugao, Agence France-Presse – 21 August 2008

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SINGAPORE (AFP) — Asia's electronics manufacturing sector is holding up, despite a slowing global economy, because of sustained demand from Brazil, Russia, India and China, analysts said Thursday.

The need for newer technology to put into cars, mobile phones and flat screen television panels should help drive demand for increasingly sophisticated electronics chips, they said at an industry forum in Singapore.

"Overall the electronics industry has been riding out the storm so far, although people are still wary of potential further slowdown in the global economy," said David Cohen, a regional economist with research house Action Economics.

"And a lot of the continued strength that people point to is the demand from the emerging markets," he said.

Robust exports to Brazil, Russia, India and China -- the so-called BRIC countries -- have made up for softer shipments to the United States and Europe, he added.

Albert Lu, a senior scientist with the state-linked Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology, said innovation to find new technologies for use in cars, mobile phones and high-tech television sets will help drive demand for electronics products.

Some cars now come equipped with electronic sensors that enable the vehicle to activate its brakes automatically in case of an emergency, as well as sensors to monitor tyre pressure, he said.

Christopher Fussner, president of TransTechnology Pte Ltd, an independent supplier of technology products, said evidence from dealing with his clients shows the industry slowdown is not as bad as expected.

"The market right now is definitely mixed. Just looking throughout the region, things are very positive though," he told the forum, held ahead of an electronics trade show next month called GlobalTRONICS 2008.

In India, Nokia is churning out millions of mobile phones a year at its plant in Chennai while in Vietnam, Intel is building a plant the size of eight to 10 football fields, he said.