

**Shumaila Rafiq**

**BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

**South Asia**

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### **India, Sri Lanka, Maldives run scrapped by Greek cruise line: report**

Jan 19, 2010 (LBO) - Louise Cruises, a Greece based line which started a service running out of India to Sri Lanka and Maldives was pulling out after suffering losses due to high cost of operating out of Indian ports, media report said.

Louise Cruises had lost 3.5 million US dollars in 45 days of operations, the Inter Asian News Agency (IANS) said in a report.

The line had signed a deal with Kerala regional state to operate out of Cochin but were now pulling out, because of high port charges, expensive fuel, poor port infrastructure and "unco-ordinated embarkation procedures", the report said.

Excessive port charges, refuelling tax, sub-par port infrastructure and unco-ordinated embarkation procedures are some of the reasons stated by the company for withdrawing from India.

"When we started discussing with the Indian government, they assured us of all possible tax rebate for operating here," the report quoted Yogesh Gupta of Louise Cruises as saying.

"But the slow bureaucratic process and poor government policies have left us with no option but to withdraw

"India doesn't have a cruise policy and we are taxed equivalent to a cargo ship, which is really unfair."

Gupta was quoted as saying that 24,000 US dollars were paid as port charges for each call in India compared to 3,000 US dollars in the Maldives. The cruise was stopping at Colombo to top up fuel because fuel was 33 percent more expensive in India.

The company was laying off 200 or relocating 200 crew hired for the South Asian run and its ship MV Aquamarine was returning to Europe.

**UNITED NATIONS, Jan 19, 2010 (IPS) - The devastation caused by the earthquake in Haiti last week has brought into sharp focus the threat of another natural disaster waiting to happen: a sea-level rise that could obliterate the world's small island states, triggering fears of mass migration.**

But contrary to initial reports, the Indian Ocean island of Maldives says it has no plans to relocate its 300,000 inhabitants or purchase land in neighbouring countries to re-settle Maldivians before the impending devastation.

"Maldives does not have a relocation plan and had at no time ever considered relocation to another country, either in the neighbourhood or any other area," Ambassador Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, the permanent representative of Maldives to the United Nations, told IPS.

Still, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), which includes countries such as Fiji, Palau, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tuvalu, have not ruled out the possibility of relocating before disaster strikes.

Ambassador Stuart Beck of Palau says that displacement to a neighbouring or third country "might be the only option if climate change continues at the current or increased rate without significant and urgent mitigation by the international community."

As they struggle to cope with the monumental disaster that may have killed over 200,000 people, hundreds of Haitians have been trying to find shelter in neighbouring Dominican Republic.

Asked about this post-earthquake migration, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told reporters he is aware that the government of Dominican Republic "is trying to accommodate as many as possible, those people within the existing rules and regulations of their country, but they have been very generous."

Soon after his election in the Maldives in October 2008, President Mohamed Nasheed proposed the creation of a sovereign fund to buy land to resettle his countrymen.

But his U.N. envoy points out that the president was only alluding to the seriousness of the situation for countries like the Maldives for whom the threats posed by sea level rise are in fact very real and imminent.

Since then, Nasheed has reiterated many times that the Maldives "neither wished for nor was planning relocation."

"However, his statement on the setting up of the sovereign fund did have the desired effect of raising the awareness of the international community to the stark reality that the Maldives, along with many other small island countries, faced as they try to address the myriad of challenges posed by climate change," Mohamed said.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has predicted that in the worst case scenario, as many as 50 million to 350 million people may have to migrate from their island nations - if they are to survive a climate change disaster.

Ambassador Beck of Palau cites an analysis by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees which says that while international law is not clear, some people forced to flee the effects of climate change may be protected by the 1951 U.N. Convention on the Status of Refugees, "whereas others may not qualify for protection."

"There is little appetite for expanding the Refugee Convention to explicitly cover those displaced by climate change, given the fear that this risks lowering the protection currently afforded all refugees," Beck argues.

There have been unconfirmed reports that countries such as Australia or New Zealand may consider providing sanctuary to inhabitants of neighbouring small island developing states (SIDS) - dubbed "environmental refugees" - fleeing sea-level rise.

But the Maldivian envoy told IPS he is not aware of any island nation that has signed an agreement with a larger neighbour or another country regarding relocation.

"Even if such an agreement is signed between an island nation and another host country, this itself will raise a number of issues regarding international law - sovereignty status, U.N. membership etc. etc."

"Do these people relocate as a 'nation' or as individual refugees who are then subsumed into the host nation as their own citizens, or would they enjoy 'sovereign rights'? Would they continue to have claim to the territory of the land they had vacated? If not, who would have claim on it, if at all?" he asked.

The fate of these disaster-prone small island states will be high on the agenda of two major upcoming international conferences mandated to draft a legally binding treaty on climate change: the first one in June in Germany and the second in November in Mexico.

Mark Jariabka, executive director of Islands First, an organisation that promotes and protects the interests of SIDS, told IPS that it is very likely that this issue will continue to be discussed at the two meetings.

"It is important that the recognition of SIDS as most vulnerable countries be preserved in a legally binding outcome and that these countries receive priority access to resources for urgent adaptation and mitigation projects," he said.

Jariabka said the special vulnerability of SIDS was recognised in the December 2007 Bali Action Plan and was an important issue in last month's Copenhagen negotiations, especially in the context of adaptation, access to financial resources, and capacity building.

There has been some debate at the negotiations regarding the question of what constitutes a 'most vulnerable' country, with some parties offering proposals that could dilute the

significance of the distinction, he said.

"However, it is important to remember that SIDS are unique in that their very existence is threatened by climate change," he added.

Even a modest rise in sea level, he said, could render countries like Tuvalu and Kiribati completely uninhabitable, though serious climate change impacts on food and water security are already being felt in SIDS.

Under the Copenhagen Accord, the most vulnerable countries, including SIDS, least developed countries (LDCs), and some African countries, are granted priority access to finance, Jariabka said.

Also, mitigation actions under the Accord are voluntary for SIDS and LDCs, he added.

### **Pruksa eyes 27% growth from 48 projects**

The listed developer Pruksa Real Estate Plc - a new English spelling removes the "e" from Preuksa - plans to invest at least 20 billion baht to develop new projects this year, CEO Thongma Vjittpongpan said yesterday.

It aims for 27% growth in sales and revenue this year, recording 29 billion baht in sales and 24 billion in revenue.

The company also targets overseas expansion with more developments in India and its first project in the Maldives. It plans to launch 48 new projects worth 30 billion baht this year. Of those, 16 are townhouse estates, 14 single house developments, 16 condominiums and two overseas projects.

Mr Thongma said 6.8 billion baht would be spent to acquire land for all new projects and 12.6 billion for construction of the projects. It will also invest 1 billion baht to expand its precast factory as well as 150 million baht to upgrade its information technology system to support business enlargement.

Last year Pruksa posted 22.77 billion baht in sales, up 40% from 2008, while its revenue in 2009 was 19 billion baht, beating its target of 17 billion baht and 46% higher than its 2008 revenue of 12.96 billion. The company transferred 11,249 units to buyers in 2009.

The country's second biggest developer has a sales backlog of 15 billion baht, and around 9.8 billion baht will be booked as revenue this year.

Mr Thongma said Pruksa had already developed projects in Bangalore so it would expand into other large Indian cities including Chennai by joining Mutha Nohad Group and Soham in Mumbai.

Pruksa set a sales projection of 1.5 billion baht with revenue realisation of 1 billion baht for its Indian operations this year.

The company, represented by chief business officer Mayta Chanchamcharat, signed a term sheet agreement with Housing Development Corp to develop a housing project in Hulhumale, a city built on reclaimed land in the Maldives, under a joint venture partnership.

In Vietnam, it targets 500 million baht in sales and 400 million in revenue from its

developments in Haiphong.

Pruksa shares (PS) shares closed yesterday on the SET at 18.10 baht, up 20 satang, in trade worth 158.5 million baht.

### **SpiceJet plans to raise \$75 mn**

NEW DELHI: Delhi-based SpiceJet plans to raise up to \$75 million from the market to fund its fleet and route expansion programme. The company will invite proposals from aircraft manufacturers by March before formally placing orders for jetliners.

The low-cost airline expects to register profit for the full financial year during 2009-10, first time since it started commercial operations.

“We are looking at opportunity to raise capital from the market. The number would be in the neighbourhood of \$50-75 million,” SpiceJet CEO Sanjay Aggarwal told ET. He said the airline would place orders for new aircraft for network expansion but added that the company was aiming at a ‘measured and profitable’ growth.

The company is yet to decide the modalities of raising the funds. The airline has sought government permission to fly overseas — Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka, and hence needs more aircraft. SpiceJet would get the last plane of its earlier order in 2012. The airline, at present, has a fleet of 19 Boeing 737 jets. It has a market share of 12.4% in the domestic market.

The Indian airline industry is estimated to have lost Rs 10,000 crore during 2008-09 . It’s only now that the aviation sector is looking up and airlines have begun to talk of expansion plans as air traffic numbers have started soaring in the last few months. Domestic air traffic recorded a growth of nearly 35% to 44.87 lakh in December against the same period the previous year.

As against the increase in industry demand of 30% in the October-December 2009 quarter, SpiceJet claims to have recorded a growth of 55%.

Most Indian airlines are expected to register profit for the quarter ending December 2009 as increased demands have allowed them to increase fares. SpiceJet, for instance, has recorded a 25% jump in its yield (the revenue earned by carrying one passenger over one kilometre) since September last year, Mr Aggarwal said.

### **Post-Copenhagen, does green IT matter?**

IT is the means, not the end

Workshop It's difficult to talk about “green IT” without coming across as a techno-apologist. However much suppliers lay claim to having the most tree-huggingly planet friendly technologies available, the indisputable, unavoidable, insurmountable truth is that IT is largely about wiring up and plugging in sometimes large pieces of equipment, which need to be manufactured, powered during their lifetime and eventually disposed of.



What can get lost in the noise of the “My thing runs more efficiently than your thing” debate, is that without said things, it would be difficult to get much done. We’re stuck with stuff, from toothbrushes, kitchen knives and washing machines, to mobile phones and storage arrays. For a species blessed with larger brains and opposing thumbs, stuff is actually quite handy.

### **EU- Lanka’s number one trading partner**

The European Union (EU) is Sri Lanka’s number one trading partner with imports and exports valued at Euro 3.55 billion, or 23.3 percent of Sri Lanka’s total trade said Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Bernard Savage.

He was speaking at the AMCHAM January luncheon meeting which was held recently.

He said that Sri Lanka’s exports to the EU amounted to Euro 2.24 billion, both products and services, which represented 38 percent of Sri Lanka’s total exports. The European Union is Sri Lanka’s second largest import partner next to India, with imports valued at Euro 1.31 billion, or 14 percent of total imports.

Exports of garments and textiles to the European Union accounted for more than 54 percent of the value of Sri Lankan exports amounting to Euro 1.17 billion. The growth in the trade between the two countries was due to the GSP Plus concessions granted by the EU. EU hopes that Sri Lanka will be able to rectify and put in place certain issues which would enable it to continue benefiting from the GSP Plus scheme, he said.

The EU’s role in Sri Lanka has always been to support programs that have a development dimension and that which gives greater confidence and more opportunities to local businesses, especially SMEs, attract new investment and build strong regional markets.

It is an approach he said that the EU believes will assist even the smallest of companies to eventually participate in global trade, he said.

### **NASHEED ARRIVES IN MANAMA**

MANAMA, JAN. 20 (BNA) THE PRESIDENT OF MALDIVES MOHAMMED NASHEED ARRIVED HERE TODAY ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN WHERE HE WILL HOLD TALKS WITH HIS MAJESTY KING HAMAD BIN ISA AL KHALIFA. NASHEED WAS RECEIVED UPON ARRIVAL BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHAIKH KHALID BIN AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL KHALIFA. EM// 20-JAN-2010 15:21

### **SpiceJet to raise \$75m to expand**

India's SpiceJet plans to raise up to \$75 million to buy new aircraft and start new routes.

The airline is considering operating international services, and will be allowed to do so after it completes five years of domestic operations in May, says a spokeswoman.

"We are still evaluating the destinations and the viability of international operations," she adds.

Indian media reports say the carrier wants to start services to Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives

and Sri Lanka.

SpiceJet operates a fleet of 19 Boeing 737 aircraft, and has nine more on order. They are scheduled to be delivered up to January 2012, says the spokeswoman.

It is not known yet how the airline will raise the capital to fund its expansion.

"It is too premature to speak of something that we are still evaluating," says the spokeswoman.

#### **MACI raise concern over new deposit fees**

Maldives Association of Construction Industry (MACI) expressed concern on Monday over the government's decision to increase deposit fees of expatriate workers from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka on February onwards.

Mohamed Ali Janah, MACI president and the managing director of Alison Services said MACI is negotiating with the Department of Immigration and Emigration over the decision.

"We have made some proposals," explained Janah. "We're working for easier measurements to pay deposit fees as this decision may have a bad impact on the construction industry. We have drafted this year's budget without taking this into consideration. Companies may bankrupt if at a sudden the companies are demanded to pay over Mrf 100,000."

MACI is negotiating to reduce more than 50 percent of the deposit fees if a company employs over 50 expatriates, he said.

He added. "Still we are negotiating the department on the issue, yet we haven't come to an understanding."

State minister Ilyas Hussain Ibrahim, the controller said on Monday that they are holding discussions with the construction companies to reach an understanding by reducing the deposit fees if the companies employ over 35 expatriates.

"Still we're continuing the discussions," he said. "If the companies give a guarantee, we are offering to reduce 10 percent of the deposit fees.

"But we can't help the parties who employs and individual, as we have to take necessary measurements to control unlawful employment."

Immigration has decided to charge Mrf 8,000 from a Bangladeshi, Mrf 4,000 from a Sri Lankan and Mrf 3,500 from an Indian as deposit fees.

The department also charges one-way ticket money from every expatriate worker since 1 July 2009.

The deposit fees for the expatriate workers from the rest of the countries were not increased as there were few records of unlawful employment, he added.

### **Copenhagen Climate Accord Accepted By Six Nations (Correct)**

Jan. 19 (Bloomberg) -- Australia, France and Canada are among six countries that have told the United Nations they'll accept the Copenhagen Accord, the non-binding climate-change agreement brokered last month, the UN said.

With 12 days before more than 190 nations must say whether they accept the deal and detail pledges to cut emissions blamed for global warming, six countries have said they'll sign up while one, Cuba, has rejected it, a UN Framework Convention on Climate Change spokesman said today in an e-mailed reply.

The accord was brokered on Dec. 18 by U.S. President Barack Obama, China Premier Wen Jiabao, South Africa President Jacob Zuma, India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Under the deal, countries will aim to keep the global rise in temperatures since industrialization in the 1800s to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

Papua New Guinea, Ghana and the Maldives have notified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change they'll accept the deal, the spokesman said. Countries have until Jan. 31 to sign the accord and list in an appendix the emissions-reductions targets and actions they'll commit to.

"A spokesman for the UNFCCC said on Thursday that information he had previously given that Turkey, Singapore and Serbia had formally communicated to the UNFCCC secretariat their willingness to be associated with the Copenhagen Accord is incorrect," the UNFCCC said in an e-mailed statement. "These countries have not yet done so."

The U.S., Brazil, China, India and South Africa have yet to make formal submissions to the UN indicating they'll sign up to the Copenhagen Accord, according to the first UN e-mail. The 27-nation European Union, Ethiopia and Grenada were among those that indicated support for the deal in Copenhagen.

To contact the reporter on this story: Alex Morales in London at amorales2@bloomberg.net.

### **Exploitation Nation?**

#### **Naomi Klein worries Haitians won't have a role shaping their future.**

Bottom feeders follow closely on the heels of disaster. After Hurricane Katrina, private security contractors landed in New Orleans, hired to guard against looters. After the Indian Ocean tsunami, governments in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, and the Maldives pushed aside coastal villages to make way for resort developers. That kind of profiteering is standard fare. But is it organized? That's what author Naomi Klein says in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, arguing that "disaster capitalists" take advantage of post-crisis chaos to push through a set of free-market reforms that further their own interests, rather than those of the victims. Is that the case in Haiti right now, even as rescue operations are still underway? NEWSWEEK's Katie Paul chatted with Klein about what she—and the 20,000 people who have already joined the No Shock Doctrine for Haiti group on Facebook—are watching out for this time around. Excerpts

#### **UN climate body chief warns window of opportunity is short**

"The world has to seize this opportunity to act against climate change. If not, the impacts of

climate change could be terribly negative and possibly disastrous," he said

Abu Dhabi: There is little opportunity left for the world to counter the impacts of climate change, following last month's summit in Copenhagen that failed to live up to expectations, the UN climate body chief warned yesterday.

Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), predicted increased frequency and duration of extreme events, which will make life difficult in many parts of the world, and said some nations are already living in a state of fear and mounting threat.

"What we have after Copenhagen is an extremely short window of opportunity," he warned.

"The world has to seize this opportunity to act against climate change. If not, the impacts of climate change could be terribly negative and possibly disastrous," he said.

Experts demand the curbing of greenhouse gases, blamed for causing climate change, to keep the increase in global temperatures to no more than 2 degrees Celsius by 2050. For this to become reality, the IPCC says, global emissions should peak by 2015.

The science is compelling, Pachauri said, speaking at the World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi.

Established in 1998, the IPCC is considered the world's leading authority on climate change.

Based on IPCC's fourth assessment report published in 2007, Pachauri said: "If we do nothing to curb the greenhouse gas emissions the global temperature will continue to increase. Dangers associated with this include increased frequency and duration of extreme events, making it very difficult for different parts of the world."

### **Moral responsibility**

He called it the moral and ethical responsibility of the global community to help some of the worst affected countries, which are also among the poorest.

"Some of them are living in a state of fear and mounting threat. They are already feeling the impacts of climate change," he said, referring to countries such as the Maldives, Bangladesh and islands in the South Pacific.

The psychological impacts that precede the physical dangers they will face are grave, Pachauri noted.

"Even prosperous nations like [the ones in] North America will not be spared."

As early as 2020 water scarcity and stress will affect 75 to 250 million people, and agricultural output will be down in many countries by 50 per cent, the IPCC report said.

Elaborating on the impacts of climate change on the Gulf region, Pachauri said: "The rising sea level will imperil some parts of the region. There will also be increased heatwaves, and changes in precipitation patterns."

Chalking out adaptation measures is hence important, he said.

"Our children and grandchildren will otherwise pay the brunt of our inaction," the IPCC chief said, calling for an upsurge in action at the grassroots levels.

There should be lifestyle changes too, as we are "living on borrowed time and borrowed resources"

## **BANGLADESH**

### **The lessons from Hasina's visit**

As Bangladesh Prime Minister Sk. Hasina returned from her three day (January 10-13) visit to

India, her country found its people totally engaged with this one development. Domestic reactions were on expected lines. While Sk. Hasina and her party along with their allies described the visit as a remarkable success, the opposition led by the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) projected it as a total failure and surrender to India.

The central point, however, is the fact that in Bangladesh, no foreign relations attracts the kind of attention and importance, and raises emotions as ties with India do. This is very significant. It makes it abundantly clear that in their appreciation of India, Bangladeshis remain as deeply divided as they were during the 1971 war of liberation.

As an aside, it was very interesting to note the crowd reaction to the Bangladesh-India-Nepal tri-series cricket tournament in Bangladesh. The support to the Indian team was surprisingly high. This, compared to the photographs carried in some Bangladeshis newspapers in the 1980s and 1990s showing Pakistan beating India all over in the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi indicate that things are changing.

While addressing a press conference in New Delhi on January 13, Prime Minister Sk. Hasina made a very perceptive observation to a reporter's question. She said strong anti-India elements have been there as demonstrated by the 1954 Pakistan elections (Bangladesh was East Pakistan then), and she could not do anything about it. These anti-India voices can be subsumed if the common people of Bangladesh benefit from the Indo-Bangladesh relations, she added.

This is the truth. It is becoming increasingly clear that many Bangladeshi leaders who sided with the pro-liberationists in 1971 were actually pro-Pakistani and anti-Indian. Two senior leaders, Khandakar Mustaque Ahmed and Taheruddin Thakur, were directly involved with the assassination of Bangabandhu Sk. Mujibur Rahman along with most members of his extended family on August 15, 1974. Only his two daughters, Sk. Hasina and Sk. Rehana, survived as they were abroad.

In November that year the same group of army officers who killed Sheikh Mujib also assassinated four top Awami League leaders who were incarcerated in the Dhaka central jail. Two other developments in this connection are notable.

The "killer majors", as the group of army officers were known popularly, were elevated to diplomatic postings and given amnesty by the government of the day. And the Jaamat-e-Islami, which was banned for its pro-Pakistani activities against the freedom fighters and pro-liberation minded Bengalis, was politically rehabilitated. The trial of war criminals was also stopped.

All this happened in the period between Sk. Mujib's assassination and President Zia-ur-Rehman's period. Zia-ur-Rehman, as a major in the army, was a highly decorated freedom fighter. But his actions during his tenure at the highest position in the country suggested a pronounced anti-liberation bias.

President Zia, who formed the BNP, worked to create tensions with India. H.M. Ershad, who took over after Zia's assassination in 1981, eased the bilateral relations to an extent. By this time, the anti-India forces were well entrenched, mainly with the assistance of the BNP. The JEI was still untouchable among most Bangladeshis.

But the worst period in India-Bangladesh relations was witnessed during the BNP-JEI led four party alliance rule from 2001 to 2006. This was the period which saw a sharp rise in Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, hosting of Indian insurgent groups like the ULFA and others, and a close co-operation between Bangladesh's intelligence agencies and Pakistan's ISI to launch cross-border terrorism into India's heartland. The accidental interdiction of ten truck load of arms at the Chittagong port in April 2004, revealed the kind of arms support Bangladesh was providing the ULFA. The case is still under investigation.

The world now realises that the BNP-JEI government had become state sponsors of terrorism, because top ruling government leaders, their intelligence agencies and bureaucrats were involved in such operations. Attempts were made on the life of Sheikh Hasina, who is considered to be pro-India and the living symbol of liberation.

The Awami League returned to power in the December 28, 2008 election with a sweeping majority because the BNP-JEI government had ravaged the country in more ways than one.

The vast majority of Bangladeshi Muslims believe in secularism, democracy and historical friendly relations with India. Most Bangladeshis are emotional and sensitive people who do not contribute to obscurantism and terrorism, and look towards modernism and development. No wonder the JEI won only two seats at the last election.

But this is no reason for complacency. The BNP and JEI have created a strong support base. The JEI's support is on strong religious and ideological grounds. The BNP's support is more opportunistic and remains vulnerable to outside incentives.

Returning to Sheikh Hasina's India visit, the agreements and MoUs signed, and the joint statement issued at the end of the visit, it is no surprise that the Bangladesh opposition has concentrated on only a few sensitive issues. But in their eagerness to trash the upgraded bilateral relations, they have exposed their core concern, which is unacceptable to the civilized world.

The opposition sharply criticized the three agreements on mutual legal assistance on criminal matters, transfer of sentenced persons, and combating international terrorism, organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. They have argued that these arguments are in Indian interests only, and not Bangladesh's.

This is strange logic. Is hosting criminals, terrorists, drug traffickers and organized crime in Bangladesh's interest? Do they expect international praise for such a policy, or do they believe destabilization of India as the pinnacle of their destiny?

The government of Sk. Hasina was severely attacked by the BNP and the JEI for assisting India in arresting ULFA leaders like its chairman Aurobindo Rajkhowa. The Bangladesh based ULFA leaders were described as freedom fighters who the country should support, and compared to Bangladeshi freedom fighters. It was also said that by handing over ULFA leaders to India, Bangladesh was making an enemy out of this organization and jeopardizing Bangladesh's security.

This preposterous suggestion shows that the opposition desires that Bangladesh remains a platform and incubator of anti-India terrorism, unmindful of the calamity these same groups can unleash on the country. This is not viciousness, but utter madness.

The opposition also castigated land and water transit to India as counter to the country's security and sovereignty, explaining the Indian army could transit through these routes to north-east India. Similarly, access to Bangladeshi ports for India has been objected to on lame grounds. At the same time they are silent on India's accord to allow road connectivity to Nepal and Bhutan to Bangladesh, a long standing demand, the billion dollar credit line for infrastructure construction including up gradation of railways. They also opposed the 250 mw power supply to Bangladesh, and lifting of negative tariffs on 47 items.

In brief, India is anathema to the entrenched anti-India sections. But it is unfortunate to see worldly wise and erudite BNP leaders like Morshed Khan join this chorus. Of course, his Pakistani links are also family entrenched.

All issues cannot be resolved in one visit. But this one visit promises to restore and build upon the trust between the two countries on a much larger scale. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has agreed to revisit the 1974 Indira-Mujib pact on land borders and adversely possessed enclaves, promised not to do anything on the proposed Tipaimukh dam on the Barak river which may adversely affect Bangladesh, and move to resolve river waters dispute, especially the Teesta. Bangladesh and India also agreed to resolve the maritime boundary question bilaterally.

These are, however, issues on which the Bangladesh opposition pin their stand against India. While the maritime boundary may be easier to settle with give and take, there will always be space for criticism. River waters is a more difficult issue. There are 54 rivers, big and small, flowing from India to Bangladesh. Water is becoming a precious commodity. Nature cannot be predicted and the upper riparian stands to be blamed. Small problems will always remain between countries sharing common rivers and common borders. These can be managed if there is mutual trust.

It is now India's turn to act, and act quickly. The people of Bangladesh are waiting to see the gains from this new relationship. If they are dismayed, the battle may have been won but the war lost.

Bangladesh now needs the support that can solidify relations between the largest country of the subcontinent and the most densely populated country of South Asia. South Asia can grow faster if all the countries agree to grow together. Otherwise, India can grow alone but it will be a difficult growth.

Prime Minister Hasina has staked a lot on her India initiative, and India has responded superbly. We cannot let the momentum get embroiled in bureaucratic lethargy. If this relationship is brought to fruition, and there is no reason why it should not, it would be a lesson for the rest of the region, including Pakistan. Relations must be on equality, as Prime Minister Singh indicated.

Size does not make a big brother, but a strong and friendly hand does.

The "Manmohan Singh doctrine" is in the making. But the bottom line remains: all hands must work together. Are Kathmandu and Colombo listening?

Do not bring in extraneous powers to work against each other. Learn from history. This should be the motto of SAARC.

**Rising seas threaten tigers living in the mangrove forest of Bangladesh, study warns**  
**MICHAEL CASEY AP Environmental Writer**

One of the world's largest tiger populations could be wiped out this century as rising seas threaten to engulf their dwindling habitat in the coastal mangrove forests of Bangladesh, researchers said Wednesday.

A projected sea-level rise of 11 inches (28 centimeters) above 2000 levels along coastal Bangladesh by 2070 may cause the remaining tiger habitat in the Sundarbans to decline by 96 percent, pushing the total population to as few as five tigers, according to the new World Wildlife Fund-led study published this month in the peer-reviewed journal, *Climatic Change*. Studies in the past have shown that tiger populations below 25 have difficulty surviving.

Colby Loucks, WWF's deputy director of conservation science, said in a statement that tigers were capable of thriving in a wide range of habitats from the snowy forests of Russia to the tropical forests of Indonesia, but the projected sea-level rise in Bangladesh would likely outpace the tiger's ability to adapt.

"If we don't take steps to address the impacts of climate change on the Sundarbans, the only way its tigers will survive this century is with scuba gear," said Loucks, the lead author of the study.

Tigers are among the world's most threatened species, with just 3,200 estimated left in the wild following widespread poaching and deforestation. There are believed to be close to 250 tigers on the Indian side of the Sundarbans, and another 250 on the Bangladesh side.

The study is the first to assess the impact of a sea-level rise on the tigers, and its conclusions were made possible by advances in the data collected on the Sundarbans, although it does not assess the impact on the Indian side of the forest.

The Bangladesh government said it was working with several international groups to address the threats to the tigers highlighted in the study.



Aminul Islam, a Bangladeshi tiger expert, said studies suggested a sea-level rise was likely, but remained hopeful the tigers still could be saved as the deposit of silt in the delta region of the Sundarbans could compensate for the rising water.

### **Hasina inks secret deal with India: Khaleda**

DHAKA (Agencies) - Leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh Parliament and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson Khaleda Zia, in a televised Press conference on Sunday, claimed that Prime Minister Sh Hasina had “signed a secret security deal” with New Delhi during her recent trip to India, reports bdnews24.com. She said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina “brought nothing back” from her recently-concluded tour of India and said the deals signed had amounted to “a sell-out” of Bangladesh’s interests. The Opposition Leader dodged a query whether she, if elected again, would scrap the deals signed by Hasina. “I haven’t seen the agreements,” she said, prompting another question: “So what are you objecting to.” Khaleda replied: “The joint communique has it all.” “Everything Bangladesh had to offer, it handed to India on this visit,” Khaleda said at her Gulshan office, as senior party leaders, including BNP Secretary-General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, other standing and advisory committee members, sat in attendance behind her. Referring to reports of a section of the media, Khaleda also claimed the Prime Minister had also signed a security deal “in secret” with India. “She kept mum on the deal during her Press conference suggesting that the reports are correct.” She termed the joint statement released during the visit a communique of India and Awami League. “It’s not a statement of Bangladesh and India.” Referring to Hasina’s call to BNP to join parliament to discuss the outcome of the visit, Khaleda said there is no scope of discussing the matter in parliament since the deals are already signed. She said every citizen of the country is afraid of the outcome of the visit. Khaleda urged the people to unite and get prepared for “a national movement” to prevent the enforcement of the deals.

### **Redrawing the interest line**

The patriots of Bangladesh in general were anticipating the agreements between Bangladesh and India, during Hasina's visit to India from 10 to 13 January 2010, to be unfavourable to Bangladesh. However, what they actually found in the end was much worse. The 50-point Joint Communiqué was published by the Ministry of External affairs, India, on 12 January 2010, the day when the agreements were signed. The excerpts thereof, and possibly the full Communiqué, were also published in Bangladesh on 12 January 2010. These reports said it all. The patriots of Bangladesh in their utter amazement found the agreements to be absolutely a sell out of national interest and an abject surrender of sovereignty by the BAL government to the gleeful Indian hegemonists.

In exchange, Hasina was awarded a hollow and worthless Indira Gandhi 'peace prize' by these Indian hegemonists, who in 2005 awarded the same prize to Karzai, as Karzai and Hasina are

both puppets of the US-Israel-India evil axis. Also Indira's name cannot be associated with peace, without making a travesty of truth.

Save and except for the sworn lackeys of India, the victims of India-influenced media and other propaganda campaigns (like the WMD propaganda campaigns of lies by Bush) and the direct and indirect beneficiaries of Indian bankrolling and influence, the other people of Bangladesh in general are totally unhappy about, and opposed to, these agreements. They whole-heartedly denounce, reject and condemn the agreements and would look forward to the abrogation of these, whenever the right opportunity arises and, for that matter, the sooner these are annulled, the better for them.

**ESCAP to increase cooperation for socio-economic development**  
The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) yesterday assured to increase its cooperation and financial assistance for socio-economic development in Bangladesh.

The assurance came when ESCAP executive secretary Dr Noeleen Heyzer paid a courtesy call on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban here.

During the meeting, Dr Noeleen Heyzer informed the president that ESCAP was requested by the ASEAN to make the necessary programme for establishing road and railway connectivity among the countries of Asian regions.

"The connectivity would facilitate the transporting of goods and services in this region," she said.

Dr Noeleen Heyzer hoped that after formulating the programme, the ESACP would be able to find the development partners for providing financial assistance for the programme.

She also said the ESCAP is working to build energy cooperation network in this region. Appreciating the disaster management capacity of Bangladesh, Dr Noeleen Heyzer said other Asian countries could take knowledge and experience from Bangladesh in the field of maintaining the natural disasters.

The president Zillur Rahman appreciated the ESCAP for selecting Dhaka as its venue for the High Level Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries' and giving the opportunity to Bangladesh for jointly hosting this important meeting.

He sought more cooperation of ESCAP for the welfare of the people of Bangladesh. The president said the government has taken various pragmatic initiatives for over all socio-economic development.

**Bangladesh Keen To Make Penang Port Its Sister Port**

PENANG, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Bangladesh is keen to make the Penang port its sister port as part of efforts to enhance trade and relationships between the two nations, its Minister of Shipping, Shahjahan Khan, said.

He said Bangladesh, a developing country, was keen to have a greater understanding of the operations of a modern port such as the Penang port.

"We do not have any sister port and we feel that the Penang port will be ideal," he told a media briefing after a tour of the newly-completed Swettenham Pier International Cruise Terminal here Tuesday.

Shahjahan is leading a delegation on a visit to Penang port. Accompanying them were Penang Port Commission chairman Tan Cheng Liang and Penang Port Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya.

He said he would discuss the matter with Bangladesh prime minister soon.

"I hope to sign the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Penang port soon. We are impressed with the development of the port here," he said.

Meanwhile, Tan said she hoped the MOU could be signed soon as it would help enhance the development of the ports.

"If we sign the MOU with the port, especially Chittagong port, it will help strengthen the relationships between the two nations in terms of port operations," she said.

She said Penang port has made a steady progress since it was privatised in 1994 and its throughput increased by 3.1 per cent to 958,476 twenty-foot equivalent (TEUs) last year from 929,639 TEUs in 2008.

Tan said the Penang port would undertake projects including the acquisition of container equipment and increase the post-Panamax gantry cranes to 16.

She said the newly-completed international passenger ship terminal at the Swettenham Pier International Cruise Terminal was expected to attract one million passenger arrivals this year.

"With the capability of the terminal to receive bigger ships it is expected that the number of passengers staying over in Penang will increase.

"The terminal also has facilities for ferries plying between Penang and Langkawi and between Penang and Medan, Indonesia," she said.

The 15,000 sq ft terminal also has houses the Customs and Immigration offices and quarantine

area.

### **A true friend of Bangladesh**

After Indira Gandhi, if there was any Indian politician respected and admired by the people of Bangladesh, it was Jyotibabu. This was not just because he was born in Bangladesh. He was a true friend (akritrim bandhu) of the people of Bangladesh and had a deep-rooted affection for them.

Jyotibabu was a true statesman. Irrespective of whether he was a chief minister or not, the people of Bangladesh respected him and looked up to him as a father-figure. He was the chief minister of one Indian state, but we regarded him as a national leader of India.

In 1985, I had an opportunity to interview him. He told me about his relationship with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was then heading the Muslim League government in undivided Bengal. Jyotibabu was then a young Communist leader and spearheaded movements against the government. But Suhrawardy would call him and talk to him. That's how he came to know Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

People of Bangladesh can never deny the role of Indira Gandhi in the formation of the country. Jyotibabu had played an important role in those days. We have known him since 1971, when the war of liberation was being fought in what is now Bangladesh. He had a very positive outlook and supported the people of Bangladesh wholeheartedly. In those days, China supported Pakistan, which led to confusion among CPM leaders in India. Jyotibabu rose above ideological considerations and swayed the party's support to the liberation of Bangladesh. He even headed a committee formed by CPM on Bangladesh's liberation.

Our prime minister Sheikh Hasina has always had very high regards for him. The Ganga water accord would not have been possible without him. Jyotibabu had convinced the then Indian Prime Minister about Bangladesh's need and rights. The accord helped Sheikh Hasina win the elections.

Bangladesh was even made the theme of Kolkata book fair, about a decade ago. Sheikh Hasina was then the prime minister and she was invited by Jyotibabu to attend the fair. There were some protocol issues and the Indian government made some objections. Our Opposition parties here turned it into a major issue. But the Bangladeshi prime minister remained firm. Jyotibabu had invited her. How could she refuse? Every time that she had been to Kolkata, she met Jyotibabu. Whenever he fell ill, she used to call him. His death is a huge loss for the people of Bangladesh. It leaves a vacuum in not just the Communist movement, but also in progressive politics a vacuum that can never be filled.

### **Bangladesh president rejects Mujib killers' mercy petitions**

Dhaka, Jan 19 (IANS) Bangladesh President Zillur Rahman has rejected the mercy petitions

of three of the five former army officers who were sentenced to death for the killing of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. Mohammed Shafiul Alam, secretary to the president, told bdnews24.com: "There is nothing more to do here. The petition has been refused and was sent to the home ministry on Sunday."

The government told the Supreme Court Tuesday that the execution of all five former army officers who were awarded death sentences has been stayed till the apex court rules on their review petitions.

The court said it would hear the five petitions Jan 24.

Two of the five, Syed Farooq Rahman and Mohiuddin Ahmed, filed their petitions Tuesday, while three others - Bazlul Huda, A.K.M. Mohiuddin Ahmed and Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan - had done so earlier this month.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were killed in a putsch led by serving and former army officers Aug 15, 1975.

On Nov 19 last year, the apex court confirmed death sentences to a dozen ex-army personnel, including the five who have been detained.

Of the seven others, one died and six are on the run. The government has moved the Interpol and the governments in the US, Canada, Libya and Pakistan to get their custody.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is Mujibur Rahman's daughter, has ignored a plea by Amnesty International, a US-based human rights watchdog that the death sentences be converted into life imprisonment.

### **The Cautious Handling of Secularism in Bangladesh**

Secularism was one of the four pillars on which the independent Bangladesh was founded after its liberation from Pakistan in 1971. But this pillar crumbled after the murder of the founder president of Bangladesh, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975.

When Zia-ur-Rahman became president, he introduced the Fifth Amendment in the constitution of Bangladesh. This amendment legitimised all governments that had been in power following the coup of August 15, 1975, until April 9, 1979, including the late President Zia-ur-Rehman's ascension to the presidency. It also legitimised "Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim" in the preamble of the country's Constitution, and ratified over a hundred military proclamations and orders. Subsequently, when General Ershad became president he brought in Eighth Amendment to the constitution and declared Islam as state religion.

The result of these amendments was change in the nature of polity of Bangladesh. It led to formation of parties in the name of Islam. It helped top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami who were seen as war criminals in Bangladesh to return from Pakistan. All this led to massive rise in extremism in Bangladesh.

The growing Islamisation of polity in Bangladesh made Awami League suffer greatly during the rule of four-party alliance. There were several attempts on the life of party Chief Shaikh Hasina. In fact, in one such attack on 21 August 2004, Shaikh Hasina barely survived, but lost her 23 party members including Ivy Rahman. Another top party leader Shah AMS Kibria was also murdered by the Islamist forces in a grenade attack at a rally in Habiganj on January 27, 2005. The attacks on Awami League leaders continued during the whole tenure of four-party alliance.

This sinister development in Bangladesh made very difficult for other political forces to survive. It also forced Awami League to chart a different course, and on eve of December 2008 election, party clearly decided to shun Islamist forces.

The landslide victory of Awami League in Bangladesh elections created hope of revival of the 1972 constitution. But before the government could do anything the mutiny in paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) happened. Once the government got control over the situation it started acting on promises it made during the electioneering.

During the electioneering Awami League had promised that it would act against the war criminals. It also promised to stop misuse of religion in politics. The party has now an opportunity to fulfill this promise after the Bangladesh Supreme Court on January 3, 2010 lifted a four-year stay on the “abuse of religion for political purposes.” The apex court of Bangladesh has also endorsed the August 29, 2005 judgment of a three-judge Bench led by Justice ABM Khairul Haque which declared the Fifth Amendment to the country’s Constitution as “void ab initio and illegal”. This is a significant development in a country where Islamists have been threatening to establish their sway.

At the same time, however, it is also important to note that the government has decided to keep the words “Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-Ar-Rahim” in the preamble to the constitution and declaration of Islam as state religion. According to the Bangladesh prime minister Shaikh Hasina these things have been kept as they reflect the beliefs of the people. She also told her alliance leaders that they must accept the reality. Shaikh Hasina however was of the view that the spirit of the constitution would be restored with the High Courts verdict.

This cautious return towards secularism in Bangladesh shows the political realism of the Awami League. The party now knows that in the last several decades Islamist tendencies has grown in a section of people in Bangladesh which is not going to go away overnight. Though the party sometime back had announced certain measures to deradicalise the population, this strategy has still not been implemented. The arch rivals of Awami League always allege that Islam would be in danger if Awami League comes to power. Though there is no threat to Islam per-se in Bangladesh as ninety percent of its population is Muslim, still Awami League knows that turning the clock back is not going to be easy. Hence it has made cautious move to restore secularism while leaving Islam as state religion of Bangladesh.

### **Bangladesh breathes in hope**

MONTREAL - Bangladesh, long known in the West as an "international basket case", is doing its best to consign to history the dismal label so firmly attached to it by US diplomat Henry Kissinger. The economy is humming and the stock market surging. Now the government is being urged to pursue reforms while the opportunity lasts.

The Dhaka Stock Exchange General Index (DGEN) has doubled in the past nine months, including a phenomenal 25% one-day jump in mid-November. It has risen 10% in

just the last three weeks and is now on the verge of closing above the 5,000 mark, which it crossed briefly earlier this week.

This is a remarkable change in fortunes for the country since Kissinger, then running the US State Department, expressed

his <http://a.tribalfusion.com/h.click/aymNnAoAMBncjspHUC3aZbe3Hyt3mrIprMJYGMQ1cQ10VrxpTJV5FYSWbBZcWAvWPq3YScUmQHby1WfoVAUp4cMUYbZbZbVmqw4mv9RmMF2WQr0dBLpdey5mvV5Gj7Vcv9WVF6SPvOTtUPWmewwAj5p7PWsQF13d3NgZa8ZaXI/http://mywebface.mywebsearch.com/index.jhtml?partner=GRxm059>

views soon after Bangladesh won its independence from Pakistan in 1971. An important force for good since then has been the Grameen Bank's extension of microcredit, the idea for which Muhammad Yunus received the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

The country's per-capita inflation-adjusted gross domestic product (GDP) has more than doubled in the past 35 years, according to the World Bank, and its poverty rate fallen by 20% in the last two decades. Urbanization, especially around the capital Dhaka, has driven this growth.

The UN still classifies it as a "least developed country" (LDC), but the decline in the budget deficit, high rates of export and import growth, and increasing foreign currency reserves earned Bangladesh plaudits in a recent country review paper for the UN's Brussels Program of Action for the LDCs. The report encouraged the government to continue to pursue attempts to reform the budgetary system, financial institutions, and the revenue sector.

The drive to pursue any such reforms may be weakened by an economy faced with unpleasant headwinds as the global economic crisis continues to make its impact felt.

Three-quarters of the country's export earnings are pulled in by the garment industry, backed by foreign direct

investment (FDI). This has been hard hit by a decline in demand as a result of the global financial crisis.

FDI, which has been encouraged through the establishment of a handful of Export Processing Zones, where foreign investors receive incentives for opening factories, also took a hit last year and is expected to continue to slow in 2010. Remittances from abroad, which contribute significantly to foreign exchange, also face a slowdown as Bangladeshi workers overseas struggle to keep jobs and maintain pay levels.

As is the case in some East Asian countries, the lack of integration of local financial and banking institutions with the worldwide industry shielded Bangladesh somewhat from being swept up in the economic maelstrom of the global crisis. The possibilities of increased prices for food and fuel are now the country's major macroeconomic challenges.

The Bangladesh Bank has followed a monetary policy intended to control inflation while increasing capital investment. While increasing credit to the private sector, however, it is restricting credit to government. The bank anticipates that both food and non-food inflation in Bangladesh will continue over coming months. Its target figure is 6.5%. Bank governor Atiur Rahman says there are dangers of speculative bubbles, as real productive opportunities may lag behind available investment capital. Those worries seem so far not have dragged on the stock market.

It was the landslide election of a political alliance led by the Bangladesh Awami League at the end of December 2008 (following a provisional military government that postponed the planned January 2007 elections) and the institutionalization of a relatively stable democracy that created the political preconditions for the present exceptional, near-parabolic rise in the stock market.

The banking sector remains the market bellwether, and the country's largest mobile telephone operator, Grameenphone, represents 17% of total market



capitalization. Other significant sectors include pharmaceuticals and energy, notably gas.

There had been some hope, in the middle of the last decade, that a Bangladesh-India-Myanmar dispute over Bay of Bengal maritime boundaries might be resolved in conjunction with development of an east-to-west gas pipeline extending to Kolkata.

The Bangladeshi government, which would have garnered transit fees from the project, was however the only one not to sign off on the final proposal. Since then, Myanmar has decided to send its gas by pipeline to China.

There has been so much natural gas development in Bangladesh that the Asian Development Bank estimates that overdependence on gas for power generation and in industrial and residential sectors in fact represents a threat to the country's energy security. At some time in the future, the government will have to rethink its pricing structure, which makes gas available to users at a minimal price. Electricity demand regularly outstrips supply.

If the country is able to overcome transparency issues and continue cooperation with its South Asian neighbors (as a recent summit meeting with India indicates will happen), then the country's economic prognosis is far more positive than its earlier reputation.

Bangladesh is considered a "frontier market" under the FTSE classification, although not by MSCI. Yet Goldman Sachs includes it among the "Next Eleven" (N-11) that it judges have the potential to become one of the world's largest economies in the present century, a category separate from the BRICs - the fast-growing developing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China.

#### **In Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina settles scores**

FULLY 35 years after the brutal crime, five former Bangladesh army officers will be executed in the coming days for murdering an increasingly dictatorial Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, generally held to be Bangladesh's founding father. They also killed all his family bar two daughters, who were out of the country. Few people expected President Zillur Rahman to heed pleas for clemency, since he is close to the current prime minister, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the eldest of those two daughters and heir to the Awami League, Mujib's political movement.

The time taken for judgment to be reached, and the circumstances of it doing so now, are as much as anything a reflection of how mired in dynastic rivalry Bangladesh's politics remains. After the Awami League was turned out of power following Mujib's death, successive governments thwarted attempts to have his killers stand trial. Sheikh Hasina's implacable foe, Khaleda Zia (whose husband and president, General Ziaur Rahman, was also assassinated by army officers in 1981), used her latest stint as prime minister from 2001-06 to block Sheikh Hasina's wish for vengeance. Only when the Awami League returned to power in 2008 for the first time in almost a decade did the trials make progress.

Once these officers have met the firing squad, Sheikh Hasina aims to pursue much more contentious trials, those the Awami League accuses of war crimes in Bangladesh's war of secession from Pakistan in 1971, a dark period in which 3m may have died. In hunting down those whose hands were bloodied in opposing Bangladesh's independence, Sheikh Hasina is conveniently hounding her dynasty's perceived enemies. For instance, the Awami League intends to prosecute almost the entire leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's biggest Islamic party.

What of Sheikh Hasina's bitterest foe, Mrs Zia? The supreme court is expected any day to strike down a constitutional amendment that legitimised all military governments after Mujib's assassination, including that of General Zia. Mrs Zia and her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are livid. (Religious parties may also be deemed unconstitutional.)

Mrs Zia must fear that she is the last representative of the political dynasty she heads. Both her sons face numerous charges of corruption. The eldest, Tarique Rahman, is for many Bangladeshis the symbol of all that was wrong with the BNP's last turn in power, kleptocratic and vindictive in equal measure. A year into the Awami League's rule, the BNP's slogan, still visible on Dhaka's wall, sounds antique. It goes: "Khaleda Zia is our leader. Ziaur Rahman is our philosophy. Tarique Rahman is our future."

But eliminating enemies does not mean the future belongs to Sheikh Hasina, whose rapprochement with India is also meeting criticism. Marginalising the opposition generates risks that she seems inadequately to appreciate. In the coming months, the opposition may take to the streets in crippling protests. Islamist violence may climb. And then the military, which for now has no taste at all for political duties, may stir in its barracks.

## **Pakistan hands over SAARC Chamber stewardship to Bangladesh**

<http://www>

DHAKA, Jan 18 (APP): Bangladesh's apex trade-body chief Annisul Huq has taken over as president of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a function attended by regional trade leaders in Dhaka. The outgoing president of the SAARC CCI, Tariq

Sayeed of Pakistan, formally handed over charge to his newly elected successor, Annis, also the incumbent president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Abdul Hamid Advocate, Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith and MPs, among others, attended the handover ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister Muhith urged the regional trade leaders to work together for strengthening the economy in the South Asian region. He said the people of the subcontinent are more friendly and close and they believe in a similar lifestyle and food habits. Those countries can enhance their economy through exchanging trades.

### **Bangladesh won't give corridor to India: FM**

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni on Thursday turned down the allegation of offering corridor to India, in turn accusing opposition BNP of making false and motivated allegations.

Bangladesh has not allowed corridor to India and will not do so in future, the minister said at a roundtable on "Bangladesh-India Summit" at the Jatiya Press Club.

Referring to BNP's allegation that the government sold the country, the foreign minister said, "A country cannot be sold, but such stories have been being concocted since the regime of Ayub Khan."

She said the BNP was trying to stoke up irrational debates on corridor, transit and transshipment. "This is not the way things are dealt politically since politics is not so mean," Dipu Moni added.

She said former president Ziaur Rahman first signed deal to give transit facilities to India in 1980. In 1978 Joint Rivers Commission decided to study impact assessment on controlling flood and potential benefits of dam on Tipaimukh River.

There was no mention of adverse effects of the dam on Bangladesh, she said.

"Was the transit deal signed to cheat people" Dipu Moni posed a question, saying that in the age of connectivity, Bangladesh cannot be isolated.

Daily Bhorer Kagoj organised the roundtable.

### **UPDATE 1-Bangladesh aims to buy 400,000 T of wheat -trade**

SINGAPORE, Jan 20 (Reuters) - Bangladesh is likely to buy 400,000 tonnes of wheat for April-May shipment, mainly from the Black Sea region, traders said on Wednesday.

"They have not bought much in the last few months, so we expect good demand in the coming months," the head of grains business at a global trading house told Reuters at a seminar organised by the Centre for Management Technology in Singapore.

Typically, Bangladesh imports slow down from April onwards as more domestic supplies become available.

Another trader said the country's wheat imports were likely to rise to around 2.6 million to 2.8 million tonnes in the year to June compared with 2.2 to 2.3 million bought a year ago as lower global prices have encouraged purchases.

"They will be buying more this year because consumption is going up and local production is stagnant," said another trader.

Traders declined to be identified because company policy bars them from talking to the media.

Bangladesh's state grains buyer has issued a new international tender to purchase 100,000 tonnes of wheat from any origin worldwide. The tender deadline is Feb. 9 and bids must remain valid up to March 2.

Bangladesh, which consumes rice as a staple, produces about one million tonnes of wheat annually. It also produces around 30 million tonnes of rice a year, nearly sufficient to feed its almost 150 million people. (Reporting by Naveen Thukral; Editing by Clarence Fernandez)

#### **Air Chief on goodwill visit to Bangladesh**

New Delhi, January 19, 2010 Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal P V Naik is on a goodwill visit to Bangladesh during which he will hold talks to improve bilateral relations, promote defence ties and outline further areas of defence cooperation.

The discussions will also aim to resolve pending issues through dialogue and understanding, an official press release said.

Air Chief Marshal Naik met Bangladesh President Zillur Rahman on January 17 and will meet Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow.

He has also met the three Service Chiefs of the Armed Forces of Bangladesh and will have detailed interactions with Air Marshal S M Ziaur Rahman, Chief of Air Staff of Bangladesh.

Air Chief Marshal Naik will also visit the National Defence College, Defence Services Command & Staff College, Mirpur, the Naval Headquarters and the Army Headquarters in Bangladesh during the trip, the release added.

#### **BNP entered into deal with India but deceived Delhi: Dipu Moni**

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni Thursday said the past BNP government "deceived" Delhi as she claimed they had entered into a deal with India on transit issue but then backtracked on the agreement, reports UNB.

"During 1980 and 2006, the BNP government signed agreement with India on transit issue but they didn't abide by it," she told a roundtable on "Prime Minister's Visit to India" at the National Press Club, amid a storm kicked up by opposition BNP over the PM's Delhi trip and transit accord. The discussion was organised by daily Bhorer Kagaj.

The foreign minister strongly defended the Dhaka-Delhi accords and expressed their

government's determination to push those through at all events.

She warned that the people would give the fit reply if they (BNP) try to resist the implementation of the joint communiqué issued after the talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

"Confusion has been created among the people with some words like corridor, transit and transshipment, but we did not give anybody the corridor," the foreign minister told her audience.

Describing the visit as great achievement for the signing of three deals which would impact not only on Bangladesh but the entire South Asian region, Dipu Moni said the government signed the agreements with India in line with the Awami League's election manifesto.

### **LDCs ask developed world to meet trade commitments**

DHAKA (Reuters) - Least developed countries of the Asia and Pacific region renewed their demand on Wednesday that developed nations fulfil commitments to allow duty-free market access along with other trade-related assistance.

"They must honour their promises to help least developed countries (LDCs) to overcome the curse of unending poverty," said Noeleen Heyzer, a U.N. under-secretary and executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

"The representatives literally said enough is enough. A sense of urgency is there to attain time-bound development targets," Noeleen told reporters on Wednesday at the end of a 3-day conference of the LDCs in the Bangladesh capital.

The Dhaka meeting was jointly organised by the government of Bangladesh and ESCAP.

The representatives want disbursement of additional resources pledged by the developed countries and for official development assistance to be aligned with LDC national development priorities.

The Dhaka meeting aimed at making preparations for the 4th UN conference on LDCs scheduled for Istanbul next year.

"The Dhaka outcome document will be endorsed at the ministerial level meeting of the UN ESCAP in South Korea in June this year," said M Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Bangladesh's secretary of the economic relations division.

Bangladesh targets trade-oriented services, investment from India

Dhaka wants 'ad hoc' Teesta deal

FE Report

Bangladesh has targeted trade-oriented services and investment from India as narrowing down huge trade deficit between the two neighbours through exports will be tough, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said Wednesday.

"The prime minister held meetings with Indian businessmen during her latest visit to New Delhi. We will use every possible way to minimise the deficit," she said.

The minister was speaking at a roundtable on 'State Visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India' at the conference hall of the Independent in the capital.

The Independent and the Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies jointly organised the event with Mahbubul Alam, former caretaker government adviser, in the chair.

Former foreign minister Anisul Islam Mahmud, former foreign adviser Reaz Rahman, former caretaker government adviser Shafi Sami and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury also spoke.

Dr Dipu Moni said the region lags coordinated efforts when it comes to resolving outstanding issues between countries like those of European Union.

"We are not giving corridor to India or leasing our Chittagong and Mongla ports to them. We have not signed agreements or communiqué against our election manifesto."

She said Bangladesh is using the ports and can have scope to broaden the uses of them.

The foreign minister said the two countries are negotiating on solving the issue of maritime boundary. "We have to solve the problem to explore and use the resources the Bay can offer."

She reiterated her government's stance on continuing arbitration process in the international court while trying to convince India to demarcate maritime boundary.

"Two processes will continue at the same time. We will try to solve the problem bilaterally. If it does not work then we will of course have the scope to settle it at the United Nations," she said.

The minister said the joint boundary working groups have been working on the issue. "We hope we will be able to reach a solution very soon."

On mountains of trade deficit with India, Dr Moni said: "Like India, we have also large amount of trade deficit with China."

"We cannot reduce this deficit through only exports. We intend to increase trade-oriented services and we also want investment."

On border killings, she said: "India has told us during the tour that they would seriously look into the issue and take steps accordingly."

The minister also said the Tin Bigha corridor issue would soon be solved.

Discussant Shafi Sami said various unresolved disputes cast a shadow on the friendly relations between the two countries and held them back from harnessing economic development.

bdnews24.com adds: Bangladesh wants to sign an "ad hoc" deal with India on Teesta water sharing immediately after a Joint River Commission meeting slated for March, the foreign minister said Wednesday.

"The government wants to sign an ad hoc deal with India after the ministerial meeting of the JRC in March," Dipu Moni said.

### **Two killed in Sri Lankan election violence**

Sri Lanka's President has ordered a security crackdown after two people were killed and several injured in growing violence ahead of next week's presidential election.

Mahinda Rajapakse has ordered increased security as violence escalates ahead of the election.

Police and military forces are on alert across Sri Lanka, amid fears of more bloodshed in the hard-fought campaign.

A supporter of Opposition candidate General Sarath Fonseca was shot dead as he attempted to put up election posters in the north-western town of Wariapola.

Several hours later a ruling party supporter was killed and six others were injured in a bomb attack on a campaign office in a nearby village.

Riot police fired tear gas to disperse rallies in several other parts of the country.

### **Sri Lankan refugees to be resettled while more wait**

The last of a group of 78 Sri Lankan asylum seekers involved in a stand-off on an Australian customs ship have now left Indonesia.

The refugees were intercepted in Indonesian waters last year as they tried to reach Australia.

They are now to be resettled in Australia and the Philippines.

The BBC's Karishma Vaswani reports, from the capital Jakarta.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8473894.stm>

### **War refugees struggle to rebuild in Sri Lanka**

KILINOCHCHI, Sri Lanka -- The vast rice fields of Kilinochchi are overgrown with shrubs. The herds of cattle and goats have disappeared. The tractors and motorcycles are gone. Buildings and homes have been bombed into heaps of concrete rubble.

War refugees have found little left of their old lives as they trickle back to their villages in the former Tamil Tiger stronghold eight months after Sri Lankan forces crushed the rebel group.

"We are happy to be back but confused about what to do next," Subramaniam Muthurasu, 66, said. "We have to start farming, but we don't have the resources. We stand empty-handed."

Muthurasu, who once grew rice and tended cattle in the village of Karaichchi, is desperate to find a way to make money now that he has the extra responsibility of taking care of his daughter, widowed by the war, and her five children.

The government says the returnees are getting food rations and money to help them out, but conceded it was not enough.

"You should understand that this is a poor country, you will not be able to give everything at one go," said Maj. Gen. Kamal Gunaratne, the military official in charge of the hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians displaced by the fighting.

Journalists from The Associated Press were granted rare permission to visit the former battlefield just weeks before a hard-fought presidential election pitting President Mahinda Rajapaksa against former army chief Gen. Sarath Fonseka. Both men, considered war heroes by the Sinhalese majority, are heavily courting the Tamil vote with promises of aid to the war-wracked minority as it tries to rebuild from the conflict.

For more than a quarter-century, this Indian Ocean island nation was consumed by the conflict between the Sinhalese-dominated government and the ethnic Tamil separatists who were fighting for an independent state in the jungles of the north.

The rebels controlled a vast swath of the area, set up a de facto state with police, courts and banks, and used Kilinochchi as their administrative capital.

The economy of the rebel-held region had long been stifled by the war, with a government blockade keeping out everything from gasoline to cement. But agriculture thrived and some entrepreneurs managed to run shops and small industries producing soap and cologne.

All that disappeared last January when government forces overran the area, sending the insurgents and the residents fleeing deeper into rebel territory. Some civilians managed to grab their valuables and drive off with their motorbikes, but were eventually forced to abandon everything as the offensive swept over them. Those with money in rebel banks saw their savings instantly disappear.



According to U.N. documents, more than 7,000 civilians were killed in the final months of the fighting. About 300,000 Tamils were forced into government detention camps, awaiting government permission to return to their homes.

### **Not all Sri Lankan refugees 'deserving'**

SRI Lankan's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama says his Government wants access to asylum seekers who leave his country illegally for countries such as Australia because they may have been involved in serious crimes including terrorism.

He has also urged the United Nations not to rush the process of assessing refugee status for Sri Lankan asylum seekers.

His comments come less than a fortnight after four Sri Lankan Tamils picked up at sea by the Oceanic Viking and granted refugee status by the UN were denied visas to Australia because ASIO deemed them a security threat.

"We want access to asylum seekers when they have been detained and apprehended on other's soil, that's how we look at it," Mr Bogollagama told *The Age*. "Those who have violated the laws of Sri Lanka and tried to migrate through illegal channels, that undermines our goodwill and all our efforts and our security."

Refugee Council of Australia president John Gibson said the proposal was absurd. "It is totally contrary to the spirit and principles underlying the Refugee Convention to grant access to officials from a would-be persecuting state," he said. "The UNHCR has clearly stated this fundamental position."

Since the end of the 26-year civil war between Tamil Tiger rebels and the Sri Lankan army last May there has been a sharp rise in the number of Tamil asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australian waters.

Mr Bogollagama called for a "considered approach" to the assessment of such asylum claims. "The UN should not rush into declaring asylum seekers as deserving asylum. "That also compromises our position as a sovereign state to investigate some of these people wanted in terms of local crime and wanted for crimes in Sri Lanka."

Australia cannot deport the four considered a security threat to Sri Lanka because it would breach the UN Refugee Convention.

Mr Bogollagama would not say if his Government helped ASIO's investigation of those on board the Oceanic Viking.

The Sri Lankan and Australian governments were "equally concerned" about asylum seekers leaving by boat, Mr Bogollagama said.

"We don't want anyone to leave Sri Lanka and seek asylum in another country," he said.

"I maintain the position that there is no need for anyone to seek out of Sri Lanka, out of a country where there is democracy, normalcy, rule of law and no discrimination."

Last November Foreign Minister Stephen Smith and Australia's special envoy to Sri Lanka, John McCarthy, met officials including Mr Bogollagama in Colombo to discuss ways to reduce the number of asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australia. "We will strengthen our apparatus in Sri Lanka to prevent anyone leaving this country illegally in the first place," he said.

Sri Lanka will hold presidential elections next Tuesday with the incumbent, Mahinda Rajapaksa, facing a strong challenge from former army chief, Sarath Fonseka.

However, Mr Bogollagama said he did not believe Sri Lanka's policies on asylum seekers would change, whatever the result.

### **Hutchison Telecom: No Plans To Sell Sri Lankan Operation**

HONG KONG (Dow Jones)--Hutchison Telecommunications International Ltd. (HTX) said Monday it doesn't plan to sell its operations in Sri Lanka.

The telecom company made the comment after speculation in the market rose that once Hutchison Telecom's parent, Hutchison Whampoa Ltd. (0013.HK), privatizes the telecom unit, it will likely sell off unprofitable assets including those in Sri Lanka.

"There is no plan to sell any of our operations, other than Thailand," a spokeswoman for Hutchison Telecom told Dow Jones Newswires.

Earlier this month, billionaire Li Ka-shing's Hutchison Whampoa offered to take its Hutchison Telecom unit private in a HK\$4.23-billion (US\$545 million) cash deal that will give major shareholders more control over how to restructure unprofitable telecom assets.

### **Jyoti Basu always held high banner of socialism - CPSL**

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka expresses its profound sorrow on the passing away of Comrade Jyoti Basu, the veteran leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and a much respected leader of the international communist movement.

Recognized as a national leader of India, he was once invited to become the Prime Minister of India, which invitation he faithfully declined to accept on the advice of his party, states Communist Party of Sri Lanka Chairman Raja Collure in a condolence message. The message adds:

We devoted 70 years of his 95 years to the cause of socialism, democracy and the welfare of the working people.

He joined the Communist Party of India on his return from Great Britain after completing his studies where he came into contact with the leader of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka the late Pieter Keuneman among others from the colonies.

It was there that both of them cut their teeth as future Communist leaders whilst engaging in struggles for the freedom of their respective countries from colonial rule.

A Chief Minister of West Bengal for a record and continuous period of 23 years Jyoti Basu showed how Communists could win power in major representative democratic institutions and carry out far-reaching reforms to advance the interests of the working people.

His role in carrying out land reforms and in instituting the panchayati system providing a say to poor peasants were landmark achievements. He never allowed the police to be used against workers' and peasants' struggles. Jyoti Basu steadfastly upheld secular values and ensured communal harmony in his State.

When there were anti-Sikh violence in the aftermath of Indira Ghandi's assassination (1984) and after the demolition of Badri Masjid (1992) in other parts of India the occurrence of similar violence was prevented in West Bengal.

"In the service of the working people of India Jyoti Basu spent three and half years in prison and two years in the underground. He never lost faith in socialism despite set backs socialism suffered with the fall of the Soviet Union.

"Our party has always respected him as an outstanding leader of the CPI (M) who creatively applied the teachings of Marxism and held high the banner of Socialism.

The CPSL salutes the memory of Jyoti Basu who was a great Communist and conveys its heartfelt condolences to the members of his family and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who has lost one of its foremost leaders.

## **UN Concerns**

### **UN chief worried by growing violence ahead of Sri Lanka polls**

UNITED NATIONS, January 20, 2010 (AFP) - UN chief Ban Ki-moon is alarmed by the growing violence in Sri Lanka, including the reported slaying of political activists, ahead of the upcoming presidential elections, his spokesman said Wednesday.

"The Secretary General is concerned about the growing violence in the lead-up to the presidential election in Sri Lanka, including the reported killing of political activists," Martin Nesirky said in a statement.

Ban urged all Sri Lanka parties and their supporters "to show restraint and refrain from violence, to adhere to the electoral laws and rules, and to avoid provocative acts throughout the election period and its aftermath."

He stressed that the peaceful conduct of the election is of the "highest importance for long term peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka."

Sri Lanka's independent election Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake was quoted as saying Wednesday that he had stopped issuing directives to the police and other government authorities who disregarded his orders for conducting a free and fair election.

"Dissanayake said he would not issue any more directions to the police because his directions have been ignored in the run-up to the January 26 presidential election," the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) said.

The CPA, whose affiliate the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence has access to the elections commission, said Dissanayake told party representatives that he had become helpless.

Police have reported at least four campaign-related deaths and have also received complaints of more than 700 poll-related incidents of violence across the island.

## **Nepal**

### **Indian Army chief made honorary general of Nepal Army Friday, January 22, 2010, 5:5**

Kathmandu, Jan 22 (ANI): Indian Army Chief, General Deepak Kapoor, was decorated with the honorary rank of General of the Nepal Army by President Ram Baran Yadav here on Thursday. The President presented the Nepal General's ceremonial sword, peak cap and insignia to General Kapoor.

General Kapoor was conferred the honorary title of General of the Nepal Army upholding a six-decade long tradition between the Indian and Nepali Armies.

Nepal's Defence Minister Bidhya Bhandari, Nepal's Army Chief General Chhatraman Singh Gurung and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

"I hope that this visit will help resume the military cooperation. Indian Army Chief said during the meeting that India is bound to extend any military assistance to Nepal," said Bhandari.

General Kapoor, who is on his four-day goodwill visit, also called on Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Earlier, Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil had conferred the honorary rank of General

of the Indian Army on Nepal's chief of army staff, General Gurung during the latter's visit to New Delhi. (ANI)

<http://news.oneindia.in/2010/01/22/indianarmy-chief-made-honorary-general-of-nepalarmy.html>

U.N. Nepal mission to leave by mid-May  
UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - The Security Council on Thursday extended the mandate of the U.N. mission in Nepal until May so it can finish monitoring the Himalayan state's peace process, but said it should prepare to then leave.

Under a 2006 deal that ended a decade-long civil war between Nepal's government and Maoist rebels, the United Nations has supervised compliance by the former combatants with an agreement on their arms and armies.

The 250-person U.N. mission, known as UNMIN, has arms monitors based at camps for former Maoist fighters where weapons are stored and at a weapons storage site in a Nepal army barracks.

The Security Council had hoped to wind up UNMIN this month but a political crisis since the Maoists quit the government last May in a dispute over their attempt to fire the country's army chief delayed the discharge of fighters from the camps.

The discharge got under way earlier this month when former Maoist child soldiers began to leave, in a move considered crucial for peace in Nepal, which is trying to write a new constitution after abolishing the monarchy in 2008.

Thursday's council resolution extended UNMIN's mandate until May 15, as requested by the Nepalese government.

It said that "working with the parties, UNMIN should make the necessary arrangements with the government of Nepal for its withdrawal, including handing over any residual monitoring responsibilities" by May 15.

The next step in emptying the U.N.-monitored camps around the country is the integration and rehabilitation of more than 19,000 adult Maoist ex-combatants still in them.

The Security Council welcomed a recent understanding between the Nepalese government and the Maoists on having a firm schedule to do that by mid-May. The new constitution is meant to be promulgated by May 28.

UN Security Council extends mandate of mission in Nepal

*United Nations.* The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously agreed to extend the tenure of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) by another six months under the

request of the Nepali prime minister, Xinhua News Agency informed. This is the third six-month extension of UNMIN's term since it came for a one-year period in January 2007. The UN mission, which supports the peace process in Nepal, would have expired Jan. 23. According to the UN Secretary-general's most recent report on Nepal, the "peace process remained largely stalled." No agreement has been reached by the major political parties on issues such as the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist army, democratization of the Nepal Army and presidential authority, the report said. The mandate also includes monitoring the arms of the Nepal Army and the Communist Party of Nepal, which is now known as the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M).

Nepal and India agree to tackle cross-border crime

KATHMANDU: Nepal and India said on Sunday they had agreed to tackle cross-border terrorism and organised crime together as Indian Foreign Minister SM Krishna wrapped up a three-day visit to the Himalayan nation.

Krishna and Nepalese counterpart Sujata Koirala discussed security concerns and agreed that terrorism and extremism were a threat to both countries. "They agreed to cooperate closely to end this menace," said a joint statement issued at the end of the Indian minister's visit to Nepal. The two ministers also discussed ways to "enhance bilateral security cooperation to control cross border crimes such as smuggling of fake Indian currency, human trafficking and arms smuggling". Nepal and India share a 1,700-kilometre porous border and there have been concerns over the lack of proper security arrangements between the two nations. Rights groups say more than 10,000 women are trafficked from Nepal into India every year where they become sex workers. Krishna also raised concern about the business environment in Nepal affecting Indian investment and joint ventures and urged the Nepal government to address the issue "urgently and effectively".

Nepalese police say kidnappers are targeting the urban middle classes, who have access to money but lack the political connections of the super-rich. The country's affluent Marwari community, an ethnic group with its origins in neighbouring India that is famous for its business and trade links, has become a prime target of the criminal gangs. afp

Security Council extends mandate of UN mission in Nepal by four months

21 January 2010 – The Security Council voted today to extend the United Nations political mission in Nepal (UNMIN) by nearly four months amid heightened tensions in the Asian country ahead of the issuing of a new constitution.

In a resolution adopted unanimously, Council members agreed to extend UNMIN through 15 May, two weeks before the new constitution is due to be promulgated.

But the resolution also said the mission should continue working with the Government on making arrangements to withdraw as it winds down and completes its mandate.

UNMIN was set up at the request of the Government in 2007 to monitor the management of arms and armed personnel of the former Royal Nepal Army and its foe, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M). The two sides signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006, bringing an end to a conflict which claimed some 3,000 lives.

Council members today acknowledged “the strong desire of the Nepalese people for peace and the restoration of democracy and the importance in this respect of the implementation” of the CPA.

The 15-member body welcomed the creation of a high-level political mechanism working to ensure the promulgation of a constitution by 28 May, as well as the action plan signed last year by the UN, the Government and UCPN-M on releasing child soldiers.

With the holding of successful elections for the Constituent Assembly in May 2008, UNMIN has already accomplished some elements of its mandate.

Further, the Council said in today’s resolution, both phases of the verification process have concluded in line with UNMIN’s mandate and with the provisions of the CPA.

It called on all parties to “take full advantage of the expertise and readiness” of UNMIN before 15 May, which is also the deadline for the Government and UCPN-M to agree on a timetable for the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army personnel.

The resolution urged “all political parties in Nepal to expedite the peace process, and to work together in a spirit of cooperation, consensus and compromise in order to continue the transition to a durable long-term solution to enable the country to move to a peaceful, democratic and more prosperous future.”

Last week, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s top envoy to the country stressed that although Nepal’s four-year-old peace process remains fragile and concerns that it could derail are real, the recent urgency shown by the parties in focusing on peace-related issues gives some grounds for hope.

“Although the hour is late, the recent actions by the Government and the parties, if followed through with vigour, have the potential to usher in constructive actions for the next stage of Nepal’s democratic transition,” Special Representative Karin Landgren told the Security Council.

In a report released earlier this month, Mr. Ban warned that Nepal’s peace process remained largely stalled and the major disagreements “remain unresolved, increasing the risk of its collapse.”

The country is entering a “crucial period” leading up to the promulgation of the new constitution, he wrote.

“While it is my desire to see UNMIN complete its mandated tasks and end its presence as soon as possible... withdrawing the Mission at this particular time of heightened tension would not be the wisest course,” the Secretary-General wrote, calling for an extension of the mission’s mandate.

US asks Nepal to speed up peace process

The United States on Wednesday urged Nepal's rival political leaders to push forward a peace process that ended a bloody communist insurgency but has hit roadblocks that sparked protests and unrest.

A visiting senior U.S. diplomat, who met Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and former Maoist rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also called for Nepal to investigate human rights violations. Some 13,000 people died during the 10-year insurgency and hundreds remain unaccounted for.

The peace process that began in 2006 led the Maoists to abandon their decade-long armed revolt and join mainstream politics, but tensions have grown in the past year, principally over the fate of thousands of former Maoist fighters still confined in U.N.-monitored camps.

Little progress has been made in rewriting the constitution, which was scheduled to be completed by May 2010.

"The U.S. is urging timely progress in the peace process. We believe all parties need to be flexible. There will be need for compromises to successfully reach agreement on all the issues by the deadline set of May," Patrick Moon, U.S. principal deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, told reporters in Katmandu after meeting political leaders.

"I also urged action on human rights issues," Moon said, referring to allegations of abuses during the insurgency by both the army and Maoists. The U.S. believes the allegations should be investigated, he said.

The Maoists won national elections in 2008, but their government resigned last year



amid a dispute with the Nepalese president over Dahal's attempted sacking of the army chief for refusing to enroll former rebel fighters into the military as required under a U.N.-brokered agreement. The Maoists are now urging the president to disband the current coalition government and replace it with a national one that includes their party.

Last month, Dahal's Communist Party of Nepal ended protests that had disrupted Parliament for a year and brought government work to a standstill but reiterated their threat to paralyze the Himalayan nation with an indefinite general strike starting later this month unless their demands are met.

### Nepal hands over detained Tibetans to UN agency

Tibetans arrested over the weekend for crossing illegally into Nepal have been handed over to the United Nations' refugee agency, not returned to China, an official said Monday.

Hundreds of Tibetans journey every year through the treacherous mountains in Nepal en route to Dharmasala in India, where Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, lives in exile.

The majority of them make the journey on foot through mountain trails and jungles without being found by the police. However, a few of them are arrested by the Nepalese police.

Nepal generally does not deport those found, but there were reports that the eight men and two women could be handed over to the Chinese Embassy in Katmandu. Instead, they been handed over to the U.N. refugee agency, said Chandra Nath Gautam, an official at the Nepal's Department of Immigration.

Nepal used to recognize fleeing Tibetans as refugees, and thousands who fled Tibet now live in the country, but Katmandu has not given papers to new migrants for a few years.

There was no immediate response from the Chinese Embassy or the Foreign Ministry in Beijing.

Some Tibetans have regularly protested in Nepal since 2008 against Chinese rule in Tibet. Under pressure from Beijing, the Nepalese government have banned such protests and threatened that those involved would be deported. But no one has been deported so far, and protesters are usually freed after a day in police custody.

[http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news\\_content.php?id=1158632&lang=eng\\_news](http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=1158632&lang=eng_news)

Political instability in Nepal holds up revised extradition treaty

NEW DELHI: The much awaited revised extradition treaty with Nepal is likely to remain hostage to the political instability in the country. During

foreign minister S M Krishna's visit to Nepal last week, Kathmandu conveyed to the Indian side that while it is not averse to signing the treaty, it is yet to build up a political consensus in the country which is imperative for any such treaty with India to come into force.

India and Nepal had agreed in principle to have an extradition treaty when then foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Nepal in 2008. According to highly placed sources, India has no option but to wait as any attempt to force things could unsettle the precariously poised relationship with Nepal, a country China has unabashedly courted in the past few years.

India is now waiting for Nepal to move forward. "Our preference would be to work at a pace which is convenient and comfortable for Nepal. We understand that there is a need for political consensus in Nepal which is passing through a phase of transition," said a source, adding that India wants to sign another deal on mutual legal assistance with Nepal to combat terrorism.

During Krishna's visit to Nepal, deputy PM and foreign minister Sujata Koirala had reiterated that Nepal will not allow its territory to be used for any activity against India. The two ministers discussed security concerns and agreed that terrorism and extremism were a threat to both countries. They also discussed ways to enhance bilateral security cooperation to control cross-border crimes such as smuggling of fake Indian currency, human trafficking and arms smuggling. Krishna assured Nepal that India was willing to provide all possible assistance to the Nepalese security agencies.

The Maoists led by Prachanda, who protested against alleged land encroachment and interference by India even during Krishna's visit, have warned Kathmandu that any attempt to sign an agreement on extradition would be opposed tooth and nail. The signing of a new border map that will end all border disputes also doesn't seem possible in the current political situation. Krishna, in fact, also met Prachanda during his visit and expressed his displeasure over "baseless" attacks on India.

The Indo-Nepal Extradition Treaty was first signed in 1855 and revised in 1953. India is pressing for a new treaty to keep up with the changing times and looking at the inclusion of a

clause for the deportation of third-country nationals wanted for terrorism, crime and economic offences.

### **Nepal Home Minister meet Krishna, Chidambaram**

New Delhi, Jan 19 (ANI): Nepal Home Minister Bhim Rawal met External Affairs Minister SM Krishna here on Tuesday.

Rawal is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The visit comes close on the heels of Krishna's visit to Nepal during which the two countries agreed to cooperate on ways to combat cross border crime and terrorism.

India and Nepal share a 1400-kilometre-long open border, which has very few checkpoints.

The porous border between India and Nepal has become a source of worry to the authorities, with smugglers and criminals taking advantage of the difficult terrain. (ANI).

### **WASHINGTON: Political uncertainty and fighting continue to disrupt economic activity in Pakistan and Afghanistan, warns a World Bank report released on Wednesday.**

Ongoing internal conflicts in Pakistan and Afghanistan “continued to disrupt economic activity” and resulted in “more moderate growth outturns” than other nations in South Asia.

The Global Economic Prospects 2010 report notes that Pakistan sought to stimulate its economy through an increase in its public sector development programme.

“While these stimulus measures helped offset the negative effects of the global crisis, they also led to higher fiscal deficits in nearly all South Asian economies,” the report notes.

Even before the crisis, sizable fiscal deficits were already a problem for many South Asian economies, where weak tax administration and structure resulted in low domestic resource mobilisation, the report adds.

The report also places Pakistan among the countries that entered the global economic crisis with large internal and external imbalances and were forced to severely crimp domestic demand. In such places “the growth has been the weakest”.

“Countries that entered the crisis with stronger fundamentals, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and India, weathered the crisis better.”

Since the second quarter of 2009, local equity markets and capital inflows to the region began to recover -- largely in line with trends across developing countries.

In India and Bangladesh improved investor sentiment on comparatively strong growth outturns further helped the process while Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives needed support from the International Monetary Fund, the report notes.

Nevertheless as of August 2009, capital inflows to South Asia remained 28 per cent below levels a year earlier.

Industrial activity in South Asia, which did not contract as much as in most other developing regions, has also shifted into positive growth, led by India, Bangladesh, and more recently Pakistan. Fiscal stimulus measures have supported the rebound in output by helping to revive consumer demand.

Merchandise trade growth remains below previous year levels for the region, with imports down much more sharply than exports, given the sharp compression of demand in Pakistan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka in particular.

Regional external positions had come increasingly under strain from the multi-year boom in food and fuel prices before mid-2008. During 2009, Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka posted the largest adjustments in their current account deficits.

Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka also experienced a slower pace of growth of remittances inflows.

However, India — the largest recipient of remittances in the world in dollar terms — posted a contraction in remittance inflows in 2009.

The moderation in inflationary pressures and falling international commodity prices also provided scope for regional central banks to introduce expansionary measures to support domestic demand in response to the crisis. Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka cut their policy interest rates.

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## **BHUTAN**

### **Bhutan lost a good friend: Former king**

|KOLKATA: The fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, condoled the death of Jyoti Basu in two messages to chief minister Buddhadeb

Bhattacharjee and Basu's son Chandan.

Expressing deep sorrow, Wangchuk, who abdicated in 2008 in favour of his son, described Basu's death as "a great loss for India", which would be "deprived of an exceptionally able and highly respected leader who dedicated his life to the service of his country and people."

He said the loss would be deeply felt by the people of Bhutan. "Your father, whom I have known for over three decades, was a good friend to me and my country," Wangchuk wrote to Chandan. "My family joins me in sending our deepest condolences."

Consul-general of Bhutan in Kolkata, Tsering Wangda, who had seen the friendship between Basu and the fourth king of Bhutan blossoming over a 30-year period, said Basu had twice visited Bhutan.

### **Bhutanese dissident: democratic government akin to absolute monarchy by Nirmala Carvalho**

Mumbai (AsiaNews) - "The constitution of Bhutan provides the foundation for democracy. But the activities of the new democratic government still reflect those of the old absolute monarchy. " This is the statement of Karma Duplo secretary of *Druk National Congress*, the Bhutanese political movement in exile in New Delhi. Despite the fact that the first democratic elections took place in 2008 there are still many unresolved issues in the country: political prisoners are still in prison, freedom of press and association is still lacking, but most importantly the condition remains unchanged for 90 thousand refugees who have been penned in refugee camps in 'UN on the border with Nepal since 1990.

Bhutan is a small town in the Himalayan region, caught between China, India, and Nepal, and until 2007 was ruled by an absolute monarchy. In 2008, the ascent to the throne of 28-year old King Jigme Khesar brought new hopes of opening the country and a possible way out for the refugee population in Nepal. These were expelled from the country between 1977 and 1991 during the campaign of nationalization promoted by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. But to date the new Bhutanese government refuses to allow their return to their homeland and Nepal has never granted them citizenship. In January 2009, U.S., Australia and other Western countries gave asylum to 25 thousand refugees. This is to avoid a humanitarian crisis due to lack of funds of the World Food Program.

For the *Druk National Congress* - says Duplo - the international community including India, should fight for the repatriation of refugees." In fact the 90 thousand refugees still live in camps, thousands have refused to emigrate to foreign countries in hopes of returning to their villages. For the leader the only solution is to force the government to restore citizenship to the deported Bhutanese.

Duplo says that the people residing in Bhutan undergo continuous human rights violations.

"People - says Dupto - live in continuous fear of repression and never expresses their opinions." "Freedom of speech and expression - says the leader - are guaranteed by art. 7 of the new constitution. " He also explains that the government continues to prohibit the publication of policy documents made by the Bhutanese in exile who want a full democracy and prohibits foreign journalists from visiting the areas near refugee camps. "The media - continues Dupto - are under the control of the government that has banned the vision of foreign channels considered violent and obscene."

According to the dissidents hundreds of political prisoners are still in jail awaiting release. "Independence and efficiency of the judicial system is indeed questionable – he claims - few efforts have been made to reform the Supreme Court and make it free of government influence." According to the government newspaper *Kuensel* as of November, the Court is guided by a single judge, the only one able to sign the documents required for release of dissidents.

### **Take a journey to India and Bhutan courtesy of Richmond Art Museum**

Through their paintings, artists Ray Hassard and Debra Joyce Dawson will show visitors to the Richmond Art Museum the India and Bhutan that they observed during their recent journey to the countries. Both Ohio artists are plein air painters, working in a popular style derived largely from the French Impressionists. Many of their works were done on site in India and Bhutan.

The display of their works opens with a reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24. The exhibition will continue through April 4.

Hassard resides in the Cincinnati area and teaches pastels at Baker Hunt Art and Cultural Center in Covington, Ky.

Dawson resides in Pataskala, Ohio, and was one of six central Ohio artists who worked on the 2003 Bicentennial Paint Ohio Project.

The show's focus on India and Bhutan coincides with the Richmond Art Museum's upcoming multi-cultural program for students in kindergarten through third grade called "Art is ... India." Each year, the "Art is..." program focuses on a different country and gives about 2,500 area students a chance to learn about the art and customs of each locale.

### **Assam militants cannot set up base again: Bhutan PM Thinley**

Gelephu (Bhutan), Jan 20 (IANS) Militants from India's northeast had no chance of again setting up base in Bhutan, Prime Minister Jigme Y. Thinley said here Wednesday, and added that threats from Maoist rebels existed but his country was capable of fighting back.

Refuting the possibility that militants from northeast India could again set up base in his country, Thinley told IANS in an interview: "Such speculations are incorrect and there are no

militant activities in Bhutan especially after our security forces flushed out militant groups from our country.”

“Our security establishment is on alert and every measure is being taken to ensure that whatever has happened in the past cannot happen again,” he added.

In 2003, Bhutan launched Operation All Clear and busted at least 30 camps belonging to outlawed rebel groups United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO).

More than 20 rebels were also killed in the operation that helped the country flush out all Indian rebels from its soil.

India and Bhutan share a 643 km unfenced border.

He admitted that threat from Maoists did exist. “The threat (from Maoists) is there and I think such threats exist for all countries. Interests are there from such parties, but there is no basis on which their efforts can gain ground in our country.”

Thinley was in the southern Bhutan town of Gelephu, adjoining the northeastern Indian state of Assam, for a routine visit to the southern districts to oversee development and security issues.

He will be visiting the southern districts for the next two days.

Bhutan has been hit a series of explosions since 2008. More than a dozen people have been killed with security forces blaming the little known Nepal-based Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist-Leninist) for the attacks in the otherwise peaceful Himalayan nation.

Bhutanese security forces in the past one year busted at least three Maoist camps in southern Bhutan districts and captured about eight rebels.

Bhutan had witnessed a pro-democracy agitation in the 1990s with a section of Nepali-speaking residents in its southern parts rising in revolt against the monarchy.

The crackdown that followed led thousands of Nepali-speaking people from southern Bhutan to flee to Nepal. Now an estimated 100,000 people are sheltered in relief camps.

There are reports that the Maoists are recruiting among aggrieved refugees now based in Nepal.

“The only way that such situations can be prevented is by way of providing good governance and justice. We are confident of repulsing any such threats,” the prime minister said.

Bhutan became the world's newest democracy in 2008 after the first general elections gave Thinley's Druk Phuensum Tshogpa party an absolute majority, thereby transforming the largely Buddhist nation from a 100-year-old monarchy to parliamentary democracy.

"Democracy has started under extraordinarily peaceful conditions and I am happy that it is gaining ground and that its roots are being established. I am confident that democracy will thrive for the well being of the Bhutanese people," the prime minister said.

### **Sino-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations: Complexities of the 'Package Deal'**

China and Bhutan completed the nineteenth round of boundary talks on January 13, 2010. The parleys were held in Thimpu and Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue represented China while Minister of Economic Affairs Khandu Wangchu represented Bhutan. In the latest round, both sides have decided on a joint field survey, which would enable harmonising the reference points and names of the disputed areas. Also the focus of the forthcoming survey would be the disputed areas in the western sector which constitute the pastoral lands of Doklam, Charithang, Sinchulumpa and Dramana. The eighteenth round of talks was held in Beijing in 2006, when both parties decided to discuss the boundary issue at the technical level with the help of experts and then map out the disputed claims. The nineteenth round is significant due to its exclusive focus of the North-Western sector.

The nineteenth round could also be seen as significant because both sides met after a gap of almost four years. The talks are noteworthy due to three developments. First, India and Bhutan revised their friendship treaty in 2007 and Article II, which stipulated that Bhutan should be advised by India in its foreign policy decisions, was symbolically dropped. Second, Bhutan witnessed the first stage of democratization in 2008 by holding elections, thus taking the maiden step towards domestic political reform; at the same time, the Oxford educated Khesar Jigme Namgyal Wangchuk was formally coronated as the fifth King of Bhutan in November 2008. Third, China on its part in the past few years has made significant progress in constructing roads right next to the disputed border areas. For instance, six roads so far have been built by China near Bhutan's North and North-West areas. Moreover in the past two years, Bhutan has witnessed several Chinese intrusions/incursions into its territory.

### **PM's India visit 'paves way for regional connectivity'**

Bangladesh wants regional connectivity with India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar and the recent visit of prime minister Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi will pave the way to materialise it, said foreign secretary Mohammed Mijarul Quayes Sunday.

The 50-point joint communiqué released during the visit of the prime minister covered a wide range of issues including electricity, water and trade.



"Agreements related to energy, home and culture ministries were signed and many other issues were discussed during the visit," he said at the monthly luncheon meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at a city hotel.

The two governments are engaged in linkage talks and Bangladesh wants to have connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan also, he added.

"Both governments are convinced that there is a need to hold hands to go forward," Mr Quayas said.

An interconnectivity grid needs to be set up to import power from India and the government is planning to invest in Myanmar to import power from Arakan, he added.

The Indian government has agreed to sell 250 megawatt power to Bangladesh in the just concluded visit of Sheikh Hasina.

The Bangladesh government has attached priority to water sharing and very soon there will be series of meetings on Teesta water sharing, the secretary said.

"Both the countries will hold technical and secretary level meeting within a month and joint river commission within a very short time," he said.

India will cooperate with Bangladesh in capital dredging and other infrastructure related areas to improve rail and road network in the country, he added.

The Bangladesh government has made it clear to the Indian government that it wants to remove all tariff and non-tariff barriers and there are some development in this regard, the secretary said.

"India has reduced the negative list by 47 products and there is a development of acceptance and harmonisation of certificates required at the time of trade," he said.

The government is maintaining bilateral negotiation with its neighbours to resolve the maritime dispute but at the same time it pursues settlement through UN, he added.

Bangladesh has maritime boundary dispute with India and Myanmar and lodged a petition with the UN to delineate the boundary.

"If bilateral negotiations are successful then we will call off the UN petition, otherwise we have to wait for UN decision," Mr Quayas said.

FICCI president AM Hamim Rahmatullah said foreign policy of Bangladesh in relation to business and industry needs to be more investor-friendly.

Bangladesh needs more foreign investment and remove barriers to attract FDI, he said.

"Shortage of energy, tax evasion and unethical business practice are the major problems in attracting FDI," he added.

Bangladesh embassies in different countries have a role to promote FDI and the government should pay more attention in this regard, Mr Hamim said.

A large number of businesspeople and diplomats of different countries attended the programme.

### **PM spells out plans till end of term 21 January, 2010 –**

Within the next two years, the DPT government will not only try to fulfill what it has promised but go beyond it, Lyonchhoen Jigmi Y Thinley told a gathering of about a thousand people, comprising businessmen, civil servants, students and residents of Gelephu town on Tuesday.

He said that, as promised, his government would try and link all the 205 gewogs with roads. However, places like Laya, Lunana and Soe in the north-western part of the country and Merak and Sakteng in the east would not be linked by road, he said. A road connection to Merak and Sakteng, he said, would bring the community less benefit.

"We want to develop them through tourism," he said, adding that, if they were connected with road, tourists would only drive up to Merak and Sakteng, and after a brief sight seeing, complain about the cold and return to Trashigang to spend the night. Besides that would cause cultural dilution of the nomadic community, he said.

Instead, Lyonchhoen proposed that the two communities be saved for trekkers from which locals could earn better revenues. Incomes, he said could start with horse rides to Merak and Sakteng, rents from tourist lodges built with government funding and from the food they served.

The DPT government, in the next two years, is planning an MBBS college in the country, with assistance from India, which would not just provide opportunities for Bhutanese students aspiring to become doctors but also address the shortage of doctors. "We'll turn Bhutan into a world class service hub," the prime minister said.

He said many Bhutanese visited hospitals in Bangkok for medical check ups spending large sums of money every year. Similarly, the government and the private sector people could together build such services, which will save Bhutanese from having to travel to places like

Bangkok, Kolkata and Vellore. “While the services will be free for Bhutanese, we could charge people coming for check ups from neighbouring nations,” he said.

On tourism, Lyonchhoen said that the government was planning to bring in some 100,000 tourists as they opened access from Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar.

For Gelephu it was an opportunity, he said, and urged them to construct standard hotels. “When standards are raised, we can expect higher revenues,” he said. “Resorts like Aman and Uma charge between US\$ 5,000 and US\$ 7,000 a night, and tourists are willing to pay that given the country’s exoticism.”

Touching on foreign direct investments (FDI), the prime minister said that, while local private financial institutions like Bhutan Insurance have already started, they were encouraging international financial institutions in the market.

He said that more banks would lead to competitive services. “Initially our local banks would throw numerous reasons when people asked for reduction in interest rates,” Lyonchhoen said. “Just a hint of Punjab bank opening soon and they’ve improved their services.”

The prime minister also shared his plans to brand Bhutan as an organic food producer. “Unlike many countries, which grow genetically modified food, ours is pure and organic and for that we needn’t look anywhere else for market, India will use our exports,” he said.

Lyonchhoen said they were preparing a system to remedy civil servants’ existing attitude towards work of procrastinating until the last moment. “We’ll reward civil servants based on performance,” he said.

All these plans, including the hydropower projects, Lyonchhoen said, were geared towards fulfilling the last promise the DPT government had made – creating full employment.

“World over if 5 percent of the population are unemployed they still consider it full employment, in Bhutan it is 2.5 percent,” he said. “We have two years in government and, if we fail to create full employment by then, the people have the right to act upon the government they elected.”

One of the most important promises his government made, he said, was to lay a strong foundation for democracy and leave a system, which future governments could follow or build upon. “Democracy is taking strong roots. For it to grow, people will have to work together with the government they elected,” he said.

But, without the presence of political parties in the constituencies, it was difficult for a fledgling democracy to take shape. He was referring to the lack of state funds to run the DPT offices in the constituencies. “We need funds for offices, staff and equipment in every constituency,” Lyonchhoen said. He reasoned that, if people were unhappy about certain aspects of the government, there was no avenue to take their complaints to. The elected

representatives, he said, were in the capital making and passing laws, discussing matters of national interest and heading various ministries.

“When people become skeptical and the gap between the people and its government widens,” he said. “Doubts take over trust in government, which over time gives way to upheaval, certainly not a thing to wish for.”

Citing examples of foreign countries, Lyonchhoen said that the state provided funds for parties to run their offices with lesser amounts for opposition parties.

“Here we are asking for equal amount of funding for both parties,” the Lyonchhoen said, adding that the request had been rendered unconstitutional at the parliament and, although the DPT government outnumbered the opposition, they retreated. “Now our party is on the verge of collapse,” he said.