

Report # 107
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Turkey, Central Asia, East Asia, India & China
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Weekly Report from 13 February 2010 to 19 February 2010
Presentation: 24 February 2010

This report is based on the review of news items focusing on political, economic, social and geo-strategic developments in various regions namely; Turkey, Central Asia, East Asia, India and China from 13 February 2010 to 19 February 2010 as have been collected by interns.

TURKEY

Political Front:

Strong opposition by various political groups have stalled the process of implementation of democratic initiative however Cultural Ministry has started taking measures to enforce cultural aspects of the initiative. Meanwhile a group of 500 PKK members held demonstration in Istanbul to mark the 11th year of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture. Main Opposition Republican People's Party has made plan to submit a censure motion against PM and Interior Minister alleging that the government pressured judges not to arrest a group of terrorist.

Geo-strategic Front:

Turkish high officials held diplomatic visits to Dhaka and India and discussed various issues to enhance cooperation. Turkey and Bahrain signed an agreement for inter-parliamentary cooperation. Turkish Premier has called on the developed world to be more supportive about the human situation in Gaza. Turkey showed its goodwill and intention to normalize ties with its Armenian neighbor. Meanwhile Kazakhstan has voiced its support for Turkey's efforts to create stability. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos has assured that Spain would speed up Turkey's EU accession process during its rotating EU presidency.

Economic Front:

Turkey has signed agreements with Bahrain and Tanzania in order to enhance economic cooperation with them.

Social Front:

Mehmet Erdoğan, the nephew of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been convicted on charges of drug trafficking and sentenced to prison by İstanbul court. Meanwhile Twenty-six people, including a high-level police officer, have been arrested in operations targeting human trafficking in İstanbul, Ankara and the southern province of Malatya. A number of nongovernmental organizations in Diyarbakir protested a decision by the 8th Chamber of the Council of State to retain a university admission system that uses a lower coefficient to calculate the university admission examination score. In the meantime storms and rainy weather have paralyzed life for nearly two weeks in Turkey's northwestern provinces.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Trial of 31 alleged members of an Islamic insurgent group accused of terrorist activities in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan has started. The younger brother of Kyrgyz President has created an elite military unit on the basis of President's recommendations for amending the constitution. Tajikistan's ruling National Democratic Party has nominated the president's eldest son, to be a candidate for Dushanbe's city council.

Geo-strategic Front:

Three Azerbaijani soldiers have been killed after exchanging fire with Armenian armed forces near the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. Meanwhile Armenian Foreign Minister has warned Azerbaijan against disregarding the principle of self-determination in negotiations to resolve the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani President received former Israeli Prime Minister last week. Both exchanged views on issues of mutual concern. Kazakhstan's President has presented a package of measures to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to his Azeri counterpart. Kazakh PM held meeting with Turkish FM and discussed a wide range of issues on further development of Kazakh-Turkish trade and economic relations in the framework of the Treaty on Strategic Partnership, signed by the presidents of the two countries. Meanwhile Kazakh PM held telephonic talk with his Russian counterpart and discussed a number of issues on further development of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Uzbek officials have introduced new regulations that limit the number of visits Kyrgyz citizens can make to Uzbekistan. Tajikistan has decided to plant apricot orchards on territory recently returned to Tajikistan by Afghanistan, in order to prevent further loss of its territory to the later. President of Uzbekistan has recently paid a visit to Korea.

Economic Front:

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) has expressed its intention to build a new pipeline to export gas to Iran. As part of its new medium-term cooperation strategy for 2011-2014 financial years, the World Bank has made a plan to provide USD 1 billion in loans to Azerbaijan. All the while Azerbaijani Tax Ministry has announced revenue of 4.114 billion manats in 2009. Global economic crisis also affected Kazakhstan's economy as its gross domestic product grew 1.2 percent last year, i.e. down from 3.2 percent in 2008. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has appreciated efforts of the Government of Tajikistan to build hydropower plants on its territory that will allow tackling many problems resulting from electricity shortages. Meanwhile the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has completed its first power rehabilitation project in Tajikistan. Turkmen geologists have found new evidence of huge gas reserves in the country. The famous Uzbek photographer and film maker Umida Akhmedova and her lawyer have filed the petition for appeal to the higher authority.

Social Front:

The attorney for arrested Azerbaijani blogger Adnan Hajizade has requested that new judges be named to preside over his client's appeal in a Baku court. Jailed Kazakh human rights defender Yevgeny Zhovtis has begun publishing a blog on the Internet. Kyrgyzstan has reinforced environment protection measures within oil and gas facilities exploitation.

Oxfam has released report on climate changes and poverty in Tajikistan. The report claims that the people of Tajikistan are experiencing the impacts of climate change; i.e. more frequent droughts and heightened extreme weather conditions are hitting poor communities, eroding their resilience and the country's glaciers are melting, bringing the danger, in the future, of greater water shortages and potential disputes in the wider region.

EAST ASIA

Political Front:

While talking to Chinese community at the commemoration of their New Year; Indonesian President has promised to protect the civil rights of Chinese population. Major issue being faced by President of Philippines is to transfer power through a smooth and stable political process. Thousands of pro-Thaksin protesters forced Thailand's biggest bank to close its headquarters while accusing it for having links with Thai royal family.

Economic Front:

Indonesian economy grew at the rate of 5.4% in the last quarter of the year 2009 taking its overall growth in the last year to 4.5%. Increase in exports and investment have been identified as main indicators of economic recovery in Indonesia. Likewise, positive growth in fourth quarter in Singapore has raised hopes of economists and others regarding this year's economic growth. Cyclones and droughts have badly affected Philippines' crops further deteriorating its economy. Different opinions exist about future course of Thai economy. Some have positive hopes regarding country's economic recovery meanwhile many other think that amidst unstable political conditions remarkable growth in economy can not be expected. Malaysia has started putting efforts to transform its economy in order to join the group of high income economies. Biggest garment industry in Cambodia had to discard 3,000 jobs amidst economic crisis. Meanwhile 106 factories got closed putting 45,500 people out of work. Hence government seems keen to increase employment. Government of Vietnam has started taking measures to avoid economic slump this year.

Social Front:

Islamic police in the province of Aceh patrol daily to arrest people involved in anti-religious activities. Meanwhile three women in Malaysia were canned for engaging in illicit sex. The issue of caning the women has ignited a fierce debate in various circles of the country. Last month a group of Philippine politicians called on the country's government to ban domestic workers from going to the Middle East and Gulf states. In this regard a survey has recently been carried out. According to the survey report 44% of the population approved the proposal. 23% however claimed that government should not get indulged in such affairs. An alarming number of government servants in Brunei have started 'walking with a time bomb' after recent studies have shown that 55 per cent of them are struggling with obesity and another 60 per cent suffer from high blood sugar and high blood pressure respectively.

INDIA

Political Front:

National Front:

Main opposition party in India has been critical of the government's policies at various fronts. In this regard BJP's President has declared ruling regime to be the main cause of rising inflation in the country. BJP has also opposed an open-ended dialogue with Pakistan and has strongly criticized Home Minister's recently made statement regarding Kashmiri youth. President of BJP stressed greatly on the need to overcome basic issue being confronted by millions of poor in India and assured his party that he would keep struggling against UPA for the rights of poor sector of society. Meanwhile President of VHP has asked political parties to avoid interference in religious matters like reconstruction of Ram Temple at the place of Babri Masjid.

As far as Maoist insurgency is concerned at least 20 Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR) personnel were killed in the biggest attack launched in West Bengal. Meanwhile in Bihar Maoists assassinated 12 civilian.

Regional Front:

Muslim leadership of Andhra Pradesh has announced to protest against court decision on reservation of 10% quota for Muslims and government's lenient approach to handle the case. Nearly a week after setting up a five-member committee on the Telangana issue, the Union government announced the panel's seven-point terms of reference. The committee, headed by the former Supreme Court judge has been asked to examine the situation in Andhra Pradesh with reference to the demand for a Telangana State as well as the demand for maintaining the present status of a united Andhra Pradesh. The committee is requested to submit its report by December 31, 2010. Meanwhile fourteen MLAs from the Telangana region handed over their resignation letters to Speaker on a call by the all-party Joint Action Committee (JAC) to protest against the terms of reference of the Srikrishna committee.

Geo-strategic Front:

Indo-Pak talks became hot issue as contradictions in stance of both the countries seem to be quite clear. India wants to stick on terrorism focused talk while Pakistan wants resumption of dialogue process that was halted after 26/11. Congress government has expressed determination to resume talks even after Pune blasts while BJP has strongly criticized Congress initiative. Meanwhile India and Nepal have decided to sign agreement to provide railway connectivity and expand existing lines between the two countries. Apart from this Russia and India have decided to firm up two major pacts on nuclear energy and a fifth generation fighter plane; they have also resolved to step up trade ties and develop closer cooperation in the energy sector.

Economic Front:

India has started putting efforts to conclude comprehensive trade opening pact or the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union by the end of this year. Meanwhile inflation has marked another 120 basis points (1.2 percentage points) and surged to 8.6 per cent in January setting a record high in the last 13 months.

Social Front:

At least nine people died and over 50 got injured in a blast in German Bakery in Pune. Some analysts and politicians doubted the involvement of extremist Hindu outfits in the tragedy. Meanwhile violence erupted in some parts of the Darjeeling Hills where life was hit due to a 24-hour strike by the students' wing of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM). The strike was called to protest against the refusal of the authorities to allow its supporters to hold a pro-Gorkhaland rally in Siliguri and other parts of the Dooars earlier this month.

CHINA

Political Front:

Communist Party of China (CPC) has called for better law enforcement to ensure national security, social harmony and the country's sound economic growth.

Geo-strategic Front:

China remained active in enhancing collaboration with various countries of the globe including; Tanzania, Syria, Singapore, etc. As far as issue of US President's expected meeting with Dalai Lama is concerned; China has warned the US ambassador that such meeting would cause strain in the US-China relations. US President however held meeting with Dalai Lama but claimed that China should not consider it to be disrespect to her. China however expressed dissatisfaction over the issue and asked US to stop supporting anti-China activists. In case of cyber attacks against Google it is assumed that some of Chinese brilliant students and military were involved in it. Military however denied these allegations.

Economic Front:

Despite the fact that China's natural gas output rose by 7.7 percent last year, it was still not enough for ever rising domestic demand. The country produced 83 billion cubic meters of natural gas last year, while consumed 87.45 billion cubic meters, up 11.5 percent year on year. Taiwan has expressed positive hopes regarding economic cooperation with China as it would help Taiwanese people to do business and boost the island's competitiveness. China, Japan and South Korea have launched joint study on trilateral Free trade deal. Meanwhile stock exchange of Hong Kong remained fluctuating.

Social Front:

China's operational high-speed railways have exceeded 3,300 kilometers, leading the world in both length and technologies. Police and other authorities in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region detained 1,795 people suspected of dealing drugs in 2009. Chinese Premier visited Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region over the weekend, spending the Spring Festival, or Chinese lunar New Year, with local villagers.