

Report # 110
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Turkey, GCC, Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, East Asia, India & China
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Weekly Report from 6 March to 12 March 2010
Presentation: 17 March 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, GCC, Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, East Asia, India & China from 6 March to 12 March 2010 as have been collected by interns.

TURKEY

Political Front:

PM Erdogan has decided to hold meetings with artists from theatre and cinema in order to seek support for democratic initiative. Meanwhile Sledgehammer documents have indicated the involvement of some senior policemen in coup plotting along with army officers.

Geo-strategic front:

Turkey has recently signed an agreement on Civil Aviation Cooperation with New Zealand. Meanwhile Turkey and South Korea have signed agreement to enhance cooperation in nuclear energy sector. Turkey claimed that Israel has accepted Turkish role as mediator between Syrian-Israeli talks. Israel however denied these reports. Turkey has expressed serious concerns regarding US resolution over World War I killings of Armenians. Operations have been carried out in several European countries against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) over the last two weeks, with a wide-ranging operation conducted in Belgium following anti-PKK operations in France, Germany and Italy.

Economic Front:

The strategically crucial Nabucco pipeline got thumbs up from the Turkish Parliament, breaking legal ground in Turkey for the pipeline connecting the country's eastern neighbors to Austria. Parliament passed a bill approving the Nabucco project. Turkish Industry and Trade Minister that country's economy has seen moderate recovery since the second quarter of 2009 after a stagnation caused by the global economic downturn. Turkey's industrial production was up 12.1 percent year-on-year in January 2010. However, industrial production was down 15.3 percent when compared to previous month.

Social Front:

A strong, pre-dawn earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6 struck eastern Turkey, killing 51 people. A recent report by the National Police Department's Anti-smuggling and Organized Crime Bureau (KOM) has shown that a significant number of the bureau's operations in 2009 in Turkey have been launched in the field of health. A middle school student has been expelled from school in southeastern city for wearing hijab. Turkey came in 101st on a list of 109 countries on the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM),

which is calculated according to women's participation in economic and political life in their countries.

GCC

Geo-strategic Front:

A Georgian has become the first woman ambassador to Saudi Arabia and it happens first time in the 80 years history of Saudi Arabia that a woman became ambassador to the kingdom.

Economic front:

Dubai World, the state-owned holding company seeking to renegotiate terms on \$26 billion of debt, made "some progress" in talks with creditors.

Social Front:

In Saudi Arabia, a huge fire broke out in north of Jeddah's Safa district near the city's main fruit and vegetable market on Friday evening. No casualties were reported during the firefighting operation. In the meantime border guards in Jazan foiled an attempt to smuggle quantities of hashish and ammunition.

FERTILE CRESCENT

Political Front:

President Barack Obama called parliamentary elections in Iraq a "milestone" event and vowed to keep his pledge to remove all U.S. troops from that country by the end of next year. Many Iraqis participated in elections. One of the significant developments of elections has been the role of women in elections as voters and as participants.

Geo-strategic Front:

Talks on implementing a new framework for the countries of the Nile basin are set to continue for another six months to sort out a working formula. A senior Palestinian official criticized the Arab League for offering Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a four-month period to resume the indirect peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

Social Front:

Egypt rejected UN rights investigator Martin Scheinin's criticism of the government's use of emergency law. The investigator expressed his concern that Egypt's emergency law is applied within situations that have no link to terrorist activities such as detention of bloggers and politically motivated trials. He also pointed out to the repeated use of the military courts and state security courts. Israel has granted amnesty to a group of 77 Palestinian fighters from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an offshoot of Fatah movement.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Majilis, the lower house of Kazakhstan's parliament, ratified an agreement on Russia's use of the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The Kyrgyz opposition Ata-Meken (Fatherland) party

has demanded the resignation of President and his son. The US General has recently paid visit to Kyrgyzstan.

Geo-strategic Front:

Former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who lives in self-imposed exile in Britain, has claimed that Armenia and Azerbaijan should not look to Moscow to help solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Berezovsky. Azerbaijan President strongly condemns decision of U.S. House of Representatives committee on foreign affairs, to pass a resolution on WWI killings of Armenians by Turkey. Tajikistan's Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) has released the list of members of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) of the fourth convocation elected through a proportional, party list system from a single nationwide constituency.

Economic Front:

The Government of Tajikistan has endorsed the short list of companies that would compete for the contract for development of the Konimansuri Kalon silver deposit in the Tajik northern Sughd province. Japan allocates US\$457,679 to six projects within the no-string aid of the Government of Japan to grass-root projects in Uzbekistan.

Social Front:

Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg has expressed concern that some journalists in Azerbaijan have been imprisoned on fabricated charges of hooliganism. A former Kazakh banker has accused President Nursultan Nazarbaev's son-in-law of prompting a strike by several thousand workers at an oil facility in southwestern Kazakhstan. Meanwhile thousands of people have been evacuated and some killed in Kazakhstan after severe floods destroyed several dams. Kyrgyz Rights Group has strongly condemned authorities' attack against Freedom of Press. About 150 people in northeastern Uzbekistan have held a rally to protest the arrest of a local activist.

EAST ASIA

Political Front:

One of the major issues being faced by Indonesian ruling regime is to decide the place of religion and moral values in their daily lives. Resignation of few members of Opposition party in Malaysia; has brought uncertainty about party's future position. Thailand's weekly cabinet has decided to impose the Internal Security Act (ISA) during March 11-23 to ensure law and order in a mass anti-government rally by the united front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) group. The Cambodian parliament has passed a controversial anti-corruption bill that aims to further enhance transparency in government while opposition parties staged a walkout, saying the new law would stifle criticism and foster corruption.

Geo-strategic Front:

Malaysia has expressed keenness to revive the Look East policy with South Korea by broadening areas of co-operation in capacity-building.

Economic Front:

Indonesia's central bank raised its 2011 economic growth forecast to as much as 6.5 percent from an earlier forecast of as much as 6 percent as consumer spending has accelerated. Exports of the local Timber industry have boosted because of its growing demand from the markets of Europe and US. Thailand and Japan have signed new agreements to further boost their existing economic ties.

Social Front:

The US report that was compiled by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor found that among the human rights problems that it listed for Brunei were the "inability of citizens to change their government; arbitrary detention; limits on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; restrictions on religious freedom; discrimination against women; restricted labor rights; and exploitation of foreign workers."

INDIA

Political Front:

The disputed women reservation bill (33% seats for women legislature in both houses) has been passed in Rajya Sabha after fourteen years long struggle. RJD, LJP, SP and some other opposition parties opposed the bill. Mulayam Singh Yadav of SP alleged that it was a conspiracy to prevent Muslims, backwards and dalits from entering Parliament and state assemblies. He contended that when not a single Muslim MP was elected to Parliament from several states including Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana, how Muslim women could be elected without reservation. " Meanwhile Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad declared that the Women's Reservation Bill was 'a political blunder' and a conspiracy hatched by the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party to suppress representation of women from the backward classes. All the while Muslim community decided to reach out the eminent political parties for their support against the reservation of 33% women seats in parliament. The groups, led by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the All India Milli Council have decided to reach out to as many parties as possible barring the BJP and convey to them that those supporting the Bill could face a Muslim "backlash".

While talking about Maoists Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai said the objective of the Maoists engaged in an armed 'liberation struggle' is to overthrow the Indian state by 2050, as indicated by documents seized from them. In order to counter their move government has already launched military operation. Human Rights activists in India, however, have strongly condemned government's use of force against Maoists.

Geo-strategic Front:

Indian government "has conveyed to the U.S. government that sanctions on Iran have proved to be counter-productive and that all differences with Iran should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation." While responding to Pakistan's allegations regarding Indian violation of Indus Basin treaty; Indian government claimed that water problem in Pakistan is because of its own inability to handle it properly and has nothing to do with India.

Economic Front:

India continued to be the most optimistic nation in terms of hiring plans for the next three months, driven by strong job opportunities across all sectors including finance and realty sectors.

Social Front:

According to a report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India has the maximum number of women dying in the Asia-Pacific region because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition.

CHINA

Political Front:

Chinese lawmaker has proposed single system to protect people's equal rights to vote. One of the political advisor claimed that China should use the Internet as an important platform of diplomacy to boost the country's online voice and lift its international image. China's Supreme Court and procuratorate vowed to step up anti-corruption efforts after a string of high ranking officials fell in last year's clean-up campaign.

Geo-strategic Front:

China has strongly opposed Israeli plan to build new Jewish settlements. Chinese FM has declared 2010 to be very significant for Chinese diplomacy. China has pointed out the need to mend ties with the US after some controversial issues. Meanwhile Russia has expressed satisfaction with Russo-Chinese ties. Issue of Google still prevails in China. The Chinese mainland and Taiwan have cooperated in dealing with more than 5,000 criminal cases since a cross-Strait agreement on judicial assistance took effect on June 25, 2009.

Economic Front:

China's gold reserve amounts to 1,054 tons, ranking fifth in the world. Meanwhile China's exports grew for the third straight month in February, up 45.7 percent year on year to 94.52 billion U.S. dollars, which indicated a rebound in global demand. Chinese labor unions have made great contributions to ease the country's employment pressures during the global economic crisis.

Social Front:

A senior official emphasized that the Chinese government should exert more effort to reform the income distribution mechanism and bridge the nation's income gap. A total of 64 people from the Chinese mainland made the Forbes magazine list of the world's richest billionaires. China has started considering overturning the ban that prohibits HIV-positive foreigners from entering the country. For a second straight year, the Chinese government has increased security across parts of the vast Tibetan plateau to dissuade any Tibetans from holding protests this week to mark the anniversaries of ethnic uprisings.

At environmental front China has urged more efforts from U.S. to tackle climate change. Meanwhile China is heading to achieve its task of cutting pollutants by 10% from 2006-2010.