

## **SHUMAILA RAFIQ**

### **BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

#### **SOUTH ASIA**

#### **Weekly Report 125: from 19<sup>th</sup> June to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

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## **SUMMARY:**

**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh's ruling Awami League party suffered an unexpected blow Friday when an opposition candidate won a crucial mayoral election in the port city of Chittagong. One of Bangladesh's leading universities closed indefinitely Sunday after five people were injured in riots by students demanding time off to watch the football World Cup, police said. Political parties must sever ties with their student bodies to restore healthy student politics and ultimately ensure a congenial environment for education in public universities of the country, said speakers yesterday during a roundtable at Jatiya Press Club. Police will take stern actions against the pickets if they try to create anarchy by vandalising vehicles or setting those on fire, Shahidul said at a press briefing at the Rajarbagh Police Telecom Auditorium in the city. Bangladesh has proclaimed an order to redesign the capital city, requiring reclamation of 3,000 acres of land occupied by influential real estate companies, earlier dubbed as "land pirates" by senior government leaders. At least 150,000 people have been marooned and thousands of hectares of crops destroyed by floods after weeks of heavy rain in Bangladesh's northeast, A Bangladesh parliament committee has told the government to declare 'a time befitting minimum wage structure' by July 29 for the country's readymade garments industry that is facing recurring industrial violence. Many of the millions of tube wells, dug over the past few decades in an effort to alleviate the country's chronic freshwater shortage, reached layers that are heavily laced with naturally occurring arsenic. A new study published in the journal Lancet documents that more than 20 percent of the deaths in the country's capital of Dhaka can be directly attributed to

drinking arsenic-tainted well water. The Bangladesh government Wednesday introduced a Family Savings Certificate, allowing investment up to Taka three million, aimed at making women economically self-reliant. A technical committee of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation member countries has decided to put the proposal of establishing 'Saarc police' and 'Saarc Institute of Criminology' on the agenda of the upcoming Saarc foreign ministers conference, as India rejected a proposal in support of issuing 10,000 stickers for visa exemptions on Thursday. India's Border Security Force (BSF) and its Bangladeshi counterpart Thursday agreed to exercise 'utmost restraint' in areas of dispute along the border. Bangladesh is losing the US market for garments to India, China, Vietnam and Indonesia, among others, causing concern among exporters. Bangladesh's annual economic losses out of the energy shortfall is US\$16.6 billion, around 16.6 percent of the \$100 billion gross domestic product (GDP), a study said Thursday. The central bank of Bangladesh has allowed commercial banks to appoint agents to disburse refinancing for solar energy plants,

**NEPAL:**PM Nepal says he, too, is in favour of unity govt. Continuing with his vitriolic attack on bureaucracy, Nepal's Constituent Assembly election defeated Prime Minister Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal on Thursday June 24, 2010, indicated that there was "rampant corruption in the government offices and held ministers, secretaries and high ranking officials entirely responsible for the prevailing chaotic situation" Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Sujata Koirala on Tuesday said her party Nepali Congress is in no hurry to lead a new government amid reports that it was planning to form a coalition after the embattled prime minister steps down as part of a last-minute deal last month. Nepal's opposition Maoist party threatened Monday to block the annual budget until the prime minister fulfils a pledge to stand down and make way for a new power-sharing government. Nepal Telecom (NT) plans to establish optical fiber connection with China by the end of fiscal year 2010/11. A satellite phone, IsatPhonePro, has been launched in Nepal on Tuesday targeting Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY-2011) by I4 Technologies, dealer of UK-based satellite mobile company Inmarsat. The price of the satellite phone in Nepal is US\$ 700 excluding value added tax (VAT). Nepal hikes daily gold imports limit to 20 kg. Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has introduced new rules related to exchange facilities for Indian rupee that, among other, has limited Indian rupees withdrawals from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in India by using electronic cards issued by Nepali banks, The ruling parties, Nepali Congress and United Marxist Leninists have decided after a meeting between representatives of the two parties at the UML parliamentary delegation office, June 23, 2010 that they will abide by the three points agreement in both letter and spirit, which was reached late night May 28, 2010-in effect it was May 29, 2010 already. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to provide Nepal with a loan of NPR 4.3 billion (USD 60.4 million equivalent) and a grant of NPR 870 million (USD 12.1 million equivalent) in an effort to increase access for credit to the rural poor and to women. Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) 2010, launched by the government on Thursday, has identified 19 products and services having maximum export potentials as an attempt to reenergize the country's ailing exports. At a time when several Nepali products are still nowhere

in the international market, China is providing duty-free facility to Nepal from next week, reports RSS. The Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index continued to see downward spiral on Thursday- the closing day of share transactions for the week-too as it shed 4.15 points to close at 463.45 points. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has on Wednesday announced the launch of 'Nepal Trade Integration Strategy-2010 (NTIS)' that provides a vision for the sustainable development of trade sector in Nepal.

**SRILANKA:** The Sri Lankan Government has declared that it would refuse visas for UN panel members appointed to investigate alleged human rights abuses during the civil war against Tamil rebels. Sri Lankan government has decided to hold the first ever provincial-level Cabinet meeting in Kilinochchi, the erstwhile administrative capital of the vanquished LTTE, next month in an effort to reach out to the local people." The conditions set by the European Commission to extend the GSP+ tariff facility are so "unacceptably intrusive" that the government feels the need to inform the Sri Lankan public of the implications of accepting those conditions for a limited-time benefit. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is expected to name a group of experts Monday to advise him what to do about alleged human rights violations during the last month of the Sri Lankan civil war, a UN diplomat said Monday." Sri Lanka's Buddhist monk party Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) says that it supports the constitutional reforms proposed by the government including the removal of the President's term limit. A Massive crowd is reportedly flocking to Anuradhapura for the celebrations to mark the inception of Buddhist civilization in Sri Lanka two millenniums ago. Humanitarian Snapshot - Focus Return Areas June 2010..Returns have continued at a steady pace since the accelerated resettlement process commenced in October 2009, with 236,755 people released from camps as of 20 May. Of this total, 142,772 have returned to their districts of origin, while 92,791 IDPs are staying with host families and 1,192 individuals are in social care institutions. Srilanka economic growth accelerated in the first quarter as the three major sectors of the economy contributed positively. Gross domestic product, or GDP, rose 7.1% annually in the first three months of the year, the Department of Census and Statistics said. The United States on Friday urged the Sri Lankan government of Mahinda Rajapaksa to "take advantage" of the opportunity and accept an offer of a U.N. committee that will probe the alleged human rights abuses in the island-nation during the final stages of the conflict between security forces and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that ended in May last year.The Russian Federation Thursday slammed the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's decision to appoint a panel of experts to advise him on Sri Lanka's alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law during the last stages of the war against Tamil Tiger rebels without regard to the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) nations have suggested formulating a common strategy to fight terrorism and drug smuggling in the region, with Sri Lanka pushing for the creation of a Saarc police body to investigate cross-border crimes in the region. Praising the measures Sri Lanka has taken towards achieving peace following the end of the war the visiting Japanese Envoy

Yashushi Akashi said today that his government has allocated 39 billion yen (48 billion rupees) assistance to Sri Lanka for the forthcoming period.

### **Detailed News:**

#### **Bangladesh ruling party suffers shock defeat in mayoral vote**

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh — Bangladesh's ruling Awami League party suffered an unexpected blow Friday when an opposition candidate won a crucial mayoral election in the port city of Chittagong. Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) candidate M. Manzur Alam beat the incumbent ruling party candidate -- who has been mayor for 17 years -- by 95,528 votes, Chittagong election commission official Shafiqur Rahman said. "People responded to our promise of change in Chittagong," Alam told reporters after the initial results were announced.

The BNP, which is currently boycotting parliament and has called a protest strike on June 27 to try to bring down the government, said their Chittagong victory signaled widespread discontent with the AL's "misrule". "The AL have failed to resolve the power crisis or spiralling inflation on essential goods and the people have seen this," BNP secretary general Khandakar Delwar told reporters. The result marks the first loss of a key position for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League 18 months after it won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that ended two years of military rule. "This defeat is a signal for the government, we accept the result, we realise that the people have spoken and we will help the new mayor as best we can," said Obaidul Kader, a senior AL leader. Local observers said the election was largely peaceful with no major allegations of vote rigging although minor scuffle erupted Thursday night between the opposing candidates' supporters, leaving some injured. Bangladeshi politics has long been dominated by Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia, who have maintained a debilitating rivalry for decades. In all four national elections since democracy was restored in Bangladesh in 1991, the losers never accepted the results and began a series of protests and strikes immediately after the polls.

#### **Political parties must de-link student fronts**

Political parties must sever ties with their student bodies to restore healthy student politics and ultimately ensure a congenial environment for education in public universities of the country, said speakers yesterday during a roundtable at Jatiya Press Club. Teacher-student relations in the public universities have grown cold which has negatively affected the academic environment on the campuses, they said at a roundtable organised by Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik (Sujan).

The speakers asked the government to take steps to create suitable atmosphere for learning on the campuses. Speaking as the chair of the roundtable president of Sujan Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said creating a congenial atmosphere on the campuses cannot be overlooked as it is linked with the development of the country. While presenting a keynote paper Prof Shafi Ahmed of

Jahangirnagar University said academic atmosphere will not be regained if the universities cannot eliminate their political dependency. The government itself has failed to provide a healthy atmosphere in the public universities, he added. Secretary of Sujan Badiul Alam Majumder presented another keynote at the roundtable which was also addressed by Mahmudur Rahman Manna a leader of Awami League, Ruhin Hossain Prince leader of Communist Party of Bangladesh and Professor Sadeka Halim of Dhaka University among others.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=144064>

### **Bangladesh closes university after World Cup riots**

One of Bangladesh's leading universities closed indefinitely Sunday after five people were injured in riots by students demanding time off to watch the football World Cup, police said. Students carrying sticks and metal rods rampaged through the University of Engineering and Technology in the capital Dhaka on Saturday demanding the term was cut short to allow them to enjoy the matches, the local police chief said. "The junior students were protesting as they wanted the campus to close so they can watch the World Cup. But some senior students, who have exams, didn't want that -- so there were some very tense clashes," Rezaul Karim told AFP. "The university held emergency meetings and decided to close immediately," he said, adding this was a week ahead of the scheduled June 26 end of term. During the 2006 World Cup, scores of students were injured in clashes at the same university. The fighting on Saturday triggered widespread panic, witnesses said. "It was totally unexpected. Suddenly, the junior students started attacking the seniors with metal rods and sticks," Tapash Ghosh, a senior student, told AFP. "This violence is so silly -- why on earth should my university close for the World Cup? For senior students, our classes are too important," he said. On Sunday armed security guards were stationed at the front gates of the deserted campus. "We have closed the university for an indefinite period to avoid any trouble, we hope to reopen after the World Cup," Jibon Podder, the student affairs chief, told AFP. "At one stage the two groups were fighting inside the university itself, injuring five students," he added. Rakibul Hasan, a senior student who is about to complete an honours degree, criticised the university authorities for giving in to the protesters. "I'm really annoyed. Now it will take even more time for us to finish our studies, get a job and start earning -- I think the university was scared and shut down too quickly," he said. Bangladesh has a culture of violent student politics, especially on public university campuses. All three of the country's main political parties have strong student wings, which they fund and sometimes arm. The usually cricket-mad nation is currently gripped by World Cup fever, despite the national team not qualifying for the tournament.irate fans last week damaged vehicles and attacked electricity distribution centres when a power cut hit television coverage of a match.

Some factories in Dhaka have also shut during games to reduce power blackouts.

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jwpdoC7Kt9Zengwfag8\\_j5e\\_CmYQ](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jwpdoC7Kt9Zengwfag8_j5e_CmYQ)

## **BNP warned against hartal chaos**

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque on Friday said police will not prevent the BNP from observing its dawn-to-dusk hartal on June 27.

Police will take stern actions against the pickets if they try to create anarchy by vandalising vehicles or setting those on fire, Shahidul said at a press briefing at the Rajarbagh Police Telecom Auditorium in the city. BNP Chairperson and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia announced the general strike from a grand rally in the capital on May 19 protesting tender-grabbing and extortions by government cronies; and demanding resolution of the ongoing water, gas, and electricity crises; resignation of the Election Commission; and cancellation of the recently signed treaties with India. He said additional 10,000 police forces will be deployed at 4:00am on the day of hartal to maintain law and order in the city. The DMP will be divided into nine sectors under nine deputy commissioners where a total of 451 picketing teams, 74 striking teams and 135 mobile petrol teams will work. And striking reserve forces will stay at 15 points including near the police control room. Besides, police personnel of the Detective Branch will stay at the Bangladesh Secretariat and other key installations in plain clothes. Around 20 teams equipped with video and still cameras will parade different city streets in the hartal hours.

Police petrol teams will start patrolling across the city on the eve of the hartal day.

## **That's not the way to do it**

“THE chances of another coup in Bangladesh are close to zero,” says a former general in Bangladesh’s army. That sounds excellent. But the country’s “rival queens”—Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister, and Khaleda Zia, who were both jailed during an anti-corruption drive by an army-backed government in 2007-08—seem to see the soldiers’ docility as an opportunity. The result is that, 18 months after Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League (AL) won a parliamentary election in a landslide, Bangladesh’s politics is back to normal: personal, vindictive and confrontational. This week Mrs Zia’s opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) extended its boycott of parliament. She has called a nationwide *hartal* (protest strike) for June 27th to call for the government to step down. It will be the first *hartal* since democratic politics collapsed in late 2006 and will come only ten days after mayoral elections in Chittagong, the country’s second city, which the party is expected to lose. Demoralised and in disarray, the BNP has just 30 seats in parliament, down from 193 in 2001. But where the BNP is concerned, the AL is conditioned to overreact. It has shut down an opposition-backed television channel. On June 2nd it also closed *Amar Desh*, a BNP-backed newspaper, and detained its editor, Mahmudur Rahman, one of Mrs Zia’s closest advisers. The BNP is livid, suspecting Sheikh Hasina of punishing Mr Rahman for publishing a story accusing her son of financial irregularities, and for his alleged role in the BNP’s efforts in late 2006 to rig a (subsequently aborted) parliamentary election. It is as if



the two-year military interregnum, during which most senior politicians were in the clink on charges of corruption, never happened. On May 30th Bangladesh's judges dropped the last of 15 corruption cases against Sheikh Hasina. Four cases against Mrs Zia are proceeding. Aid donors are furious over government plans to make the Anti-Corruption Commission secure government approval before prosecuting officials. Repeated pledges by Sheikh Hasina to end executions by police and paramilitary forces have come to nothing. The first 18 months of AL rule saw at least 190 extrajudicial killings (typically "in crossfire"), according to the Asian Legal Resource Centre, a human-rights watchdog. This may be an obstacle to Bangladesh's hopes of winning the presidency of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2012. Another headache is Bangladesh's largest-ever trial—of thousands of members of the Border Guard Bangladesh, a paramilitary force formerly known as the Bangladesh Rifles, for their alleged role in a bloody mutiny in February 2009. The reasons behind the mutiny, in which more than 50 army officers died, may never be known. But, sure enough, the AL and BNP accuse each other of having had a hand in it. The government must be seen to punish the culprits to avoid damaging its relations with the army. That may mean mass executions. As it is, at least 48 border guards died in custody last year. The army's attempt to rid Bangladesh of its appalling leaders, or to shock them into better behaviour, has failed. But its intervention has disrupted, perhaps for ever, the regular rotation of power that has marked Bangladeshi politics since the advent of parliamentary democracy in 1991. For the first time since then, Bangladesh's problems—poverty, energy shortages, terrorism and climate change—may not be enough to bring the opposition to power. Mrs Zia must fear that she is the last in line in her political dynasty. Both her sons face charges of corruption. The eldest, Tarique, who is in exile in London, is seen by many Bangladeshis as the symbol of all that was wrong with the BNP's previous, kleptocratic stint in power. Mrs Zia may reckon he could resuscitate the party if he returned from exile. But the opposition camp is split three ways, between those loyal to her, a reformist wing and former leaders who have now left the BNP. Reuniting them requires reconciliation, not one of Mrs Zia's strong points. Meanwhile, the party's ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's biggest Islamic party, is in trouble. Almost all its leaders will stand trial for alleged war crimes during the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. Some 70% of Bangladesh's population of about 160m are under 35. Most have had enough of the politics of personal animosity. The two ladies' feud and obsession with the past have hobbled development for decades. But the habits of confrontation are hard to break. Some senior BNP leaders have advised Mrs Zia to replicate Thailand's "red shirt" movement and "turn Dhaka into Bangkok".

[http://www.economist.com/node/16319783?story\\_id=16319783](http://www.economist.com/node/16319783?story_id=16319783)

### **Bangladesh to reclaim land from realty cos**

Bangladesh has proclaimed an order to redesign the capital city, requiring reclamation of 3,000 acres of land occupied by influential real estate companies, earlier dubbed as "land pirates" by

senior government leaders. "The government had announced the DAP (Detailed Area Plan) for the capital Dhaka to prevent flooding and ease the traffic congestion in the city...this will require us to reclaim about 3,000 acres of land from the real estate companies," a spokesman of the regulatory Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK) told *PTI*. He added that they would launch a campaign to reclaim the land marked as flood flow zone and agricultural land in and around Dhaka while out of the total 590 square miles of jurisdiction area in the area plan, 33.35 per cent was kept for urban and rural residential and mixed purposes, which were expected to house 18.53 million people by 2015.

Several real estate companies, however, already raised high-rise residential projects involving crores while several hundred of such plots have already been sold despite media campaigns against land grabbing for unplanned projects exposing Dhaka, the home of an estimated 10.5 million people, to notorious traffic jams and water logging during monsoon rains. According to earlier newspaper reports several of the housing project areas were occupied also by ruling Awami League leaders. The Daily Star newspaper, however, feared that despite Tuesday's government gazette notification approving DAP certain errant land development projects were likely to remain unscathed due to "legal loopholes". Quoting the government high-ups, the report said the authorities might need to take a softer stance in certain cases as the Town Improvement Act, Wetland Conservation Act, and DAP itself provide chances of appeal for violators, and discretionary authority for government high officials. State-minister for public works and housing Abdul Mannan, who earlier declared a crusade against land grabbers calling real estate companies as "land pirates" told the newspaper that the government might need to accept "violations in certain cases". "But we will enforce the law sternly in the worst cases of violation," he added. Such acceptance of errant land use will be considered only in greater public interest, said RAJUK chief Nurul Huda. RAJUK officials said the DAP followed a principle in identifying the agricultural land, flood flow zones, water bodies and water retention ponds under a 1997 structural plan for the city. They said several government establishments like Gazipur upazila or sub-district headquarters, Keraniganj upazila headquarters, Sonakanda BSCIC Industrial Area, Dhaka City Corporations dump at Baliarpur and Bhurulia REB office would also need to be relocated to free the flood flow zones

<http://business.rediff.com/report/2010/jun/24/dhaka-to-reclaim-land-from-realty-cos.htm>

### **150,000 marooned by Bangladesh floods**

DHAKA: At least 150,000 people have been marooned and thousands of hectares of crops destroyed by floods after weeks of heavy rain in Bangladesh's northeast, an official said on Tuesday. Five weeks of heavy rain caused rivers to burst their banks and flood large areas of countryside and villages, Sylhet district chief Sazzad Hossain told AFP. "At least 36,000 families – around 150,000 people – have been marooned by the floods in my district," he said. The water level was still rising, causing major damage to crops and cutting off communication with many areas, he added. "We have opened 31 makeshift relief centres where

2,000 people have taken shelter,” he said, adding there were currently no reports of casualties. Last week at least 55 people were killed after the worst rains in decades triggered landslides and flash floods in the country’s southeastern hill regions. At least 12,000 people were made homeless in the floods.

### **Give fair wage to Bangladesh workers: Parliamentary body**

A Bangladesh parliament committee has told the government to declare 'a time befitting minimum wage structure' by July 29 for the country's readymade garments industry that is facing recurring industrial violence. The parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment also recommended taking measures to resolve all the other problems in the garments sector. The labour minister Mosharraf Hossain informed the committee Thursday that a tripartite meeting involving the ministry, garments unit-owners and workers' representatives is likely to be held Sunday or Monday. The meet will discuss the ongoing unrest in the sector, Israfil Alam, chief of the parliamentary body, told The Daily Star newspaper. As many as 50,000 to 60,000 garment industry workers have been booked for violence over the last weekend in Ashulia, a suburban industrial township on the outskirts of the national capital. Four cases were lodged at the Ashulia police station by Wednesday evening -- one was against 50,000 to 60,000 unnamed people while two were against 180 people on the charge of attacking factories and one against 200 unnamed people. About the case filed against such a large number of people, New Age quoted the Ashulia police officer-in-charge, Sirajul Islam, as saying: 'We have taken the decision to avert further unrest in the area.' The area's 250 garments units resumed work Wednesday following assurance of protection from the government. The private garments sector is Bangladesh's top foreign exchange earner. It netted \$12 billion in 2009. The latest round of violent protests was triggered over wage dispute. The workers want Taka 5,000 (\$86) as minimum wage, while the employers are not willing to pay beyond Taka 1,600. The garments sector has witnessed recurring violence in Bangladesh where wages are low and working conditions are poor for an estimated three million workers, mostly women. A global survey by the Vienna-based International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), released here last week, has said that the Bangladeshi workers in this sector are 'world's most poorly paid.'

<http://sify.com/news/give-fair-wage-to-bangladesh-workers-parliamentary-body-news-international-kgoacbcihh.html>

**Tens of millions of Bangladeshis are being poisoned by arsenic through drinking from contaminated wells dug since the 1970s.**

Many of the millions of tube wells, dug over the past few decades in an effort to alleviate the country's chronic freshwater shortage, reached layers that are heavily laced with naturally occurring arsenic. A new study published in the journal Lancet documents that more than 20 percent of the deaths in the country's capital of Dhaka can be directly attributed to drinking arsenic-tainted well water. The study followed the overall health of volunteers and the level of arsenic in local well water. After 10 years, Dr. Habibul Ahsan of the University of Chicago Medical Center documented a clear link to long-term exposure to arsenic among those volunteers and an increased incidence of death. Arsenic is known to cause cancer and is toxic to the liver, kidney skin and the cardiovascular system. Bangladeshi Health Minister A.F.M. Ruhul Haque told reporters that while he acknowledges arsenic is a problem in his country, he questions the new findings by Dr. Ahsan. The United Nations World Health Organization calls Bangladesh's arsenic crisis "the largest mass poisoning of a population in history."

<http://www.earthweek.com/2010/ew100625/ew100625c.html>

### **Bangladesh introduces savings scheme for women**

The Bangladesh government Wednesday introduced a Family Savings Certificate, allowing investment up to Taka three million, aimed at making women economically self-reliant. Family Savings Certificate of Taka 10,000, Taka 20,000, Taka 50,000, Taka 100,000, Taka 200,000 and Taka 500,000 will be on sale at all bureaux of the National Savings Directorate. \$1 is equal to Taka 69.5. Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, who formally inaugurated the scheme, said women are a much neglected lot as they have to depend on the father in their childhood, on the husband in their youth and on their children in old age. Family Savings Certificates, which offer monthly benefit, were first launched in 1997 but the government withdrew the facility in 2002, The Daily Star said. Women's empowerment is a major issue in Bangladesh where Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus launched Grameen, a rural credit scheme exclusive for women, in the 1970s.

### **India rejects visa exemption proposal**

ISLAMABAD: A technical committee of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation member countries has decided to put the proposal of establishing 'Saarc police' and 'Saarc Institute of Criminology' on the agenda of the upcoming Saarc foreign ministers conference, as India rejected a proposal in support of issuing 10,000 stickers for visa exemptions on Thursday. Four technical sessions were held on Thursday, day-two of the third meeting of the Saarc countries' ministers of interior. The meetings here at the Serena hotel were attended by top officials from the foreign affairs, interior and police departments of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives and Bangladesh. The meetings discussed in detail various

issues related to organised crime, immigration, passports and visas, border control management and human smuggling. Saarc member states agreed to improve identification procedures at their airports. Pakistan proposed that a criminology institute be established in the Saarc region, a suggestion that member countries agreed to unanimously. This proposal was placed on the agenda of the Saarc interior ministers conference scheduled for Friday. On Wednesday Sri Lanka had proposed that a 'Saarc police' network should be established in the region, and on Thursday this proposal was also placed on the interior ministers' agenda. Sri Lanka also presented a proposal on the exchange of intelligence. At a session on immigration, chaired by the Director General Passport and Immigration Wajid Bokhari, officials discussed the Saarc visa exemption scheme. Under the Saarc visa exemption scheme introduced in March 1992, the holder of an exemption sticker is entitled to one-month stay in a Saarc country without restrictions on the number of cities visited.

The meeting was told that the Saarc secretariat has printed 10,000 stickers in order to grant visa exemptions to businessmen, athletes, academics and journalists. Out of this, 8,500 stickers have been distributed to Saarc member states. These include 3,500 to Bangladesh, 2,000 to Pakistan, 800 to Afghanistan, 1,000 each to Sri Lanka and India and 200 to Maldives. However, India opposed the proposal and said that visa issues should be dealt with bilaterally. Indian representatives said visas should be handled in accordance with a country's own policies and procedures. Thursday's meeting of technical committees has finalised the agenda for Friday's conference, which has been issued to member countries. The communiqué on the conference is expected to approve of this agenda.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/23620/india-rejects-visa-exemption-proposal/>

### **India, Bangladesh to exercise calm on border**

India's Border Security Force (BSF) and its Bangladeshi counterpart Thursday agreed to exercise 'utmost restraint' in areas of dispute along the border. After a meeting with Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Brigadier Obaidul Haque, BSF Inspector General R.C. Saxena said: 'We have strongly voiced our concern and displeasure regarding recent unprovoked firing by them creating unnecessary tension along the border.' BSF and BDR officials met at Dawki, 85 km south of Meghalaya's capital Shillong, in the aftermath of BDR's 'unprovoked firing' June 15 that left a school teacher injured. Saxena told IANS on telephone from Dawki that both sides had agreed that any violation of the border would be settled through discussions and not by confrontation. 'We have agreed that settlement of areas under adverse possession should be left to the joint working group of both nations scheduled to meet next month to find ways to settle outstanding border disputes,' Saxena said

### **Bangladesh losing US garment market to India, China**

DHAKA: Bangladesh is losing the US market for garments to India, China, Vietnam and Indonesia, among others, causing concern among exporters. Citing a recent report of US Commerce Department, exporters say Bangladesh, recording a marginal fall during January-April this year, has witnessed overall negative growth in shipments compared to other Asian competitors. The report on "US apparel imports from major Asian sources in January-April 2010" shows Bangladesh's apparel shipments saw one per cent decline over the like period of the past year. The report shows that in January-April, shipments from China grew more than 13 per cent to \$6.8 billion, Vietnam 9.6 per cent to \$1.7 billion and Indonesia 6.1 per cent to \$1.46 billion. Shipments from India in the period grew by 1.8 per cent to \$1.15 billion, Pakistan 8 per cent to \$0.4 billion and from Cambodia they grew by 3 per cent to \$0.65 billion. "The post-recession US market appears to be harsh to Bangladesh," a Bangladeshi executive who works for the Dhaka sourcing office of an US importer told New Age. In the first four months of the current year, Bangladesh's apparel shipments to the US were worth \$1.21 billion against the figure of \$1.2 billion in the like period of the 2009. "Sourcing dynamics have been changing a lot in the post-recession market," the executive said. "Convenient contracts and deliveries, more interactive marketing efforts and many other things are influencing the minds of the importers." Readymade garments and knitwear are Bangladesh's top earners and netted \$12 billion in 2009. However, it is also afflicted by political and industrial violence. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/global-markets/Bangladesh-losing-US-garment-market-to-India-China/articleshow/6086434.cms>

### **Study Says Energy Crunch Causes \$16.6 Billion Yearly Loss In Bangladesh**

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Dhaka, Bangladesh (AHN) - Bangladesh's annual economic losses out of the energy shortfall is US\$16.6 billion, around 16.6 percent of the \$100 billion gross domestic product (GDP), a study said Thursday. The power and gas crisis is eating up \$1.33 billion worth of net output in the export-oriented manufacturing sector, according to Ijaz Hossain, a professor at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. Hossain made the revelations as he presented a paper on the "impact of power and gas crisis on the export-oriented manufacturing sector" at a meeting in the capital, Dhaka. Hossain also said the country's overall energy shortfall is equivalent to 4 million tons of oil, which is affecting the industrial sector badly.

Bangladesh is now reeling under an acute power and gas crisis with the electricity generation shortfall hovering around 1,500 megawatt (mw) and gas supply shortfall around 500 million cubic feet per day. He said the country is highly dependent on natural gas, which has an estimated reserve of around 12.5 trillion cubic feet.

Considering 6 percent demand growth annually, the reserve would be exhausted by 2020, he said. The professor urged the country to diversify its energy resources to meet the country's future demand. He called coal only a near-term option.

## **Bangladesh's Banks Allowed To Appoint Agents For Solar Energy Loans**

Dhaka, Bangladesh (AHN) - The central bank of Bangladesh has allowed commercial banks to appoint agents to disburse refinancing for solar energy plants, officials told AHN Media Thursday. The agents will be responsible for all aspects of the loan process, from preparing loan proposals to recovery of the loans, according to a bank circular."The central bank has taken the latest move to boost up disbursement of the fund both in off-grid and on-grid areas across the country," a senior official of the Bangladesh Bank told AHN in Dhaka.If banks channelized the fund through the agents, the rate of interest on such lending will be maximum 10 percent instead of the existing 9 percent, the official added.The central bank earlier set a refinancing scheme worth US\$28.81 million (BDT 2.0 billion) for installation of effluent treatment plants (ETPs) and solar energy and bio-gas plants.Under the scheme, the solar energy and biogas plants and ETPs will be provided with up to 100 percent refinancing that will be disbursed to both rural and urban areas.The officials said the repayment period will be three years

## **NEPAL**

### **PM Nepal says he, too, is in favour of unity govt**

At a time when the main opposition Unified CPN (Maoist) and a section of the CPN (UML) have been describing him as the main obstacle to forming a government of national consensus, Prime Minister Madhav Nepal Thursday said he, too, also in favour of such a government. PM Nepal also said all the political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly should be involved in the formation of 'national unity government' along with the three major parties. The Prime Minister was speaking at a meeting of fringe political parties held at the parliamentary party office of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) in Singha Durbar. The leaders of the fringe parties held the meeting with Prime Minister Nepal as part of their ongoing efforts to encourage the top leaders of the three big parties to find consensus at the earliest.Talking to reporters after the meeting, chairman of Dalit Janajati Party said the smaller parties would be compelled to resort to peaceful protest if the major parties failed to find a way out of the current stalemate. Earlier too, the fringe parties had made numerous calls to the big ones for consensus as a prerequisite for expediting the constitution-writing and peace process.

### **Nepal PM spits venom, Bureaucrats retort and redirect Fingers at him**

Continuing with his vitriolic attack on bureaucracy, Nepal's Constituent Assembly election defeated Prime Minister Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal on Thursday June 24, 2010, indicated that

there was “rampant corruption in the government offices and held ministers, secretaries and high ranking officials entirely responsible for the prevailing chaotic situation”.Addressing the concluding session of his four day interaction with the government secretaries, PM Nepal categorically pointed out the irregularities in the bureaucracy and also stated that neither the secretaries nor the ministers have been able to check such illegal practices.“Some of the high ranking government officials and former ministers own ten buildings in Kathmandu and they also own several vehicles”, he said and asked, “Investigation is never carried out how they could amasses so much of wealth.”He was also not happy with the way government secretaries and ministers were visiting the diplomatic missions. However, reports have it that the Prime Minister accepted that visiting the foreign missions here have now become a *compulsion*.

“I used to often visit foreign missions stationed in Nepal, but, I have become quite selective now”, he said and added, “I have decided to attend only golden jubilee and silver jubilee celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic ties with our country.”“I do not want you to unnecessarily visit the foreign missions...you must maintain minimum diplomatic courtesies.”

However, the government secretaries in an indirect manner held the Prime Minister also responsible for the situation, it has been reported.“Yes, we accept that we must maintain the diplomatic boundaries, but the Prime Minister too has several times broken the limits by holding several hour long discussions with the foreign secretaries, their deputies from India and Pakistan”, said Yub Raj Pandey, secretary at the National Planning Commission. Pandey asked,“It is not at all honorific for a prime minister, does it.”PM Nepal is a duffer as he has himself been found holding one to one unwarranted discussions with several Ambassadors, more so with Ambassador Sood, without the demanded and the required approval of the Foreign Ministry.Ambassador Sood is a regular visitor.If the Nepal PM can meet foreign envoys without informing the Foreign Ministry then what is the harm when his “corrupt”, as PM claims, subordinates and the bureaucrats mingle over “two pegs of Scotch whiskey” with foreign Ambassadors stationed in Kathmandu and in the process ask for “ free scholarship” for their kids?To recall, Nepal PM’s own daughter, Dr. Suman Nepal, enjoyed free Indian MBBS scholarship some years back and now she is accomplishing her “internship” at the All India Medical Institute.How Madhav Nepal could have bagged this free Indian scholarship is any body’s guess.No free lunch from India. Reports say that Dr. Suman Nepal is soon getting married. Nepal PM too wants to accomplish this compulsory and binding “Hindu ritual” while he is glued in the current Chair for a “variety of reasons”. This does mean that the Nepali Prime Minister has already irritated the bureaucracy for which he awaits befitting retaliation. However, in which form the bureaucrats retaliate is not known.What is known is that they will surely disable Nepal PM sooner than later.PM Nepal has opened the Pandora's Box. The Lid is open now.How the ugly drama unfolds in the immediate future will have to be watched.

[http://telegraphnepal.com/news\\_det.php?news\\_id=7870](http://telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7870)

**Nepali Congress not in hurry to lead govt: Sujata**



Kathmandu: Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Sujata Koirala on Tuesday said her party Nepali Congress is in no hurry to lead a new government amid reports that it was planning to form a coalition after the embattled prime minister steps down as part of a last-minute deal last month. I am not in a position to form a government that will be short lived and is incapable of completing the peace process as well as drafting the new constitution, Koirala said.

Koirala, who is also the Foreign Minister, said her party is in no hurry to lead the new government. The Nepali Congress should focus on strengthening the party organisation at the local and district levels and keep the organisation intact before aiming to head the government.

Without ensuring the tasks of completing the peace process and drafting the constitution there is no meaning in forming a new government headed by the Nepali Congress, she underlined. The foreign minister said for the Nepali Congress it is more important to draft a democratic constitution and to resolve the current deadlock than heading a government. She said the incumbent Prime Minister should be allowed to continue for the time being and the Maoists should cooperate to endorse the budget for the next fiscal year when the government tables it next month. Koirala, who is also the central committee member of the ruling Nepali Congress, said the party will now focus on its general convention scheduled to take place in August-end rather than running after power. Koirala's remarks comes amid reports that some leaders in the largest party in the ruling coalition has put forward the party's claim to lead a government amid a standoff over power sharing in Nepal. The political parties are deadlocked over a deal whereby Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal had agreed to step down as demanded by opposition Maoists after it agreed to support the extension of the term of the Constituent Assembly by one year on May 28. Main opposition CPN-Maoist, the single largest party with nearly 40 per cent of the parliamentary seats, has claimed to lead a national coalition to rescue the peace process and frame a new constitution. Reports have suggested that former premier and senior Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba and Parliamentary Party leader Ramchandra Paudyal are in the race for the top post after the prime minister expressed willingness to step down once a consensus is reached among the major parties to form a new government and complete the peace process. Amid growing speculation over a power struggle in the Nepali Congress, Koirala said she had no problem with whoever becomes the prime minister. "There is no controversy over prime ministerial candidate in the party," said Koirala. "I have no problem with whoever becomes the prime minister. But the thing is that the leadership should be successful," she was quoted as saying in the media today. Koirala said Nepali Congress will have to play an important role in taking the peace process to its logical conclusion and to draft a democratic constitution. She asked all political parties including the Maoists to move forward by forging cooperation, collaboration and unity to solve the national problems. The Maoists should cooperate in managing the combatants (integration into the security forces), returning the seized property and dissolving the paramilitary organisation of the Young Communist League before forming a new government, she said. The ruling 22-party coalition is deadlocked over power

sharing with the main opposition Maoists since the Prachanda-led government resigned last May following a dispute with President Ram Baran Yadav over the sacking of former army chief Rukmangad Katawal.

<http://www.zeenews.com/news635831.html>

### **Nepal's Maoists threaten to block budget**

KATHMANDU — Nepal's opposition Maoist party threatened Monday to block the annual budget until the prime minister fulfils a pledge to stand down and make way for a new power-sharing government. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal agreed on May 28 to resign as part of an 11th-hour deal to persuade the Maoists to vote for an extension of parliament's term and avert a political crisis. But he remains in office and the Maoists, who have the highest number of seats in parliament, have accused him of betraying the agreement between the three main party leaders. "We will not accept the government's budget for the coming year unless the government resigns," Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma told AFP. "If there is no resignation, there will be no budget." Parliament was scheduled to begin debating the government's budget proposals this month, but that has been delayed by political wrangling over the shape of the next administration. The parliament, or Constituent Assembly, was elected in 2008 with a two-year mandate to complete the peace process launched after the 10-year civil war between Maoist rebels and the state, and to draft a new national constitution. But it failed to complete either task on time, hampered by fierce disagreements between the Maoists and their political rivals. Its term had been due to end on May 28, leaving the country without a functioning legislature, but lawmakers voted to extend it for another year. Nepali opposition party's combatants urged to participate in rehabilitation programs Different bodies of the United Nations based in Nepal have urged the main opposition Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN-M)'s former People's Liberation Army (PLA) combatants to participate in various rehabilitation programs, the National News Agency RSS reported on Thursday. According to the RSS, the U.N. bodies urged the former PLA combatants to participate in the rehabilitation programs after there was minimum participation of the former PLA fighters in the programs carried out by these organizations. A total of 4,008 former disqualified PLA combatants were discharged from the cantonments in last December. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities and International Labor Organization have been carrying out different rehabilitation programs for the unqualified PLA fighters. According to the information given at a program organized by the UNDP here Wednesday, although all ex-militants were urged to participate in the rehabilitation program run by the four U.N. agencies, only 1,837 have come into contact till date. Some of them participated in the rehabilitation program. Training on technical skills such as tailoring and house wiring was provided to some while others willing to join schools and colleges were provided with scholarships as per the program. Resident Representative of the UNDP Robert Piper said though the social and political rehabilitation of the ex-militia of the

UCPN-M was sensitive, it was begun by the U.N. agencies. He urged the UCPN-M and Nepal government to help in this effort. UNICEF Representative Gillion Mellsop said that the agency was promoting rehabilitation programs and encouraging those willing to join schools.

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7038535.html>

### **Nepal Telecom to establish optical fiber link with China**

Nepal Telecom (NT) plans to establish optical fiber connection with China by the end of fiscal year 2010/11. According to Monday's Republica daily report, the state-owned telecom major has held a series of discussions with China Telecom to establish optical fiber connection between the two operators as per the Memorandum of Understanding signed two years ago, said Anoopranjan Bhattarai, deputy managing director-planning division at NT. Optical fiber connection will link NT's network with China Telecom's network from Nepal-China bordering area Tatopani and Rasuwa stations. NT has already developed necessary infrastructures at the Tatopani station but is yet to build infrastructures at Rasuwa station, according to Bhattarai. NT is working out economic aspect of share and use of the optical fiber network. "We are discussing bandwidth, leasing period and financial aspect of the deal. We are constantly in touch with the Chinese telecom operator to discuss the related issues," Surendra Thike, spokesperson of NT, told the daily. NT currently has optical fiber connection with India and it sends and receives data toward China's Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan and other countries through India. "If optical fiber connection with China is established, the cost of telecommunication services to and from other countries will significantly drop," Bhattarai said. He also said that China and India would reach an understanding to connect their telecommunication networks through Nepal once Nepal establishes optical fiber connection with the northern neighbor.

NT is currently establishing connections to Europe and America using satellite technology.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-06/21/c\\_13360516.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-06/21/c_13360516.htm)

### **Satellite phone in Nepal at US\$ 700**

A satellite phone, IsatPhonePro, has been launched in Nepal on Tuesday targeting Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY-2011) by I4 Technologies, dealer of UK-based satellite mobile company Inmarsat. The price of the satellite phone in Nepal is US\$ 700 excluding value added tax (VAT). The satellite phone is available with both prepaid and post-paid service facilities. On the prepaid satellite phone, it will charge 95 cents per minute to its customers while on the post-paid, it will charge 68 cents for a call to anywhere in the world. According to the company, the Isatphone Pro is best for travelers, first aid workers, media persons, the military, mountaineers and people living in remote areas as the phone is capable of making calls from anywhere around the world. The phone is very useful to the first aid workers as well because anyone can ask for back up help and rescue during the emergencies in dangerous places and places with extreme

temperatures, said the company. It said it aims to sell 300 to 600 units by the end of the tourism year.

### **Nepal hikes daily gold imports limit to 20 kg**

by an additional 10 kg a day to 20 kilogram per day till July 7. In a statement, NRB said this is in view with continued demand for the yellow metal during the marriage season. However, Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association (NEGOSIDA) said this move will not be enough as the marriage season will continue beyond the granted 30 days period and there will be a shortage of gold in the market. According to the Association, per day gold requirement is in the range of 25-30 kg but if the additional quota of gold import by NRB ends, it will create a shortage of gold for the ongoing marriage season, which will continue till July 16. Gold prices in Nepal remained below Nepal Rs 36,000 per tola at the beginning of this week despite international rate for gold has increased to \$ 1,260 per ounce due to a weak dollar.

<http://www.commodityonline.com/news/Nepal-hikes-daily-gold-imports-limit-to-20-kg-29351-3-1.html>

### **Nepal Introduces New Rules On Exchange Facilities For Indian Rupee**

KATHMANDU, June 21 (Bernama) -- Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has introduced new rules related to exchange facilities for Indian rupee that, among other, has limited Indian rupees withdrawals from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in India by using electronic cards issued by Nepali banks, China's Xinhua news agency reported citing local daily. According to the Monday's myrepublica.com report, the central bank officials said the new measures were aimed at checking illegal trading of Indian currency, particularly in bordering cities, and to ensure adequate supplies of Indian currency to those who are in real need. According to the directives, individuals having ATM cards issued by Nepali financial institutions can now withdraw up to 200,000 Nepali rupees (US\$2,758) (US\$1=72.90 Nepali rupees) per month from the banks based in India. Earlier the limit was 25,000 rupees (US\$342) per day. "We have noticed activities of hundreds of individuals, who deposit huge sum of Nepali rupees in Nepali banks and withdraw it from banks across the boarder to sell them at higher rates in Nepal," said an official of the central bank. According to media reports, currently Indian currency notes are being sold at as high as 165 Nepali rupee per 100 Indian rupee in the bordering cities of Nepal mainly after banks in the regions failed to supply Indian currency as per the demand. NRB has fixed 160 Nepali rupees for each 100 Indian rupees as an official exchange rate between the two currencies. ( 1 Indian Rupees = 1.59 Nepali Rupees).

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsworld.php?id=507511>

## **Nepal parties NC and UML agree to realize 3 point accord verbatim**

The ruling parties, Nepali Congress and United Marxist Leninists have decided after a meeting between representatives of the two parties at the UML parliamentary delegation office, June 23, 2010 that they will abide by the three points agreement in both letter and spirit, which was reached late night May 28, 2010-in effect it was May 29, 2010 already. On May 28, 2010 Nepal's major three parties had arrived at a Three Point Agreement prior extending the Constituent Assembly tenure by 12 more months.

Three Point Agreement follows:

1. To bring logical end to the peace process and accomplish historical goal of drafting New Constitution, we hereby commit ourselves to accomplish our duties in consensus and unity.
2. We agree to extend tenure of the Constituent Assembly by one year period to accomplish the remaining tasks of drafting constitution.
3. To accomplish above mentioned jobs and responsibilities we agree to form a National Unity government in consensus and assure that the prime minister of the current coalition government is ready to tender his resignation.

Apart from extending the CA tenure by a year period the parties have not been able to forge unity over the remaining issues.

The idea is to keep the fighting going on but pocketing monthly salaries without any hindrance befooling the population. Ram Chandra Poudel, the leader of Nepali Congress Parliamentary delegation told media persons after the meeting that the ruling parties have decided to implement the agreement in totality within two days. Poudel also said that he was totally confident that the meeting would bring political dispute to an end. The NC insiders however, claim that the meeting was primarily held to find ways to thwart fresh Maoists' threat to not allow the government to present Fiscal Budget for next year.

yet another drama is all set to begin.

[http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news\\_det.php?news\\_id=7866](http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7866)

## **Asian Development Bank Pledges \$72m in Assistance to Nepal to Expand Microfinance to Rural Areas**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to provide Nepal with a loan of NPR 4.3 billion (USD 60.4 million equivalent) and a grant of NPR 870 million (USD 12.1 million equivalent) in an effort to increase access for credit to the rural poor and to women. The ADB Board of Directors approved the funding to be paid from its Asian Development Fund to finance the Nepalese Rural Finance Sector Development Cluster Program and other similar programs.

The Rural Finance Sector Development Cluster Program is a development program executed by Nepal's Ministry of Finance to provide financial services to and alleviate poverty of the rural

poor in Nepal. The cluster program is targeting an increase in credit access for the rural poor from 1 million accounts in 2008 to 1.17 million by 2012 and an increase in women's access to finance from 200,000 accounts to 283,000 during the same period.

### **NTIS 2010 accords priority to exports**

Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) 2010, launched by the government on Thursday, has identified 19 products and services having maximum export potentials as an attempt to reenergize the country's ailing exports. The strategy-identified potential commodities include agro-food items like large cardamom, ginger, honey, lentils, tea, instant noodles and medicinal herbs or essential oils. Likewise, handmade paper, silver jewelry, iron and steel products, pashmina products and wool products have been categorized as export potential products under industrial goods. NTIS 2010 is an update of Nepal Trade and Competitiveness Study 2004 and has been prepared keeping in view the gloomy state of the trade and economic situation of the country. The NTIS has also listed top ten market destinations for each of the potential products and service areas. It has also identified tourism, labor, health, education, IT and BPO, engineering and hydro-electricity as highly potential seven service areas. The strategy has also prescribed the government to focus on setting up a number of good agricultural practices (GAPs), integrated pest management (IPM) and quality management system (QMS) in case of agricultural commodities. According to the strategy, along with GAPs, IPM and QMS, third party certification (TPC) too is key to enhance the quality and quantity of supply and lower the current burden of sanitary phyto-sanitary (SPS) certification for exports. The four capacity development objectives of NTIS 2010 include ensuring proper market access, building domestic support institutions that can create a conducive business climate, strengthen the supply capacity of exporters, especially in sectors where they can build a competitive advantage and mobilising Overseas Development Assistance. Strengthening trade and negotiations capacity; strengthen the technical capacity of domestic Non Tariff Barrier (NTB) and other business environment supportive institutions; strengthen the export capacity of Inclusive Export Potential Goods and Services; and strengthen the Government of Nepal's capacity to coordinate and Manage Trade Related Technical Assistance and Aid for Trade and to implement NTIS are the four strategic objectives of the NTIS 2010.

### **China to allow duty free access to Nepalese products**

At a time when several Nepali products are still nowhere in the international market, China is providing duty-free facility to Nepal from next week, reports RSS. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, China is providing duty free facility from July 1 to 33 underdeveloped countries, including Nepal, Bangladesh and the Maldives of South Asia. Twenty-six African countries are also on the list of the countries getting duty-free access in China, said the ministry said. Chinese news reports said Nepal's northern neighbour will provide duty-free access to

4,768 products imported from 33 countries. Textile, agriculture, mineral, steel, silver and water products will get zero-duty access.

### **Capital market continues to move in red territory**

The Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index continued to see downward spiral on Thursday-the closing day of share transactions for the week-too as it shed 4.15 points to close at 463.45 points. Except the hydropower group, all trading groups saw their sub indices shed points today. The hydropower group saw a gain of 0.33 points to close at 708.07 points. On the other hand, the sub indices of banking and development banks groups, key players in the secondary market, dropped by 5.48 points and 0.41 points to settle at 440.58 points and 475.5 points respectively. Similarly, others, insurance and finance groups also lost 4.69 points, 3.7 points and 0.84 points to close the day at 529.91 points, 552.3 points and 413.43 respectively. The sensitive index, which measures the performance of Group A companies, saw a loss of 1.24 points to end at 112.95 points. A total of 72, 023 units of shares and 70 scrips worth Rs 28,041,387 changed hands through 1,197 transactions. Total market capitalization-total worth of listed shares in the secondary market-was recorded at Rs 363,247.62 millions on Thursday

### **PM Nepal announces launch of Nepal Trade Integration Strategy 2010**

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has on Wednesday announced the launch of 'Nepal Trade Integration Strategy-2010 (NTIS)' that provides a vision for the sustainable development of trade sector in Nepal. The rapid pace of economic liberalisation and globalisation has truly opened enormous opportunities for unprecedented economic growth and trade in many parts of the world," said Nepal while speaking at the NTIS launching programme held in the capital. "Trade and investment in general can contribute to human development through enhancement of productivity, employment, government revenue and ultimately the economic growth of a country consequently raising living standard of the people," he said, adding, "However, the links between trade and human development are always complex and the benefit of trade do not automatically percolate down to the masses in terms of poverty reduction, social equity and justice." Despite the fact that trade is rightly taken as an engine of growth, LDCs are largely unable to utilise it to accelerate their growth process because of the challenges faced for enhancing the supply side capacity and competitiveness of their products and competence of human capital, according to the PM. "The additional challenges faced by landlocked countries like Nepal are unique basically due to remoteness from the sea and inadequacy of the transport infrastructures, and high transit transportation costs along with cumbersome administrative procedures and hassles that all add up to high trade transaction costs," he stated. "A combination of these factors has ultimately resulted in considerable erosion of competitive edge of Nepalese products and services in the global market," PM Nepal mentioned. PM Nepal also said that the government attaches great importance to the notion of trade for inclusive growth. In course of the government's approach for aligning and integrating our economic policies with global trading system, we joined WTO and two regional trading arrangements, SAFTA and BIMSTEC,

according to him. "Nepal, with a variety of agro-climatic conditions, rich natural resources and ancient cultural heritage, possesses huge export potentials of goods and services. These export potentials should be optimally harnessed for increasing the welfare of the people," he further said

## **SRILANKA**

### **Sri Lanka says won't allow entry of UN human rights panel members**

The Sri Lankan Government has declared that it would refuse visas for UN panel members appointed to investigate alleged human rights abuses during the civil war against Tamil rebels.

"The position of the Sri Lanka Government is abundantly clear - we will not have them in this country" The BBC quoted External Affairs Minister, GL Peiris, as saying. The three-member panel was appointed by both sides to look into the allegations of human rights abuses during the last months of the 26-year conflict that ended in 2009. Meanwhile, the UN has described the move to prevent the panel from entering the country as "most unfortunate." "Everybody loses out if we cannot go to Sri Lanka, it will make it harder for the truth to be unearthed," said General Marzuki Darusman, the head of the three-member panel. International human rights groups are skeptical about the ability of the government to investigate claims impartially, and are demanding an independent investigation. The UN, however, has said that its panel is designed to give advice and is not a full investigation. Earlier, this week, Sri Lankan Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella had said that the government was "concerned" that Ban Ki-moon, as an outsider, had appointed the panel of human rights advisers. The country is recovering after nearly three decades of conflict, which claimed over 100,000 lives, mainly in the northern and eastern provinces, where the LTTE was fighting for a separate state for the Tamil minority. According to the UN estimates, some 7,500 civilians were killed during the final weeks of the conflict.

### **Sri Lanka to hold Cabinet meeting in Kilinochchi**

**Colombo, Jun 25 (PTI)** Sri Lankan government has decided to hold the first ever provincial-level Cabinet meeting in Kilinochchi, the erstwhile administrative capital of the vanquished LTTE, next month in an effort to reach out to the local people. "The first Cabinet meeting at provincial level will be held in Kilinochchi a former strong hold of defeated Tigers on July 14," Cabinet spokesman and Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella said. "Since all the ministers will be there local people could find solutions for their burning problems." It will also coincide with the launch of a mobile service to solve the burning problems of the people in the district. Kilinochchi was liberated from the LTTE in January last year. Rambukwella said the government also planned to hold its weekly Cabinet meeting in other districts.

**[http://www.ptinews.com/news/741765\\_Sri-Lanka-to-hold-Cabinet-meeting-in-Kilinochchi-](http://www.ptinews.com/news/741765_Sri-Lanka-to-hold-Cabinet-meeting-in-Kilinochchi)**

**Conditions set by European Commission for GSP+ "unacceptably intrusive", Sri Lanka says**



Jun 24, Colombo: The conditions set by the European Commission to extend the GSP+ tariff facility are so "unacceptably intrusive" that the government feels the need to inform the Sri Lankan public of the implications of accepting those conditions for a limited-time benefit. Sri Lanka's External Affairs Ministry issuing statement today said the despite the positively acknowledging the steps taken by the government to address the concerns raised in the European Commission report of 19th October 2009, the EC has set unacceptable conditions that intervene in the affairs of the country. Referring to the EC's second condition regarding the 17th amendment, the Ministry said it leaves no room for the Government or the people of Sri Lanka to decide on this issue of vital national importance. The Ministry cautioned that the result of such a mechanism might be the "perpetuation of the fragmentation that terrorism sought to inflict." The third item of the list to repeal Emergency Regulations that gives the powers to law enforcement will result in abrupt releasing of the former LTTE combatants who are undergoing rehabilitation and vocational training without the necessary logistical support. The 4th condition in the EC list requires the government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) which the Ministry says is similar to or less stringent than provisions adopted by certain developed countries to safeguard the nations from terrorism. The Ministry pointed out that the PTA is needed to contemplate measures against possible terrorism considering the formation of the so called "Provisional Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam". "Decisions relating to the need for vigilance in this regard are matters for the elected Government of Sri Lanka, and not for any external agency," the Ministry emphasized.

EC's demands that the Sri Lankan government allow individuals to submit complaints to the UN Human Rights Commission and implement opinions of UN Human Rights Committee would require an Act of Parliament to override a considered decision of Sri Lanka's Supreme Court, which has proceeded to pronounce that the domestic laws and mechanisms have more than adequately provided for the protection and safeguarding of fundamental rights in keeping with national law and treaty obligations. " In our view, it is hardly for the Commission to demand the reversal of a decision by the highest Court of Sri Lanka," the Ministry said. While appreciating the benefits the country received from the GSP+ trade facility for a certain period, the Ministry said the government, as the President Mahinda Rajapaksa has stressed in his address to the nation on June 18, is not ready to accept aid under conditions that will betray the freedom of the land and people. "The Government is confident that the people of Sri Lanka who faced the challenge of terrorism, will also face and overcome equally successfully the challenges of ensuring economic progress and development. The Government will remain steadfast in prudently pursuing the path of restoring normalcy and of achieving rapid economic development, parallel to the progressive elimination of the threats of de-stabilization," the Ministry said.

**[http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_10A/Jun24\\_1277402211CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_10A/Jun24_1277402211CH.php)**

**UN chief to name panel on Sri Lanka rights abuses**

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is expected to name a group of experts Monday to advise him what to do about alleged human rights violations during the last month of the Sri Lankan civil war, a UN diplomat said Monday. "It is an advisory panel of experts, not an investigative body," the diplomat told AFP. The three-member panel "will provide the secretary-general with advice on how to proceed on the question of accountability pertaining to Sri Lanka," the diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the Colombo government had not yet been officially notified. Sri Lankan authorities have faced numerous accusations of war crimes committed during a final military offensive against Tamil rebels in the northeastern part of the island last year that ended the conflict. Videos, photographs and satellite images presented by human rights groups as evidence of war crimes have been rejected as forgeries by the government in Colombo. On May 18, 2009, the government declared military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LITE), which had been fighting for an independent territory since 1972 and is considered a terrorist group by Sri Lanka and the United States. According to the United Nations, between 80,000 and 100,000 people were killed during the conflict, and 7,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the last four months of the conflict. Ban's decision follows a visit last week to Sri Lanka by the UN under secretary general for political affairs, Lynn Pascoe, to discuss national reconciliation and allegations of human rights violations. Japanese envoy Yasushi Akashi, as well as two US officials, were in Sri Lanka at the same time. Samantha Power, a special assistant to President Barack Obama for multilateral affairs and human rights, and David Pressman, a national security council official in charge of issues involving war crimes and atrocities spent four days in Sri Lanka. The visit by the two US officials followed a meeting in Washington last month between US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister G.L. Peiris. The United States for months has been calling for an independent investigation into the war crimes allegations. A Sri Lanka official said Monday in Colombo that his country was "deeply unhappy" with Ban's decision, announced Thursday by Pascoe, calling it "unwarranted and uncalled for."

### **Sri Lanka's monk party to support government's constitutional reforms**

Jun 23, Colombo: Sri Lanka's Buddhist monk party Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) says that it supports the constitutional reforms proposed by the government including the removal of the President's term limit. Sri Lanka's ruling United People's Freedom Alliance, of which JHU is a constituent party, plans to bring constitutional amendments that would allow for unlimited presidential terms. "President Rajapaksa has achieved a lot for the country. If the people want to give him a third term so be it," Minister of Power and Energy and General Secretary of the JHU Patali Champika Ranawaka told reporters today at a press briefing. The Minister said however, the executive presidential system needs reform and the President must be made accountable to parliament and the judiciary. The main opposition United National Party (UNP) and Sri Lanka's Marxist party, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), have already raised objections to the move.

### **Sri Lanka Police Rule Out Tamil Rebel Involvement In Colombo Blast**

Sri Lanka police Thursday said Tamil Tiger rebels who waged a civil war against the government until last year weren't involved in a blast that injured nine people in the capital, Colombo. "We are ruling out terrorist involvement. The incident was probably due to a personal vendetta," police spokesman Prishantha Jayakody said.

### **Massive crowds flock to Sri Lanka's Buddhist capital for Posen festivals**

A Massive crowd is reportedly flocking to Anuradhapura for the celebrations to mark the inception of Buddhist civilization in Sri Lanka two millenniums ago. Anuradhapura, the Buddhist capital of Sri Lanka expects around two million devotees coming to worship sacred shrines in the city and in adjacent town Mihintale. The District Secretariat of Anuradhapura, the Municipal Council, and the North Central Provincial Council jointly organize the Posen festival with the assistance of other organizations. The Deputy Inspector General of North Central Province Kithsiri Dayananda said that a special security and traffic arrangement are underway in Anuradhapura area. Public transport systems including the train services from Anuradhapura to Mihintale have been arranged, a spokesman of the Ministry of Transport said. Commercial Authority of Railway Services Vijaya Samarasinghe says special train services are in place till the 27th of this month. They will operate from Anuradhapura to Fort, Anuradhapura to Mahawa and Anuradhapura to Matara.

### **Minding 'our' language: a post-colonial obsession**

Sri Lankan newspapers appear to regularly report worrying reports of urgent needs such as medical supplies to hospitals, and as the recent flash floods sickeningly demonstrated, the re-engineering of the city storm water drainage network needs to be undertaken urgently. Curiously however the Colombo elite, instead of pursuing these vital social needs, appear to be busily engaged in addressing some perceived problems with the 'Sri Lankan variety' of English! Now, if memory serves us right, President Rajapakse may have raised the issue sometime last year that all Sri Lankans need to gain proficiency in the English language and Information Technology as essential 'Life Skills'; not a bad idea in view of the continuing dominance of English and IT in global trade and development. He may even have floated the idea, in the same context, that Sri Lankans need not have any concerns about speaking English 'our way' in the interest of 'getting on with it'. The current flurry of activity by certain sections of the Colombo polity could well be a campaign against President Rajapakse's idea of making English accessible to the younger rural generations, disguised as an expression of 'concern' about the declining 'standards' of English. It could also be a reaction by those who have traditionally considered English their private property! Regardless of the motivating factors that underlie it, this ridiculous 'debate' attracts attention for sociological reasons. The position of the English language in Sri Lanka, like in all

former British post-colonial societies, has always been something more than a medium of communication. Its real social relevance was aptly described by the brilliant post-1956 Peradeniya generation when they dubbed it 'kaduwa'; the capture of the post colonial economy, business, bureaucracy and social structures by the local collaborators enabled them to use English to demarcate the boundary between the 'rogues alliance' that they constituted and the masses who maintained their linguistic and cultural independence through the ugly and shameful colonialism of five hundred years. The flip side of this situation was that the masses themselves saw English as signifying an inheritance of collaboration with foreign invaders. The dawn of the World Wide Web based electronic media are erasing these entrenched positions, but slowly.

The current discourse however, appears to be an initiative of the academic types who concede the existence of a local variety of English, and rather patronisingly, advocate its full recognition. Pitched against this position are the 'practioners' who argue that there is no such thing as Sri Lankan English, but just good writers and bad ones. The lonely voice in the practitioner camp, it appears, is Rajpal Abeynayake; one of the more competent English language journalists in Sri Lanka. There are others who appear to see current moves as part of an 'elitist agenda' to create a 'vulgar' Sri Lankan version of English for the masses, while the Colombo elite retains the 'more civilised variety; this concern however appears unfounded because no one will be have the capacity to govern the use of a particular variety of English by different groups of people.

Not surprisingly, the British Council too has sought to weigh in to the 'debate'. Their particular interest however, is not hard to read: they market the 'International English Language Testing System' (IELTS) as a standardised test of international English language proficiency for admission to Australian, British, Canadian, Irish, New Zealand and South African academic institutions, and some 2,000 universities in the US, and for immigration to Australia and Canada; in 2008, more than one million people around the world had to sit for IELTS!

In a situation like this, the best the bystanders can do is to cheer the side we favour and prompt both sides to get down to the brass tacks so that they keep the discourse real!

Firstly, the existence of a 'Sri Lankan English' amongst the many varieties of Global English is not a universally accepted fact; the use of a few peculiar Sri Lankan colloquialisms and the intermingling of some Sinhala words within sentences do not go far enough to differentiate Sri Lankan English from the rest of the sub continent; the common accent marked by extended vowel articulation and rhythmic intonation also sees to that.

A quick comparison of Sri Lankan English with the variety of the English language spoken by the American adherents to the Amish, Mennonites and other religious sects known as the 'Pennsylvania Dutch' in the US demonstrates this fact: this particular group of people manipulate the grammar elements of English to a particularly convoluted form, with the adjective and noun arranged in reverse order to Standard English, and verbalise in a manner akin to other 'Germanic' languages, making it nearly unintelligible to 'normal' English speakers.

When the Amish say 'Throw Papa down the stairs his hat', they mean 'Throw Papa's hat down the stairs to him'; they speak of 'tying the dog loose' and 'outening the light'; 'eating myself' and 'he eats me' mean, not cannibalism, but finding one's own food and someone else feeding

them respectively! They call people outside their group ‘outlanders’ and when they ask for a ‘toot’, what they’d really like is a paper bag.

Now that is a ‘variety’ of English!

Judging by some notices on Japanese hotels this writer has seen, Sri Lankan English does not rank close to the Japanese version either. Here are some examples: “It is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not a person to do such thing is please not to read notis”; “You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid”; “Cooler and Heater: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself”. In the bar, they serve “Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts”!

Are there any Sri Lankan equivalents to these?

When it comes to English speaking too, any time spent on aping the BBC or received pronunciation (RP) will be a ludicrous waste of time because what RP represents is a degenerated form of vowel sounds of Sanskrit during its evolution to neutral English. In addition, those who try and fail will suffer the ignominy of sounding like Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu!

One can only agree with Rajpal Abeynayake’s assertions that there need not be a debate on Sri Lankan English, and that the emphasis needs to be on ‘good’ writing. This is so because, as Abeynayake puts it: “Those who eschew grammatical English will fall behind in the race of — and for — ideas.”

What flows from this argument is that the discourse on improving, or stopping the slide of, English ‘nationally’ is essentially a waste of time, and all the country can do is to impart a basic standard of correct grammar through the educational system. The needs in terms of broad help and ‘guidelines for good writing’ for people who require particular skills for specific purposes need to be accommodated within special schemes. While teaching and evaluating English skills, the powers that be need to unburden themselves of the ‘reverence’ with which they tend to treat English, a hangover from the effects of mental colonisation, and consider that it is just another language devised for conveying ideas between brains without surgery. However, no human is capable of saying or writing all they mean, because the thought process is viscous and words are slippery. The use of the right word in right place appears to be the trick that helps most! Whenever ideas fail, words need to be invented: it is commonly believed that swearing was invented as a compromise between running away and fighting! As noted by George Orwell in his 1946 essay ‘Politics and the English Language’: “To write or even speak English is not a science but an art. Whoever writes English is involved in a struggle that never lets up even for a sentence. He is struggling against vagueness, against obscurity ...” Orwell has also opined elsewhere that “The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as if it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish, squirting out ink”. The aspiring writer needs to be warned against the use of euphemisms as a means of hiding unpleasant truths, a practice that prevents the writer from sticking to the matter at hand. There is always the risk that one writer’s frankness is vulgarity for some one else. Notwithstanding that concern, an ‘ancient mariner’ would always be just an ‘old sailor’ no matter how you say it; the word ‘indolence’ does not make laziness any

classier; surgeons do not have to 'ligate' arteries when they just have to 'tie' them to stop the bleeding! Similarly, people often overlook the fact that words have many meanings: the word 'good', as G.K. Chesterton noted has different meanings and, "If a man were to shoot his grandmother at a range of five hundred yards, I should call him a good shot, but not necessarily a good man".

What this writer has been trying to convey is that the English language is nobody's special property but the property of the imagination. When it comes to rules for speaking and writing the English language correctly, it is worth noting that any fool can make a rule, and most writers can learn to bend or break them for the purposes of clear expression after adequate mastering of the rules.

<http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2010/06/20/minding-%E2%80%98our%E2%80%99-language-a-post-colonial-obsession/>

### **Sri Lanka: Humanitarian Snapshot - Focus Return Areas June 2010**

Returns have continued at a steady pace since the accelerated resettlement process commenced in October 2009, with 236,755 people released from camps as of 20 May. Of this total, 142,772 have returned to their districts of origin, while 92,791 IDPs are staying with host families and 1,192 individuals are in social care institutions. This leaves 60,900 people awaiting return at Menik Farm. While returnees have generally welcomed the opportunity to go back to their homes, the sustainability of their resettlement remains fragile due to the limited availability of basic services and significant reconstruction needs throughout the former conflict areas. The Sri Lankan Government has committed substantial resources to the main affected districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya, and the Country Team is complementing efforts, aimed at supporting safe, dignified and sustainable returns.

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MDCS-86QEW6?OpenDocument>

### **Sri Lankan GDP Growth Accelerates In Q1**

Sri Lanka economic growth accelerated in the first quarter as the three major sectors of the economy contributed positively. Gross domestic product, or GDP, rose 7.1% annually in the first three months of the year, the Department of Census and Statistics said Thursday. It followed 6.2% growth in the December quarter. The three major sectors of the economy namely, agriculture, industry and services registered notable growth of 9%, 6.9% and 6.7%, respectively, in the first quarter from a year earlier. The percentage share of the three major sectors, the agriculture, industry and services to the total GDP more or less remain unchanged being 13.8%, 28.4% and 57.8% respectively, the statistical agency said. The index number of GDP implicit price deflator rose from 191.7 in the first quarter of 2009 to 213.2 in the same quarter of 2010, giving an inflation rate as 11.2% for the first quarter 2010. Sri Lanka's annual average inflation rose marginally to 3.6% in May. Inflationary pressures in the domestic economy remained subdued benefiting from dampened commodity prices in the global market and increased domestic agricultural output, the country's central bank said last week, while

maintaining its policy interest rates unchanged. The central bank retained its repurchase rate at 7.5% and the reverse repurchase rate at 9.75%. The bank has been maintaining the rates since November 2009.

### **US Urges Sri Lanka To Accept UN Panel Probe**

The United States on Friday urged the Sri Lankan government of Mahinda Rajapaksa to "take advantage" of the opportunity and accept an offer of a U.N. committee that will probe the alleged human rights abuses in the island-nation during the final stages of the conflict between security forces and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that ended in May last year. The U.N. had announced on Tuesday the setting up of a three-member committee of experts by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to examine "the modalities, applicable international standards and comparative experience with regard to accountability processes, taking into account the nature and scope of any alleged violations in Sri Lanka." Headed by Indonesia's Marzuki Darusman, the panel's other two members are Yasmin Sooka of South Africa and Steven Ratner of the United States. It is to submit its report in four months. "We urge the Sri Lankan government to take advantage of this team... take advantage of their offer," State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner quoted U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice as saying. Toner was responding to a query on Sri Lanka barring the U.N. panel from entering the country. Following the U.N. announcement, Ambassador Rice issued a statement on Wednesday in support of the panel of experts to advise the U.N. chief on "accountability issues" relating to alleged violations of human rights. She said the U.S. supported a robust accountability process that would provide a durable foundation for national reconciliation and the rule of law in the aftermath of Sri Lanka's decades-long conflict. "To that end, the United States welcomes UN Secretary General Ban's announcement of a panel of experts to provide advice on relevant best practices for investigations into the alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. To be successful, Sri Lanka's domestic "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission" should apply the best practices from similar commissions in other countries. We strongly urge the Government of Sri Lanka to take advantage of this UN Panel's expertise," the statement read. Sri Lanka said on Thursday that it would not allow the U.N. panel to enter the country to investigate the alleged human rights abuses. "We will not allow the UN Panel (on Sri Lanka) to enter the country. We may not issue them visas," Sri Lanka's External Affairs Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris told reporters in Colombo.

<http://www.rttnews.com/Content/GeneralNews.aspx?Node=B1&Id=1343886>

### **Russia criticizes the UN expert panel on Sri Lanka**

Jun 25, Colombo: The Russian Federation Thursday slammed the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's decision to appoint a panel of experts to advise him on Sri Lanka's alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law during the last stages of the war against Tamil Tiger rebels without regard to the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. The Russian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs in a statement criticized the UN Chief for not asking the opinion of the Security Council or the General Assembly on this matter before appointing the panel. "What also makes us cautious is the fact that this decision was taken without regard to the position of a sovereign state and a member of the UN Sri Lanka. Russia said that Under Secretary-General for political affairs B. Lynn Pascoe visited Sri Lanka before the UN Chief's appointment of the panel and he was aware of Sri Lanka's stand that the panel was unwarranted and unnecessary. The Russian Foreign Ministry pointed out that Sri Lanka have already begun their own investigation process at national level with the appointment of the Commission on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation with a mandate to review all aspects of the conflict. The Russian Foreign Ministry further said the responsibility to investigate past events in Sri Lanka lies with its government and expressed hope that UN panel of experts will not take any steps to complicate the investigation being conducted by the authorities of Colombo.

**[http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_10A/Jun25\\_1277443955CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_10A/Jun25_1277443955CH.php)**

### **Japan pledges 48 billion rupees in aid to Sri Lanka**

Praising the measures Sri Lanka has taken towards achieving peace following the end of the war the visiting Japanese Envoy Yashushi Akashi said today that his government has allocated 39 billion yen (48 billion rupees) assistance to Sri Lanka for the forthcoming period. Addressing the media in Colombo following a meeting with the External Affairs Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris, the envoy said the Japanese aid to Sri Lanka is never conditional and always in line with Sri Lankan government needs and wishes.

### **Sri Lanka wants Saarc regional police**

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) nations have suggested formulating a common strategy to fight terrorism and drug smuggling in the region, with Sri Lanka pushing for the creation of a Saarc police body to investigate cross-border crimes in the region. A technical committee of Saarc nations, which met here ahead of the third three-day meeting of Saarc home ministers starting on Thursday, recommended the exchange of lists of terrorist organisations and persons and benefiting from each other's experiences in the battle against extremism. The panel also suggested intra-Saarc cooperation in enhancing efficiency of law-enforcement agencies, including police, and working towards restricting drug smuggling. Secretaries and focal persons of the home departments of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal and Afghanistan participated in the meeting. The panel reviewed the agenda for the Saarc interior ministers' conference and interior secretaries' meeting and exchanged views on important points, including anti-terrorism, a mechanism for exchange of information, curbing human smuggling, as well as visa issues. Sri Lanka proposed the establishing of a Saarc police force to investigate international crimes in the region, to control terrorism and to arrest wanted persons within the boundaries of the seven-nation grouping. India suggested that the border control management of



Saarc countries be improved to curb smuggling of drugs and that the scope of exchange of information be enlarged so that it could be used effectively to end terrorism. The Saarc nations should exchange lists of and information about terrorist, extremist and criminal organisations and their prominent members. Pakistan updated the panel on its achievements against terrorism in Swat, Malakand, as well as South Waziristan and other tribal areas. The participants praised the achievements of the Pakistan Army in its war against terrorism. Afghanistan also briefed the meeting about ongoing efforts against terrorist organisations on its territory. The meeting is expected to continue on Thursday. Interior secretaries are due to meet on Friday while the interior ministers' conference will take place on Saturday. Strict security arrangements have been put in place in the capital for these meetings.

**<http://tribune.com.pk/story/23388/sri-lanka-wants-saarc-regional-police/>**