

**SHUMAILA RAFIQ**

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#### **Summary:**

**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has alleged that her political rival Khaleda Zia, chief of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), and the then government had "direct links" with the grenade attacks on a 2004 party rally in which 24 people were killed and over 400 injured. The special parliamentary committee on constitution amendment will make its final

recommendations considering the country's existing "political atmosphere", its co-chair Suranjit Sengupta has said. Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has finalised its new name to face changed situation if the party is banned and to continue its politics under a new banner, according to the sources. The sources further said the new name of the party will be 'Bangladesh Socialist Party' or 'Justice Party' and the party will continue its politics by taking a new name from the two names. The ratification of martial law by the Bangladesh parliament in 1986 was unconstitutional, the High Court said in a judgment on Thursday that will likely lead to a key ally of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina facing criminal charges. Leaders of Awami League (AL), other political parties and professionals here on Friday evening called upon for launching mass public movements to ensure execution of the war criminals by completing their immediate trials. THE cabinet's approval to amend the anti-corruption law has drawn mixed reaction. The amendment proposals, endorsed by the cabinet recently, includes Anti-Corruption Commissions (ACC) obligation to take permission from the government prior to initiating a case against any government official and making the anti-graft body accountable to the President. Many factors are working as disincentives to higher education in Bangladesh. Opportunities here for higher education have progressively decreased over the years. Hundreds of aspirants vie for a single seat in any of the departments of the Dhaka University. In a major decision, the cabinet has decided to allow six million non-resident Bangladeshis to vote in all elections in Bangladesh from their country of residence. The decision was taken at a regular meeting of the cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday. Known in the global market for its cheap labour, Bangladesh does not have minimum wages for 34 industries and has not revised wages in a dozen others for the past many years, a media report said Thursday. Bangladesh has been ranked 88th among the "best" 100 countries in the world by the Newsweek, an international newsmagazine, which undertook the rather interesting survey. The rankings are based on indicators like education, health, quality of life, economic competitiveness and political environment.

**Nepal:**THE monsoon brings Nepal's annual cow festival, a chance for ordinary people to mock their rulers in traditional street performances. This year the comedians were blessed with plenty of material. After failing to elect a new prime minister on Monday despite five rounds of vote spread over a month, Nepal's parliament will now hold an unprecedented sixth round of election Sep 5 amidst growing protests at home and concern among the world community. It is likely to be the last chance for Maoist. The UCPN (Maoist) central committee meeting, which resumed Wednesday after being postponed thrice since August 12, is all set to see divided opinions over the policies and the future strategies of the party with two vice chairmen Mohan Baidya and Dr Baburam Bhattarai, presenting separate proposals that are seen as a 'counter' to party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal political report. A meeting of the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC), which was slated for Thursday, has been cancelled at the last hour after the Nepal Army (NA) refused to take part in the meeting. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has on Wednesday said that the concept of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) should be leveraged to bring a greater efficiency and transparency in the

government's services. Thousands have been affected and several lives lost in floods due to heavy rainfall for past few days in Nepal. Over a dozen people were killed on Tuesday after being swept away by flood waters or buried by landslides, local newspapers and television channels reported. Investigators in Nepal on Wednesday combed the site of a plane crash that killed 14 people including six tourists, as the grim task of identifying the bodies began. With Nepal's peace process appearing increasingly uncertain, the United Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) may get an extension after its current term expires on September 24. Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPP-N) Kamal Thapa has claimed that the Maoists hold positive views about monarchy and that Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "has realised" that activities of foreign power centres have grown in Nepal after abolition of monarchy. The most awaited vaccine of Influenza A (H1N1) has arrived in the country. Nepal has received 'GlaxoSmithKline' vaccine manufactured in France, from World Health Organisation (WHO) today. As if the global recession was not enough, migrant workers, Nepal's best 'export' that contributes nearly 20 percent of the country's GDP, are facing a series of recent worries. The month started with 153 Nepali workers in Macau losing their jobs. At the end of April this year, all 27 commercial banks of Nepal concluded an informal agreement deciding on the maximum ceiling on deposit interest rates.

**Srilanka:** After nearly four decades of bloodshed since Sirima Bandaranaike's regime (1970-1977) Members of Parliament (MPs) in Sri Lanka have come to the most crucial juncture of our history. The Sri Lankan government has appointed the director of operations of the Sri Lanka Army Maj. Gen. Shavendra Silva as the country's new deputy permanent representative to the United Nations. Frustrated Tamil migrants were finally given the free use of telephones to call their loved ones in Sri Lanka after losing contact with them for more than 14 weeks, including 12 spent on the rusty MV Sun Sea that smuggled them into Canada. Sri Lankans, however, are still grappling with Tamils' duping them for close to a century with absurd allegations, sadistic nonsense, racist rubbish and usual bad luck stories. Sri Lanka's benchmark share index closed near flat on Thursday as a rise in financial stocks on speculation of new import tax cuts offset traditional month end forced selling. Sri Lanka's economic growth rate is expected to double this year, with the country firmly on the road to recovery after decades of ethnic war, a top International Monetary Fund official said Monday. With the end of ethnic conflict, India and Sri Lanka will revert to a more normal defence relationship. Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar will visit Colombo soon to get an idea of the issues to be taken up at the first annual defence dialogue between the two countries.

## **Detailed News**

### **Bangladesh**

## **BNP-Jamaat linked to 2004 grenade attacks: Sheikh Hasina**

DHAKA: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has alleged that her political rival Khaleda Zia, chief of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), and the then government had "direct links" with the grenade attacks on a 2004 party rally in which 24 people were killed and over 400 injured. "Certain activities of the then BNP-Jamaat coalition government point to the fact that they had direct links with the attack and there is no doubt about it," Hasina told a rally Saturday held here to mark the sixth anniversary of the attacks. "Investigation continues... those who killed so many innocent people must be tried and punished," she told the gathering. Hasina, who was addressing a rally Aug 21, 2005, was fired upon as she was whisked away in a bullet-proof vehicle. Those killed included Ivy Rahman, chief of the Awami League's women's wing. Her husband, Zillur Rahman, is currently the country's president. Several senior leaders of the then opposition party, now in power, were seriously injured and taken to India for surgery. Hasina Saturday said the Zia government (2002-06) had "scuttled" the probe and had destroyed evidence, United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency reported. She alleged that Zia's ministers had "patronised" the attackers who are believed to belong to Islamist militant outfits that Zia later banned under international pressures. "There is no doubt that BNP-Jamaat alliance government was involved in the Aug 21 grenade attack," Hasina said. Recalling her own experience amid the grenades explosions that day, Hasina said her survival was "a miracle", UNB news agency quoted her as saying. Hasina called for putting an end to the "politics of killing". "For achieving political goals, you cannot kill your political opponents. Such culture of vengeance must be stopped for ever," the prime minister said. Calling for "a transparent probe" in an editorial Sunday, New Age said the grenade attacks "added distortion to the political process and, needless to say, further intensified the mistrust and malice that the two mainstream political camps led by the Awami League and the BNP have for each other".

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/BNP-Jamaat-linked-to-2004-grenade-attacks-Sheikh-Hasina/articleshow/6391106.cms#ixzz0xj4tfOST>

## **India Bangladesh Relations**

The most talked about issue in South Asia is India-Pakistan relations. Bangladesh-India relations are seconding among the population of the region. It could be mentioned that India Bangladesh relations also significantly impact on the internal politics of both the countries. Especially the dynamics and pattern of the internal politics of Bangladesh is importantly influenced by the impact of India Bangladesh relation .India Bangladesh relations have a long history. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the extent of the relations some times grow warmer and of course some times come down to the level of coolness, but never reached the freezing point.

Presently the relations between the two neighbors are warmer than told by the observers. It is also observed that the recent Dhaka visit of Indian Finance Minister was intending to provide another degree of warmth to the India Bangladesh relations. It should be said that Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina visited India at the early month of this year. And at that time several agreements were signed between the two countries. One of the objectives of Indian Finance Minister's recent Dhaka visit was to observe and discuss on the development of the implementation of those agreements in Bangladesh side. The India Bangladesh relations evolved around few issues mainly on joint rivers, border & enclaves, security issues and bilateral trade, regional cooperation, maritime boundary, transit and transshipment and on international politics. The extent and pattern of Bangladesh and China relations are also impact on the relations of India and Bangladesh. The public perception on India Bangladesh relation is also another important issue that considered always in both of the countries. Is India a friend of Bangladesh? While public perception is concern, it is difficult to find out any appropriate answer. In consideration to this public perception, it could be told that India was the friend of Bangladesh while the people of Bangladesh were struggling for the noble cause of independence in 1971. So, what is wrong with the public perception of Bangladesh that they have confusion about India? To find out the answer, it is essential to be analyzed the political development of Bangladesh, the changes in the internal politics of India and Indian behavior to Bangladesh as a powerful neighbor, which took place in last four decades. The dynamics of internal politics of Bangladesh was continuously changing in last four decades. The spirit of the independence of Bangladesh was a secular political idea. The secularism was in practice up to 1975; mainly it was in practice in state level and among the educated middle class. The secular idea emerged in this land just after the British rule in 1947. And of course, in 1960s, secularism emerged as a strong political and cultural ideology among the educated middleclass of Bangladesh that is among the middle class of the than East Pakistan. But just after the independence of Bangladesh the secular politics was fading out and an obscure picture of religion based politics was emerging in the society, it could be told that the cause of that back step is yet unexplainable. Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman was assassinated on 15<sup>th</sup> August of 1975 and Bangladesh stepped into the era of military autocracy. In that changed political scenario, the practice of religion based politics surfaced with vigor in Bangladesh. At that time religion based politics was patron by the state. Importantly, before 1991, Bangladesh never experienced real democracy. Rather, from 1975 to 1990 Bangladesh was ruled under military autocracy or military autocracy with the veil of civil character. That time, Bangladesh, was the hatchery of religion fundamentalism. An urban people upsurge in on December 1990 ousted the military autocrat General Ershad. In 1991 Bangladesh Nationalist Party BNP, the party founded under military control and took political character while struggling for democracy against military rule in 1980s, came into state power through democratic process. In 1996 Bangladesh Awami League, the leading party of the struggle of Independence and Liberation war, return to state power and again in 2001 BNP formed government.

Bangladesh was governed by an extra constitutional military backed interim government for two years after the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> BNP tenure. On December 2009, Awami League formed Government with absolute majority.

From 1971 to 2010, India was also the changing showground of politics and many changes were taking place in India. In 1971, Congress was in the control of Indian central politics under the leadership of Indira Ghandhi. After a little interval Congress again regain power in Delhi and Indira Ghandhi became Prime Minister again. After the assassination of Indira Ghandhi, her elder son Rajib Ghandhi became the Prime Minister of India and President of Congress. India stepped into a new pattern of international politics under Rajib Ghandhi. Rajib was also assassinated and this incident forced India towards alliance politics in centre. In provincial level, regional political parties became more important, influential and powerful. The Hindu fundamentalism surfaced and BJP formed government in center. Presently, in central politics of India, Congress under the leadership of Sonia Ghandhi, the widow is powerful but the alliance politics is yet significantly strong. In this time frame there are many changes in international politics as well. Though India was a non-alliance state, the country had economic and military relations with the then socialist Soviet Union. The socialist center Soviet Union was collapsed at 90s of last century and India had changed international relations policy as a logical consequence of the changed international political environment. By the time, in the post cold war era, India made themselves as one of the important players of international politics and emerged as globally significant regional supper power. In post cold war world, political Islam and other religion based politics and terrorism in the name of religion had emerged as new world phenomena. What ever the cause of the new phenomena, it is in existence in the world and it has a big impact on the India Bangladesh relations. It is mentionable that, thought the last four decades, the development of international and regional politics, the impact of these development on the two neighboring countries and the mental makeup of the people of the two countries always have impact on the extent and pattern of India Bangladesh. It is assumed by all that presently India Bangladesh relation is warmer than any recent past that it was. Most of the people will show the logic that in India Congress, the supported the noble cause of Bangladesh that is the Independence, is in state power and in Bangladesh Awami League, the party that lead the war of Independence, is governing the country. Both of the parties are old friends in south Asian region. One could be reached at a conclusion through this simple equation. But it should also be taken into account that international or bilateral relations do not run always through simple equations. Joint rivers are always a hot issue for India and Bangladesh both. Farakka Barrage and water sharing of river Ganga are not only the issue of diplomatic concern, also the issue is related to environment, ecology, food security and the future geo-pattern of Bangladesh. And of course joint rivers issue has the important impact on the internal political debates and development in Bangladesh. The solution of the problems relating to Joint Rivers depends on the attitude and intention of India. That is why, in Bangladesh, who ever in state power, that government want to reach on a solution in this regard. But India is always reluctant on the issue. Present government of Bangladesh has tabled the Tista water sharing in bilateral discussion but

India is again reluctant as the country was. If only joint rivers issue is considered, India Bangladesh relations could not be termed as warm as it seems to. But it should be mentioned that only one issue could not be the indicator to judge any bilateral relation. The border and enclaves issue should be considered with due importance while the extent and pattern of India Bangladesh relations would be discussed. Of course this issue has a sharp and clear appearance to the people. On enclave, there are discussions between India and Bangladesh but there is no tension on the issue. Border is a big issue to measure the extent and pattern of India Bangladesh relations and it should be told that many unexpected occurrences and incidents over the border line is yet the concern for India Bangladesh relations. Experience is that, several times the behavior of Border security personnel went beyond the norms and of course that actions are the determining factors to judge the pattern of diplomatic relations that prevailing between India and Bangladesh. This issue is the cause of concern for both of the neighbors. Security is another issue that impact on the relations between India and Bangladesh. In consideration to the totality of India Bangladesh Relation, current character of global politics, image of India and Bangladesh among regional and international community including United States, it could be said that there is no possibility of war between India and Bangladesh. Rather it could be told that war between India and Bangladesh might be a schizophrenic imagination. But Security, in terms of militancy and armed insurgency in the north east India and in the hill districts of Bangladesh, has significant impact on India Bangladesh relations. The political leadership and administration of India and Bangladesh have reached on an agreement that no one will facilitate the militants and insurgents at any extent. This agreement provided warmth to the Indio-Bangla relations.

As bilateral trade is concern, Bangladesh always a country of deficit. Though India and Bangladesh are the member state of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), there are many tariff and non tariff barriers for trade. Most of the barriers are against Bangladesh, this should be mentioned. The ray of hope is there that both of the countries are agreed to overcome the trade barriers within a logical period of time. Maritime boundary debate that prevails in the India Bangladesh relations is an international, regional and bilateral issue now. It seems that the two neighbors would be able to reach at a solution on this issue; at least the pattern and extent of the relations indicate a good consequence. Transit and transshipment are the most talked about issues that have extensive influence and impact on India Bangladesh relations. These issues are highly related to regional and international politics as well. While the word transit uttered, the eco of the sound in Bangladesh is that India is seeking facilities for their commercial and military transportation to the northeastern states by using the land of Bangladesh. There might be some truth in this reaction. It is also the truth that India will gain more from the transit through Bangladesh. The hard truth is that the extant and pattern of the relations of India and Bangladesh is mostly dependent on transit issue. That is why, for Bangladesh, it is logical that transit must be used as a leverage of relationship. It is also a reality that, while transit is concern, Bangladesh must demand transit facility through India to connect Bhutan and Nepal for commercial transportation. And the development is that India agreed upon the demand of Bangladesh in principle and now it is on the track of implementation so far. In



exchange of Indian action, Bangladesh agreed to give the surface and river transportation system and the port facilities for Indian use. In view of the actions that have taken by both of the countries, it could be told that the two neighbors are running forward to build up a peaceful and prosperous South Asia. But things are not like this. The pattern and extent of India Bangladesh relations are also related to the international politics. India and China are the two Asian Superpowers. Both of the countries, probably, intending to enhance their influence in Oceans as part of their security strategy. Apparently Indian Ocean is for India and Yellow Sea and a portion of Pacific Ocean are for China. It is a reality that the extent and pattern of India China relations enable Bangladesh to ensure the rule of the nation in regional and international politics and also enable Bangladesh to determine the strategy to exist as a small state between the two Asian Superpowers, especially as a small neighbor of the gigantic India. It should also be mentioned that the pattern and extent of India Bangladesh relations determine the pattern and extent of Bangladesh China relations. After the recent India visit by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh relations with India grew warmer. But, probably, it went down following the China visit by the Prime Minister. It is not that China visit has very significant impact on India Bangladesh relations. But Indian observation on Bangladesh China relations has extended and intensified, it should be said, because Prime Minister of Bangladesh, while visiting China, agreed upon to provide transit and port facilities for the use of China. Besides this, Bangladeshi Prime Minister seeks cooperation from China for renovation of Chittagong port and for building of deep sea port at Chittagong coast line.

Presence of China in South Asian Region, especially in the sea is considered as security concern from India. China already has put their foot at Hambantota in Southern Sri Lanka and at Gawder in Baluchistan of Pakistan by providing assistance in building of new ports. In other words, by providing assistance in building of these two ports, China ensured its presence in Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, which is considered as security concern by India. Besides these, Indian and many other countries have believed that China has military presence at Hungai naval base of Myanmar and there is a China observatory at Coco Island near to Nicobar. In view of this situation, it is to be observed that what would be the Indian reaction to the presence of China at Chittagong. One thing should be mentioned that all superpowers have their front-yards or backyards. It is more than a truth for Russia, China and United States. Central Asia is the yard of Russia and East Asia and South East Asia are considered as the yard of China. But South Asia is not yet considered as the yard of India. India has an image of the largest democracy of the world and also intending to maintain this image as well. That is why India is not intending to use South Asia as yard, rather interested to develop South Asia i.e. the SAARC as an economic, political and to some extent a military Union of the member states as per the model of European Union. This behavioral pattern of India is the determining factor to inter relationship of South Asian Nations. It is also should be mentioned that present India Bangladesh Relations are mostly necessity driven (could be told reality driven), not that much of Ideology driven, which was showed at the 70s of last century. In consideration to this situation Bangladesh should determine the strategy for relationship with India on the basis of the strategy of regional cooperation.

With all considerations, the historical aspects of the South Asian region also be taken in to consideration for determining the pattern and extent of India Bangladesh relations. South Asia is a land of ancient civilization. The nations have their own culture and politics. But the history of political evolution of the South Asian Nations is same and all the nations are emerged from a single civilization. In consideration to this heritage 'South Asia' is closer to the 'South Asia'.

<http://www.groundreport.com/Politics/India-Bangladesh-Relations/2927892>

### **Charter panel to consider 'political tone'**

The special parliamentary committee on constitution amendment will make its final recommendations considering the country's existing "political atmosphere", its co-chair Suranjit Sengupta has said. After its third meeting on Tuesday at the parliament building, Sengupta told reporters that the committee had found some contradictions between the judgments of the high court and the supreme court. He said the committee will hold a series of meetings on September 4, 5 and 6 to discuss each of the articles of the constitution for amending in line with the judgment of the supreme court. "The judgments of the high court and the appellate division have some declarations, directions, observations, comments and contradictions," Sengupta told reporters after the meeting. He said the committee would prepare its final recommendations as soon as possible, though the parliamentary body had no time frame for submission of its reports to the parliament. "We will make our recommendations considering the prevailing political atmosphere of the country," said Sengupta adding that the 15-member body would also examine each section of the ruling. The co-chair, however, did not explain to bdnews24.com what he meant by the term "prevailing political atmosphere of the country". Some members of the committee and political analysts say that the committee may accept some of the articles inserted in the constitution by the military ruler and the main opposition BNP's founder Lt Gen Ziaur Rahman through the Fifth Amendment order, which the courts declared illegal.

Zia through the Fifth Amendment inserted Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim and "faith in Almighty Allah" in the original constitution adopted in 1972. The BNP and its allies have already hinted that they would strongly oppose deletion of the two provisions and wage a movement against the government for "de-islamisation". Gen Ziaur Rahman in November 1975 promulgated a military order which the court had held changed the basic character of the constitution that had been formulated by an elected parliament under the leadership of Bangladesh's independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Fifth Amendment also allowed the war criminals and the religious-based parties to do politics. As per the 1972 constitution, they were debarred from politics for their anti-liberation role and crimes against humanity during Bangladesh's freedom struggle in 1971. Zia came to power after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members on Aug 15, 1975. In 1979, Zia demilitarized his regime and held general polls to legalise the constitutional changes carried out by the fifth amendment. As per the constitution, any change to the constitution must be made by two-third majority in parliament. In 2005, the high court declared the Fifth Amendment "illegal" when the BNP was in power. The appellate

division of the Supreme Court stayed the order as the BNP government moved to appeal the decision in the highest court. But in 2010, the appellate division finally upheld the high court verdict with some changes. The government on July 21 formed the 15-member committee to make recommendations on amending the constitution in line with the Supreme Court verdict.

<http://www.bdnews24.com/details.php?id=171562&cid=2>

### **Jamaat to function in a different name**

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has finalised its new name to face changed situation if the party is banned and to continue its politics under a new banner, according to the sources. The sources further said the new name of the party will be 'Bangladesh Socialist Party' or 'Justice Party' and the party will continue its politics by taking a new name from the two names. The government and the Election Commission (EC) are thinking to impose ban on the country's religion based politics as the Supreme Court's in line with recent verdict on the fifth amendment of the constitution. After the verdict, the law minister declared that the religion based politics will be banned in the country and there will be no scope for Jamaat-e-Islami and other religious parties to continue politics. The minister's speech has been proved that the government is advancing to eliminate Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic parties and the Islamic parties may be banned after amending the constitution. At the time, the policy makers of Jamaat-e-Islami are thinking about the consequence of the banning of their politics. So they decided that they will change their banner to face the changed situation and continue their politics. Jamaat has a number of activists and most of them are dedicated to their party. So the party policy makers think that if the government bans the party, their activists will organise under the new party. At this situation they are considering the example of Turkey's present ruling party 'Justice and Development Party (AK Party)' that the party entered the Turkish politics from 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul after the banning on the parties 'Islamist Virtue Party' and 'Welfare Party'. The AK Party, known in Turkey as Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, gradually gained higher votes in each local and general elections surprising other political parties. In 2002 they won 34,3% of the total votes. The party took part at the last parliamentary elections in 2007 where it won the elections. Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the prime minister of the new Government. The success of AK Party in changed situation in Turkey's politics is being considered highly at the policy level of Jamaat-e-Islami and they are ready to change their banner like AK Party. Earlier, the party on October 20 in 2008 submitted application for registration with the EC by changing its name from Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh to Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and amending some provisions of the party constitution in compliance with the EC's conditions. When asked Jamaat central leader Prof Tasnim Alam, he told the New Nation, "The matter of changing name has not been decided in the party policy level until now. If the government takes decision to impose ban of our party, at that time we will take decision and the situation will say what we have to do."

### **Bangladesh court rules 80s coup illegal**

The ratification of martial law by the Bangladesh parliament in 1986 was unconstitutional, the High Court said in a judgment on Thursday that will likely lead to a key ally of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina facing criminal charges. Lawyers said the ruling meant former military ruler Lieutenant-General Hossain Mohammad Ershad, 80, could be prosecuted for seizing power from an elected government in 1982. "The constitution has no provisions for martial law or military rule. So, the then army chief Hossain Mohammad Ershad took over power illegally," a prosecutor told reporters after the landmark judgement. The parliament in 1986 ratified the martial law imposed by Ershad after he removed President Abdus Sattar in a bloodless coup in March 1982. Ershad's Jatiya Party is now Hasina's major ally in government and his prosecution would be a setback for the ruling alliance. Jatiya is Bangladesh's third-largest political party, with 30 members in the 345-member legislature. If Ershad is prosecuted his followers could switch to ally themselves with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of Hasina's arch-rival Begum Khaleda Zia, which will again be the most formidable challenger to Hasina's Awami League in elections due by the end of 2013, political analysts say. Ershad made himself president in late 1986 through a general election that also elected 300 lawmakers to the parliament, mostly from Ershad's Jatiya Party. He was toppled in a popular uprising in December 1990.

### **Mass movements stressed for execution of war criminals**

Leaders of Awami League (AL), other political parties and professionals here on Friday evening called upon for launching mass public movements to ensure execution of the war criminals by completing their immediate trials. They also vowed to make a razakar-free and developed digital Bangladesh and reverting to the non-communal and secular 1972 constitution and demanded enacting of new laws for banning religion-based politics once for all on this soil. They were addressing a workers' rally and discussion organised on the occasions of new AL members' collection and Iftar party organized by Ward No- 3 unit of AL at Keramotia High School ground in the city. Chaired by President of Ward No-3 unit of AL Zakir Hossain, the occasion was attended and addressed by valiant Freedom Fighter and convener of Rangpur district unit of AL Abul Mansur Ahmed as the chief guest. Veteran politician and President of Bangladesh Ganotantary Party Mohammad Afzal, central committee member of Jatiyo party Nur Mohammad Tulu, joint convener of district AL Advocate Rezaul Karim Raju, addressed, as the special guests. AL leaders Prof Mazed Ali, Shafiar Rahman, Dilshad Hossain Mukul, Nabi Ullah Panna, Fazlul Haque, Nawshad Rashid, Amin Sarker, Rozy Rahman, Shahadat Hossain, Secretary of District Motor Sramik Union MA Mazid, Secretary of district Chhatra League Fakhrul Hassan Lieu, addressed. Two hundred people of Ward No-3 collected AL membership forms on the occasion and became members of the political party that brought the country's Independence under the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Vice-president of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association and President of Rangpur

district unit of Sammilito Sangskritik Jyote Kazi Mohammad Junnon also renewed his primary membership of AL by collecting the necessary form in the ceremony.

<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2010/08/23/news0258.htm>

### **Move to amend anti-graft law and relevant issues**

THE cabinet's approval to amend the anti-corruption law has drawn mixed reaction. The amendment proposals, endorsed by the cabinet recently, includes Anti-Corruption Commissions (ACC) obligation to take permission from the government prior to initiating a case against any government official and making the anti-graft body accountable to the President. It states that the government, not ACC, will appoint the secretary to the constitutional body, and those filing false cases will face five years in prison. In April this year, the cabinet approved the proposals to amend six clauses of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act. The amendments are likely to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad soon after vetting by the law ministry. Proponents of the amendment say permission must be granted by the government to prosecute judges and public servants. Such a law is necessary to ensure that the government officials can work without fear. If there is no such law, the officials will not work properly because of fear, they said.

However, opponents of the amendment believe section 197 of the criminal procedure protects government officers from charges of alleged criminal activities, committed in the course of official duty. Such an amendment will see the ACC revert to its previous state when it was known as the Bureau of Anti-Corruption with majority cases clogged, they added. Reacting sharply on the proposed amendment, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) observed that the cabinet's approval to amend the anti-corruption law would make the anti-graft body ineffective and further spread corruption in administration and other public services. These proposals go against the present government's pledge to ensure good governance and fight corruption, said TIB. The section 36 of the ACC Act, 2004 that authorises the government to interpret the laws and provide instructions to ACC if any complexities arise in enforcing the laws should be cancelled to check possible one-sided intervention of the government, TIB observed and suggested that ACC be given power to reconstitute its organisational structure, recruit officials and frame budget for its independence. The development partners do not appear to give consent to the amendment. The World Bank said Bangladesh government's move to amend the Anti-Corruption Commission Act will weaken the independent anti-graft watchdog and undermine its ability to investigate corruption. Although the current government claims it is committed to having an independent Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), it has moved to weaken the institution, said the WB's latest Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) report on Bangladesh. The report said the cabinet-endorsed amendments to the ACC Act will substantially limit the commission's autonomy and ability to investigate corruption. If the parliament adopts the proposed amendments, the role of the commission will be similar to that of the previous ineffective anti-corruption bureau, it added.

Reports say a high official of the finance ministry told the media that the WB assessment would not only affect overall assistance, but would also have an impact on foreign direct investment and trade. A recent TIB survey reveals that three in every four people in the country oppose the government move to make it mandatory for the ACC to take permission before filing corruption cases against public servants. An equal number of respondents of the survey said the government did not take necessary steps to strengthen the ACC in line with its electoral pledges. Conducted on 3,998 adults of age group between 18 and 57 in the country's seven divisions in early July this year, the survey finds that the cabinet's approval to amend the ACC law will turn the anti-graft body into an ineffective institution. Notably, 43 percent of the surveyed government service holders are against taking permission prior to filing a case against public servants. Eighty percent politicians, 81 percent private service holders and 78 percent businessmen are also against the provision.

Law experts believe that the appointment of the ACC secretary by the government has no logic at all and it only establishes administrative control over the anti-graft body. According to the present law, ACC can appoint its commissioner. But under the amended provision, it is proposed that government can appoint the ACC's secretary. It will result in the bureaucracy's and the government's control over the ACC, they said. Regarding accountability to the president, the commission in its opinion said this amendment would bring the anti-graft body under control of the government's executive branch as the president cannot take any decision without the advice of the prime minister, except for appointment of the chief justice and the prime minister.

It is worthwhile to mention that during the last eighteen months of this government's tenure, the ACC has barely played an active role in fighting corruption. The commission is embedded with problems with the prime concern being the integrity and efficiency of the ACC staff as many of them were staff members of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption. Experts believe making ACC a politically influential organisation will be a suicidal decision for any political party. If ACC is politically influenced, their rival party will misuse it against them after their tenure. The ACC should be strengthened for a strong democracy. They suggest that the government make the organisation strong and effective. Some laws can be modified. But the government should not do anything which will make the organisation a weak one, they added. All said and done, the issue of corruption that the ACC means to handle is vast and certainly is a challenge to the entire country. It needs to go deep into dealing with the powerful elements, in politics, administration and business, who have for years together fleeced the country and successfully turned it into a haven for corrupt dealings. What the ACC needs to do is to go into the family records of officials, and not just at customs, to ascertain the past and present lifestyles of these men and their families and take appropriate actions. There is no denying that corruption has by now acquired a vast swathe of territory in Bangladesh. The 'system loss' appears to be present in all sectors of the society. The failure of the political elite to address the socio-political causes of corruption and to bring the bureaucracy under political control helped

corruption to take a firm root. The fundamental problem that relates to corruption in Bangladesh is the dominance of the vested interests, irrespective of changes in the power matrix. The remedy was to start a cleaning drive from the top tiers. But the ACC failed to take steps for curbing corruption, where no corrupt person would be spared because of his political affiliation. In order to activate the ACC, it is essential that its top brass is formed with dynamic and devoted persons who can shoulder the sacred and onerous responsibility of curbing corruption without fear or favour. Also, full transparency should be brought into the way the commission operates. It is expected that no one in the government should do anything that might undermine the anti-graft body or give rise to speculations that it was still a dysfunctional body.

### **Narrowing opportunities for higher education**

Many factors are working as disincentives to higher education in Bangladesh. Opportunities here for higher education have progressively decreased over the years. Hundreds of aspirants vie for a single seat in any of the departments of the Dhaka University. The scene is more or less the same in all other public institutions of higher learning in the country. Thus, many in the student population with potential for higher education are finding themselves excluded from the opportunity of such education mainly because the number of general public universities and specialised universities has not increased. Furthermore, the capacities in such institutions have not expanded to make it possible for them to admit more students. The private universities that have cropped up, normally charge high fees that cannot be afforded by many otherwise good students. Thus, the way to higher education is narrowing. Such education is also becoming like a commodity to be purchased by students of affluent parents. Even in the limited number of public universities or specialised centres of higher education, courses get too frequently disrupted by aimless party politics. Frequent violent incidents linked to such politics contribute to undermine the academic atmosphere. The other fall-outs from campus violence -- session jams -- painfully lengthen the time that students have to spend for their graduate and post-graduate studies. The public universities are also found lacking in introducing or providing up-to-date courses and teaching aids. The teachers in them, as a consequence of their involvement in party politics and pulls outside for private teaching assignments, are seen spending less than the expected time to their main teaching posts. Improving conditions of higher education will require adequate attention to both quantity and quality factors. It is very necessary to substantially increase government's investments in new general universities, specialised universities, engineering universities, science and technology universities, medical colleges, engineering colleges, agricultural colleges and universities, etc. Not only increasing their number, every effort must also be made to impart quality education in them. The resources of the publicly-run institutions of higher learning will need to be increased with greater allocations from the national budget for the purpose. The institutions themselves can reasonably increase tuition fees and other charges to

meet increasing costs. Presently, tuition and other costs at public universities are nominal. Guardians will probably not find it hard to pay somewhat higher fees and other charges for the sound education of their young ones from such institutions.

Most private universities also need to progressively meet the criterion to be fully regarded as worthwhile centres of higher education. The deficiency of many of these institutions, in terms of not having their own campus, competent teaching staff and their own spacious premises to provide a healthful academic environment, excessive opportunities to study on a few subjects to the relative neglect of others, etc., do need to be addressed within a time-frame to ultimately overcome them. The operators of private universities do also need to take moves to set up campuses at sites away from Dhaka. Presently, 80 per cent of the existing private universities are located at or around the capital city, Dhaka. Private universities should be set up all over the country to create balanced opportunities for higher education.

[http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news\\_id=109813&date=2010-08-23](http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=109813&date=2010-08-23)

### **Hasina gives six million non-resident Bangladeshis voting rights**

In a major decision, the cabinet has decided to allow six million non-resident Bangladeshis to vote in all elections in Bangladesh from their country of residence. The decision was taken at a regular meeting of the cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday. Her spokesperson Abul Kalam Azad told journalists about the decision after the meeting. Earlier, different forums of non-resident Bangladeshis demanded that the government and the Election Commission should recognize the franchise of expatriates and enrol them as voters for the upcoming elections. 'Voting right is our basic demand as the citizens of Bangladesh,' said Abdur Rahman, president of International Expatriates Welfare Association of Bangladesh. He blamed the government's negligence for keeping around six million non-resident Bangladeshis away from exercising their constitutional right to vote. Bangladeshi expatriates send home about 12 billion US dollars in hard-earned foreign currencies last year and their voting rights must be guaranteed considering their huge contribution to the national economy, the association leader told a press conference in Dhaka. Earlier, the High Court in October, 1997 endorsed the voting right of expatriate Bangladeshis. It will be possible for the Election Commission to include the expatriate Bangladeshis in the voters' list within a few days and cast their votes through the country's missions abroad, Abdur Rahman suggested.

[http://www.app.com.pk/en\\_/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=114253&Itemid=2](http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=114253&Itemid=2)

### **No minimum wages in 34 industries in Bangladesh**



Known in the global market for its cheap labour, Bangladesh does not have minimum wages for 34 industries and has not revised wages in a dozen others for the past many years, a media report said Thursday. The government is sitting on a proposal of the Minimum Wage Board (MWB) for fixing or reviewing legal minimum wages for a dozen industrial sectors having several million employees. Important industries where no legal minimum wage has as yet been set include poultry, power and handloom, garment accessories manufacturing, ceramic, jewellery, cement, electronics, publications, paper, cable, beverage, brick, cigarettes, audio-visual products, newspaper, printing and dairy farm. The MWB informed the government that minimum wages in at least 12 industrial sectors had not been reviewed in 14 to 28 years although such a review should be done every five years. Sources in the labour ministry told New Age newspaper that workers in at least 34 industrial sectors, having a huge number of employees and contributing substantially to the country's economy, were yet to have any legal minimum wages. The Board is currently struggling to get minimum wages fixed for the money-spinning ready-made garment sector acceptable by both employers and workers. The sector that netted \$12 billion in export earnings last year, employs three million workers, mostly women. There has been intermittent industrial violence in the garment sector due to poor wages and working conditions. Prominent trade union leader Abul Bashar alleged that 'the ruling class, led by politicians, hold an elitist attitude and always prefer to keep workers subservient to them'. He said the workers, directly involved in production in mills, had never seen increase in their wages although the salaries of the managerial and clerical staff had been increased with the announcement of national pay scales. National pay scales were announced at regular intervals as high officials in the government also benefit from them, Bashar said in an interview with New Age.

**<http://sify.com/news/no-minimum-wages-in-34-industries-in-bangladesh-news-international-ki0pabgibdc.html>**

## **Bangladesh ranked 88th**

### **Not that good, but still encouraging**

Bangladesh has been ranked 88th among the “best” 100 countries in the world by the Newsweek, an international newsmagazine, which undertook the rather interesting survey. The rankings are based on indicators like education, health, quality of life, economic competitiveness and political environment. Though the 88th position does not speak very highly of our achievements, but it is still good news that we have found a place in the upper half of the nations across the globe. Two other countries in the region have done better than us Sri Lanka has been ranked 66th while India finished 78th. The indicators that the survey is based can of course give a clear picture of how a country is functioning. Education and health are two areas where a developed and a welfare-oriented country has to perform very well. Sri Lanka and India have an edge over us in these two sectors and that has pushed their positions up the scale. Quality of life is also a sore point in our

scheme of things with the rich-poor gap being too big. So, we are still grappling with many socio-economic challenges which if met in the right manner should push us further up the ladder. Economic competitiveness is something that all developing nations are trying to achieve to survive in this age of globalisation. Bangladesh was performing reasonably well in RMG, but recent developments might have lowered our position in the international market.

Political environment is perhaps the most important pointer of how a country is being governed. It is a yardstick of democratization and fulfillment of the basic rights of people. Bangladesh has had a democratic government for nearly 20 years, except for brief periods when caretaker governments took charge. However, political environment of the country is still not stable or tranquil enough to be compared with the mature democracies in the western world. Political acrimony or even intra-party conflicts still stand in the way of consolidation of democracy. On the positive side, the country maintains a healthy growth rate of GDP and encourages foreign investment in the true spirit of open market economy. The peaceful Nordic countries have finished ahead of even the most advanced western countries. That only shows that social stability and peace are two of the most important criteria used by the Newsweek for judging a country's performance. It is true that social stability contributes to enhancing the quality of life. However, for obvious reasons some societies are more volatile and less predictable, but that does not mean that they cannot be the very best in the world

**<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=152241>**

## **Nepal**

### **Bovine politicians fail to pick a prime minister**

THE monsoon brings Nepal's annual cow festival, a chance for ordinary people to mock their rulers in traditional street performances. This year the comedians were blessed with plenty of material. Two months after the prime minister resigned, on the grounds that he was unable to advance the country's peace process, Nepal remains without a leader. As a result, the tenuous peace stands in dire need of some process. Five rounds of voting in the democratically elected Constituent Assembly, which also serves as a parliament, have failed to produce a new prime minister. A sixth round, scheduled for September 5th, is unlikely to do any better. Much hangs in the balance. A new constitution needs writing. Arguments over land reform and human rights need settling. Some 20,000 Maoist fighters are camped out, waiting to learn whether they are to be integrated with the army. Two candidates want the job, but neither has been able to get a majority in the 601-seat assembly. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, or Prachanda (his *nom de guerre* means "the fierce one"), has already held the office. Having led the Maoists through years of guerrilla warfare, he became Nepal's prime minister after signing the 2006 peace accord. Prachanda resigned last year, after a row with the army. The Maoists still command a 40% plurality in parliament, but they have been unable to bring Prachanda back to power.

His rival is Ram Chandra Poudel, who heads the Nepali Congress party, which was in the coalition government that succeeded Prachanda's. His former coalition partner is remaining neutral in these votes, in the hope of forcing the formation of a unity government. This leaves Mr Poudel also unable to win a majority. Muddying the waters yet further, a block of regional parties from the neglected south of Nepal has withdrawn from the voting in a protest of its own. As the assembly prepares for yet another round of votes, many younger members are calling for a new body to be formed to elect a leader. They say that an entrenched wing of the Nepali Congress has become fixated on thwarting the Maoists and insincere about writing a constitution. India is rumoured to be supporting the stalwarts. The Maoists say they are open to forming a "consensus government", but they are not ready to drop Prachanda in favour of a candidate whom their opponents would find palatable. The stalemate is taking a toll on government. If the annual budget is not passed, public services could come to a halt. The worse fear is that in all the fumbling, Nepal's politicians will lose their grip on the fragile peace. No cow-festival comedian could milk that for jokes.

**[http://www.economist.com/node/16889655?story\\_id=16889655&fsrc=rss](http://www.economist.com/node/16889655?story_id=16889655&fsrc=rss)**

### **Next Nepal PM duel Sep 5**

After failing to elect a new prime minister on Monday despite five rounds of vote spread over a month, Nepal's parliament will now hold an unprecedented sixth round of election Sep 5 amidst growing protests at home and concern among the world community. It is likely to be the last chance for Maoist. Kamal Dahal Prachanda and his sole rival, former deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudel of the Nepali Congress, to win the support of at least half the 599 MPs or clear the decks for a different solution. Nepal has been without a government since Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned in June due to Maoist pressure. Though the former communist guerrillas were able to force the communist leader's resignation, they have however failed to form the new government after the communists retaliated. Nepal's communist party, the third largest in parliament with 109 MPs, has been sitting neutral all through the voting, resulting in neither contestant crossing the 300-vote mark needed to win. The chance of a decisive victory has also been marred by a group of four ethnic parties, who together comprise the fourth-largest bloc in parliament, trying to drive a hard bargain for itself and refusing to vote till its demands are met. If the communists and the Madhesi parties' front refuse to relent, the sixth round of election will also end in fiasco. Though indigenous organisations have been demonstrating against the major parties' single-minded war for power to the detriment of national interests, the leaders show no sign of relenting and trying to reach an understanding. Though Nepal heaved a sigh of relief after the Maoist insurgency ended in 2006, the peace process since then has been obstructed by the parties' jockeying for power. As a result, Nepal still bears the burden of two armies. Nearly 20,000 guerrilla fighters from the Maoists' People's Liberation Army are yet to be rehabilitated. The parties also failed to

announce a new constitution in May. Now the extended deadline of May 2011 is in jeopardy given the chronic failure to elect a new prime minister.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Next-Nepal-PM-duel-Sep-5/Article1-591089.aspx>

### **Maoist CC meeting: Dahal rules out withdrawal of candidacy; Baidya, Bhattarai table separate proposals**

The UCPN (Maoist) central committee meeting, which resumed Wednesday after being postponed thrice since August 12, is all set to see divided opinions over the policies and the future strategies of the party with two vice chairmen Mohan Baidya and Dr Baburam Bhattarai, presenting separate proposals that are seen as a 'counter' to party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal political report. Baidya and Bhattarai tabled their written proposals at the CC meeting simultaneously after Dahal presented his draft, saying Dahal prepared it without consulting other party leaders and that it could not address the viewpoints of all leaders in the party. Generally, chairman (or general secretary) prepares the political dossier in a communist party. Dahal had prepared his dossier during his overnight stay at a resort in Dhulikhel in the weekend.

Maoist spokesperson Dinanath Sharma confirmed that the two vice chairmen had filed their political dossiers at the party secretariat, but refused to call them 'separate dossiers'. "They are not separate proposals, but supplementary proposals," said Sharma. "Leaders can put different views at the central working committee verbally or in writing. This time they have put their views in writing." In his political document, Dahal has stated the party would not quit the ongoing prime ministerial race even if the PM election goes up to tenth round, sources said. He has attributed the failure to elect new PM to the flaws of parliamentary system. Dahal, who is in the prime ministerial race, has also blamed Indian 'intervention', parliamentary parties and the sections within the Maoist party for the failure to form a Maoist-led government. Similarly, vice chairman Baidya in his draft has emphasised the need to consolidate the republican system while preparing for a 'people's revolt'. However, Dr Bhattarai has come up with a softer tone, saying the party should move ahead by forging consensus with the parties in order to defend the political achievements made so far

### **Nepal Army refuses to take part in JMCC meet**

A meeting of the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC), which was slated for Thursday, has been cancelled at the last hour after the Nepal Army (NA) refused to take part in the meeting. The Nepali Army has been insisting that it would not take part in any JMCC meeting unless the issue of fresh recruitment in the national army is stricken off its agenda. A special political mission to Nepal, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) has been discouraging any fresh recruitment bid in both the Nepal Army and the Maoist army. According to the UNMIN, such fresh recruitment would be a breach of the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement and the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA). On the contrary, the NA posits that the JMCC has nothing to do with the national army's recruitment bid as the issue falls under the jurisdiction of the government as per Interim Constitution 2006 and Army Act 2006. JMCC is a panel headed by chief arms monitor at UNMIN Col. Marcos Manuel Miranda Caceres. The panel comprises three representatives each from the UNMIN, the NA and the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Nepal+Army+refuses+to+take+part+in+JMCC+meet&NewsID=255256>

### **PM Nepal highlights ICT's role in expediting govt services**

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has on Wednesday said that the concept of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) should be leveraged to bring a greater efficiency and transparency in the government's services. PM Nepal said this while inaugurating the two-day 'The 2010 International Conference on Multimedia Information Technology and Applications (MITA 2010)' that kicked off today in Lalitpur district. Some 110 experts from Nepal and Korea are participating in MITA 2010, which is jointly organised by Korea Multimedia Society (KMMS), Republic of Korea, and High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT), Government of Nepal. PM Nepal also expressed belief that the conference will play a vital role in the economic development of the country by exploring potentials of the ICTs. He also said that the developed countries should assist the developing ones to take a leap in the sector of ICTs. During the conference, Nepali and Korean participants are presenting their separate working papers

### **Floods wreck havoc in several parts of Nepal**

Thousands have been affected and several lives lost in floods due to heavy rainfall for past few days in Nepal. Over a dozen people were killed on Tuesday after being swept away by flood waters or buried by landslides, local newspapers and television channels reported. Many areas in Terai plains inundated while landslides in the hilly regions have damaged houses, killed residents and blocked roads. Four persons were swept away by overflowing streams in Makwanpur, Tanahun, Ilam and Baglung. Bodies of three others missing in flood waters were recovered in Chitwan. Five persons were buried in a landslide at Taplejung in north-eastern part of the country. Rescue teams had not reached the site due to rains and blocked roads. Most rivers in the plains are in spate and some flowing over the danger mark. Hundreds of houses and fields on the banks of Koshi and Mahakali rivers have been inundated forcing thousands to flee to safer areas. To prevent over-flooding due to rising water level at several points in the Koshi barrage, 39 of the 56 gates were opened on Tuesday. Over-flooding in the Koshi had caused havoc in Nepal and affected millions in neighbouring Bihar two years ago. Reports say over a dozen restaurants and hotels near Chitwan National Park, a popular destination among tourists, have been flooded. Officials led by Chief Secretary Madhav Prasad Ghimire inspected

areas in Kanchanpur on Wednesday where embankments were breached by the rising waters of Mahakali. He instructed officials and army and police teams involved in rescue and relief work to repair the embankments soon and provide shelter and food to the affected families.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Floods-wreck-havoc-in-several-parts-of-Nepal/Article1-591532.aspx>

### **Nepal searches for clues after tourist plane crash**

Investigators in Nepal on Wednesday combed the site of a plane crash that killed 14 people including six tourists, as the grim task of identifying the bodies began. The small Agni Air plane crashed in heavy rain early on Tuesday as it returned to the capital Kathmandu after bad weather prevented it from landing at Lukla, one of the highest airports in the world. The six tourists -- four Americans, a Japanese and a British citizen -- were all planning to walk to Everest base camp from Lukla. The cause of the accident is not yet known, and Agni Air said investigators were searching for the plane's black box data recorder. "We don't know what happened yesterday. It may have been the weather conditions, but I will not be able to say any more until the investigation is complete," said Agni Air marketing director Pramod Pandey. The remains of the victims have been taken to a Kathmandu hospital but Pandey said doctors were struggling to identify the badly burned bodies. Agni Air, which has two more planes of the same model, grounded its flights after the accident, but Pandey said it had now resumed operations. "Things are getting back to normal, but we are grieving for our staff and the passengers who lost their lives," he said. Thousands of travellers fly into Lukla, 140 kilometres (90 miles) northeast of Kathmandu, every year to access the stunning Himalayan range that forms Nepal's northern border with Chinese-controlled Tibet.

### **UN mission in Nepal may get extension**

With Nepal's peace process appearing increasingly uncertain, the United Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) may get an extension after its current term expires on September 24. Three major political parties — the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist — on Friday told UNMIN chief Karin Landgren that the UN body must stay in the country in the absence of a credible alternative. The government will write to the UN Security Council for extension of UNMIN's term, however, the duration of the term has not been stated. Landgren had candidly expressed her frustration that neither the government nor the political parties had got into the core of the peace process. "We wanted its term extended," said Barshman Pun, a politburo member of the UCPN-M. Ram Sharan Mahat of the Nepali Congress also endorsed Pun's view, saying: "We have expressed our opinion and the government will now act accordingly." UNMIN first came to Nepal in June 2006 on a year's mission, but its term was extended every time since the peace process has been in a limbo. The of integration of Maoist combatants, the most volatile and contentious issue, has not

even begun. Meanwhile, the Nepal Army is going ahead with its plan to recruit 3,400 personnel to fill up existing vacancies, ignoring protests from Maoists. Army spokesperson Brig Ramindra Chhetri said the headquarters has received 18,000 applications and is expecting more

<http://news.in.msn.com/international/article.aspx?cp-documentid=4290091>

### **'Maoists positive about monarchy**

Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPP-N) Kamal Thapa has claimed that the Maoists hold positive views about monarchy and that Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "has realised" that activities of foreign power centres have grown in Nepal after abolition of monarchy. "He (Maoist chairman Dahal) said during a meeting with me that activities of foreigners have grown since monarchy was sidelined," he said while speaking at the Reporters Club Thursday. Thapa also claimed the Maoist chairman had "realised the need for revival of monarchy to safeguard nationality". "Nepali Congress, UML and other parties are also liberal towards monarchy," Thapa further said, arguing that there should be a referendum to decide on monarchy and secularism. Speaking at the same programme, Rastriya Prajatantra Party chairman Pashupati Shumsher Rana, a former royalist leader, said there is no alternative to republic and that the voices for revival of monarchy are meaningless. "There is no alternative to republic at the moment. It would be foolish to talk about finding an alternative to republic," said he, "Instead we can look for an alternative to the three main parties that have held the republic hostage." Rana also said dismissed news reports that the recent meeting of former royalist leaders at the house of Padma Sundar Lawati was called for discussing strategies to revive monarchy. "The reports that there was discussion about reviving the monarchy are just rumours," he clarified

### **Swine flu vaccine arrives in Nepal.**

Finally, the most awaited vaccine of Influenza A (H1N1) has arrived in the country. Nepal has received 'GlaxoSmithKline' vaccine manufactured in France, from World Health Organisation (WHO) today. Dr Anand Kumar Shrestha, coordinator of Avian Influenza Control Project (AICP) under the Ministry of Health said that Nepal received around 2.7 million doses of swine flu vaccine and will be distributing it on a voluntarily basis. The GSK vaccine has been widely used by the European Economic Zone and has less side effects, added Shrestha. The ministry is distributing the vaccine freely. According to the AICP deployment plan, first priority in vaccine distribution will go to health workers or essential service providers as they are categorized as high risk group. "Health care workers and dependents, the pregnant, high risk groups with co-morbid conditions, children less than five years old and people above 65 years are the high priority groups," said Shrestha. The vaccine will be provided on first-come-first-serve basis to children above ten years said the coordinator, adding that the vaccine is being provided as per the agreement the country had signed with WHO. We are distributing the vaccine in the central and western development regions in the first phase in October and will be distributing in the

remaining regions in the second phase in November, informed Shrestha. Winter is the peak time for transmission of the disease. According to AICP, the flu has taken three lives. At least 195 out of nearly 600 tested cases have been diagnosed as swine flu in the country, since the first Swine flu case reported on June 29 last year. The government had declared the spread of Swine flu in the community on October 15 last year.

### **Tough going for Nepal's best 'export'**

As if the global recession was not enough, migrant workers, Nepal's best 'export' that contributes nearly 20 percent of the country's GDP, are facing a series of recent worries. The month started with 153 Nepali workers in Macau losing their jobs. Then there was news of 108 workers being duped by manpower agencies stranded in Libya. More bad news followed with Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai banning security agencies. It would lead to nearly 15,000-20,000 Nepalis working as security guards losing jobs. Last month Nepal lifted a six-year ban on workers going to Iraq. While it came as relief to those who entered the country legally, the fate of nearly 100,000 illegal Nepalis in Iraq still hangs in balance. And Nepal has failed to persuade Israel to lift a 2009 ban on its workers. These are worrying signals for the country that is largely dependent on remittances. At present Nepal receives around US \$ 3 billion annually from the nearly three million migrant workers abroad (except India). "The aftermath of the global financial crisis and the ensuing economic crisis is definitely a difficult time for Nepali migrants," says columnist Chandan Sapkota. The decline in demand of Nepali workers will directly affect remittances. It will also affect household purchasing power and sectors like real estate and imports where remittances money is flowing into. Narrowing down of options won't mean an increase in semi-skilled/unskilled Nepalis moving to India. But since the job market in Nepal is squeezing, skilled workers could turn to India, says Sapkota. India is home to nearly 10-12 million Nepali workers at present. "The government has to wake up; seriously and with a detailed plan," Sapkota says. But with political stability eluding Nepal, when some measures will be put into place is anyone's guess.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Tough-going-for-Nepal-s-best-export/H1-Article1-590441.aspx>

### **'Cartel' banks of Nepal**

At the end of April this year, all 27 commercial banks of Nepal concluded an informal agreement deciding on the maximum ceiling on deposit interest rates. The agreement not only ridiculed the free market economy and liberalized interest rate phase in Nepal's banking sector, which has been in effect since 1990, but also showed utter disregard for consumer welfare leaving millions of helpless consumers suffering from one of the most pernicious form of market evils—cartel. On May 13, Republica reported the news and quoted bankers and senior officials of Nepal Bankers Association (NBA), who revealed the disturbing and flagrantly illegal term of the agreement, which limited deposit interest rate at 12 percent in all commercial banks. Banks and the NBA basically argued that such an agreement was necessary to deal with "growing



competition among commercial banks” in attracting deposits by offering higher interest rates and also to check the interest rate on bank’s investment since once a bank takes deposit at a higher interest rate, it will be forced to invest such deposit at much higher interest rate, which might not be economically viable. However, such arguments have no merit and the said agreement was only a manifestation of greed, and utter disregard of consumer’s interest and prevailing laws of the nation. It is very clear from the nature of the agreement, deposit interest rates of commercial banks since the conclusion of the agreement and NBA high officials’ own concession that the said informal agreement among commercial banks is a cartel agreement, which is prohibited and even punished under Competition Promotion and Market Protection Act 2007. At this point, it may be noted that Competition Law does not require the conclusion of a formal or a written agreement for the existence of a cartel and that mere facilitating practice or implied agreement is sufficient. Hence, by agreeing to limit deposit interest rate and abiding by that agreement, commercial banks have clearly violated and are still violating existing law of the country. Apart from being flagrantly illegal, there is not even the slightest justification for the agreement. The primary reason behind letting banks to decide on interest rates and the liberalization of economy in Nepal was to ensure free and fair competition in the market, which in turn can ensure market efficiency and consumer welfare. However, such collusion patently destroyed competition among banks restricting consumers’ options and bargaining capacity in banking sector. In addition, another argument put forward in support of such collusion is that in absence of the ceiling on deposit interest, lending interest will rise, which might not be economically viable. It is very interesting to note that if banks were so concerned with the rise of lending interest, why did they only fix the limit on deposit interest rates and not the maximum lending interest rate? This argument is unfounded and completely detached from the reality of simple economics of free market. The threat of upward spiral of lending interest rate is merely a hoax and an attempt to use fear in justifying something that is clearly wrong. Free competition among banks can automatically balance lending interests. After that, efficient banks will be able to operate on the margin once the interest rates are determined by market conditions and simple demand and supply economics. Hence, the collusion among commercial banks is illegal, unjustifiable, selfish, and harmful to the market and consumer welfare. Competition law is one of the essential pillars of modern economic regulation, especially in case of free and liberal market. In addition, market competition in the form of inter-firm rivalry is, perhaps, the most essential socio-economic instrumentality for the consumer welfare, without which consumers are left without any hope of protection and thus will further increase people’s distrust with banks. Thus, it is high time banks realized their mistake and broke the cartel. Similarly, the concerned authority, Nepal Rastra Bank and Department of Commerce, should investigate the matter and let the law take its course.

## **Srilanka**

### **Constitutional reforms for democracy or another dictator?**

After nearly four decades of bloodshed since Sirima Bandaranaike's regime (1970-1977) Members of Parliament (MPs) in Sri Lanka have come to the most crucial juncture of our history. The key question everyone has to ask themselves is: Are we going to vote for democratic changes (constitutional reforms) or another dictator? Should we go back to the era of elected dictators such as Sirima Bandaranaike or JR Jayewardene? I (humbly) urge everyone to refresh their memories with the help of my previous article 'Idi Amin returns as Asian Leader' see links below. The article did not aim to compare the late Ugandan dictator Idi Amin with President Mahinda Rajapaksa. It has to be understood within the context of Rajapaksa's campaign for a two-thirds majority in Sri Lanka's parliament.

The ruling party was demanding a two-thirds majority in parliament so it could abolish the executive presidency. The article was written to educate Sri Lankan voters so as to prevent them from falling victim to further deceptions. I wish I could publish it in Sinhala and Tamil because the target audience was Sri Lankan voters. The Sri Lankan majority should decide the political future of the country.

President Rajapaksa knew that, had he left the presidential election until the end of his first term in November 2011, the rocketing cost of living and the corruption in the government would have undermined his popularity as winner of the war against LTTE terrorism. He used the best opportunity, soon after the war victory, to grab votes and win an election. The government propaganda machinery gave the whole credit for the victory to the president and his brother, Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The war hero, the battlefield architect, Gen. Sarath Fonseka, has been humiliated for Rajapaksa's political ambitions.

He is going to use the same strategy to grab a two-thirds majority among MPs before they realise his political ambitions. A bad omen already emerged soon after the general election victory in April 2010. He keeps all key ministerial positions for himself and his brothers. He is seeking to extend his term of office indefinitely. Namal Rajapaksa MP, 'the future king', is more powerful than a senior minister.

Mahinda Rajapaksa's strategy had been to win the general election by keeping his main rival, General Fonseka, in prison and further extending the emergency regulation to crack down on opposition. For the first time in Sri Lankan history, he convened the dissolved parliament twice to extend the emergency. Independent media reported that nearly 90% of state resources were used for the government election campaigns. The general election result shows that voter turnout was extremely low. According to the opposition, it was around 50%. This means that the other 50% of the voters are not represented in the parliament. A voter from Kurunegala said: "Many voters feared going to polling stations. There were vehicles on the roads with tinted glass. Some were wrapped like toffees. They had no number plates and only little openings in the windscreens. The drivers could see the roads, but nobody could see who was inside the vehicles.

Police did not check those vehicles.”

It is a constitutional duty for the government to protect religious establishments and the most venerated Buddhist shrine Dalada Maligava (Palace of the Tooth). But, when the Sanga Convention was to advise the government on good governance, agents in robes threatened to bomb the sacred shrine.

The Most Venerable Thibbotuwawe Sri Siddhartha Sumangala Thera, Mahanayake of the Malwathu Chapter, said voters who voted against the government had to take refuge in the jungles after the elections as in the days of terror. But the government’s promise was to liberate the country from terrorism. According to the facts, in terms of western democracy the general election victory was a robbery in broad daylight.

President Rajapaksa seems engaged in a political manoeuvre. When he found it hard to get a two-thirds majority from MPs, he now stands shoulder to shoulder with the main opposition, the United National Party (UNP). In principle, he has agreed with the UNP to consider replacing executive presidency with executive premiership. Perhaps he wants to be another Putin. The MPs and the public have to realise that there is no great difference between an executive president and a prime minister with similar powers (as Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike was in 1970-1977).

Constitutional reformers should consider creating a delicate balance of powers between parliament and the executive presidency. The president should have executive powers to lead the nation. The president’s role should not be a rubber stamp.

The proposed amendments aim to abolish the most democratic aspects of the ‘JR constitution’. For example preferential voting will be abolished allowing party leaders to put forward henchmen for election that would further strengthen the dictatorship.

Everybody knows the treacherous politics of Mr Rajapaksa’s predecessors resulted in nearly four decades of bloodshed, suffering and economic hardships. Since Sirima Bandaranaike’s time the country has been almost continuously under emergency regulations. This means democracy has been virtually dead for four decades. Emergency regulations have been used to suspend constitutional/democratic rights, kill people without court trials, burn bodies in ‘tyre pyres’ and crack down on opposition, trade unions and the media.

To amend the constitution needs a two-thirds majority in parliament. But to suspend all constitutional rights requires just one majority vote there. This must be changed. For good governance, votes must be obtained from opposition MPs for emergency-regulation extensions. Such extensions are ‘the Guillotine of democracy’. Terrorists could/should be dealt with under

different

laws.

In the aftermath of the wars with the LTTE and the Peoples Liberation Front (JVP), it is the duty of a responsible government to introduce effective political solutions and democratic reforms. It is time for a public consultation to re-consider constitutional reforms meticulously to restore lost democracy, re-build the nation and preserve the motherland. This needs time, at least a year. Constitutional reforms should reflect experience from the past. In June, I read a shocking story. In Vavuniya, a Northern district liberated from the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), a man cut off a woman's hand and fingers to steal gold bangles and a ring. When her husband tried to resist, he was shot. I see this not just as an evil crime but also as a fatal symptom of the people's despair at economic hardship. The government must treat the root cause of such incidents.

Now, MPs, it is your time/turn to demand from the president democratic reforms. The left wing parties in the government (LSSP and the CP) should not forget the lessons they learnt from the 'Sirima government', (the people called it 'a seven year curse') which prepared the way for an elected dictator, J.R.Jayawardena. The question they need to ask is, 'Should we let President Rajapaksa hammer the last nails in the coffins of the parties?' It is time for other MPs to show the public that they are not corrupt and have a backbone. Tell the president: 'We need more time to study the changes you propose for the constitution. Consult the public, academics and all political parties! Give us time to breathe.'

In the ancient world each giant pyramid was built by hundred of thousand of people/slaves with their blood, sweat and tears to send one man, the king, to heaven. Do government MPs want to create a new 'royal family' in the 21st century when most monarchs are disappearing from the world's politics?

Please be cautious when you listen to spin doctors such as Dr. Dayan Jayathileke and the old professor G.L.Peris. If you take their theories as gospel you could go terribly wrong. These people benefit equally from the UNP and the SLFP. I remember the days of President Premadasa in 1989 when people did not want to drink tap water from the rivers because of the floating human bodies. I remember when fishmongers found it hard to sell fish containing body parts. I remember when mothers could not shed tears openly when their sons were burnt in 'tyre-pyres'.

Dayan was the director of the 'Premadasa Foundation' and the Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the United Nations for the Rajapaksa government. The UNP's Peris is foreign minister in the Rajapaksa government. He is the public face used by Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) leaderships since Chandrika to give an attractive image to treacherous politics. Chandrika's coalition promised to restore democracy, punish political criminals and wipe out corruptions. What happened? You should have your own memories. I give one example of continuing corruption. Minister of education Richard Pathirana should have been a role model

for other ministers. But he was one of the most corrupted ministers in the government. He came from a poor family background. People in Galle know/are aware that before entering politics he used a motorbike that would start only if pushed. When he became the minister he built huge buildings for schools even if they had small numbers of children. Commission from contractors and admissions to leading schools was a lucrative business. When elections were being held, his goons and thugs went three or four times to vote after deleting the ink on their voting finger. Once, a policeman arrested a goon for this (election) offence. The minister, outraged, went to the polling station with a police superintendent. 'Put your gun down! Come here, you bloody dog, how dare you arrest my man?' said the minister. Then the minister slapped the policeman ordering him to release the goon immediately. His agents opened liquor shops until midnight (well beyond the legal 8.00pm) without fear of prosecution. Half of the arrack they sold contained 'kasippu' (local illicit liquor). At the end of Chandrika's regime Richard Pathirana was a multi-millionaire. It was reported he had bought a luxurious house worth 40 million rupees in Colombo and built another mansion in Galle. Builders who built Minister S.B. Dissanayake's mansion came from Hanguranketha to lay marbles in the floors in Pathirana's Galle mansion. Finally he was awarded an honorary doctorate by a university for his 'honest service to the public and the country' and became Dr. Richard Pathirana. When he was a chief guest at school ceremonies he often advised students to follow him as a role model for success. Finally Richard Pathirana became paralysed. People in Galle say he was cursed by the gods.

Chandrika's government exposed S.B Dissanayake as the only corrupted minister in her cabinet but only after he split from the party. Now he is minister of higher education in the Rajapaksa government.

Government MPs need to ask themselves: Do we have democracy at least within the party? What happened to Nisantha Muthuhettigama (now MP for Dodangoda)? As the chief organiser of Akmeemana electorate, he did all the hard work to regain the faith of voters. He became popular and the leading figure in Galle with his wealth and dedication/commitment. Then he (Nisantha) was forced out of Akmeemana by the president, in favour of Dr. Richard Pathirana's son. This means that politics is a family property. This must be changed. When Nisantha asked the president about parachuting candidates into the provincial council election such as Sajin De Vass Gunawardena (the man who led Mihin Lanka Air line to bankruptcy) and Anarkali Akarsa, the answer was 'It is not your business.' When he openly criticised the leadership he was humiliated, assaulted by the president's security men. Pro government media including 'The Island' presented him as mentally ill. When he alleged the election results were fraudulent, he received death threats. I have received some credible information that people close to the political hierarchy have been hunting ancient treasures, including some hidden in the liberated areas, using sophisticated equipment so that they can do the 'job' without exorcists. The defence budget has been the best treasure for the political hierarchy since JR Jayewardene's presidency. While few people benefit from those budgets, millions of people undergo enormous

economic hardships. It was reported that the Insurance Corporation of Sri Lanka was to be bought by the Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Last year while the war was being fought the defence budget was \$1.66billion. The 2010 budget, after the war, was only slightly less, \$1.65billion. (Rs.201 billion). This is not what people were promised. The government promised to cut the defence budget and use the money for development and for reducing the cost of living. Military expenditure is 3.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of this tiny island. In the U.K. it is 2.5, Germany 1.3, Italy 1.7, China 2.0, and India 2.6, Japan 0.9%. If the government wants to rebuild the nation, it should stop misinterpreting King Dutugamunu's legacy for racist advantages and start using King Dathusena's legacy as a role model. King Kassapa asked his imprisoned father, Dathusena, about treasure he thought he had hidden for his legitimate son Mugalan. Dathusena asked a permission to have a bath in the massive reservoir, Kalaveva, which he had built. After bathing he said to Kassapa; 'This is my treasure saved for the nation, not for Mugalan.' But the contractors of the 'modern king' destroy the greatest treasure, the ancient irrigation system without taking any care of the unique technology used by our ancient engineers to store water. They remove purpose built mud layers; to repair dams/modify lakes. As a result Salvinia grow, and the lakes become unusable. I watched the video and the photos of the assassination of Maj. Gen. Janaka Perera, the late opposition leader of the North Central Province, at the inauguration ceremony of his new home in Anuradhapura. He was explaining his motive for coming to politics, to make it more gentlemanly and less corrupt. Minutes after his speech, he was assassinated along with his beautiful wife and supporters. Nobody had a chance to enjoy the auspicious/traditional ceremonial food, Kavun and Kiribath, prepared for the occasion. There must be an end to the evil legacy.

<http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2010/08/constitutional-reforms-for-democracy-or.html>

### **Sri Lankan Major General Appointed to Permanent Mission to UN**

The Sri Lankan government has appointed the director of operations of the Sri Lanka Army Maj. Gen. Shavendra Silva as the country's new deputy permanent representative to the United Nations. Silva was the commander of the army's 58 Division during the final stages of the war and reportedly played a key role in capturing several strongholds of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – the separatist group that fought against government forces. Silva will be replacing Bandula Jayasekara who was recalled last month. The former commander's new appointment came up during the U.N. daily briefing in New York on Wednesday. A journalist asked Martin Nesirky, the spokesperson for the secretary-general, whether Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#) would accept the credentials of an officer who was "actively involved in the final stage of the conflict in Sri Lanka, which is now being investigated." The reporter also asked whether the secretary-general has the authority to refuse such an appointment. Nesirky failed to provide any specific information. "On the general point about the procedure, I would need to find out," Nesirky said. "I do not know. But on the specific, I'm not going to enter into

hypothetical (situations).”The war between government forces and the LTTE ended in May last year. Since then, there have been accusations of human rights violations during the final stages of the war, which are currently being investigated through the Lessons Learnt and the Reconciliation Commission. Ban has also appointed a panel of experts to advise him on issues related to Sri Lanka – a move that was criticized by the Sri Lankan government and several of its allies who saw it as U.N. intervention in the domestic affairs of a member state.

**<http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/6605738-sri-lankan-major-general-appointed-to-permanent-mission-to-un>**

### **Tamils can call Sri Lanka — free**

Frustrated Tamil migrants were finally given the free use of telephones to call their loved ones in Sri Lanka after losing contact with them for more than 14 weeks, including 12 spent on the rusty MV Sun Sea that smuggled them into Canada. The migrants, who are being held in B.C., were allowed to call family members Wednesday. Calls to Sri Lanka can average about 10 cents a minute and the migrants had complained about not being able to phone home. “They are worried about their wives and family back at home,” said David Poopalapillai, of the Canadian Tamil Congress. “They haven’t heard from their loved ones in more than three months.” The phones were activated on Wednesday at detention centres in B.C. where the 492 migrants are being held after arriving on the B.C. coast. “They feel much better now that they can talk to someone at home,” Poopalapillai said from B.C. on Wednesday. “It took the authorities a little while for the phones but at least now they can talk to family.” The women and children are expected to be released next week, he said. All the migrants are being detained as their IDs are checked and to determine if any are Tamil Tigers terrorists. Some of the migrants fear the calls will be monitored by Canadian authorities, community members said. The migrants have been given a fact sheet listing their rights. “Legal aid is available to the detainees” the sheet said. “Migrants may choose their own counsel and they have an opportunity to meet with counsel prior to their detention review.” Some immigration lawyers estimate it could cost up to \$22 million for legal aid, interpreters, court costs, and health and dental care for the migrants. Federal immigration spokesman Karen Shadd said refugee claimants can apply for a work permit and have access to a federal program that covers emergency medical and dental treatment. “They may also have access to various provincial social benefits, including welfare,” Shadd said. Once a person is accepted as a refugee they are also eligible for the Canada Student Loans Program and Canada Study Grants, she said. They also have access to various provincial social benefits. is monitoring the treatment of the Tamils to ensure it meets UN standards

**<http://www.torontosun.com/news/torontoandgta/2010/08/25/15140346.html>**

### **Tamils Duped Sri Lanka Too!**

Sri Lankans, however, are still grappling with Tamils' duping them for close to a century with absurd allegations, sadistic nonsense, racist rubbish and usual bad luck stories. Yet Sri Lankan leaders don't have the courage to openly denounce Tamil-only grievances, Tamil-only aspirations and Tamil-only homelands decisively. All these excuses were used to indulge in racist politics as in Tamil Nadu and rob others' fair share of parliamentary representation, university opportunities, government jobs and what not.

At the 2010 General Election held under peaceful conditions, Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) – a Tamil race based party by definition – obtained a mere 233,190 votes but won 14 seats. However, all other parties that won seats received 7,644,696 votes but were allocated only 211 seats. In other words, Tamil race-based ITAK could win a seat with just 16,656 votes whereas the other parties toiled with 36,230 votes to win a seat! While Tamil racist political parties win seats more than twice easily than other parties, they misuse this apartheid privilege to promote Tamil racism – Tamil grievances, Tamil homelands, Tamil aspirations and Tamil Elam. However the tragedy of Sri Lanka doesn't end there. The very same disparity is observed in university admissions too. Although Sri Lankan Tamils were 12.5% of the population in 1981, their percentage in taxpayer funded universities exceed 35% in medicine, engineering, computer science, quantity surveying, etc. On the other hand, money to run the universities and governance structures including the parliament is taxpayer-funded and tax is collected uniformly across all ethnic communities. Why do the poor Sinhalese, Muslims and Upcountry Tamils have to put up with a disproportionate tax burden which is of no benefit to them? This is daylight robbery. The most ludicrous Tamil bogus claim that duped a sizable number of Sri Lankans and the world is their claim of Tamil traditional homelands within the island of Sri Lanka. Tamil homeland is none other than Tamil Nadu – India where everything Tamil is born and where over 80% of world Tamil population reside. Tamil is the only community in the world that has claimed two traditional homelands so far – one in India and the other in Sri Lanka. Although Tamils live in almost every country, they don't let persons of any other ethnicity live in Tamil majority areas. Tamil Nadu is the least diverse state of India with over 96% being Tamils. Same goes for Jaffna, Mulaitivu, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya and Batticaloa districts of Sri Lanka where previous Sinhala and Muslim habitants were killed and chased away completely. Today the Tamil percentage of these districts range from 90%-100%. However, the Tamil population in Sinhala majority areas have shot up drastically in the past few decades. When Tamils settle in Colombo it is called exercising their right to live in any part of Sri Lanka but when a Sinhalese think of settling down in Jaffna or Vanni or Trincomlae or Ampara or Batticaloa it is called colonization! Tamils have businesses in all 25 districts of Sri Lanka but Sinhalese and Muslims are prevented from doing business in Tamil majority districts. Tamils are in every taxpayer funded university of the country but Sinhalese are prevented from going to the Jaffna university, which is, ironically, funded mostly by Sinhala taxpayers. Since 1923 Tamils continuously followed ultra racist political policies in Sri Lanka with race-based political parties including All Ceylon Tamil League, All Ceylon Tamil Congress, Illankai Tamil Arse Kachchi, Tamil United Liberation Front, Tamil National Alliance, etc., but blame the Sinhalese for racism and chauvinism! For the information of who make this hilarious allegation, there was only one Sinhala race-based party that won a seat in an elections since 1947 whereas Tamil racist parties always won the majority Tamil vote in the North and the East. And in Tamil Nadu, India too.



Tamil Nadu, India and North and East of Sri Lanka account for over 41 Tamil/Dravida racist political parties. It is a world record for any ethnic community.

That's not all. When Tamil Tigers killed thousands of unarmed mainly Sinhala civilians hundreds of kilometres from the battle zone for no reason, it was not at all a crime, according to Tamils. However, when Tamil Tigers, unable to face the army, trapped and killed Tamil civilians to get world attention, it was called war crimes and blamed on the government! Tamils have shown their extreme ungratefulness to all nations and political parties. During 1970-77 the government imposed strict exchange control and encouraged local agricultural produce. The main beneficiaries of this were Tamils. In addition, illegal trade between Tamil Nadu and Jaffna while import restrictions were imposed elsewhere made Tamils very rich. However how did they say thank you? By further going down to Tamil racist politics. In 1976 an ultra racist resolution was passed (and later put into action) to wipe out the entire Sinhala and Muslim populations from the North. From 2001-04 the UNP government did yeoman service to Tamils in the North and East by bringing a temporary peace to these areas at a grave risk of losing support elsewhere. How did the Tamils say thank you? By not voting for the UNP in both 2004 and 2005! Rajapakshas are yet to learn this lesson. When they eventually learn it, things would be beyond repair. If the Northern Provincial Council election is held, the government will know for sure that they have been pouring money on a black hole. North and East development must take place. There is no doubt about that. However, North-East development must be tied to ethnic integration. With development, the population composition of the North and the East must be changed from present day Tamil only to multiethnic. If northern development benefits only Tamils and not others, ultimately there will not be any gain for the nation. As a matter of priority, the government must adopt a fast-track ethnic integration scheme based on creating new multiethnic settlements in the North backed by the military stationed there. The north must become multiethnic at the same pace it develops. Otherwise we are again going to see what happened during the British time, Sirima Bandaranaike's time and Ranil Wickramasinghe's time. Development without ethnic integration in the North breeds Tamil racism.

**An essential proviso must be added to the above. The word 'Tamil' was used not to categorise all Tamils. As any other community, the Tamil community too has more good people than bad. The word 'Tamil' was used to identify only those Tamils who use 'Tamilness', Tamil and 'being Tamil' to extort favours from others.** A rule of thumb to differentiate Tamil racists and good Tamils is their attitude towards Sinhala settlements in the North. If a Tamil opposes Sinhala settlements in the North for whatever reason, he is a Tamil racist. Similarly if a Sinhalese opposes Sri Lankan Tamils settling in the South, he is a Sinhala racist. It is a simple test that works perfectly. It is a foolproof test of commitment to peace and ethnic harmony. Canadians came to know how Tamil racist elements duped them with bad luck stories and fairy tales from hell. When will Sri Lanka learn

<http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2010/08/24/tamils-duped-sri-lanka-too/>

## **Sri Lanka bourse flat; banks offset month-end selling**

Sri Lanka's benchmark share index closed near flat on Thursday as a rise in financial stocks on speculation of new import tax cuts offset traditional month end forced selling. Sri Lanka's main share index .CSE edged up 0.2 percent to 5,594.30 points after spending the session down as much as 1 percent on month-end forced selling as investors, most of them local retailers, sold shares to help settle credit transactions by the end of the month, traders said. Sri Lanka's main share index .CSE edged up 0.2 percent to 5,594.30 points after spending the session down as much as 1 percent as forced selling to a regular month-end process to recover money on credit transactions, traders said. The bourse hit an all-time high of 5,679.14 on Friday and is Asia's best performer with around 65.2 percent gain so far this year, although analysts have said the bourse has overheated with local retail investors chasing speculative shares instead of fundamentally sound stocks. The banking, financial, and insurance sector sub index .CSEBF hit a new record high on Thursday led by a 10 percent jump in leasing firm Capital Trust LOLC.CM, formerly Lanka Orix Leasing Company, and 0.9 percent rise in Hatton National Bank <HNB.CM. Analysts said financial stocks were continuing to benefit from the central bank's interest rate cuts last week, for the second straight month. "The interest rate being at very low level is helping the market," said Harsha Fernando, the chief executive of SC Securities. Analysts also said an unsourced report in Lankadeepa daily that the government was expected to make more cuts to import taxes in the 2011 budget set in November, also helped the stocks. The government cut import taxes in June. Turnover on Thursday was 3 billion rupees (\$26.7 million), more than five times the 2009 daily average. Foreign investors bought a net 310.9 million rupees' in shares. But they have overall sold a net 11.4 billion rupees of stock so far this year. The rupee LKR edged up to 112.60/65 per dollar, from 112.63/67 on Wednesday due to an increase in dollar selling by exporters, dealers said. (\$1=112.625 Sri Lankan rupees)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSSGE67P0J820100826>

## **Sri Lanka's economic growth to double: IMF**

Head of IMF mission to Colombo says island's economy will grow by 7% this year, up from 3.5% in 2009. COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economic growth rate is expected to double this year, with the country firmly on the road to recovery after decades of ethnic war, a top International Monetary Fund official said Monday. The island's economy will grow by seven percent this year, up from 3.5 percent in 2009, thanks to improved farm output in the previously embattled north and east, forecast Brian Aitken, head of the IMF mission to Colombo. The strong economic performance meant there would be no difficulty for the IMF in releasing the fourth tranche of a \$2.6 billion bailout approved in July 2009, Aitken said. "We feel things are quite good," Aitken told reporters following a 10-day visit to the island. "We are in a position to recommend to the IMF board approval of the next (loan) installment worth over \$200 million," he said. With that

payout, the IMF will have released \$1.2 billion of the loan. Sri Lanka sought an IMF bailout to avert its first balance of payment crisis after the island's foreign reserves slipped to under a billion dollars last year. The loan was approved in July, two months after the military crushed the Tamil Tiger rebels and ended a 37-year conflict that claimed up to 100,000 lives, according to UN figures. Aitken said the government has shown progress in cutting spending and boosting revenue to ensure that the budget deficit stays on track at eight percent of GDP this year. He said Sri Lankan authorities have promised to raise tax revenues, cut spending and step up fiscal reforms when the 2011 budget is announced in November. "To do that, tax reform is needed — to simplify the existing system, broaden the tax base, including restricting concessions and to spread the tax burden more equitably to support economic growth," Aitken said. Since the IMF bailout, Sri Lanka's foreign reserves have swelled to a record \$5.8 billion, boosted by international investor interest in the island's sovereign bonds. The central bank expects foreign reserves to hit \$6.2 billion by the end of 2010. Aitken said Sri Lanka planned to issue in September a 10-year \$1 billion euro bond whose proceeds would be earmarked for infrastructure and other purposes.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C08%5C24%5Cstory\\_24-8-2010\\_pg5\\_28](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C08%5C24%5Cstory_24-8-2010_pg5_28)

### **India to normalise defence ties with Sri Lanka**

With the end of ethnic conflict, India and Sri Lanka will revert to a more normal defence relationship. Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar will visit Colombo soon to get an idea of the issues to be taken up at the first annual defence dialogue between the two countries. The institutional mechanism of a yearly defence dialogue was decided by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa during their summit meeting here in June. "It is time to look at greater comprehensive cooperation. In this context, we broadly discussed the areas which would be important to focus on in the annual defence dialogue. An earlier visit by the Defence Secretary would help to understand the issues. In the aftermath of the conflict, there is a need for a different defence relationship," sources said after the high-level India-Sri Lanka talks on Thursday. The sources denied that Sri Lanka had approached India for assistance in building the second phase of the Hambantota port. China had undertaken the expansion and modernisation work in the first phase and is understood to have tied up with Sri Lanka for the second phase as well. And the third phase is not in sight, the sources said. At the talks on Thursday, India was represented by National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon, Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao and Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar, while the Sri Lankan side included Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunga, and Senior Advisor to the President Basil Rajapaksa, who is also in charge of rehabilitation efforts in the war-affected parts of Sri Lanka. India was cautious in its defence ties with Sri Lanka while the conflict was on and had restricted military assistance to non-lethal aspects such

as enhancing the Armed forces' maritime and aerial domain awareness. When Sri Lanka sought arms from other countries including Pakistan, New Delhi enabled Colombo to seal a \$300 million armaments deal with its old ally, Moscow.

The sources pointed out that defence was one of the several issues at the table, most of which were a follow-up of decisions taken during Mr. Rajapaksa's recent visit. Both sides also discussed the problems facing fishermen, with the India pointing out that killings were unacceptable and that a way had to be found to eliminate this altogether. It was agreed to open channels of communication between fishermen from both countries to understand issues that have sparked violence on the high seas. Having embarked on building railway infrastructure in Sri Lanka, India has signed most of the contracts and an Export and Import Bank team will shortly complete the arrangements for the \$800 million credit for the purpose. India has completed the hydrological survey of the Kankesanthurai port and will be sending a team to finalise the detailed project report. It is also finalising the tender documents for the modernisation of the Palaly airport. Sri Lanka appreciated the ground covered by India in three months to construct 50,000 houses for the internally displaced people, with the pilot project for 1,000 houses set to take off.

**<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article596379.ece>**