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Contents

Bangladesh

Political

- Threat to Hasina's life, warn intelligence agencies
- Help build poverty-free digital Bangladesh
- B'desh plans to ban below 18 from political activities
- Bangladesh is on track in achieving MDGs: Muhith
- Bangladesh to get UN recognition

Social

- Eid-ul Fitr celebrated
- Bangladesh to launch satellite
- 'Forced veiling' debate divides Bangladeshi women
- Bangladesh human anthrax infections cross 500'
- Moderate quake hits Tripura, Bangladesh
- Experts warn of earthquakes in Bangladesh

Economic

- BB buys 10 tonnes of gold from IMF
- Bangladesh eyes trade, farming in west Africa
- WB plans 'highest-ever' aid for Bangladesh
- Poor infrastructure pushes down Bangladesh in GCI

Geo-strategic

- BDR, BSF meet on Sep 22
- Govt wants details on Iranian offer for cross-border gas pipeline

Nepal

Political

- Prachanda withdraws from Nepal PM race
- Nepali congress 12th general convention kicks off in Kathmandu
- Maoists to detach PLA from party
- UCPN-M, UML reach 3-pt understanding; Dahal to withdraw PM candidacy
- NC general convention begins today
- Maoists to detach PLA from party
- Remote control operation prolonging failed Nepal PM election: Prachanda
- Nepal's parties set new deadline for peace process
- VP Jha's personal secy arrested

Social

- Nepal to stand up in fight against poverty
- Third Mobile Expo 2010 kicks off
- Global warming swells glacial lakes
- 60,000 people suffering from cancer in Nepal
- Prez assures Nepal's Asiad participation

Economic

- Chinese businessmen keen to invest in Nepal
- NRB issues regulations for remittance companies

Geo-strategic

- Nepal and Tibet agree to boost trans-border tourism

SriLanka

Political

- Sri Lanka jails ex-army chief Fonseka
- Sarath Fonseka calls his security men "Buruwo"
- Sri Lanka opposition party leaders meet to discuss party's future
- Sri Lanka responds to US concerns on passage of 18th Amendment
- Sri Lanka President criticizes laws that causes social injustice
- Sri Lanka Opposition Leader nominates TNA MP to Parliament Council and TNA rejects nomination
- Local Government Election Bill in Sri Lanka parliament next month
- Sri Lanka's former Army Commander found guilty of misconduct in military procurements

Social

- Accidental Blast Kills 25 in Sri Lanka

Economic

- Sri Lanka to end 10 pct price limit on share trading
- IMF praises Sri Lanka's surging economy

Geo-strategic

- Sri Lanka seeks to boost ties with Iran

Summary

Bangladesh:

Intelligence agencies at home and abroad have warned of a threat to the life of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that could take place between September and November, a media report said. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought cooperation from all classes of the people to build a poverty-free digitally enabled golden Bangladesh as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh plans to ban the engagement of youth below the age of 18 in political activities under a draft policy set to be approved by the government next month, officials said on Thursday. Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith today said Bangladesh was in track in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a progress report on the achievements was launched here ahead of the special MDG summit at the UN

headquarters next week. The United Nations is to acknowledge Bangladesh for its achievements in UN-set Millennium Development Goal (MDG) next week as the world leaders join the 65th general assembly session of the highest global forum in New York. The Eid-ul Fitr, one of the two biggest religious festivals of the Muslims, was celebrated across the country Saturday after a month-long fasting (Siam) amid religious fervor and festivity, reports UNB. Bangladesh will launch a satellite in the space with broadcasting facilities to make information and communication technology more available and upgrade to international standard. An inter-ministerial meeting was held in this regard at the conference room of the post and telecommunications ministry with its Minister Raziuddin Ahmed Raju in the chair. When a Bangladeshi government official told Sultana Arjuman Banu she was an "uncultured prostitute" for not wearing a burqa, the outraged headmistress took him to court. In a landmark verdict, Bangladesh's High Court ruled that "attempts to coerce or impose a dress code on women clearly amount to a form of sexual harassment. More than 500 people have been infected by anthrax as a major outbreak of the disease spreads through Bangladesh's dairy belt, a health official said Tuesday. Ten districts have confirmed outbreaks of anthrax in humans and cattle, with the total number of people infected rising to 508 across the country, health ministry director Mahmudur Rahman told AFP. A 4.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Tripura and adjoining Bangladesh late Friday night, but no casualties were reported, officials said Saturday. Scientists at the Dhaka University Earth Observatory have recorded 10 tremors in the last one week and warned that more earthquakes can hit the country anytime. Bangladesh plans to open a new front in agricultural production and trade in west African countries, which have vast fertile and fallow land and import almost all commodities. The World Bank plans its highest ever financial support of \$6.1 billion for Bangladesh over the next four fiscals. The multilateral lending agency made the proposal at the launch of its Country Assistance Strategy for Bangladesh on Wednesday at a city hotel. Infrastructure in Bangladesh ranks among one of the worst in the world as it has secured 133rd position out of the 139 countries, the Global Competitiveness Report-2010-2011 revealed. Chiefs of the border forces of Bangladesh and India will be meet on Sep 22 to thrash out differences. The government has sought detailed information from Iran over its recent offer for joining the proposed multi-billion dollar cross-border gas pipeline that will also connect India and Pakistan, top energy officials said.

Nepal: In a bid to find a way out of the deadlocked prime ministerial polls in Nepal, Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has withdrawn his candidature from the race. 12th general convention of the Nepali congress kicks off on Friday amidst a grand assembly in open theater in Kathmandu. The Special Committee on Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation today endorsed a new directive, ending UCPN-Maoist command and control over the ex-PLA combatants living in several UN-monitored cantonments across the country. Comrade Prachanda, the ferocious of the bygone era, has gone crazy. He blasts, explodes and expresses his deep annoyance but those have no impact or whatsoever in Nepal's prevailing dwindling politics. Nepal's politicians have given themselves four months to finally complete a peace process after

a United Nations report criticised their failure to fulfil pledges made at the end of the war. Police arrested Vice President Paramananda Jha's personal secretary Rajesh Ahiraj from the Capital on Friday. Ahiraj was arrested from the Madheshbani Weekly's office this evening in suspicion of his ties with the armed outfits operating in the Tarai region. President Dr Ram Baran Yadav today expressed concern over the uncertainty of Nepal's participation in the 16th Asian Games slated for November 12-27 in Guangzhou, China. Nepal will 'Stand Up' to unite against poverty on Saturday. "Though, celebrated for three days with a wide range of events, relevant actions and initiatives to show support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Saturday. The 6-day long 'Third Mobile Expo 2010' kicked off at Bhrikuti Mandap, in the capital Thursday. Mobile Association of Nepal (MAN) has organised the expo with the aim to exhibit and provide information on the latest mobile sets and accessories of different companies. Among 2.8 million cancer victims, 70 percent are from the developing countries. In Nepal too, there are 60,000 people suffering from cancer. Some 75 percent of them are deprived of treatment owing to the lack of money. Bursting natural dams may endanger thousands lives Nepal identifies 20 lakes at risk of glacial lakes floods. BANGKOK: As global warming shrinks glaciers along the world's highest peaks, glacial lakes in Nepal are increasingly at risk of bursting the natural dams – endangering lives of tens of thousands in communities below, a UN humanitarian news agency quoted experts as saying. The Chinese private sector is keen to invest in hydropower, tourism and agricultural sectors of Nepal. While speaking in the 11th meeting of Nepal-China Non-Government Cooperation Forum in the capital on Thursday, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Qiu Guohong said," Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has fixed the ceiling for paid-up capital for those companies working in the sector of remittance by issuing regulations, reports Nagarik daily. The governments of Nepal and Chinese-ruled Tibet Autonomous Region have on Sep 14 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost tourism between the two territories.

Sri Lanka : A court martial in Sri Lanka on Friday convicted former army chief Sarath Fonseka of corrupt military supply deals and sentenced him to three years in jail, a top military official told AFP. "The govt media carried out malicious and false propaganda on the Election Day from 1 pm to 4 pm against Mr. Sarath Fonseka claiming that is not registered as a voter in Sri Lanka and any vote given to him would be a waste". This is a serious violation of election laws. Sri Lanka's crisis-ridden main opposition United National Party (UNP) leaders are to meet on Tuesday (14) to discuss the party's future and the strategy for the upcoming Local Government elections. The Sri Lankan government today, responding to the concerns expressed by the United States on the just passed constitutional reforms, said the passage of 18th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution last week in the parliament with a two-third majority is an entirely internal matter. Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa today said that large scale drug dealers made their businesses freely absconding the prevailing laws while drug addicts were punished with life imprisonment. Sri Lanka's main opposition and United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremasinghe today nominated Tamil national Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian M.A Sumanthiran as his nominee to the Parliamentary Council established under the 18th

Amendment. The Local Government Election Bill that would introduce the first-past-the-post electoral system to hold elections for local government institutions will be presented to the Sri Lankan parliament for debate next month, the Government Media Unit said today. Containers filled with explosives accidentally blew up at a police station in eastern Sri Lanka Friday, killing at least 25 people. Military spokesman Ubaya Medawala had originally said the death toll was more than 60. Sri Lanka's economy advanced by 8.5 percent during the second quarter of 2010 on an annual basis -- the highest quarterly growth rate recorded since 2002 -- following a 7.1 advance in the first quarter. Sri Lanka's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on Wednesday said it would remove the 10 percent price limit on stocks with effect from September 20. "The Colombo Stock Exchange is hereby directed to give effect to...lift with effect from Sept. 20 the 10 percent price band imposed on all listed securities," During his meeting with the Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari, the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa called for expansion of ties between Tehran and Colombo.

Detailed News:

Bangladesh:

Threat to Hasina's life, warn intelligence agencies

Intelligence agencies at home and abroad have warned of a threat to the life of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that could take place between September and November, a media report said. The intelligence agencies warned that simultaneous multiple sabotage might be carried out by 'the anti-liberation war forces, in collaboration with an Indian separatist organisation and different local militant outfits', The Daily Star newspaper said. Sources said that the warning came following information from different intelligence agencies at home and abroad that an attempt on the prime minister's life might be carried out between this month and November. The Hasina government has taken measures to neutralise Indian militant groups operating on Bangladeshi soil. It has detained and facilitated the hand-over of several top leaders of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). There have been several attempts on Hasina's life in the past. Mahbubul Alam Hanif, a special assistant to the prime minister, said her life 'is under threat at all times'. Indian intelligence agencies had warned of a threat to Hasina's life in November 2008 when Bangladesh was preparing for the parliamentary elections. A minister, who attended the weekly cabinet meeting and was quoted by the newspaper, said that Hasina herself alerted her cabinet colleagues that the opposition parties might try to 'destabilise the country within the next couple of months' through violent protests and subversion. She linked these attempts on her government holding the trial of 'war criminals'. Those who targeted unarmed civilians during the 1971 freedom movement are referred to as war criminals. The top brass of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamist ally of main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, has been detained.

Help build poverty-free digital Bangladesh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought cooperation from all classes of the people to build a poverty-free digitally enabled golden Bangladesh as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The prime minister sought the cooperation through the media personnel at Gono Bhaban after exchanging Eid greetings with her cabinet colleagues, lawmakers, foreign diplomats, judges, leaders and workers of Awami League (AL) and cross-section of the people. Men, women and children thronged Gono Bhaban in a long queue and conveyed their Eid greetings to the PM. Smiling Hasina entertained the guests with sweets and fruits. She also exchanged greetings with a number of persons with disabilities including children and women in particular who were also entertained on the occasion. Hasina also greeted the Bangladeshi people living abroad on the occasion. She said the prices of essentials during the Ramadan were under tolerable situation. "The law and order situation was also satisfactory and the people could do their shopping till late night not only in Dhaka but also in each district," she said. She thanked the law enforcing agencies for their wonderful work during the Holy Ramadan. Hasina said the businessmen did not raise the prices for essentials unusually, although one or two persons were engaged in something unusual. But, she observed the overall situation was very comfortable and this is very rare in the country especially during the Ramadan. She said the shop owners also expressed their satisfaction over their sales this year. She said her government is working hard for improving the economic condition of the people. "We are working hard towards that direction," she said.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=154382>

B'desh plans to ban below 18 from political activities

Dhaka: Bangladesh plans to ban the engagement of youth below the age of 18 in political activities under a draft policy set to be approved by the government next month, officials said on Thursday. The country has drafted the new policy, expected to be finalised next month, proposing ban on the involvement of youth below 18 in politics and employment in hazardous jobs. The age and definition of a 'child' are proposed to be revised from the present 14 to 18 years, bringing in nearly 45 per cent of the country's estimated 160 million population. "The draft Children Policy suggested one to be considered as a 'child' up to 18 years and prohibit their engagement in politics and hazardous jobs," the spokesperson for the ministry of Women and Children Affairs said. The official said the draft was expected to be finalised next month to be placed before the cabinet for approval. He said the draft policy sought to revise a 1994 document defining individuals under the age of 14 as children. It also aimed at bringing poor children under the government's safety net protections with emphasis on girl child, who were particularly exposed to natural disasters. Some 45 per cent of the Bangladeshi population was below 18 years, according to government statistics. The draft said at least 2.65 crore children in the country live below the poverty line, with little or no means to meet their basic needs. Street children have been widely engaged by political parties during violent protests in Bangladesh,

though politics is officially banned in schools. Bangladesh has been widely criticised by human rights groups and NGOs for not cracking down on widespread use of child labour in factories and non-formal sectors defying the existing child laws. The proposed policy suggested ban on employment of children below 14 as full time worker in any factory. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, State Minister for Women and Children, earlier said the government would take initiative to update different laws that would contradict with the draft policy, particularly regarding the age limit, which currently varies under different laws. Chaudhury said the draft laid emphasis on addressing the issues of minor children and particularly the girl child during natural calamities. "We will make programmes to help the disaster- affected children overcome the trauma they suffer from in post disaster periods," she said. Several children organisations and child rights groups like 'Save the Children' earlier said minors, particularly girls, were exposed to worst social insecurity, losing their parents in disasters like cyclones that often forced them into professions like prostitutions at home and abroad.

<http://www.zeenews.com/news655631.html>

Bangladesh is on track in achieving MDGs: Muhith

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith today said Bangladesh was in track in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a progress report on the achievements was launched here ahead of the special MDG summit at the UN headquarters next week. "Bangladesh is on the track of achieving the MDGs in the past 20 years we came out of low level of development," he told the launching ceremony of the report jointly prepared by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the General Economics Division of the Planning Ministry. Muhith, however, said the country was still faced with problems in attaining targets in areas like sanitation, women empowerment, job creation attributing part of the hindrances to meltdown in Asia in 1987 and global recession in the past two years. He said the failure of the developed countries in fulfilling their promises to contribute 0.7 percent of their annual GDP for the undeveloped ones further hindered the development process in vulnerable and less developed countries. Planning Minister Air Vice Marshal (retd) AK Khandaker, Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Moshir Rahman and UN Coordination (ad interim) in Bangladesh Arthur Erken also joined the function, among others. The report was launched as the United Nations is set to acknowledge Bangladesh for its MDG achievements next week as the world leaders join the 65th General Assembly session of the highest global forum in New York particularly for successful interventions in minimizing the child mortality. The eight-point MDG goals are: eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger, achievement of Universal Primary Education, promotion of Gender Equality & Empower Women, reduction of Child Mortality, improvement of Maternal Health, combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases, ensuring Environmental Sustainability, and development of a Global partnership for Development. "We shall do our best to reach the targets (by the 2015 deadline) despite problems with our commitment, determination and efforts," Muhith said. Planning Minister AK Khandaker said Bangladesh also was able to achieve MDGs in several

other fields like primary education, gender parity in both primary and secondary education alongside the child mortality."(But) we have to progress more in reducing hunger, generating employment and reducing maternal mortality" for which, AK Khandaker said, the promised 0.7 percent GDP supports by developed countries, however, were crucially expected. Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government laid extra emphasis on enhancing social protection, particularly for women, children, elderly people and persons with disabilities though Bangladesh's exposure to climate change was negatively affecting our development efforts."Our hard-earned gains in attaining the MDGs are being eroded to a great extent by global financial instability, fluctuating food prices and the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters," she said. Dipu Moni also noted that most of the country's development initiatives were financed through domestic resource mobilization from exports, revenue generation, and remittances while "we could have done better if these efforts were sufficiently supplemented by our development partners." "In all international forums, we, on behalf of the LDCs and on our own behalf, have been urging the developed nations to fulfill their obligations made in the Monterrey Consensus and the Brussels Programme of Action," she said. But, she said, unfortunately Bangladesh often experienced newer barriers against flow of goods, services and people from the developing world hindering further the development efforts, attainment of MDGs and eroding confidence in the ongoing negotiations at the WTO. "The most significant challenge is to sustain achievements we have gained," Dipu Moni said. Dr Moshir Rahman said Bangladesh has done commendably well in achieving MDGs and for this the country should be appreciated while "this has been possible for pro-poor efforts of the present government". Arthur Erken supplemented Rahman saying the MDG Bangladesh Progress Report 2009 demonstrated the country's "significant progress" towards achieving the goals."Significant progress has been made in primary education towards achieving the net enrolment target. Already, Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education and the proportion of seats held by women in the parliament has increased considerably," he said. The MDGs reflect the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

<http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2010/09/17/news0400.htm>

Bangladesh to get UN recognition

The United Nations is to acknowledge Bangladesh for its achievements in UN-set Millennium Development Goal (MDG) next week as the world leaders join the 65th general assembly session of the highest global forum in New York."The United Nations will acknowledge Bangladesh's performance in attaining MDG goals during the UN General Assembly," Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith yesterday told a review meeting on the government's 'Ekti Bari, Ekti Khamar' project, also joined by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office. Bangladesh already achieved several targets of the eight-point MDG goals and was in the track to achieve the other

goals within the deadline of 2015, said Muhith. The country's achievements particularly in minimising the child mortality rate under the MDG 4 targets earned high global appreciation while the UN decided to formally acknowledge the performance, he added. A UN spokesman in Dhaka supplemented the minister's comments saying the acknowledgement would be made in the form of an award during a three-day special summit on the MDGs to be kicked off in New York on September 20 as convened by the UN General Assembly. The UN earlier appreciated Bangladesh's "noteworthy progress" in attaining MDGs saying Bangladesh had done remarkably and may well reach several of the MDG targets before the stipulated time of 2015.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=154505>

Eid-ul Fitr celebrated

The Eid-ul Fitr, one of the two biggest religious festivals of the Muslims, was celebrated across the country Saturday after a month-long fasting (Siam) amid religious fervor and festivity, reports UNB. Millions of Muslims attended the Eid-ul Fitr congregations seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as the Muslim ummah. President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hosted eid receptions at Bangabhaban and Ganobhaban respectively in the morning. Ministers, MPs, political leaders, judges, academics, foreign diplomats, dignitaries, high civil and military officials as well as cross-section of the people attended the receptions. The President and the Prime Minister exchanged eid greetings with the guests. In capital Dhaka, the main Eid congregation was held at the National Eidgah at 8:30am. President Zillur Rahman offered his Eid prayer at the National Eidgah. Five Eid congregations were also held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque - at 7:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am, 10:30am and 11:15am. The biggest Eid congregation was held at Sholakia Eidgah in Kishoreganj district. The authorities took fool-proof security measures for peaceful holding of the Eid congregations. The national flag was hoisted atop government and non-government offices on the occasion. Main city streets were decorated with miniature flags inscribed with "Eid Mubarak" in Bengali and Arabic. The Eid was also celebrated at the Bangladesh missions abroad. Special diets were served in hospitals, jails, government-run orphanages, homes for the socially handicapped and vagabonds and shelter homes for the destitute. The Children Park in the city was open for the underprivileged children on Eid day. Cultural functions, friendly football matches and Eid gatherings of children were held across the country. State-owned Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private television channels and radio stations broadcast special programmes on the occasion.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=111761&date=2010-09-14

Bangladesh to launch satellite

Bangladesh will launch a satellite in the space with broadcasting facilities to make information and communication technology more available and upgrade to international standard. An inter-ministerial meeting was held in this regard at the conference room of the post and

telecommunications ministry with its Minister Raziuddin Ahmed Raju in the chair. The meeting discussed technical aspects of launching the satellite, possible expenditure and various issues related to implementation of the project, said an official release. Speaking at the meeting, the post and telecommunications minister said launching of the country's own satellite is now the demand of the day to expedite implementation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina government's 'digital programmes'. He stressed the need for quick implementation of the project and said that it would be implemented under public-private-partnership (PPP). The concerned experts said the satellite project implementation will cost about 200 to 300 million US dollars and take about three years. The meeting stressed the need for formation of a national expert committee and taking steps for feasibility study for quick implementation of the project. Post and Telecommunications Secretary Sunil Kanti Bose, BTRC Chairman Zia Ahmed, Additional Secretary of Home Ministry M Iqbal Khan Chowdhury, SPARSO Chairman Mujibur Rahman, Additional Secretary of Science and Information Technology Ministry Dilip Kumar and other officials concerned attended the meeting.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=154606>

'Forced veiling' debate divides Bangladeshi women

When a Bangladeshi government official told Sultana Arjuman Banu she was an "uncultured prostitute" for not wearing a burqa, the outraged headmistress took him to court. In a landmark verdict, Bangladesh's High Court ruled that "attempts to coerce or impose a dress code on women clearly amount to a form of sexual harassment". A woman's right not to wear the Islamic veil has become a hot topic in Bangladesh, with three high court rulings in less than six months banning "forced veiling" in the Muslim-majority country. The veil is neither compulsory nor customary in Bangladesh but public opinion is divided on the politically-charged issue, and even as the courts affirm a women's right to go bare-headed, more women are opting to cover up. "My hijab is my freedom," 19-year-old television presenter Fahmida Islam, who reads the news on the privately-owned, conservative Diganta Channel and wears a full-length veil, told AFP. "Bangladesh should embrace its Islamic heritage more," she said. Bangladeshi women traditionally wear saris or salwar kameez, and the Islamic veil is a relatively new arrival -- which some credit to the influence of the Bangladeshi diaspora, particularly the millions of migrant workers in the Gulf. Burqa-clad women are an increasingly common sight both in the capital Dhaka and in rural areas, though Fahmida said "many people have the wrong concept of the veil, some girls wear burqas but take them off to go to parties." The veil has become a new front in the battle -- fought in the courts, in parliament and the education system -- to keep the Bangladeshi state officially secular, despite the country's predominantly conservative population. In March, the high court banned police from "hassling women" who do not wear the full-face veil after police in northern Rangpur district arrested nine teenage couples in a public park and ordered the girls to wear burqas. "A girl can only be arrested if there is a criminal case against her, not because of what she is wearing," the country's deputy attorney general, Rajik Al Jalil,

said at the time. In April, the court banned forced veiling of female workers after an official insulted Sultana Arjuman Banu, trying to force her and fifty other female teachers at the school in Kurigram district to wear headscarves. "How an educated man could utter the word prostitute to a headmistress of a government primary school is not comprehensible," the court said in its ruling, before ordering the official to make an unqualified apology. Last month, the high court issued a ruling banning the imposition of any religious clothing on students, following reports that a principal at a state-run college in northern Bangladesh has forced students to wear veils. "No girl should be repressed, harassed or punished for not wearing burqa or religious attire," education secretary Syed Aatur Rahman said in a Ministry of Education order issued to support the court verdict. "Forcing a girl to wear veil or any religious wear or barring her from sports and cultural activities will be considered an offence," he said. Bangladesh was created as a secular democracy in 1971 after a bloody battle for independence from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A series of constitutional amendments in the 1970s and 1980s made Islam the state religion and legalised religion-based political parties. The Awami League government, which came to power in December 2008 elections, is committed to protecting the secular status of the state -- moving to ban religious political parties and launching an overhaul of the education system. But Bangladesh is also a deeply patriarchal society, experts say, where the idea that a woman should dress modestly to prevent sexual harassment is accepted across the social spectrum. "It is a justification often used in ordinary conversations as well as policy rhetoric -- 'oh, well, women really ask for it, they should be modestly dressed,'" said barrister Sara Hossain. "Ultimately, this can get pushed to an extreme where women feel safest if they are covered up," said Hossain, a petitioner on headmistress Sultana Arjuman Banu's case. The recent court rulings are a step towards turning this situation around, by "creating safer, securer spaces and putting the burden on others to make sure that they don't assault women," Hossain said. "The rulings will give space and strength to women who do not want to observe these kind of [Islamic] dress codes or who want to be freer in the way that they want to conduct themselves," she said. But many women, like Samia Islam -- who started wearing the veil a few years ago, after her husband completed the Hajj pilgrimage -- argue the Islamic veil is the best way for women to stay safe. "When I started wearing the veil properly, it changed my experience of my own country," Samia said, adding "irritating, insulting rough talk," she used to hear from men had transformed into polite compliments about her veil. "Most women wear the veil because of their family -- this was all me, willingly I've embraced the veil as a Muslim woman. I think all women should do this. It protects them from all types of unwanted attention," she said. Mehtab Khanom, a psychologist who teaches at Dhaka University, warns the recent court rulings will have a limited impact on women's rights. There is significant pressure on young Bangladeshi girls to dress modestly and behave politely, she said, and in the family and even in official quarters, women's misconduct is still seen as the main driver of sexual harassment. "It is always the girls being blamed in this country," Khanom said.

Bangladesh human anthrax infections cross 500'

More than 500 people have been infected by anthrax as a major outbreak of the disease spreads through Bangladesh's dairy belt, a health official said Tuesday. Ten districts have confirmed outbreaks of anthrax in humans and cattle, with the total number of people infected rising to 508 across the country, health ministry director Mahmudur Rahman told AFP. No humans have died because the cases of human infection consist of cutaneous, or skin, anthrax -- which causes wound-like lesions but is not fatal if treated properly. "Thirteen new cases of human anthrax have been reported in the last 24 hours. This indicates that the rate of new infections is slowing down," Rahman said. "The vaccination programme for cattle is having an impact," he said, adding that outbreaks appeared to be localised. Last week, the health ministry said that 66 people became infected in one day. Anthrax does not spread directly from one infected human or animal to another, but is spread through spores. Humans can contract anthrax from handling diseased animals or eating infected meat. Bangladesh's current outbreak has spread through the dairy farming districts because of diseased cows being slaughtered and then sold on, officials said. Hundreds of cows have died, causing panic among farmers and consumers. Anthrax is a potentially lethal bacterium that exists naturally in the soil and commonly infects livestock which ingest or inhale its spores while grazing. It can be transmitted to humans who handle or eat infected animals.

Moderate quake hits Tripura, Bangladesh

A 4.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Tripura and adjoining Bangladesh late Friday night, but no casualties were reported, officials said Saturday. According to meteorological department director Dilip Saha, the tremor was felt twice at around 11 p.m. Friday in most parts of Tripura and Bangladesh with its epicentre at Madaripur-Gopalganj, 71 km southeast of Dhaka. No loss of life or property has been reported. India's northeast is considered by seismologists to be the sixth worst quake-prone belt in the world.

<http://sify.com/news/moderate-quake-hits-tripura-bangladesh-news-national-kjlokjdjgg.html>

Experts warn of earthquakes in Bangladesh

Scientists at the Dhaka University Earth Observatory have recorded 10 tremors in the last one week and warned that more earthquakes can hit the country anytime. The warning comes after a moderate quake, whose epicentre was at the India-Bangladesh border, shook parts of Bangladesh last Two of the milder ones with the epicentre near the national capital Dhaka and others with the epicentre at Chandpur in southern Bangladesh were also recorded on Eid day, according to the New Age newspaper. Experts at Dhaka University's geology department and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology said the intensity of the recent earthquakes measuring between 2.0 and 4.8 on the Richter scale signalled a major earthquake. They also fear that a major

earthquake with the epicentre in and around the capital could hit the country any time, causing devastation."As India and Burma tectonic plates are moving towards each other, Bangladesh's landmass is being squeezed by 6mm every year, which gives adds to strength accumulation within the earth-crust in the Bengal basin," Syed Humayun Akhter, a professor of structural geology in the university, said.Experts have also warned that disaster-prone Bangladesh, which has been facing floods and cyclones in the recent past, is not ready to tackle earthquakes.

They say most of the country's hospitals, police stations, disaster shelters and school buildings that have been set up for disaster relief are themselves not earthquake-proof.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Experts-warn-of-earthquakes-in-Bangladesh/Article1-601187.aspx>

BB buys 10 tonnes of gold from IMF

Bangladesh Bank purchased 10 tonnes of gold from the International Monetary Fund on September 9. The \$403-million purchase brings the value of BB's gold holdings up to 5.5 percent of total reserves.The central bank increased its investment in gold instead of foreign currencies to reduce risks against a backdrop of a sharp decrease in revenue and profits from its foreign reserves.

Bangladesh eyes trade, farming in west Africa

Bangladesh plans to open a new front in agricultural production and trade in west African countries, which have vast fertile and fallow land and import almost all commodities.

Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes, who led a five-member fact-finding mission to four West African countries -- Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Senegal -- from August 24 to September 2, said this at a media briefing at his office yesterday.This was the first of a series of visits that Bangladesh has planned to West Africa, Southern Africa and Latin America as part of its target to strengthen South-South cooperation, he said.The delegation talked to ministers, bureaucrats and business leaders and found huge potentials for farming, fruit processing and establishing joint ventures in textiles, exporting ready-made garments, medicine and venturing into many other sectors."We got tremendous response from them. They are very interested in getting our expertise in agriculture," said Mijarul Quayes, adding, they are still dependent on rainwater for rice cultivation once a year.Businesses could go to those countries with agriculturists and farmers, lease land at cheap rates and apply the modern farming technologies to cultivate rice round the year like Bangladeshi farmers."We asked them if we could do contract farming. They said there could be pilot projects and then it might gradually expand," the foreign secretary said.

A Liberian congressman has offered to take Bangladeshi experts to his own area to produce rice, rubber, coffee, cashew nuts and so on, he said. "This could be the beginning of our cooperation."

Besides, those countries grow abundant fruits, but nobody produces juice out of it. Investors from Bangladesh could easily take advantage of setting up fruit processing industries there, he continued.The West African countries grow a lot of cotton but are not that competitive in the

market. Investors from Bangladesh could also set up backward linkage industries that could immensely help the country's ready-made garment industry, Quayes told the newsmen.

"They literally import everything," he said, adding that Bangladesh could export many products like pharmaceuticals and clothes to those countries. Bangladesh exports some products including medicine, fruit juice and jute goods, but the amount is insignificant and not persistent, he observed. According to statistics of the Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh's export to Ghana was \$1,462,000, \$1,346,000 to Liberia, \$883,000 to Senegal and \$199,000 to Ivory Coast in 2009-10. African countries could be Bangladesh's market, he said. "They asked what they could export and we have invited them to the Dhaka International Trade Fair next year. We can have soon more dialogues, engage our business leaders and entrepreneurs for expanding trade," Quayes said. He added those countries have admiration for Bangladesh because they have seen Bangladeshi peacekeepers, fruit juice products and social activities by Brac. They are also interested to hire doctors, engineers, healthcare experts for their capacity building, Quayes said. The foreign secretary said as the first step the government might appoint honorary consuls to establish physical linkages with the West African countries and then sign memorandums of understanding for foreign office consultations. Gradually, trade deals could be signed, he noted. Prime Minister's Personal Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan, EPB Director General Rakhil Chandra Barman, Director General of Foreign Ministry (Africa) Wahidur Rahman, Managing Director of Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) Mohammad Abdullah were the other delegates.

WB plans 'highest-ever' aid for Bangladesh

The World Bank plans its highest ever financial support of \$6.1 billion for Bangladesh over the next four fiscals. The multilateral lending agency made the proposal at the launch of its Country Assistance Strategy for Bangladesh on Wednesday at a city hotel. The strategy focuses on four key areas: increasing investments to accelerate growth, reducing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, improving social services delivery and strengthening accountability and inclusion. Finance minister AMA Muhith attended the ceremony as chief guest. The strategy seems to be formulated around the government's priorities and programmes, he told the audience. "We are particularly pleased to see the World Bank supporting high priority projects like the Padma bridge and power generation." The Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) will contribute to the country's objective to graduate to a mid-income state by 2021 through support for accelerated, sustainable and inclusive growth coupled with stronger governance, says a WB release. The latest CAS, one after 2006, proposes to lend about \$1 billion in the country's crumbling power sector in addition with its on-going \$800 million projects. "We will work with the government on long-term projects in the power and gas sectors," the Bank's country director Ellen Goldstein. The WB will first scale-up its existing successful programs which include investments to promote independent and private-owned power plants, extend the rural electrification grid and expand use of solar energy, according to the WB official. The bank and the government will monitor progress jointly and promote third party monitoring to strengthen

accountability at the community level, reads the strategy paper. It also says that WB will work to strengthen the country's capacity to manage for results. To increase aid effectiveness the WB along with the government and other stakeholders will formulate a National Development Results Framework linking to the upcoming Five Year Plan. The framework would be used as a tool to perk up external resource mobilization for development projects, according to the strategy paper. <http://bdnews24.com/details.php?id=173419&cid=2>

Poor infrastructure pushes down Bangladesh in GCI

Infrastructure in Bangladesh ranks among one of the worst in the world as it has secured 133rd position out of the 139 countries, the Global Competitiveness Report-2010-2011 revealed. The poor infrastructure also pushed down Bangladesh in the global competitive index (GCI) by a single position in terms of overall index indicating that growth rate will suffer in the coming days. The poor performance is mainly attributed to deceleration in ranking in basic requirement sub-index, the study said. Bangladesh is now ranked 107th position in the report, dropping by one position from last year's 106th, out of the 139 countries which were assessed in this year's report. Last year, the survey was carried out in 133 nations. 'The Global Competitiveness Report' is an annual publication of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), as a partner organisation of the WEF, released the report at a press conference at its office in the city Thursday. CPD Executive Director Dr Mustafizur Rahman briefed journalists on the report read out by its senior fellow Khondaker Golam Moazzem. The CPD also released the Bangladesh Business Environment Study 2010 that was conducted by the think-tank simultaneously. Infrastructure is one of the 12 parameters taken into account in the report. The survey said Bangladesh's rank fell in basic requirement sub-index, infrastructure by six positions and health and primary education by one position while improved in innovation and sophistication index by five positions. All the South Asian countries excepting Sri Lanka have failed to retain their last year's positions. Of them, Pakistan has dropped by 22 positions from 101st while Sri Lanka jumped up by 17 steps to 62nd and India slipped by two points to 51. According to the report, Switzerland has retained its 1st position due to its excellent capacity for innovation, sophisticated business culture and research institutions that have contributed to retaining the top position. Sweden moved ahead of Singapore and the United States to claim 2nd position. Only two Asian nations - Singapore and Japan - are in the top 10 positions and the rest are European countries. A total of 90 large and medium enterprises having assets of more than Tk 100 million were the respondents of the WEF-CPD survey. Manufacturing companies were the major respondents whose percentage was 34.50 in the global survey. Around 90 per cent businessmen were of the same opinion that the quality of electricity supply (outage and voltage fluctuations) is worse than in some other countries though various initiatives were taken by the government last year. "And this is the only element in the entire survey where perception remained at the worst level," said CPD senior research fellow Golam Moazzem who presented the report. However, corruption has slipped to the third position from the last year's second and it is still considered a major deterrent factor for businessmen. The survey said drives against

corruption should have to be strengthened. Perception has improved for some other factors like access to financing, government stability, crime and theft, tax rates and public health. CPD-conducted Bangladesh Business Environment Study said around 80 per cent of the entrepreneurs were less confident regarding government's measures to increase supply of electricity and gas as the initiatives were considered to be inadequate. Forty-seven per cent of them perceived that policymakers were not fully successful to address the impact of global financial crisis and more than 50 per cent felt that fiscal stimulus packages were not fully effective to address the need of the affected sectors. It also said 86 per cent businessmen were concerned over impact of inflation on cost of production while 77 per cent of the businessmen said lending rates of banks are still considered to be high and affect business adversely.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=112040&date=2010-09-17

BDR, BSF meet on Sep 22

Chiefs of the border forces of Bangladesh and India will be meet on Sep 22 to thrash out differences. Bangladesh Rifles director general Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam spoke of the meeting with journalists of the two countries at the Hili land port's zero point on Wednesday. He claimed that there are currently no conflicts about the border between Bangladesh and India. The BDR chief continued, "The little conflict that we have amongst us is over drug-trafficking and smuggling, which BDR and BSF [Border Security Force of India] cannot address. Everyone will have to come forward locally for this end." Following the tour of the BDR Check Post (CP) camp at the land port, Islam went to the BSF Hili camp for a courtesy visit with the officials there. He was greeted by the Hili BSF camps deputy inspector general Umesh Neyal at the zero point. The current year has seen major disputes between the two forces over the border, with a number of Bangladeshi citizens killed and many more injured from fire from the Indian border forces. Sylhet's Tamabil, Jaintapur and Goainghat border areas saw major chunks of the conflict with repeated trespassing by Indian citizens. A major shootout occurred on June 15 with Bangladesh and Indian border forces exchanging 2000 rounds of gunfire at Tamabil border at Jaintapur Upazila. The clash arose over Indian Khashia farmers entering Bangladesh. The BSF and BDR on Aug 3 sat in a meeting at Tamabil border's Indian side for resolving the border dispute at Jaintapur and Goainghat border areas. However, the two sides failed to reach any agreements on the solution to the problems. They discussed Khasia people's intrusion into Bangladesh at Jaintapur and Goainghat frontiers and abduction of Bangladeshi stone workers by the BSF.

<http://www.bdnews24.com/details.php?id=173433&cid=2>

Govt wants details on Iranian offer for cross-border gas pipeline

The government has sought detailed information from Iran over its recent offer for joining the proposed multi-billion dollar cross-border gas pipeline that will also connect India and Pakistan, top energy officials said. "We have requested our economic relations division (ERD) to collect details of the Iranian offer involving Bangladesh with the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) natural gas pipeline," Bangladesh's Energy Secretary Mohammad Mesbah Uddin told the

FE. He said necessary steps to join with the IPI pipeline, known as 'peace pipeline', will be taken after getting details of the Tehran's proposal. Iran recently proposed formally the energy-starved Bangladesh to get involved with the proposed cross-border gas pipeline. Iranian ambassador to Bangladesh has sent a letter to the finance ministry's ERD showing interest to involve the South Asian country along with India and Pakistan. The chief of the country's parent gas company Petrobangla, however, welcomed the Iran's proposal immediately saying, "We will be very happy to be a part of the proposed multi-country gas pipeline." "It will be very useful for the country if it can bring in natural gas through the cross country gas transmission line," said Petrobangla Chairman Dr Hossain Monsur. Joining the proposed IPI gas pipeline will also help ease energy crisis of this region, he added. Ruling party deputy leader of parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury has recommended that the government should consider the proposal of the Iranian government to meet the country's mounting energy demand. If installed, the IPI pipeline will be the first cross-border multi-country gas pipeline involving South Asian countries. India, Myanmar and Bangladesh earlier had agreed in principle to set up a tri-nation gas pipeline to carry Myanmar gas to India through Bangladesh territory. But disagreements over multifarious issues of the countries concerned stalled the progress of the tri-nation gas pipeline. Officials said if Bangladesh joins with the IPI pipeline, it might be renamed as IPIB pipeline and its length might be extended by several hundred kilometres. Petrobangla has projected the country's gas need at 24 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) and investment worth \$7.7 billion over the next 15 years to maintain its 7 per cent economic growth rate. At current consumption rate, the country's proven gas reserves of 6.39 Tcf gas will start drying up from 2011, and if proven and probable reserves of around 14.4 Tcf are taken together, the country's gas resources will be exhausted by 2015. Bangladesh is currently facing a shortfall of 500,000 Mcf/d of gas per day. Petrobangla has stopped providing new gas connections to industries for over a year and suspended operation of four gas-guzzling fertilizer factories to cope with the short supply of natural gas. It is also now rationing gas in industries and introduced staggered holidays there to cope with the mounting gas demand. The country's compressed natural gas (CNG) stations are now being kept shut for six hours a day to ease the mounting natural gas demand. Officials said the IPI pipeline was initiated with signing a preliminary agreement between Pakistan and Iran in 1995. This agreement envisaged construction of a pipeline from South Pars gas field in Iran to Karachi in Pakistan. Iran later made a proposal to extend the pipeline from Pakistan into India and signed a similar preliminary agreement with India. In June 2010, Iran and Pakistan signed the final agreement for the start of Iran's gas exports to Pakistan through the multi-billion-dollar pipeline in 2014. Iran agreed to deliver 21.2 million cubic meters (750 million cubic feet) of natural gas per day to the energy-starved Pakistan from 2014. The proposed IPI pipeline will be of 2,775 kilometres ((1,724 miles) in length up to the Indian part of Kolkata. The construction of natural gas pipeline is set to start from Asalouyeh and stretch over 1,100 kilometres through Iran. In Pakistan, it will pass through Baluchistan and Sindh. In Khuzdar, a branch will stem out to Karachi, while the main pipeline will continue towards Multan. From Multan, the pipeline may be expanded to Delhi and thereafter to Kolkata. The initial capacity of the pipeline is set to

be 22 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year, which is expected to be raised later to 55 bcm annually. The pipeline will have a diameter of 48 inches. Several companies around the globe have shown interest to construct the pipelines, which include Gazprom, BHP Billiton, National Iranian Gas Company, Petronas, and Total S.A. A consortium consisting of Royal Dutch Shell, BG Group, Petronas and an Iranian business group have negotiated the export of gas from South Pars to Pakistan. GAIL from India has also been involved. Iran on August 23 inaugurated first phase of the IPI pipeline having over 900 kilometers in length, which aims at pumping Iran's natural gas from the South Pars gas field into Pakistan. With around 1,000 Tcf Iran has the world's second largest reserves of natural gas after Russia.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=111762&date=2010-09-14

Nepal

Prachanda withdraws from Nepal PM race

In a bid to find a way out of the deadlocked prime ministerial polls in Nepal, Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has withdrawn his candidature from the race. The development follows a three-point deal signed between Maoists and CPN-UML, the third largest party in parliament, on Friday. As part of the deal, which both parties claim would end the present impasse, 'Prachanda' would withdraw from the contest and CPN-UML would not take part in the voting process. Despite seven rounds of voting, neither 'Prachanda' nor Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel have managed to secure support of 300 lawmakers needed for a win. With 235 MPs, Maoists have the highest number of lawmakers followed by Nepali Congress with 114 and CPN-UML with 108 members. The three-party Madhesi conglomeration has 57 votes. If as per Friday's deal Maoists withdraw from the race and stay away from the polls and CPN-UML continues to abstain, Poudel will not be able to get the votes required for a win. But there's still uncertainty on whether 'Prachanda' would opt out of the contest before the next round of voting scheduled on September 26. "It is not decided yet. We will first talk to other parties like Nepali Congress and the Madhesi outfits to find a breakthrough," Maoist spokesperson Dinanath Sharma told Hindustan Times. Both CPN-UML and Maoists have appealed to Nepali Congress to withdraw from the contest and select the next prime minister through consensus. Nepal is in process of electing its 34th prime minister after Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned in June to make way for a consensus-based coalition government.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Prachanda-withdraws-from-Nepal-PM-race/H1-Article1-601180.aspx>

Nepali congress 12th general convention kicks off in Kathmandu

Kathmandu, Nepal – 12th general convention of the Nepali congress kicks off on Friday amidst a grand assembly in open theater in Kathmandu. Different leaders from different parties including CPN Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dalaj, UML chairman Jhala Nath Khanal and Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal also addressed at the program. During the program senior leaders from the different parties urged the Nepali congress to lead the nation by writing a constitution

on time and reach the ongoing peace process of the country. All the leaders have a common suggestion that the philosophy of late B.P. Koirala of national consensus should be followed to lead the nation from this juncture. The inaugural session of the assembly was grand in terms of participation of the general people

http://www.reviewnepal.com/detail_news.php?id=925

Maoists to detach PLA from party

The Special Committee on Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation today endorsed a new directive, ending UCPN-Maoist command and control over the ex-PLA combatants living in several UN-monitored cantonments across the country. A Special Committee meeting chaired by Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal approved the Directive on Supervision, Control, Command Procedures and Code of ethics of the Maoist PLA combatants. “Now, Maoist combatants have come under the government’s control,” said Nepali Congress representative at the Special Committee Dr Ram Sharan Mahat. “With this, the concept of two armies ceases to exist, and the combatants will come under the command and control of the committee the day its secretariat begins to carry out its tasks.” UCPN-M representative at the committee Barsha Man Pun termed the day’s development ‘a step forward in the direction of completing the peace process’. “It is a significant step for integration and rehabilitations of the Maoist combatants,” said Pun, a former PLA commander. In January, the government and the UCPN-Maoist had agreed, in principle, to bring the Maoist combatants under Special Committee, but the directive had yet to be approved. This had stalled the integration and rehabilitation process of the former combatants. The meeting also revamped the eight-member Technical Committee into a full-fledged secretariat to implement the directive. The secretariat will have 12 members, four of them newly inducted — one representative each from the Nepali Army, the Armed Police Force, Nepal Police and the Maoist party. The meeting also re-endorsed the code of ethics that not only bars the Maoist combatants from getting involved in the political activities carried out by the Maoist party but also prevents Maoist leaders from delivering political speeches at PLA cantonments, according to a member of the Special Committee. The code was finalised earlier in January this year. However, the government argues that the PLA has been violating it since its implementation. Under the code, combatants have to stop hoisting party flags and keeping signboards and photos of their leaders in the cantonments. It also requires the PLA to remove pictures of national and international communist leaders and their communist flags. They will have to stop saluting their leaders in the communist style once the code comes into effect, said the members.

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Maoists+to+detach+PLA+from+party&NewsID=258063>

UCPN-M, UML reach 3-pt understanding; Dahal to withdraw PM candidacy

The UCPN (Maoist) and the CPN (UML) reached a three-point understanding Friday, as per which Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal will withdraw his candidacy for the prime

minister. A meeting between the top leaders of the two parties arrived at the understanding. A joint press statement issued by Maoist chairman Dahal and UML chairman Jhala Nath Khanal after the meeting said the UCPN (M) will not participate in the ongoing election for the prime minister and party chairman Dahal will withdraw his candidacy to take new initiative to elect new prime minister on the basis of consensus. The two parties also concluded that the failed PM election has "disappointed sovereign Nepali people" and that continuation of the election will not bring about any positive outcome. Likewise, the UML will also not participate in the PM election until the "new process" starts.

<http://www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/news-archive/2-political/9226-ucpn-m-uml-reach-3-pt-understanding-dahal-to-withdraw-pm-candidacy.html>

NC general convention begins today

The much-awaited 12th General Convention of Nepali Congress is scheduled to kick start from Friday afternoon to elect a new party leadership. Three panels led by acting president Sushil Koirala and senior leaders Sher Bahadur Deuba and Bhim Bahadur Tamang are in the election fray. The "establishment" panel led by Koirala has fielded Koirala for the post of president including Prakashman Singh and Padam Narayan Chaudhari for the post general secretary and treasurer respectively. Similarly, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Bimalendra Nidhi and Chitrlekha Yadav, who have formed another powerful panel, are also vying for the three key posts. The "third front" led by senior leaders Bhim Bahadur Tamang and Narahari Acharya is sure to add a new dynamic to the 12th General Convention, political observers keenly watching the NC convention say. Krishna Sitaula, coordinator of the party's publicity committee, told Kantipur Daily that NC acting president Sushil Koirala will formally inaugurate the 12th General Convention at 2 pm in Khulla Manch of the capital. Top leaders of various political parties including party representatives from neighbouring countries are scheduled to address the inauguration programme, it is learnt. According to reports, rallies taken out by party leaders and activists from various parts of the capital will converge at Khulla Manch before the party's 12th General Convention officially begins. It is estimated that more than one hundred thousand party activists and sympathizers will participate in the rallies and the mass assembly at Khulla Manch. The closed door session of the 5-day long General Convention will be held at Bhrikuti Mandap and the actual voting will take place at National Academy. Some 3,001 representatives selected from public.

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Remote control operation prolonging failed Nepal PM election: Prachanda

Comrade Prachanda, the ferocious of the bygone era, has gone crazy. He blasts, explodes and expresses his deep annoyance but those have no impact or whatsoever in Nepal’s prevailing dwindling politics. The lay men appear less interested in listening to his threat loaded statements. He is losing his charisma with each lecture that he makes or is forced to make.

This much he should understand now. The politics that has been swinging from one failed election to the other for the Nepal PM post has his own personal or party’s contribution, to be fair. War, civil war and revolt are such key words that Prachanda more often than not repeats time and again. As usual, Prachanda, September 16, 2010, once again thundered at a Kathmandu program that if his party—the largest in the current CA body—is not allowed to lead the next government then his party would have no other option left than to wage yet another war. Whether he meant yet another “**people’s war**” or a different one, he however, did not reveal. But he apparently hinted of a second people’s war with a different style. “But it would be a different conflict than the previous jungle based one instead it would be a national war”, he clarified the mode of the war that was still in its embryonic stage. As expected, he blamed various forces to have been blocking the way of the formation of a Maoist led government in Nepal. He alleged that a “remote control” had been prolonging the tenure of the current caretaker government. He,

however, did not reveal as to wherefrom the remote control being operated?He winded up his lecture by stating that unless the operation of the remote control came to an end, the process of having failed elections will continue.

http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=8283&PHPSESSID=7f652007d0884d9d373896b1c10c2b87

Nepal's parties set new deadline for peace process

Nepal's politicians have given themselves four months to finally complete a peace process after a United Nations report criticised their failure to fulfil pledges made at the end of the war. The agreement paves the way for a final extension of the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), which was set up after the decade-long conflict ended in 2006 with a temporary mandate to monitor the two rival armies and oversee the peace process. Its term has been repeatedly extended as political leaders have failed to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed when the war ended, and its latest mandate is due to expire on Wednesday. More than 16,000 people died in the civil war between the state and Maoist guerrillas seeking the overthrow of the monarchy, and deep divisions between the two sides remain. The splits have hampered the drafting of a new constitution and the integration of thousands of Maoist former fighters into the national army, a task that was meant to have been completed within six months. Monday's agreement, signed by Nepal's caretaker prime minister and the leader of the opposition Maoist party, pledged to "take up the remaining tasks of the peace process... and complete them by January 14, 2011". The two parties also say they will seek a final, four-month extension of UNMIN's term to allow them to complete the peace process. The Security Council will vote on whether to grant request on Wednesday. In a report to the Security Council last week, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon urged the parties to "invest greater effort in serious and sustained political dialogue." Nepal's peace process remains stalled, with few signs of a consensual way forward. The major parties are preoccupied by profound internal fissures and the question of power-sharing," he said. Nepal's coalition government fell on June 30, when the then prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal stood down under pressure from the Maoist opposition to pave the way for a new national unity government. Since then the parties have been unable to agree on the shape of the new administration and a series of votes in the 601-member parliament have proved inconclusive, with none of the candidates securing an overall majority.

VP Jha's personal secy arrested

Police arrested Vice President Paramananda Jha's personal secretary Rajesh Ahiraj from the Capital on Friday. Ahiraj was arrested from the Madheshbani Weekly's office this evening in suspicion of his ties with the armed outfits operating in the Tarai region. He is the weekly's editor-in-chief

Prez assures Nepal's Asiad participation

President Dr Ram Baran Yadav today expressed concern over the uncertainty of Nepal's participation in the 16th Asian Games slated for November 12-27 in Guangzhou, China. Responding to the briefing from the Nepal Sports Journalists Forum (NSJF) regarding Finance Minister Surendra Pandey's comments on the government's inability to provide budget for Asiad preparations and participation, President Dr Yadav said he had taken the matter seriously and would talk to Prime Minister (Madhav Kumar Nepal) to ensure Nepal take part in the regional meet. "As the Games are being held in our neighbouring country, the absence of Nepal will not send positive message. I will talk to PM and ensure Nepal will certainly take part in the Games," said President Yadav. "The players, who have been making the country proud in international arena, should not be frustrated. I assure you that Nepali flag will be carried in the Asiad." Doubts over Nepal's participation in the Guangzhou Games emerged when Minister Pandey recently said that the government does not have the required budget. "We do not have the amount to release for the Asian Games in the absence of annual regular budget," Pandey had said recently. The National Sports Council (NSC) has sought Rs 50 million as preparation and participation costs for Games. On the occasion, President Dr Yadav congratulated the winners of the Pulsar Sports Award as well as the organisers for their efforts. "I feel proud of our sports stars who make name and fame in international arena," said the President. "I congratulate you on behalf of the nation for making the country proud. This award carries more importance as you have been judged by the sports journalists," added the President. NSJF President Niranjana Rajbanshi handed over the certificates to the winners of the award in the presence of President Yadav. "As you have received the honour in front of the head of the state, the award itself has become a national honour for all of you," said President Yadav.

Nine of the 10 award winners — Paras Khadka (male), Ganga Adhikari (female), Binita Maharjan (youth), Deepak Shrestha (coach), Komal Pandey (Lifetime Achievement), Deepak Bista (Special Award), Arjun Sapkota (Para-athlete Award), Debu Thapa (Bravery Award), Rubina Chhetri (Magical Performance Award) — were present on the occasion. Popular Player of the Year award winning footballer Santosh Sahukhala was the only absentee in the reception organised by the President's office. NSJF chief Rajbanshi said: "You should feel great honour to be here with the President. Getting congratulation from him (President) means you are getting a national honour." Rajbanshi also presented a memento to President Dr Yadav on the occasion. Meanwhile, Gokarna Golf Resort, one of the partners of the Pulsar Sports Award, hosted a lunch programme for the winners and nominees along with the NSJF members. Saral Pradhan, Acting General Manager of the Resort, Business Development and Administration Director Murari Sharma, Golf Director and teaching pro at the Gokarna Golf Club Deepak Acharya, THT Live Manager Bhima Pradhan along with NSJF office bearers presented the certificates and token of love to nominees, sponsors and supporters.

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Prez+assures+Nepal's+Asiad+participation&NewsID=257894>

Nepal to stand up in fight against poverty

KATHMANDU: Nepal will 'Stand Up' to unite against poverty on Saturday. "Though, celebrated for three days with a wide range of events, relevant actions and initiatives to show support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Saturday, Nepal will 'Stand Up' to give voice to the demands and expectations of citizens across continents," according to the UN agencies. Over this three days, UN has encouraged people and their organisations to continue to incorporate the 'Stand Up' moment and pledge reading into their events. The UN Millennium Campaign was established by the UN Secretary General in 2002 to support citizens' efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the MDGs. The MDGs were adopted by 189 world leaders from rich and poor countries as part of the Millennium Declaration, which was signed in 2000. These leaders agreed to achieve the Goals by 2015. The premise is simple: we are the first generation that can end poverty and we refuse to miss this opportunity. Last year, more than 173 million people participated in 'Stand Up', setting a new Guinness World Record. 'Stand Up and Take Action' is organised globally by the UN Millennium Campaign in collaboration with a wide range of partners, including the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). Similarly, more than 400 people including ministers, Constituent Assembly (CA) member, the diplomatic bodies, UN Agency heads, media and civil society gathered on October 16, 2009 at the office of the President to show their unity against poverty in Nepal. President Dr Ram Baran Yadav read the Stand Up pledge. Meanwhile, Asian Development Bank (ADB) president Haruhiko Kuroda will address a global summit on the MDGs in New York next week to call for concerted action to achieve all the goals. Kuroda will be among the world leaders who will gather at the United Nations on September 20-22 to accelerate progress towards the MDGs, said the Manila-based donor. The MDGs were established in 2000, following the Millennium Summit in New York, where the world's governments committed themselves to a series of development targets to be achieved by 2015. During his stay in New York, Kuroda will also join representatives of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the UN Development Programme to jointly launch a report on the status of the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific. Despite remarkable progress in reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific, about 900 million people, over two-thirds of the world's poor, still struggle on less than \$1.25-a-day.

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Nepal+to+stand+up+in+fight+against+poverty&NewsID=258045>

Third Mobile Expo 2010 kicks off

The 6-day long 'Third Mobile Expo 2010' kicked off at Bhrikuti Mandap, in the capital Thursday. Mobile Association of Nepal (MAN) has organised the expo with the aim to exhibit and provide information on the latest mobile sets and accessories of different companies. With the arrival of more mobile companies, customers will get a better deal in price, quality and service said Shankar Pokharel, minister for Information and Communication while inaugurating

the event. Ambika Prasad Dhakal, president of the MAN said that the expo is organised to exhibit and sell different and latest mobile sets to customer in the same platform. He also said that the expo has offered discounts in the sets and accessories. There are some 65 stalls exhibiting and selling mobile sets and other accessories.

60,000 people suffering from cancer in Nepal

Among 2.8 million cancer victims, 70 percent are from the developing countries. In Nepal too, there are 60,000 people suffering from cancer. Some 75 percent of them are deprived of treatment owing to the lack of money. Twenty thousand Nepalis suffering from this disease die every year. Two hospitals- BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital Chitwan and Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital have been providing treatment to the cancer survival in Nepal. Similarly, various 14 district branches of Nepal Cancer Relief Society (NCRS) have been providing preventive treatment to the affected ones. However, these efforts are meagre enough to encompass all Nepalis. Addressing an annual function of the NCRS in the capital today, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal said it was a matter of happiness that people took initiatives to establish hospitals themselves owing to government's failure to set up hospitals in the needy areas. However, he expressed worries that such hospitals lacked ample facilities and modern equipments though it was high time eastern and western development regions established such hospitals. Stating that though the government was providing help for the treatment to this disease, many Nepalis affected by the disease were deprived of this help, PM Nepal urged the NCRS among other organizations should be more active to treat the fatal disease. Similarly, Minister for Health and Population Umakant Chaudhari informed that Tobacco Control Bill was in pipeline considering the control, prevention and treatment of cancer. The government was planning to provide medical appliances to the health sectors so as to ease the treatment of costly disease. Various speakers including former chairman of the Society Karna Shakya, Dr Anjani Kumar Sharma and social worker Pravu Raj Vaidya stressed that the cancer if heeded in the initial phase could be cured. They also demanded that Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital be provided with extra building for expanding its facilities. Various people contributing to cancer relief activities were honoured on the occasion. They were Dr Sharma, Shakya, Divakar Rajkarnikar and Jit Bahadur Shrestha. On the occasion, Miss Nepal Sadikshya Shrestha was conferred with Goodwill Ambassador of the NCRS.

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=60,000+people+suffering+from+cancer+in+Nepal&NewsID=258001>

Global warming swells glacial lakes

Bursting natural dams may endanger thousands lives Nepal identifies 20 lakes at risk of glacial lakes floods. BANGKOK: As global warming shrinks glaciers along the world's highest peaks, glacial lakes in Nepal are increasingly at risk of bursting the natural dams – endangering lives of tens of thousands in communities below, a UN humanitarian news agency quoted experts as saying. Nepalese authorities have identified about 20 lakes at risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), and are using various methods to reduce the volume of water in some of them, the

agency reported. “With rapid melting of glaciers, the glacial lakes are growing so quickly that the risk of a disaster occurring throughout the Himalayas is increasing,” said Pradeep Mool of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a Kathmandu-based organisation funded by eight countries that researches climate change and mountain ecosystems. “GLOFs come very fast, carry great big boulders; they can push down rock walls and destroy river banks. The destructive impact is very, very high,” Mool told IRIN service. GLOFs occur when the natural dams of ice or rock containing glacial lakes collapse because the lake has rapidly increased in size or its walls are shattered by earthquakes or avalanches. The resulting floods can cause rivers downstream to rise up to 35 metres, destroying everything in their path for up to 100km in only eight hours, he said. According to an ICIMOD report released in May, Nepal experiences more than 1,000 earthquakes a year, has 2,323 glacial lakes and is particularly vulnerable to GLOFs. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) says GLOFs have occurred in the recent past roughly every 2-5 years. “Given the variety of parameters that can cause an outburst, a country like Nepal that sits right in the seismic zone is very much at risk,” Mool said. Nepalese officials became acutely aware of the potential damage GLOFs can cause in August 1985, when the Dig Tsho glacial lake in Nepal burst, destroying a hydropower plant and 30 houses, 14 bridges, and farmland extending 42km into Bhote Koshi Valley. GLOFs have occurred in high altitude mountains around the world, causing millions of dollars of damage to infrastructure, villages and farms, as well as claiming lives. The ICIMOD report said a standardized glacial lake inventory is being prepared for the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region and will be used for GLOF risk assessment. The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, covering eight countries from Afghanistan to the southwestern borders of China, has nearly 8,800 glacial lakes, including 203 that experts have identified as potentially dangerous, according to ICIMOD. daily times monitor.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\09\17\story_17-9-2010_pg20_7

Chinese businessmen keen to invest in Nepal

The Chinese private sector is keen to invest in hydropower, tourism and agricultural sectors of Nepal. While speaking in the 11th meeting of Nepal-China Non-Government Cooperation Forum in the capital on Thursday, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Qiu Guohong said, “Chinese hydropower companies are looking to exploit opportunities to participate in hydropower generation in Nepal.” A high-level 40-member Chinese team has come to Nepal to attend the forum and most of them belong to reputed businesses. The business delegation led by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC) first vice-chairman Quan Zhezhu, who is also a vice-minister, has entrepreneurs from established and renowned Chinese private companies in the areas of tourism, aviation, metallurgy, real estate, medicines and mechanical engineering. Nepal’s potential water storage capacity stands at 83 million KW, which is 2.3 percent of the water storage capacity all over the world, the envoy said. Out of which, 42 million KW can be used for generating electricity. “If the Chinese hydropower companies present in this forum clearly understand the policies, status and opportunity for hydropower investment in

Nepal, they will not shy away from investing in the sector,” he said. The Chinese businesspersons told their Nepali counterparts that they were seeking to invest in hydro projects ranging from 10 MW to 500 MW. “Even the district-based small Nepali entrepreneurs can invest in hydropower sector by forging collaboration with the Chinese,” said Kush Kumar Joshi, president of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). ACFIC first vice-chairman Quan said that he would bring reputed Chinese companies here to explore the new investment avenues in Nepal. The Chinese investment in the sectors such as hydropower, mines, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, banking and tourism among others, will play a vital role for the development of Nepal,” said Rajesh Kazi Shrestha, chairman of Nepal China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCCI). The Nepal-China Non-Governmental Cooperation Forum was established in 1996 with the initiatives from the business organisations of the two countries. In 2009, the two countries’ trade volume reached US\$ 440 million. It reached US\$ 237 million during January to May 2010. According to the Department of Industries, aspiring Chinese investors registered 58 joint venture industries with a total project cost of Rs 731.25 million last fiscal year, against 27 JVs from India, reports said. <http://www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/business-a-economy/9224--chinese-businessmen-keen-to-invest-in-nepal-.html>

NRB issues regulations for remittance companies

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has fixed the ceiling for paid-up capital for those companies working in the sector of remittance by issuing regulations, reports Nagarik daily. As per the new legal provision issued by the executive committee of the NRB, any remittance company working by opening its office in foreign country is required to have the paid-up capital amounting to Rs 50 million. Similarly, the amount of paid-up capital for a remittance company working in the country is fixed at Rs 10 million. Previously, the paid-up capital for a local remittance company was Rs 1 million. Previously, there was no separate provision vis-à-vis the capital base of such companies. According to the new legal arrangement, the companies remitting money from foreign countries should send the amount before paying to its concerned clients in Nepal. If this is not possible, they are required to comply with the option of bank guarantee. If the companies fail to act as per the guidelines of the central bank, legal action will be taken on the charge of embezzlement of foreign currency. Entrepreneurs associated to remittance business have lauded the latest move on the part of the bank. The new legal provision can safely be expected to make remittance companies more transparent and responsible in securing the money of the general public, they opined.

<http://www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/business-a-economy/9232-nrb-issues-regulations-for-remittance-companies.html>

Nepal and Tibet agree to boost trans-border tourism

The governments of Nepal and Chinese-ruled Tibet Autonomous Region have on Sep 14 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost tourism between the two territories. The document was signed in Tibet's capital Lhasa at the end of a two-day, 4th meeting of Nepal-Tibet (China) Joint Tourism Coordination Committee meeting, reported Nepalnews.Com Sep 15. The report said the MoU provides for the operation of buses, promoting Nepal Tourism Year 2011 in the TAR through media and hoarding boards at major crossroads, allowing regular Nepali helicopter and charter services in the sacred Mansarovar area, providing Tibet visa to international tourists from Nepal and operating more Chinese airlines in between Lhasa-Kathmandu, among others. Both the governments agreed to work closely through respective diplomatic channels to execute all these issues expediently, the reported cited a press release issued by Nepal Tourism Board Sep 15. The report said the next round of meeting between the top tourism officials from the two sides would be held in Nov'11 in Kathmandu. Agreements on bus operation and visa for international tourists had been signed in the past but failed repeatedly due to failure to implement them from the side of the authorities in Tibet. <http://www.tibetanreview.net/news.php?&id=7238>

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka jails ex-army chief Fonseka

COLOMBO — A court martial in Sri Lanka on Friday convicted former army chief Sarath Fonseka of corrupt military supply deals and sentenced him to three years in jail, a top military official told AFP. The military court, whose decision must now be ratified by President Mahinda Rajapakse, found that Fonseka favoured an arms company run by his son-in-law, the official said, asking not to be named. Last month, Fonseka was stripped of his rank and pension after another court found him guilty of dabbling in politics while in uniform. Fonseka, 59, who led the military to victory over Tamil Tiger rebels in May last year, fell out with the government and unsuccessfully tried to unseat Rajapakse in January polls. "The chairman of the court read out its decision and it must now be ratified by the president," the official said, adding that the closed-door court would make no formal announcement. Rajapakse is expected to ratify the decision -- seen as a formality -- when he returns from the United Nations general assembly session this month. Fonseka's lawyers had refused to make final submissions in the former army chief's defence after accusing the court of serious irregularities. Fonseka was arrested two weeks after his defeat in the presidential elections and has remained in military custody since. He won a seat in parliamentary elections in April, however, allowing him to attend parliament. He has said the government is seeking revenge for his decision to stand against the president and to keep him from speaking in parliament.

"They are going to put me in jail and I am prepared for that," Fonseka told reporters in parliament after being escorted by the military from his room in Colombo's naval headquarters to parliament in August. The first court martial ordered the withdrawal of the medals he had earned during his 40-year military career and also stripped him of his rank and pension. The former four-

star general quit the military in November to become an opposition politician, but has since been embroiled in numerous court cases, which he says are being orchestrated by the government. He faces civilian charges of employing army deserters, as well as revealing state secrets -- offences that carry a 20-year jail term. The 37-year ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka ended in May last year when government forces wiped out the Tamil Tiger separatist group which had fought since 1972 for a Tamil homeland. The victory boosted the popularity of Rajapakse among the ethnic Sinhalese majority, but the military campaign has since been dogged by war crime allegations which have strained Colombo's relations with former Western allies. Fonseka angered the government by saying he would willingly to testify before any international war crimes tribunal. Rajapakse has vowed to prevent any such probe. The United Nations estimates that at least 7,000 ethnic Tamil civilians were killed in the final months of fighting between government troops and the Tamil Tigers.

Sarath Fonseka calls his security men "Buruwo"

"The govt media carried out malicious and false propaganda on the Election Day from 1 pm to 4 pm against Mr. Sarath Fonseka claiming that is not registered as a voter in Sri Lanka and any vote given to him would be a waste". This is a serious violation of election laws. This was carried out by four supporters of the President with his knowledge and this is a crime big enough to cancel the Presidency of his. So please take this petition in to consideration giving us a chance to explain and prove these allegations" said Gen. Sarath Fonseka's lawyer Upul Jayasuriya at the Supreme Court five judge panel when the case was taken up yesterday. Coming out of the Supreme Court after the conclusion of hearing on the petition filed by him challenging the Presidential election Sarath Fonseka accused those around him were not for his security but to block the media. An angry Fonseka scolded the personnel protecting him with a tight security ring calling them "Buruwo" (Donkeys) and "Harak" (Cows). While getting in to his Vehicle, he told the media that he was not afraid to face the law. "We will resort to legal measures to come out of this problem. We will definitely win and establish law and order in the country," said a defiant Sarath Fonseka. The objections raised on behalf of the respondents to the maintainability of the petition filed by Sarath Fonseka challenging the election of the President were concluded by the Supreme Court yesterday. The Supreme Court allowed a period of two weeks from today (Sept. 15) for written submissions from the parties concerned. There after the Court will make an order on the matter, said lawyers.

http://srilankawatch.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1164&Itemid=1

Sri Lanka opposition party leaders meet to discuss party's future

Sri Lanka's crisis-ridden main opposition United National Party (UNP) leaders are to meet on Tuesday (14) to discuss the party's future and the strategy for the upcoming Local Government elections. UNP Gampaha District Parliamentarian Joseph Michael Perera told the local media that Deputy Leader Karu Jayasuriya, General Secretary Tissa Attanayake, and himself, among

others are scheduled to meet the Opposition and UNP Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe at party headquarters Sirikotha to discuss the Local Government polls scheduled to be held under the first-past-the-post system. Meanwhile, several UNP MPs have given an ultimatum to the UNP leadership to resolve the party crisis this week or else they would be forced to sit as independent MPs in parliament next week. UNP Spokesperson and parliamentarian Gayantha Karunatileka, who is also among the MPs threatening to sit independently, told the local media that they expect a meeting with Wickremasinghe this week to seek a solution to the party crisis. Following the cross-over of six of the party's parliamentarians recently to the government side and the threat by another 25 MPs to sit independently, Wickremasinghe's leadership has come under heavy fire again.

Meanwhile, UNP Hambanthota district parliamentarian Sajith Premadasa has emerged as the main contender to lead the weakened party. In an interview to Sunday Island, Premadasa, son of former President R. Premadasa, has said that he appreciated various actions taken by MPs to push the leadership to take corrective measures and the party needs a total facelift, not just a cosmetic change, to attract the voters. Ratnapura district UNP parliamentarian Thalatha Athukorale, who has decided to sit independently in the parliament, has said that the party leadership is damaging the credibility of the party by delaying reforms. Athukorale has said that the senior party leaders cannot allow the leadership crisis to continue and delay the party reforms which will eventually damage the party and the fate of millions of UNP supporters in the country.

Sri Lanka responds to US concerns on passage of 18th Amendment

The Sri Lankan government today, responding to the concerns expressed by the United States on the just passed constitutional reforms, said the passage of 18th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution last week in the parliament with a two-third majority is an entirely internal matter.

The government said while it, along with the people, values the longstanding relationship with the United States it regrets that the U. S. State Department comment has not been able to do justice to the true intent and circumstances behind the enactment of the 18th Amendment. In a statement released today, the External Affairs Ministry said the passing the 18th Amendment "took place in full accord with the provisions of the Constitution and in total compliance with a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court, with an overwhelming majority of 161 Members of Parliament of a total of 225, voting in favour." The United States on Saturday (11) said it has closely followed the progress and the passage of the 18th Amendment Sri Lanka Constitution and expressed concern over the approved saying the new measure weakens checks and balances and undermines the principles of constitutional democracy. The Ministry statement pointing out that successive governments have failed to fully implement the 17th Amendment to the Constitution since its inception, said the 18th Amendment was presented after careful consideration. The government said the 17th Amendment could lead to the practical situation of depriving the executive arm of government of the authority and disciplinary control, essential to

meet the constitutional obligation of managing the machinery of state and the 18th Amendment resolves this issue. The Ministry statement explained that the removal of term limits by the 18th Amendment will serve to prevent any potential for the political authority of the Head of State and Government being eroded during the course of a second term, due to an arbitrarily imposed time limitation of service to the nation. "In fact the 18th Amendment re-establishes the will of the people as the sole factor, which should correctly determine the continuity of tenure," it noted.

Sri Lanka parliament on September 8th approved the 18th Amendment to the country's Constitution with a two-third majority, paving the way for the immensely popular President Mahinda Rajapaksa to seek reelection for a third term. The U.S. in its statement called on the Government of Sri Lanka to promote the principles of good governance, democracy, and independent State institutions. Critics of the 18th amendment say the proposed parliamentary council has no powers and the President would have more powers over many independent institutions, seriously impacting the justice, free elections, and human rights.

Sri Lanka President criticizes laws that causes social injustice

Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa today said that large scale drug dealers made their businesses freely absconding the prevailing laws while drug addicts were punished with life imprisonment. Therefore, he pointed out the need for reform of laws that pave way to social injustice. The President made these observations at a ceremony held in the President's official residence Temple Trees to mark the passed Prison Inmates Day. Meeting 500 rehabilitated prison inmates and the prison officials at the Temple Trees, the President asked the prison inmates to be fruitful citizens for the motherland. "If a society is full of law abiding citizens there will be no need for prisons," he said adding that "skills of the prison inmates as well can be utilized for the national development process." The President further said that the severe congestion in prisons has also caused the increase of crimes. "Therefore, measures have been taken to ease the congestion in prisons," he said. The President presented awards to prisoners who has demonstrated special skills and awarded the Best Prison. Superintendent of Pallekale prison Tissa Jayasinghe was presented with the award for the Best Outdoor Prison. Mrs. Indrani Iriyagolla, Vice President of the Prisoners Welfare Association pinned the first prisoner welfare flag on the President and the Commissioner General of Prisons, Major general Vajira R. Silva presented a handicraft created by a prisoner to the President.

Sri Lanka Opposition Leader nominates TNA MP to Parliament Council and TNA rejects nomination

Sri Lanka's main opposition and United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremasinghe today nominated Tamil national Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian M.A Sumanthiran as his nominee to the Parliamentary Council established under the 18th Amendment. Wickremasinghe announced his nomination following a request by Speaker Chamal Rajapaksa from the Opposition Leader and the Prime Minister to nominate their representatives to the Parliamentary Council. However, Wickremasinghe told the media that he would not participate in the

Parliamentary Council. Meanwhile, the TNA today turned down the nomination of its MP Sumanthiran as Wickremasinghe's nominee to the Parliamentary Council. TNA MP Suresh Premachandran told the media that while Sumanthiran has already rejected the proposal, the TNA would not accept any nominations to the Parliamentary Council, as the party was opposed to the 18th Amendment. "The TNA is opposed to the 18th Amendment and does not want to play any part in its implementation. The TNA does not want to have any role in the Parliamentary Council, which is a powerless body," he said. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution specifies the appointment of the five-member Parliamentary Council comprising the Speaker, Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, and two nominee MPs from the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader, in place of the Constitutional Council specified by the 17th Amendment.

Local Government Election Bill in Sri Lanka parliament next month

The Local Government Election Bill that would introduce the first-past-the-post electoral system to hold elections for local government institutions will be presented to the Sri Lankan parliament for debate next month, the Government Media Unit said today. The proposed bill would enable the government to conduct the next local government election under both the first-past-the-post and the present Proportional Representative (PR) system. Under the proposed amendments two-thirds of the members are to be elected on the first-past-the-post system and one-third under the PR system. The Chief Government Whip Minister Dinesh Gunawardena has told the government media that in line with the bill, amendments to the Municipal Council Ordinance, Urban Council Ordinance and the Pradeshiya Sabha Act, will also be presented to the Parliament. The government says it has observed that there is a wide social consensus for the present system to be changed and to revert back to the ward system in view of the shortcomings in the existing system. On the recommendation of Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils A. L. M. Athallah, the Cabinet on September 8 granted approval to amend the Local Government Elections Ordinance and the Municipal Council Ordinance, Urban Council Ordinance and the Pradeshiya Sabha Act

Sri Lanka's former Army Commander found guilty of misconduct in military procurements

The second court martial that is probing allegations against Sri Lanka's former Army Commander and current Democratic National Alliance parliamentarian General (Retd.) Sarath Fonseka today found him guilty on four counts against him. The military court has recommended a prison term not exceeding three years for the ex-military chief. The verdict is to be delivered to Commander-in-Chief President Mahinda Rajapaksa for approval. The second court martial was probing charges of irregularities in military procurements during General Fonseka's tenure as Army Chief. The first court martial concluded on August 13 found Fonseka guilty of engaging in political work while in active service and recommended stripping him of his ranks and medals.

Accidental Blast Kills 25 in Sri Lanka

Containers filled with explosives accidentally blew up at a police station in eastern Sri Lanka Friday, killing at least 25 people. Military spokesman Ubaya Medawala had originally said the death toll was more than 60. The blast occurred at a police depot where the munitions were stored for safe keeping in the small town of Karadiyanaru in the Batticaloa district. The explosives were intended for road construction being carried out by a Chinese firm. Medawala says the blast occurred as workers were taking out some of the munitions. The cause of the explosion, which destroyed the station and damaged surrounding buildings, was not immediately known. Sri Lankan military officials say the majority of those killed were police officers, as well as two Chinese contractors. At least 49 people were injured. Karadiyanaru is located in an area formerly controlled by the Tamil Tiger rebels. They were defeated by government forces in May of last year, ending Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Accidental-Blast-Kills-25-in-Sri-Lanka-103128829.html>

IMF praises Sri Lanka's surging economy

Sri Lanka's economy advanced by 8.5 percent during the second quarter of 2010 on an annual basis -- the highest quarterly growth rate recorded since 2002 -- following a 7.1 advance in the first quarter. The country, which suffered through almost three decades of civil conflict and violence until the government's May 2009 defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam terrorist group, has clearly rebounded economically, with a peace-induced increase in foreign investment and tourism. The government's statistics office said the country's agriculture sector grew by 5.1 percent, manufacturing by 8.9 percent, construction by 9.3 percent and services by 8.8 from a year earlier. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), which recently extended a \$2.6 billion standby loan facility to the country, forecasts "strong growth this year" for the economy, citing that "fiscal performance so far remains consistent with achieving the government's full-year deficit target of 8 percent of GDP." The IMF also decreed that a recent interest rate cut by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka as "appropriate," citing the recovery in bank lending. "External balances are strong," the IMF stated in its review of Sri Lanka's finances, "[and] remittance inflows continue at a high rate, tourism prospects continue to improve rapidly, and gross reserves remain at comfortable levels. The end of the 30-year war has led to a surge in investor enthusiasm, bolstered by the decline in the risk of a short-term balance of payments crisis -- and future growth prospects have improved markedly." The IMF also said that Sri Lanka is satisfying the terms of its loan program. "Performance under the program has been good," the body said. "End-June performance criteria on domestic budget borrowing, reserve money, and net reserves have been met. Financial sector reforms continue to go forward in line with the program."

However, given the near-term challenges presented by a global economic slowdown, IMF advised that Sri Lanka needs to implement fundamental tax reform, that is, to simplify the existing system, broaden the tax base, spread the tax burden more equitably, and support economic growth, all while boosting the revenue-to-GDP ratio. The IMF also mentioned that Sri Lanka's private-sector investment "will need to play a critical role," in Sri Lanka's continued

growth and stability. Ashira Perera, international economist at Capital Economics, said that domestic demand in Sri Lanka should hold strong and offset the fading support from exports, citing that exports account for a relatively small percentage of GDP, at about 20 percent.

"The central bank policy rates look set to stay on hold for a long time but overheating fears are likely to climb during the course of 2011," she said. "The next move in policy rates will probably be up rather than down." In addition, S&P just upgraded both its foreign-currency debt rating (to B+ from B) and the local currency bond rating. "The upgrade reflects the prospect of continued strong growth and the stabilization in the fiscal position through Sri Lanka's IMF agreement," Perera noted. The budget deficit is on track to fall to the targeted 8 percent of GDP in 2010, from 10 percent in 2009, and the government will publish its plans for lifting tax revenues in its 2011 budget... in late November. "Perera has upgraded her GDP growth forecast and expect GDP to 8.0 percent in both 2010 and 2011." This implies that Sri Lanka will be one of the world's high-fliers in terms of growth in coming quarters," she added. "Inflation remains subdued and has averaged only 0.3 percent per month so far this year, or 3-4 percent [per annum]."

<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/63290/20100917/sri-lanka-gdp-imf.htm>

Sri Lanka to end 10 pct price limit on share trading

Sri Lanka's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on Wednesday said it would remove the 10 percent price limit on stocks with effect from September 20. "The Colombo Stock Exchange is hereby directed to give effect to...lift with effect from Sept. 20 the 10 percent price band imposed on all listed securities," the SEC said in a directive sent to the bourse. The bourse hit a record high of 6,281.96 at 0532 GMT on Wednesday on speculation that the SEC was going to remove the price limit.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSSGE68E07F20100915>

Sri Lanka seeks to boost ties with Iran

During his meeting with the Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari, the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa called for expansion of ties between Tehran and Colombo. The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting quoted Rajapaksa Wednesday as saying that, "We welcome Iranian exports to carry out projects here." The Sri Lankan president also expressed hope that Iran will supply his country with LNG. The 9th Joint Economy and Trade Cooperation Committee meeting between Iran and Sri Lanka, was held from the 13th to the 15th of September. The Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari led Iranian delegation. In the meeting the two countries commerce ministers signed six MOUs and cooperation agreements in the fields of customs, sisterhood between Shahid Rajaei and Colombo ports and acceptance of each other's maritime certificates. Also in this meeting agreements were made between the two countries in the fields of science, culture, art and standardization. An increase in trade, holding international exhibitions, enhancing maritime relations and implementing engineering and technical projects were among other agendas during the meeting. In April 2008, Iran began work

in several infrastructure development projects in Sri Lanka, all part of a \$1.5 billion loan to the South Asian island. These projects included doubling the oil refinery capacity of Sri Lanka's Sapugaskanda refinery as well as building a 100-megawatt hydropower project and irrigation plan in Uma Oya. In June 2009, the country signed a \$106 million agreement with an Iranian firm to provide electricity to roughly 1,000 villages in Sri Lanka
http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=226748