

Report # 104
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
South Asia, India, East Asia, Central Asia, GCC, Turkey & China
Nadia Tasleem
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This report is based on the review of news items focusing on political, economic, social and geo-strategic developments in various regions namely; South Asia, India, East Asia, Central Asia, GCC, Turkey and China from 23 January to 29 January 2010 as have been collected by interns.

TURKEY

Political Front:

PM Erdogan has asked all anti-democracy elements to stop their efforts to illegally topple democratically elected regime. In the meantime thousands of people throughout Turkey took to the streets to condemn recently uncovered military action plans. In response to the allegations against armed forces; military chief has out rightly denied all these charges. The Constitutional Court has annulled a law that allows military officers to be tried in civilian courts, but legal experts say that is unlikely to affect ongoing investigations and trials into military officers suspected of having participated in coup. Meanwhile terrorist PKK has made plan to launch violent demonstrations on 15 Feb (the date when their top leader got arrested) and will continue their protest till 25 March.

Reiterating his strong support for the democratization initiative launched by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government, Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani has encouraged Kurdish people of Turkey for supporting the initiative which seeks to settle Turkey's decades-long Kurdish problem.

Geo-strategic Front:

Key developments occurred in Turkish-Armenian relations after the release of latter's court's ruling about killing of Armenians in 1915. Court called genocide at the hands of Turks. Meanwhile court has also declared some part of Turkey to be Armenian. This caused strain in their relationship that was about to grow. In order to sort out this issue Foreign Ministers of both countries held meeting in UK. Besides that Turkey hosted trilateral summit that included Pakistan-Afghanistan & Turkey. Summit primarily focused on stability in the region. Turkey has strongly warned Israel to end settlements in Gaza.

Social Front:

Life in Istanbul remained paralyzed amidst snowfall and extreme e cold weather.

Economic Front:

Turkish Stock exchange has increased remarkably while its reserves have decreased.

GCC:

Geo-strategic Front:

Saudi King Abdullah held meeting with former PM of UK. Meanwhile various accords have been signed between Saudi and US universities. Strong Saudi-Pak ties also remained significant. Growing ties of China and Africa grabbed attention. Recently held Kuwait-French talks led to capping of cooperative peaceful nuke- deal.

Social Front:

Saudi government intends to create more and more jobs for graduates in different fields. Besides that various cultural programs would soon be held in King Fahd Cultural Centre. Above all swine flu vaccine has been made available in 15 Saudi centers. The Diplomatic Corps has lauded United Arab Emirates for its role in protecting rights of the migrant workers, offering them the best available milieu and opportunities to work in. Government of Qatar has started emphasizing more on the importance of education.

Economic Front:

Saudi IT market intends to touch \$4.8 billion mark by 2013. Despite the global, regional and local economic challenges, a recent consumer survey indicates that consumer confidence in Kuwait has remarkably increased. In order to improve Bahrain's economic capabilities, studies carried out. Bahrain and Russia have expressed their keenness to enhance co-operation in the trade, industrial, economic and financial fields.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Appeal of detained Kazakh Journalist for parole has been rejected by the court. The pro-presidential Adilet (Justice) party has proposed to abolish the post of prime minister and to give most of its powers to Kazakh President. Kyrgyz PM strongly condemned his Interior Minister for making wrong appointment of deputy police chief and cancelled the appointment. All the while Parliament has endorsed constitutional amendments made by the Kyrgyz President. A Tajik official claimed that many prisoners convicted of drug offenses have paid bribes in order to be released in a recent amnesty. In three Tajik constituencies elections were held to replace old parliamentarians with new deputies. Dilorom, who had been Uzbek speaker since 2008 again took charge of the Parliament under same designation.

Geo-strategic Front:

NATO has finalized an agreement with Kazakhstan on the transit of supplies to Afghanistan, in order to reduce its reliance on a route through Pakistan that has been attacked by the Taliban. Kazakhstan has threatened to rewrite key Western-run energy projects in order to implement new tax rules. Kyrgyz delegation discussed Afghan situation at international summits. Uzbek President intends to strengthen ties with the USA.

Social Front:

The NGOs have accused government of Kazakhstan for blocking 14 websites. Kyrgyz opposition party continued hunger strike against detention of former Defense minister. Nine religious groups in Tajikistan failed to file documents for registration by the January 1 deadline and have been declared illegal. Turkmen students banned from studying at

universities abroad have been allowed by the government to resume their studies at the American University in Bulgaria. Prominent Uzbek sports journalist has been arrested under the allegation of creation of illegal religious group. Authorities in the Uzbek capital have started renaming some 150 streets and residential areas to deemphasize the city's Soviet heritage. Meanwhile Human Rights Watch has asked to drop baseless charges against prominent photographer Umida Akhmidova and allow her to carry work without any fear.

Economic Front:

Inflation is expected to reach 5-7 percent in Azerbaijan at the end of 2010, compared to 1.5 percent in 2009. Many questions have to be addressed regarding Nabucco gas pipeline before its start. Number of officially registered jobless has increased by 8.5 percent and reached 9,651 people in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz PM expects remarkable economic growth via investments in 2010. According to the World Bank figures Uzbek economy would grow by 6.5% in the year 2010.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front:

As AL has completed one year of governance hence analysts have started evaluating government's performance. Most of the observers have built consensus on the point that AL has successfully achieved some of its set targets till now. Special attention has been given to the war against terrorism hence success in this area also seems to be remarkable. Besides that government has taken initiatives to curb poverty. Active diplomacy of the governing regime has also been noticed by many. As far as democratic spirit in the country's politics is concerned that still remains missing. Major opposition party BNP continued boycott from various sessions. Sixth Presidential elections were successfully held in Sri Lanka on 26 January. Rajapakse retained his position after winning 57% of the total votes cast. International monitors have expressed satisfaction with the elections despite few shortcomings. On the day of elections four explosions occurred in Jaffna Peninsula. Nepali PM has asked Maoists to leave extreme thinking in order to resolve the issue of constitution making before deadline i.e. 28 May. Meanwhile Three Nepalese princesses have been summoned to appear before a judge in a dispute over their father's estate, in what would be the first court appearance by a former royal.

Geo-strategic Front:

Some of the analysts and journalists have strongly condemned Prime Minister's recent visit to India while associating it with loss of Bangladeshi sovereignty. Fact however points out a different situation. As a result of PM visit India has decided to settle some of its dues with Bangladesh, by agreeing in principle to cede control over some 17,000 acres of territory as part of a larger, comprehensive agreement, in which the remaining tiny part of the 4,096 km-long boundary would be demarcated, while several pockets of adverse possessions and enclaves claimed by both sides are likely to be settled on an "as-is-where-is" basis. Top Nepali leadership has asked India to provide them assistance in constitution writing. Japanese assistance to Nepal and Turkish-Nepalese air services agreement also remained significant. Maldives has asked India to increase trade and investments in the island nation. India in response has promised to invest worth \$1 billion

in corporate houses. Maldives has expressed keenness to work for up gradation of environment.

Social Front:

On the third & last day of the annual religious gathering in Bangladesh was attended by 4 million Muslims.

Health experts in Bangladesh have pointed out HIV Aids as potent emerging threat to the society of the country. People in Nepal have been facing electricity cut for 11 hours daily due to power shortage in the country. The 2010 Environmental Performance Index has ranked Nepal 38th among 163 countries on 25 performance indicators tracked across 10 policy categories covering both environmental public health and eco-system vitality. Only Japan (20) and Singapore (28) are the other Asian countries that have performed better than the Himalayan nation.

Economic Front:

Bangladesh's food and disaster management ministry has issued an international tender to buy 50,000 tones of white rice. Stock exchange in Sri Lanka remarkably fell soon after Presidential elections. First month of the year has witnessed sharp increase in inflation in Srilanka mainly due to a low base effect, rising consumer spending on the back of low interest rates, and high food prices.

INDIA

Political Front:

National level:

TRS has asked government to take appropriate measures to resolve Telangana issue. Meanwhile BJP President has claimed that his party regards RSS but does not follow its dictations. Member of Shiv Sena has defeated SP leader's son in a closely-contested by-election. Security remained on high alert for Republican day. At Kashmiri front Omer Abdullah has invited freedom fighters to resolve their issues via negotiations.

Geo-strategic Front:

UN envoy for nuclear non proliferation criticized Indo-US nuclear deal as it weakened the effort for nuclear free world. RSS chief claimed that India should teach a lesson to Pakistan and take strong steps against China. India has announced 100 fellowships for training Afghan students in agricultural field every year.

Social Front:

In a recent attack Maoists killed 4 people in Orissa and blew up a railway track in Assam. A significant development is that gender based discrimination in India has remarkably decreased in the last decade. A survey by the Navsarjan Trust and the Robert F. Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights indicates that the practice of un-touchability is still prevalent in rural areas of Gujarat. The West Bengal government has announced plan to create one lakh jobs by March 2010 in different department.

Economic Front:

India has expressed determination to achieve 7% growth rate in 2010 while IMF has predicted 7.9% growth rate in 2010-11.

EAST ASIA

Political Front:

Amidst declining popularity Indonesian President has launched his third pop album entitled as 'I am certain I'll make it'. Meanwhile thousand of protestors have launched demonstrations against President Susilo for his inability to end corruption. Protests of red-shirt protestors have increased problems for Thai regime. The Philippine government and Muslim separatists held two days of talks in Malaysia as they work towards a peace deal to end decades of conflict. Sam Rainsy, the leader of Cambodia's largest opposition party, has been sentenced to two years in jail.

Geo-strategic Front:

A Cambodian cargo has been hijacked by Somali pirates.

Social Front:

Indonesia, the world's third largest greenhouse gas emitter, has announced plans for a \$1bn fund to invest in emission reduction projects across the country. The Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI) lambasted the government for failing to protect Indonesian workers overseas, saying more than 1,000 of them had died while doing their jobs last year. Malaysian prosecutors have charged three Muslim men in the firebombing of a church.

Economic Front:

Growth in Philippines gross domestic product faded to 0.9 percent in 2009 from 3.8 percent in 2008 -- the weakest since the economy shrank 0.6 percent in 1998 in the wake of the Asian financial crisis. Malaysian PM slammed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prescriptions' asserting that there was no universal recipe to financial crises. The Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (Mier) has maintained its gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast of 3.7% for Malaysia this year in view of the improving macro-economic indicators.

CHINA

Political Front:

Chinese officials have directed various departments to handle public complaints in the most appropriate manner. Meanwhile a senior official with the Civil Aviation Administration has been dismissed from the Communist Party of China (CPC) and his public office for "serious violations of discipline and laws."

Geo-strategic Front:

Cyber issue has exacerbated tension between China and USA. In response to the US criticism China claimed that its policy of internet regulation is in line with Chinese laws and does not intend to block flow of words or ideas. Meanwhile a national agency that handles China's Internet security issues said it hasn't received any detailed report from Google Inc. (GOOG) regarding a series of cyber attacks the company believes were originated from China. The US has asked China to carry investigations of the attack

while China strongly condemned US interference. China has decided to suspend scheduled visits between the Chinese and U.S. armed forces, in response to Washington's plan to sell a package of arms worth nearly 6.4 billion U.S. dollars to Taiwan. China, South Korea and Japan held a meeting to launch joint research on free trade pact. In the meantime Chinese growing relations with Brunei, Uganda, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Switzerland and Africa remained significant indicating Chinese role as an active global player.

China has asked EU to immediately lift arms embargo as it would affect their strategic partnership. China has also urged international community to play its role in resuming Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

China has further increased humanitarian aid to 18 million Yuan for the victims of Haiti. China has also decided to send humanitarian aid to Mongolia. China has promised to continue support for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

Social Front:

A top judge has been convicted in China as a result of anti-corruption drive. A total of 770,000 deaths from tuberculosis (TB) have been avoided over the past eight years in China because of a large-scale TB control project. China has started taking strict measures to curb environmental pollution. In this regard various industries causing pollution have been pointed out. Many officials have also been asked to be cautious in taking care of the environment. Emissions of sulfur dioxide, a major pollutant; in China has also dropped 10.4 percent last year compared with that of 2008. Government has allocated funds to deal with drought situation. In 2009 Beijing received 170 million tourists at home and from abroad.

Economic Front:

China and Switzerland have voiced their opposition against trade protectionism amid the ongoing global financial crisis. Chinese shares declined for first four days of the weak by increased after that lessening tension of the economists. Chinese wine industry has got golden opportunity in the international market as world has started looking for low cost wine. China's private sector has created 11.4 million new jobs in 2009. ADB has announced to provide China with a grant of 1 million U.S. dollars to help it develop large-scale concentrated solar thermal (CST) power use. More than three million people faced water shortage as a worst drought in 50 years hit parts of south and southwest China. Investments have remarkably increased in HONGKONG.

