

Report # 140
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Turkey, GCC, Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, Afghanistan, India, China
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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; Turkey, GCC, Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, South Asia, India, East Asia, China, Korea and Japan from 2nd October to 8th October 2010 as have been collected by interns.

TURKEY

Political Front:

A Danish prosecutor has asked a court to ban Roj TV, a Copenhagen-based Kurdish TV network, accusing it of supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Amid renewed debate about the headscarf issue, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeated his call to the country's opposition parties to work together with his ruling party to solve the problem.

Geo-strategic Front:

NATO chief has sought to persuade Turkey to lift its veto on Greek Cyprus' possible role in European Union-NATO cooperation. Turkey has initiated a reconciliatory conference in the Kyrgyzstan to bring different ethnic groups together. Chinese Premier held the talks with Turkey's top leaders in efforts shared by both nations to greatly boost their relationship in several areas. Japan has proposed to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister has urged Foreign Ministry officials and diplomats to donate to a campaign aimed at addressing the persisting problems of Pakistani flood victims during a fundraising dinner in which more than TL 600,000 was donated.

Economic Front:

According to IMF Turkey's economy may expand 7.8 percent this year, more than double the pace of Europe's other emerging markets. The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (RF CCI) have signed a deal to pursue partnership opportunities to boost trade volume between the two nations in accordance with the target of reaching \$100 billion in five years that was set at a high-level meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in January. Foreign direct investments (FDI) in Turkey have decreased by 35 percent from \$3.833 to \$2.49 billion in the first seven months of 2010. Turkey's auto exports rose by 12.4 percent to \$11.4 billion from \$10.2 billion year-on-year in the first nine months of 2010. Private companies in Turkey have been allowed to make their own decision regarding establishment of economic ties with Iranian firms.

Social Front:

Some male members of the Turkey Party, or TP, wore headscarves at a press meeting in the central Anatolian province to protest government and opposition parties' policies

regarding the religious garment. A renovated Armenian church in Istanbul has been opened to worshippers. Turkey's indoor smoking ban that took full effect as of July 2009 has resulted in cigarette sales in the country dropping by 16.2 percent this year over the same period last year.

GCC

Political Front:

Members of the Islamist Reform and Development Bloc called on Kuwaiti Prime Minister to carry out an expanded Cabinet reshuffle that would get rid of ministers who are a burden on him and the country, specifically targeting the interior and education ministers. Islamic Action and Al Menbar Democratic Progressive societies in Bahrain their newsletters banned for allegedly breaking the rules and regulations on publications.

Geo-strategic Front:

The Saudi Shura (Consultative) Council has announced to support calls from Middle East countries to include regional issues and the flood relief project in Pakistan. A Saudi official has denied Iraqi press reports that Saudi Arabia was satisfied with the nomination of outgoing Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki for a new term in office. Saudi Arabia has sent more relief supplies to Pakistan for the victims of the recent devastating floods that displaced around 20 million people. The UAE has submitted a request for the inclusion of 'the international response' to the flood hit victims in Pakistan in the 123rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Dubai's police chief has received death threats from Israel's spy agency Mossad linked to his role in uncovering details of the assassination of a senior Hamas leader.

Economic Front:

Top auditors in the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) adopted a proposal at a conference seeking consent of the top GCC leaders to bless more independence for the audit authorities in the council states. Al-Qaeda militants have threatened to launch fresh attacks on Saudi royal family members in a video message posted on the Internet on commemorating a 2009 bombing targeting the interior minister. The UAE's non-oil trade has expanded by eight per cent year-on-year in the first seven months of the year. The total volume of non-oil foreign trade increased Dh411.951 billion in the first seven months of the year against Dh381.5 billion in the same period a year ago.

Social Front:

The Shoura Council has instructed its social and family welfare committee to carry out a detailed study on a draft law for the protection of children's rights. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) has called upon individuals, civil groups and the media to stand against the marriage of minors, describing the marriage of young girls to older males as a "violation of children's rights found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child of which the Kingdom is a signatory". As many as 200 workers, including Saudis, have refused to work on a vital project under way in central Jeddah due to non-payment of their dues for the last four months. Another 200 workers remained absent from the work site in protest. Refusing to resume work, the protesting workers have demanded

immediate payment of their outstanding dues. The International Anti-Human Trafficking Conference has commended the UAE experience in combating human trafficking crimes and provision of good care to victims.

FERTILE CRESCENT

Political Front:

A top Iraqi Kurdish politician has announced to join forces with whichever national political bloc proves "most responsive" to their demands. He further added that out of 19 demands presented by the Kurds to the major factions, the SoL has already agreed to 17, and the remaining two are being negotiated. The US has expressed satisfaction with the efforts of Iraqi political parties to form a coalition government.

Geo-strategic Front:

Foreign ministers have wrapped up two-day meeting in Libya without consensus on reforms to the Arab League and ties with Iran. Significant upward revision has placed Iraq's proven oil reserves at 143.1 billion, pushing it into third place worldwide. Egypt's largest opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, has announced to contest upcoming parliamentary elections despite calls for a boycott. In the meantime Muslim Brotherhood has warned that if November parliamentary elections are rigged by the government, the legitimacy of Egypt's next president--who must be sworn in before the national assembly--could be called into question. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed has signaled that President Hosni Mubarak would be a presidential candidate in the 2011 elections. Egypt and Iran have agreed to restart direct flights, halted for 30 years, in what could signal a thaw in broader relations. Iranian government officials and businessmen arrived in Egypt in a show of possible rapprochement between the two countries. Syria has disagreed to accept any agreement with Israel that did not involve the end to the occupation of parts of the Golan Heights claimed by Damascus. Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman told the UN General Assembly that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would take "decades", and dismissed current talks between the two sides as unrealistic. Meanwhile Israeli PM distanced him from the speech of Foreign Minister by saying that he had not been coordinated. Foreign ministers in Libya have supported Palestinian president's stance to end talks unless Israel stops settlement building. In the meantime influential Palestinian leaders urged President Abbas to quit direct talks with Israel, owing to settlement construction.

Economic Front:

Egypt's strategic wheat reserves have reached a total of three million tons--enough to cover domestic demand until next March. He also noted that the government had recently purchased 60,000 tons of Canadian wheat at US\$275.50 per ton, and a further 180,000 tons of French wheat at US\$285 per ton.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled that the Azerbaijani government is guilty of having violated citizens' right to a free and fair election during parliamentary elections five years ago. The Azerbaijani Central Election Commission (CEC) has

approved the text, form, number and rules to prepare ballots. Over 1,322 candidates, ready to compete for MP mandate in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, have appealed to the district election commissions. Head of OSCE observation mission has discussed pre-election situation in Azerbaijan with the chairman of the opposition Azerbaijan National Independence Party (ANIP). Kazakhstan's long-serving leader has announced his intention to stay at the helm of Central Asia's largest economy for a third decade, erasing concerns about the possibility of a destabilizing succession struggle. Offices of Kyrgyz political parties have been damaged in violent attacks by protestors. The death toll from the June clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan's southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad has risen to 429. Representatives of political parties fear that the parliamentary elections will lead toward third revolution. Tajikistan's National Guards have denied multiple media reports that 28 people were killed in a helicopter crash in the east of the country where a military operation against Islamist militants is under way. 34 Tajik troops were killed in two separate incidents in the east of the country, in an area where a military operation against Islamist insurgents is under way. Tajik Defense Minister has accused independent newspapers of sympathizing with the Islamic militants who ambushed an army convoy in late August. Government forces have set up over a dozen checkpoints along the road connecting Dushanbe and the administrative center of the Rasht district, and are searching passing vehicles and their passengers. Turkmen President has called on the National Security Ministry to fight against those who "disseminate slanderous information about Turkmenistan's democratic, law-based secular state.

Geo-strategic Front:

Azerbaijan has handed over a note of protest to the U.S. charged' affairs in Baku. Armenian Foreign Minister has publicly accused the Azerbaijani authorities of killing an Armenian man found hanged in Azerbaijani custody on October 5. Azerbaijan however refuted these allegations. Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United Nations has complained that on September 27 Armenia raised the flag of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh republic on the premises of the UN mission in New York. Kazakh investigators have arrested two people in connection with the murder of Kyrgyz journalist Gennady. Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan and South Korea has signed a memorandum of understanding on military cooperation. Authorities in Kyrgyzstan have sent a request to Ukraine for the extradition of Kadyrjon Batyrov, who is accused by Bishkek of fomenting interethnic hatred. Tajik-Afghan bilateral cooperation in various fields was the focus of a meeting of Tajik Foreign Minister with his Afghan counterpart. The House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus ratified the agreement between the governments of Belarus and Turkmenistan on military and military-technical cooperation on October 4.

Economic Front:

Azerbaijan has announced to allocate 2 630 169 341 AZN to financing of Armed Forces, other military units considered in legislation and militarized organizations. Energy Minister has discussed the projects of electric power export from Kyrgyzstan to Southern Asia with the colleagues from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Social Front:

Kazakh authorities have deported some 130 Kyrgyz labor migrants.

AFGHANISTAN

Political Front:

Hundreds of parliamentary poll candidates, who allegedly spent more money on electioneering than allowed under the relevant law, have been referred to the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). Many Afghans, irked by civilian casualties, have accused the Western states of supporting the insurgents to justify their continued presence in war-devastated Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai has inaugurated the newly-created High Peace Council, reiterating his call for the Taliban insurgents to come to the negotiating table. The announcement of preliminary results from last month's parliamentary election has been postponed for a week. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) said votes cast in 141 polling centers during last month's parliamentary election had been invalidated. Governors and other high-ranking government servants have been accused of fraud and interference in last month's parliamentary elections in northern Afghanistan.

Geo-strategic Front:

Extending its full support for the Karzai government's negotiations with the Taliban insurgents in a bid to end the war, the Obama administration has cautioned Kabul not to cross the red line. President Hamid Karzai and his American counterpart Barack Obama have agreed to conclude an Afghan-US strategic partnership deal by year end. The Estonian government has offered cooperation with Afghanistan in improving its e-governance project. A top Japanese diplomat assured his country's continued support for Afghanistan. Officials from Afghanistan and Pakistan have started conducting "secret talks" reportedly mediated by the United Arab Emirates.

Economic Front:

Afghan traders have been facing numerous problems in Pakistan after devastating floods hit the neighboring country two months back. Meanwhile the floods in Pakistan, which is Afghanistan's main source of food products, have caused a considerable increase in the price of foodstuff in Afghanistan.

Social Front:

The Afghan Ministry of Education has organized the first-ever National Conference on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education. Gunmen shot dead a religious scholar --- the 50th this year --- in a mosque during Friday prayers in the capital of southern Kandahar province, the spiritual home of the Taliban.

INDIA

Political Front:

The Bharatiya Janata Party perceives the Ayodhya verdict as a sort of closure of the Ram temple movement it launched in 1989. Party leaders were of the view that the process of legitimately constructing a Ram temple had begun and would help the BJP recover from the embarrassment of being seen to have abandoned the issue. The All-India Muslim

Majlis-e-Mushawerat, umbrella body of Indian Muslim organizations, has described the Allahabad High Court verdict in the Ayodhya title suits as confusing, extra-legal and based on myths and legends. The Muslim community expressed dissatisfaction and shock over the judgment and claimed to exercise its right of appeal to the Supreme Court with a view to reversing the judicial stand from the mythological to the legal. In response RSS claimed that it would prefer an out of court settlement in the Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute in the light of the recent Allahabad high court judgment. Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi called upon the youth in Madhya Pradesh to enter politics and expressed hope that a day would come when young leadership would be at the forefront in the state. In the meantime Rahul Gandhi claimed that there was little difference between the banned outfit Students Islamic Movement of India (Simi) and RSS as both were “fanatical” and held “fundamentalist” views.

South India:

Revolutionary balladeer Gaddar has been trying to wrest the leadership of the movement from K. Chandrasekhara Rao of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) in Andhra Pradesh. The 28-month-old Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Karnataka has reached at the verge of collapse following over 20 MLAs, including six ministers, reportedly deciding to withdraw their support to the government. Hence Karnataka Governor has asked chief minister to prove majority on the floor of the State Assembly by 12 October. For the Kerala Local body election which will be held on 23-25 local bodies’ polls in the state; more than one lakh candidates are in the fray for 21,612 seats in 1,208 local bodies. More than 77,000 nominations have been filed. Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) President K V Thangkbalu has claimed that the TNCC conference to be held in Tiruchirapalli on October 9 would be a turning point in Tamil Nadu politics. To strengthen the party at the grass roots level ahead of the ensuing Assembly polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Tamil Nadu would undertake a Yatra covering across all districts of the State, highlighting various issues concerning the people.

Geo-strategic Front:

Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh have been shown as "independent entities" by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization which said this was its approach towards "disputed" areas. Russia and India have firmed up plans to jointly design, develop and manufacture the fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) and multi-role transport aircraft (MTA).

South India:

AP seems keen to develop closer ties with the Australian cities of Brisbane and Ipswich in the areas of agriculture, education, information technology, biotechnology and tourism.

Economic Front:

British banking group HSBC in its recent report indicated that trade confidence in India is soaring and is the highest among the 17 countries surveyed by the bank during July and September this year. India's trade confidence index for the coming six months stood at 140, up from 133 in the first half of 2010. The index is higher than that of China which was 111. The International Monetary Fund has projected the Indian economy will grow

by 9.7 per cent in 2010 and 8.4 per cent in the next fiscal, driven by robust industrial production and macro-economic performance.

South India:

Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh has posted a nearly 20 per cent growth in resource mobilization in the first five months of current fiscal as there had been improvement in the collection of taxes and the other major sources of revenue.

Social Front:

Writer-activist Arundhati Roy has described the Allahabad High Court's judgment on the Ayodhya title suits as a “political statement” rather than a verdict based on evidence and sound legal principles. According to her, the court seemed to have been influenced by an anxiety to maintain the public peace over the vexed issue. Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh has shown disappointment over the Allahabad high court verdict on Ramjanambhoomi and Babri Masjid issue and said that faith and belief and not law and evidence were given primacy in the judgment. This was not a good sign for the country, for the Constitution and for the judiciary itself.

South India:

Government of AP has initiated the process to withdraw cases against students in district level and others who participated in the agitations for and against separate Telangana state last year, where as Police report's filed 1,171 cases against 5,374 people from November last year to Aug 15 this year. The BC communities including Vaddera, Jangam (whose traditional occupation is begging), alleged that the community people were depressed by socially predominant communities and demanded to provide facility in registering atrocity cases against such upper caste communities. The Karnataka Government has decided to release gold and silver coins to mark the 400 years of world famous Dasara festivities on the opening day of the event on October 8. The retreating South West monsoon, strengthened by troughs of low pressure on either side of the peninsular India, caused havoc in Interior Karnataka claiming six lives during the last three days besides damaging crops over 9100 hectares. Nearly 1000 houses were damaged and the loss was put at Rs. 1.35 crore. Adding panic due to the growing number of swine flu cases, 154 more people were placed under Home Quarantine due to H1N1 in Kerala. Women feel unsafe in Kerala capital and face maximum harassment while using public transport. Heavy rainfall in Kerala brought a heavy loss of Rs 3.39 crore.

CHINA

Political Front:

Taiwan-based groups have called on the Kuomintang party to further cooperation and reconciliation with the mainland. The General Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has issued a circular calling for the publication of Party affairs at grassroots organizations. This move indicates expansion of democracy within the party at grass root level. China has announced to reinforce control and supervision over the quality of weapons and military equipment. A senior anti-corruption official of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has called for serious investigations and harsh penalties to root out corruption in government-contracted construction projects.

Geo-strategic Front:

A new US lawmakers' bill aimed at exerting pressure on China's currency policy has stirred up fresh tension between the two economic superpowers, but commentators believe the effect on the wider conflict will be minimal. China and Greece have clinched a series of deals and agreed to further deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership during the visit of Chinese PM to the Greece. The leaders of China and Japan have promised to rebuild their strained ties at a meeting on the sidelines of the ASEM summit in Brussels. China expects an early resumption of the six-party talks to ease tensions and resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. A senior Chinese diplomat has called on the United Nations to give priority to the implementation of a set of anti-poverty goals that the world has agreed to achieve by 2015. China seems keen to enhance ties with Italy, Turkey and EU.

Economic Front:

The trade between China and African countries is expected to rebound from a year ago and exceed 100 billion U.S. dollars again this year. Chinese premier has asked European Union leaders to tone down their attacks on Beijing in an escalating battle over the value of the world's key currencies. Tourism revenue in China reached 116.6 billion yuan (17.48 billion U.S. dollars) during the National Day week, an increase of 32.4 percent year on year.

Social Front:

The average area of glaciers in western China might shrink by about 30 percent by 2050 because of global warming, damaging crop production and worsening droughts. Farmers will become a "major driving force" in the growth of China's Internet population, which is already the world's biggest with its number exceeding 420 million.