



ASIA
 MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA; WEST ASIA; SOUTH ASIA; NORTH ASIA; EAST ASIA



AFRICA

WEST AFRICA; EAST AFRICA & HORN OF AFRICA; CENTRAL AFRICA; SOUTH AFRICA



EUROAMERICA

WEST EUROPE; EAST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA



GLOBALIZED OPINION...



GLOBALIZED FINANCE...



GLOBALIZED ELECTIONS...

Friday on the facebook

WEEKLY NEWS MONITOR OF OPINIONS & EVENTS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Based on weekly reports produced by the project 'Globalized Business & Politics: a View from the Muslim World.'

Using a rich data-base of news reports and opinion polls from all over the world we analyze and compile papers on global trends and patterns in the sphere of economics, politics and society. These reports and analytical summaries are uploaded online for discussion and are accessible on the [BPM Blog Page](#).

WELCOME REMARKS for new readers What is FOF?

Dear Colleagues,

We are mailing to you the weekly e-letter of the project: Globalized Business and Politics: A View from the Muslim World". The e-letter is a snapshot of the detailed data gathering and analysis which our research team does each week.

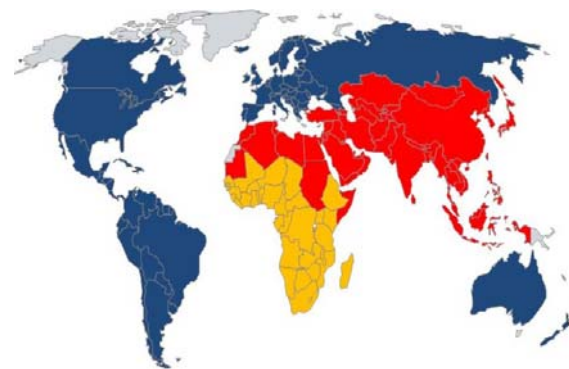
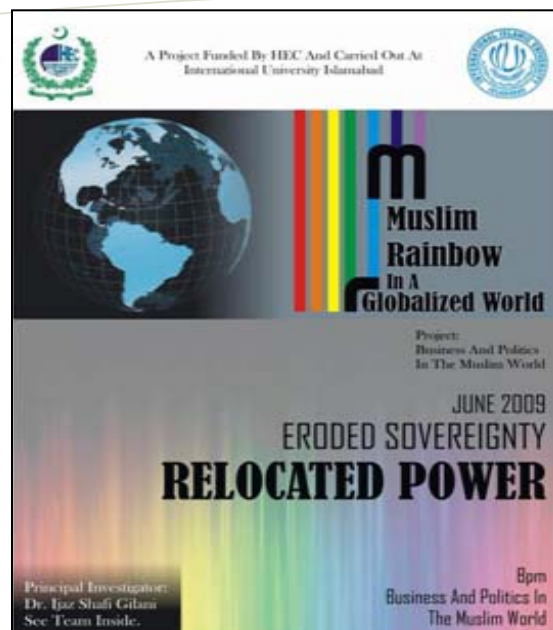
Why should one add another e-letter to many similar exercises already underway? We have pondered this question and here is what we believe to be our possible contribution or *Competitive Advantage*.

- ◆ We will make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Facebook will provide clicks to deeper levels of information; for comprehension (Maps and Data) as well as for elaboration

and analysis (complete weekly Events data, supplementary commentaries and related links).

- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be grounded in a thorough Analytical framework of Relocation of Power in the 21st Century.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be targeted to produce an annual synthesis of Global Trends. Each issue will serve as an input for the annual analysis.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be designed to become a teaching tool for class-room instruction in courses dealing with global political sociology or related fields.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will also be designed to build a theoretically inclined community of political sociologists.

With best wishes and prayers we present our 'pilot weekly e-letter: *Friday on the Facebook. - A Weekly Monitor of Global Opinions and Events.* §



Business and Politics in the Muslim World (BPM) refers to a study funded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, and is conducted at the International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad.



Principal Investigator- DR. IJAZ SHAFI GILANI



Globalized Opinions

This week's report consists of **20** surveys. One is a multi-country survey conducted by Gallup USA covering **155** countries while the rest are national surveys.

Week # 112
Dated March 21-27, 2010
Gallopedia Highlights



ASIA zone this week - 4 single country polls & 1 Global poll:

- **Fertile Crescent-** Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Israel
- **GCC-** UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen
- **Central Asia-** Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Mongolia, Tajikistan
- **West Asia-** Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan
- **South Asia-** Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal
- **East Asia-** South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia

AFRICA zone this week - 1 Global poll:

- **North Africa-** Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco
- **West Africa-** Nigeria, Cameroon, Mauritania, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Liberia, Mali, Ivory Coast, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Togo
- **South Africa-** Malawi, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Madagascar
- **East Africa & the horn of Africa-** Somaliland, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti
- **Central Africa-** Central African Republic, Angola, Congo, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Chad, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi

EURO-AMERICAS zone this week -15 single country polls & 1 Global poll:

- **Australasia-** New Zealand, Australia
- **Western Europe-** Portugal, UK, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, Iceland, Ireland, Austria, Greece, Cyprus, Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark
- **Eastern Europe-** Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Moldova, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Serbia, Macedonia, Hungary, Albania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Belarus, Czech Republic, Malta
- **North America-** Canada, USA
- **Latin America-** Costa Rica, Panama, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, El Salvador, Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Belize

Subjects covered include:

Politics and Elections
Political economy
Governance
Sovereignty and Nationalism
Social issues/ Health and Disease
International Security
War on Terror



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Zone 1- ASIA
MIDDLE EAST



Israelis Stand by PM on Jerusalem Construction

Many people in Israel are in favour of their prime minister's decision to carry on with construction in Jerusalem, according to a poll by Maagar Mochot. 62 per cent of respondents support the actions of Benjamin Netanyahu.

March 25, 2010

Palestinians Would Elect Fatah Government

Fatah remains more popular than its opponent Hamas amongst Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, according to a poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and

Continued...



Survey Research. 42 per cent of respondents would vote for Fatah in the next legislative election, down one point since December.

March 24, 2010

Abbas Leads Haniyeh in Palestinian Ballot

Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah could defeat Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas in a new election, according to a poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. 50 per cent of respondents would vote for Abbas, while 40 per cent would support Haniyeh.

March 22, 2010

NORTHEAST ASIA

Bangkok Residents Condemn Red-Shirts Rallies

Most people in Bangkok and seven surrounding provinces of the Thai capital see with disdain the popular rallies organized by the so-called red shirts, according to a poll by Suan Dusit University. 57.1 per cent of respondents say the rallies are not a democratic expression but a political game to topple the government.

March 22, 2010

Zone 3

EURO-AMERICAS

EAST EUROPE

United Russia Maintains Huge Advantage

The ruling party in the Russian Federation maintains a considerable lead, according to a poll by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center. 53 per cent of respondents would vote for United Russia (YR) in the next election to the State Duma.

March 25, 2010

WEST EUROPE

Britons Disapprove of Government's Budget

Many people in Britain are not satisfied with their government's latest spending plan, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 54 per cent of respondents disapprove of the budget presented by the administration headed by Gordon Brown.

March 27, 2010

Sarkozy's Disapproval Rating Hikes in France

The unpopularity of French president Nicolas Sarkozy has continued to grow, according to a poll by Ifop published in *Paris Match*. 64 per cent of respondents disapprove of Sarkozy's performance, up four points since February.

March 27, 2010

NORTH AMERICA

A Third of Americans Agree with Tea Party

Many people in the United States support the ideas of the National Tea Party movement, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 37 per cent of respondents agree with the movement's core policies, while 25 per cent disagree with them.

March 24, 2010

Obama Fares Best Among Healthcare Political Players

President Obama gets higher ratings for the job he did on the healthcare reform process over the past year than either congressional party does, though none of the three primary political actors receives positive reviews from a majority of Americans.



March 24, 2010

By Slim Margin, Americans Support Healthcare Bill's Passage

Nearly half of Americans give a thumbs-up to Congress' passage of a healthcare reform bill last weekend, with 49% calling it "a good thing." Republicans and Democrats have polar opposite reactions, with independents evenly split.

March 23, 2010

Public Remains Deeply Pessimistic About the Economy and Employment

Since January, President Obama's low job rating on the economy has held steady. Just under one-third of Americans (32%) give him positive ratings on the job he is doing on the economy while 68% give him negative ratings. In January, 31% gave him positive marks and 69% gave him negative ones.

March 18, 2010

U.S. Support for Nuclear Power Climbs to New High of 62%

Americans' support for the use of nuclear power has inched up to 62%, establishing a new high ever since Gallup started asking this question.

March 22, 2010

Canadians Split on Afghan Detainee Controversy

People in Canada are divided on how to deal with a recent controversy over the treatment of Afghan detainees, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 40 per cent of respondents believe a review of documents is the best course of action, while 33 per cent support holding a full public inquiry.

March 24, 2010

Canadians Review PM's YouTube Answers

Most Canadians disagree with their prime minister's ideas on senators and drugs stated during a YouTube interview, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 50 per cent of respondents disagree with Stephen Harper's notion that, "If drugs were legalized, these would never be respectable businesses run by respectable people."

March 23, 2010

LATIN AMERICA

Three-in-Four Brazilians Happy with Lula

A large majority of people in Brazil concede that the presidency of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has been positive, according to a poll by Ibope. 75 per cent of respondents say Lula's performance has been good or very good, down one point since February.

March 26, 2010



Mexico's Fox Talks About Why Leaders Need Wellbeing Data

Former Mexican President Vicente Fox sees wellbeing data as the key to better government policies and more efficient budgets. Fox sat down with Gallup.com at our Washington, D.C., headquarters to discuss Gallup's global wellbeing surveys, spanning 155 countries, and to share his thoughts on how world leaders should use these data to improve their constituents' lives.

March 26, 2010

GLOBAL POLLS

The Behavioral Economics of GDP Growth: Gallup Global Wellbeing

Gallup reveals its data of 155 countries on wellbeing. Gallup categorized the respondents into 'thriving', 'struggling' and 'suffering'. It shows that majority of population from across the world are either struggling or suffering.

Gallup asks ordinary individuals for their thoughts and opinions on several topics, including economics, religion, migration, and wellbeing. Gallup's data provide sound evidence on many issues that more than 98% of the world's adult population faces.

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Zone 1- **Asia: Summary**

Asia, Middle East & North Africa

TURKEY

Political Front: The New Year *Nevruz* was celebrated peacefully in Turkey, that some analysts claim is a sign of a society where democratic initiatives have taken root.

Meanwhile **Turkish** Government's introduction of a constitutional reforms bill has been met with severe criticism. The most controversial issue is the proposed amendments within judiciary that would increase administrative influence upon judiciary. The main opposition party i.e. Republican People's Party (CHP) has announced to oppose the package. The government however claimed that constitutional amendments would take country towards strengthening democracy and would make it easy for her to join EU.

Geo-strategic Front: The Friends of **Turkey** informal parliamentary friendship group was established last week by 47 European Parliament members. *Ireland's* President has reaffirmed his country's support for **Turkey's** EU accession process. Meanwhile EU's commissioner for enlargement claimed that **Turkey** has yet to reach a consensus in passing reforms necessary for EU accession.

President Abdullah Gül has dismissed further talks with the US administration on easing tensions over a congressional panel vote endorsing *Armenian* claims of genocide, saying the ball is in the US court now to work on ways to restore ties.



Meanwhile *Syria* has offered to assist **Turkey** and *Armenia* to resolve their issues. **Turkey** has extended her support towards the efforts of all international organizations to solve the *Darfur* problem.

The **Turkish** Air Forces Command has confirmed that two Israeli fighter jets which flew over Turkey had been given official permission to do so after fulfilling certain conditions. Meanwhile **Turkey** has asked *Israel* to abide by international law in *Palestine*.

On the *Iranian* front, **Turkey** has denied US call to join economic sanctions against Iran and has declared diplomatic solutions as more desirable.

Economic Front: World Bank has announced to lend 1.3\$ billion to **Turkey**. In a new energy plan for 2010-2014, **Turkey** plans to generate more of its own power, diversify natural gas suppliers, increase the amount of oil pumped to **Turkey's** oil hub of Ceyhan and begin the construction of a *nuclear power plant*.

Turkish President has invited *Irish* business community to invest in his country. Meanwhile trade links between *Egypt* and **Turkey** have been strengthening for the last few years.

Social Front: In a recent book Dr. Jill **Carroll**, Associate **Professor** of Religious Studies at Rice University (USA) has appreciated the *Gulen Movement*, a transnational civic society movement inspired by the teachings of **Turkish** Islamic theologian Fethullah Gülen.

Meanwhile more than 40 people, including professional football players, have been detained in Turkey on allegations of match fixing and manipulating football games.

GCC

Political Front: A **Kuwaiti** conservative MP has been putting pressure on the government to ensure that the Open University would not tolerate mixed education. Hours before a crucial confidence vote by the **Kuwaiti** parliament.

Geo-strategic Front: **Kuwaiti** embassy in Washington has raised around \$2.1 million that would help build 60 schools and educate 20,000 people in *Pakistan* and *Afghanistan*.

Meanwhile **Kuwait** has denied a media report claiming that it had instructed the interior ministry not to allow *Iranian* citizens to enter the country.

In **Bahrain**, a society dedicated to resisting the normalization of ties with *Israel* has urged the upper chamber of the bicameral parliament to endorse a draft law to criminalize contacts with **Israelis**.

Economic Front: Saudi shares gained points this week. Meanwhile the industrial cities development project has observed extensive growth.

The **United Arab Emirates**, in a call made at the United Nations, has urged the international community to overcome political and financial obstacles that prevent full implementation of the '*Monterrey Consensus and Doha Declaration on Financing for Development*'.

Meanwhile **Oman** has made significant gains in cutting down on the flaring of natural gas.

Social Front: A recent survey carried by Gallup indicates that most of **Arabia's** young and educated would prefer to leave their homelands to seek opportunity abroad.

Prominent Saudi scholars have slammed a recent call by another scholar to demolish the Al Haram Mosque and reconstruct it in a way that would prevent the mingling of men and women during circumambulation (*Tawaf*) and prayers.

A researcher has recently reported that **38%** of **Saudis** using Facebook are *women*.

The membership of **Dubai Press Club** (DPC) has expanded to include media professionals from all platforms, including broadcast and online media.

A move by four **Kuwaiti** women to open a *diwaniya* (open house) for men and women in Al Jahra has sparked a negative reaction among **Kuwaitis**.

A **Yemeni** court last week sentenced a leading member of a southern separatist movement to 10 years in prison, a move that could further heighten tensions between secessionists and the government. Meanwhile **Saudi** state media has announced the arrest of over 100 members of Al Qaida cells that were plotting attacks on oil facilities in the kingdom.

Lastly, **Oman's** Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, has underlined the need for efforts to address challenges facing the water sector in GCC states.



FERTILE CRESCENT:

Political Front: In **Egypt** one hundred independent and opposition MPs held a joint press conference in front of the People's Assembly calling for the discussion of a new law they drafted which lays the foundations for the elections. Meanwhile **Egypt's** government has drafted plans to curtail various NGOs from monitoring the elections. In a separate step, 100 opposition lawmakers introduced a bill of their own aimed at allowing free and transparent elections.

With nearly 80 percent of the votes counted from **Iraq's** March 7 parliamentary elections, the main winners appear to be Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and challenger Iyad Allawi. But the two front-runners are neck and neck. The vote count so far shows Allawi's Al-Iraqiyah coalition narrowly ahead of Maliki's State of Law alliance by less than 9,000 votes. International supervision has confirmed the soundness of the **Iraqi** elections.

Meanwhile **Iraqi** President Jalal Talabani has issued a statement urging a recount in some areas of votes from the country's March 7 parliamentary elections, a proposal that was rejected by the Independent High Election Commission.

Tawheed Movement head and former minister has reiterated calls for **Lebanese** President Michel Suleiman to resign.

Geo-strategic Front: **Egypt** has strongly condemned **Israel** for its illegal and provocative measures in Jerusalem.

Lebanon and **Jordan** signed 16 agreements, protocols and memoranda of understanding in *Beirut*.

Economic Front: The World Bank has announced a \$300 million loan to **Egypt** to finance micro and small enterprises (MSEs) aimed at boosting job creation and economic growth in the poorest layers of the society.

Iraq has agreed to renew an accord to operate an oil pipeline from its northern oil fields near Kirkuk to the **Turkish** Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

Meanwhile U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have requested an extra \$37.5 billion from Congress to fund military and civilian operations in *Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq*.

Lebanon has been placed at number 8 among 36 upper-middle income countries included in the 2010 survey.

Social Front: **Egypt** has banned calls via internet, an action that has been condemned by the telephony firm Skype.

The **Egyptian** Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) demanded the immediate issuing of a law to combat discrimination in the country in order to secure "equality, citizenship and efficiency for all **Egyptians**. Meanwhile *Transparency International* has reported that regulations and poor law enforcement are part of the problems in **Egypt** toward the fight against corruption.

Workers at the influential Muslim website *IslamOnline.net* said that they would launch an alternative website where they could demonstrate their ability to separate what they call "editorial policies from money".

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front: **Kazakh** opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations, and both pro-government and opposition journalists have urged the country's leaders to quit the CIS Customs Union that unites *Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan*.

Meanwhile some of the closest allies of **Kyrgyz** President Bakiev criticized his policies last week at a national assembly that the president had gathered as a show of support for his government.



Geo-strategic Front: **Armenian** President recently said that **Azerbaijani** territory currently held by **Armenian** forces could be returned in exchange for security and self-determination for the disputed territory of *Nagorno-Karabakh*.

Meanwhile Talks between *Turkey* and **Azerbaijan** over securing the Nabucco gas pipeline have stalled due to disagreements over Turkey's attempts to normalize relations with **Armenia**.

Kazakhstan and **Ukraine** have discussed prospects for implementing joint space projects in a phone conversation.

Economic Front: The new **Ukrainian** government has announced its plan to restore transit of **Kazakh** crude oil via the Druzhba pipeline. In the meantime **Kazakhstan** has decided boost its share on the *Japanese uranium market* to **40 percent** from current **4 percent**.

The forum of business circles of **Uzbekistan** and *Oman* was held at Tashkent's International Business Center on 23 March.

CIS Statistics Committee has predicted an increase of 4% in Kyrgyz GDP this year.

The **Tajik** Foreign Ministry summoned the **Uzbek** ambassador last week to hand over a protest note about blocked rail freight.

Social Front: *Nevruz*, the *Iranian* New Year festival, has been celebrated in *Central Asia* with pomp. The U.S. Helsinki Commission has criticized a Baku court's rejection of appeals by two **Azerbaijani** bloggers against their prison sentences. Meanwhile an **Azerbaijani** opposition journalist jailed on what supporters say were politically motivated charges has been recently pardoned.

Thousands of people have been evacuated from the flooded villages in **Kazakhstan**. All the while Oil workers in the southwestern **Kazakh** town have ended their strike that began two weeks ago.

The chief editors of independent **Kyrgyz** media outlets gathered in Bishkek last week to discuss the establishment of a union to protect their rights.

In the rating of the dirtiest cities in the world the capital of **Kyrgyzstan** – Bishkek city – took the 14th place.

EAST ASIA

Political Front: Thousands of **Indonesians** rallied in the capital last week to protest *Israel's* plan to expand settlements in disputed east Jerusalem.

Meanwhile **Thailand's** prime minister offered to send government officials to hold talks with protesters trying to force him from power with



A Palestinian flag holding money donated for the Palestinian people during a protest in Medan, North Sumatra. (AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara)

Continued...



massive demonstrations in the capital, but refused their demand to immediately call new elections. Red Shirt Protestors rejected his offer and claimed that they would like to meet him directly.

The organization responsible for setting up elections in the **Philippines** has issued a downbeat prediction of candidate behavior, including expected violence, in the run up to Election Day.

The **Cambodian** government last week warned the United Nations Resident Coordinator to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the country or risk being expelled.

Economic Front: Tensions at **Thai** political front have badly affected the country's economy. Recent protests have strongly damaged the tourist industry in **Thailand**.

Meanwhile in the past five years, *China* has become **Cambodia's** foremost foreign investor: Cambodia has approved \$6 billion of Chinese investments since 2006, while China provided at least \$2 billion more in grant aid and loans. The EU also seems keen to increase its imports of agricultural produce from **Cambodia** under its "Everything but Arms" trade initiative.

Social Front: The **Indonesian** Constitutional Court has rejected a challenge to a controversial anti-pornography law. Critics challenged the bill for being too broad, discriminating against women, and targeting aspects of **Indonesian** tradition and culture; the arguments were rejected by the court. Some areas of **Indonesia**, such as Bali, however have refused to enforce the law.

Extensive growth in the number of tourists visiting **Singapore** has been witnessed in the last three months.

The **Philippines** military and the rebel *Moro Islamic Liberation* Front have pledged to help repatriate about 60,000 internally displaced people in the southern province of Mindanao.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front: **Bangladesh** held its National Day celebration last week with great pomp and show.

Nepalese former Maoist guerrillas began a war council of top leaders last week to decide their future course of action following a public statement by *Gyanendra* that the monarchy was not yet dead. Meanwhile a conflict of seniority has been reportedly seen among the **Nepali** Congress (NC) leaders following the death of erstwhile President Girija Prasad Koirala.

The **Srilankan** Election Department has taken the decision to set up special polling centers for the detained LTTE cadres following a written request to the Election Commissioner. **Sri Lanka** Election Commissioner has approved ten local election watchdogs to monitor the upcoming general election. All the while **Sri Lanka's** main opposition United National Party filed a writ application last week before the Court of Appeals challenging the conduct of the Elections Commissioner.

A **Sri Lankan** woman who converted from Buddhism to Islam has been arrested by the authorities on suspicion of anti-state activities. Amidst international pressure **Sri Lanka** has asked for more time to settle the internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to infrastructural constraints and the danger of landmines at their original habitats.

Geo-strategic Front: *China* has agreed to help finance \$8.7 billion deep-sea port in **Bangladesh** and set up road and rail links between the two countries.

Myanmar has proposed drawing up of a new line to demarcate the maritime boundary with **Bangladesh** which is currently in talks with its western neighbor **India** on the sea border issue.

Iran has formerly invited the **Sri Lankan** President to attend the 'Group of 15' summit to be held in Teheran from 17 – 18 May 2010.

Economic Front: Last week President Mohamed Nasheed of **Maldives** ratified the *Tax Administration Bill* that will



put in place a broad tax regime in the country.

Meanwhile **Nepali** currency weakened against the US dollar this week, rendering imports expensive but raising income of exporters and remittance receivers. All the while a negative trend in the **Nepali** Stock Exchange has also been found. However improvement in **Sri Lankan** Stock exchange remained visible.

Social Front: Five groups of ethnic minorities mainly Buddhists have demanded a probe into violence by Muslim settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in **Bangladesh**, along with \$6,800 compensation for each affected family, reconstruction of damaged shrines and rehabilitation of the victims.

Meanwhile the UN agency has asked **Bangladesh** to take quick action to combat arsenic contamination in water and food affecting at least 20 million people.

The **Maldives** and La Compagnie Benjamin de Rothschild (CTBR) have agreed on a strategic partnership to take-forward the country's pledge to become carbon neutral by 2020.

With the **Nepali** government yet to decide the official religion of the Republic, some Hindu groups have been pressurizing ruling parties to reinstate *Hinduism* as **Nepal's** state religion. In this stead a Hindu extremist organization *Bhisma Ekata Parishad* last week called a bandh (strike/protest) in the mid-western and far-western regions demanding the restoration of the Hindu Kingdom.

Meanwhile thirty **Nepali** cleaners have gone on strike at King Abdul-Aziz International Airport in *Saudi Arabia* over poor working conditions and unpaid wages.

INDIA

Political Front: Opposition has started criticizing '*Nuclear liability bill*' before government's move to initiate debate over the issue in the parliament. The bill deals with the liabilities in case a nuclear mishap occurs. *BJP* claims that by signing such bill government would allow foreign private companies to enter **Indian** nuclear market.

Last week a 48-hour *bandh* (strike) called by *Maoists* in seven States, demanding an end to security operations, began on a violent note with extremists blowing up a rail track between Midnapore and Godapiasal in West Bengal. Meanwhile the West Bengal government has started raising a counter-insurgency force to be trained by the elite Greyhounds force based in Andhra Pradesh for specializing in counter-guerrilla activities of *Maoists* active in certain parts of the State.

Geo-strategic Front: The **Indian** Ministry of External Affairs has advised the government to walk out of the proposed *Iran-Pakistan-India* (IPI) gas pipeline but continue talks with Tehran for a deep-sea pipeline that avoids *Pakistan*.

Meanwhile leader of *Hürriyet Conference* Mir Waiz Umer Farooq held a meeting with *Chinese* Director of Foreign Affairs and discussed a possible *Chinese* role in resolving the *Kashmir* issue.

Economic Front: The Reserve Bank of **India** raised its key short-term lending and borrowing rates by 25 basis points each as part of its tight money policy to combat inflation.

Meanwhile overseas investors have infused a net 14,732 crore rupees in **Indian** stock markets in March, taking their total inflow to nearly Rs 15,500 crore.

Social Front: Claiming that controversial *Bangladeshi* author *Taslima Nasreen* is in the "chronic habit" of "demonising" and "cursing" Islam, the chairman of the National Minorities Commission in **India**, Mohamed Shafi Qureshi, has asked the Centre to review its decision on allowing her to stay in the country.

BJP president Nitin Gadkari has greatly stressed the need for a modern idiom to articulate *Hindutva* for the youth.

Meanwhile the controversial Bill to bring about a ban on cow slaughter and draught cattle received approval last week of the Andhra Legislative Assembly amidst stiff resistance put up by the Opposition. All the while the Supreme Court in its special judgment permitted Andhra Pradesh to provide four per cent reservation in jobs and education for backward members of the Muslim community.



CHINA

Political Front: Chinese PM has decided to set up supervision bodies at various levels in a bid to combat corruption. Meanwhile **China's** anti-corruption chief has urged to strengthen supervision within the Communist Party of China (CPC) by improving the system and practices of intra-Party inspection.

Geo-strategic Front: Diplomatic exchanges are taking place between Mainland **China** and **Taiwan**; a move being hailed by analysts as a positive development.

In the meantime, **China** has reacted angrily to Google's decision to stop censoring search results in the country and redirect users to a portal in Hong Kong.

China donated 1 million U.S. dollars to quake-torn *Chile*. Meanwhile **Chinese** efforts to boost ties with *Israel* as well as *Russia* also grabbed attention. Growing relationship of **China** with *South Africa*, *Egypt*, *Belarus*, *Namibia*, *Peru*, *Japan* etc has also been observed.

Economic Front: It is generally assumed that the transformation of **China's** economic growth pattern will provide new opportunities for the world economy. **Chinese** Premier urged all countries and companies not to start trade and currency wars, which would be harmful for the recovery of the world economy. §

Zone 2- Africa:

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa: the first *United States* and **Africa** command Inspector General (IG) outreach conference was conducted at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in *Accra*, **Ghana**. It basically aimed at providing a platform to discuss IG's missions, principles, organizational structures, operations, challenges and best practices of the system in various countries.

Ghana's Northern Regional Police Command has refused to succumb to public pressure to name top politicians it claims were behind a recent cache of ammunitions seized from a Bunkpurugu bound vehicle.

Following the dismissal of the previous cabinet in **Nigeria**, President Umaru Yar'adua's nephew Alhaji Murtala Yar'adua has been listed among the 25 ministerial nominees sent to the Senate by Acting President Goodluck

Jonathan for screening and possible confirmation. However speculations, from top aids and family members, regarding the ailing president's return to the office are being widely reported.

Meanwhile the **Nigerian** Senate has moved to adopt an amendment to Section 160 of the 1999 Constitution to remove the power of president to control activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

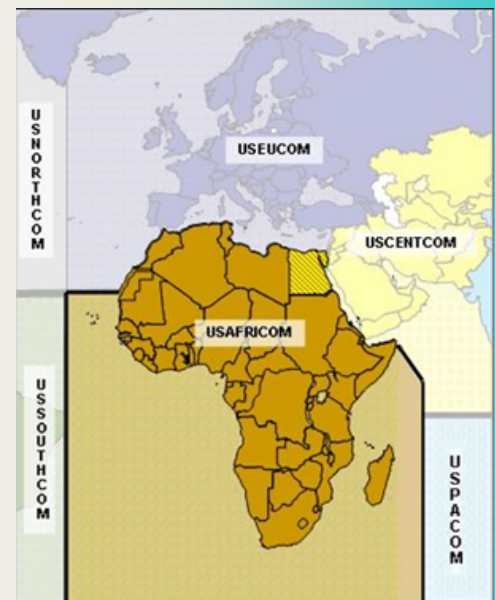
Nigerian Acting President Goodluck Jonathan is expected to meet former rebel leaders from the oil-producing **Niger Delta**, in a bid to get a federal amnesty programme back on track.

Meanwhile last week the **Nigerian** Federal Government gave a firm commitment on the country's intention to comply with all international requirements necessary for a safe implementation of a nuclear power programme.

The two **Nigerian** students, accused of being associates of Farouk AbdulMutallab (the alleged attempted Christmas airline bomber) arrested by *Malaysian* authorities in January were deported back to **Nigeria** last week.

Reportedly following the recent violence in *Jos*, **Nigeria**, revenge killings continue in the affected region. Police are planning for a speedy trial of 207 suspects arrested over recent large scale ethnic violence. Meanwhile **Nigeria's** white-collar oil workers union protested last week the murder of two colleagues in the restive oil hub of the **Niger Delta**.

Last week sea pirates off the shores of **Nigeria** attacked a Turkish flagged ship, *Ozay-5*, wounding two *Turks* and one **Nigerian** who were part of the crew.



Supporters of **Ivory Coast's** President Laurent Gbagbo said last week that the peace process is in danger since former rebels refused to tie disarmament to an election date.

According to reports the former speaker of **Niger's** parliament, Mahamane Ousmane, has returned to Niamey after eight months of exile in **Nigeria**. Meanwhile according to a visiting AU envoy former **Niger** leader Mamadou Tandja, under arrest since being toppled in a coup last month, is in "good shape".

According to military sources the **Senegalese** army and suspected separatist rebels clashed last week in the country's restive southern *Camamance* province.

Last week **Togo's** government outlawed further demonstrations against the results of a March 4 presidential election, which opposition leaders say was rigged to favor the incumbent.



Togo-Supporters of the opposition Union of Forces for Change

South Africa: Last week a media hub was opened by the *United States* in Johannesburg, **South Africa**, reportedly aimed at making the US government message *visible, active* and *effective* in advocating US policies, priorities, and actions with African audiences.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said last week that he would only implement terms of an agreement he signed in 2008 with rival Morgan Tsvangirai if the West removed sanctions on his allies.

Central Africa: Rwanda and Ethiopia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) last week seeking to strengthen their defence and military cooperation.

Reportedly the **Rwanda** government has issued international arrest warrants against Lt. Gen. Kayumba Nyamwasa and Patrick Karegyeya, who are believed to be behind recent terrorist activities in and around Kigali.

The *Lord's Resistance Army* now based in the **Central African Republic** has reportedly killed at least 10 people, injured more than 30 and abducted another estimated 50 people last weekend in Boka village in the **CAR**.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: Last week some 1,000 youths from across West Africa marched through the streets of the **Liberian** capital, Monrovia, to launch a new regional volunteer scheme, where volunteers spend time helping out in areas such as agriculture, health or education in a different country to their own.

Meanwhile the *U.S. National Peace Corps Association* launched "*Africa Rural Connect*", an online global collaboration network where knowledgeable people, including African farmers, work together to communicate and respond to the needs of African farmers.

Last week a **Nigerian** Islamic Sharia court banned Twitter and Facebook debates on the country's first wrist amputation for theft which was carried out in 2000 under the strict Islamic penal code adopted by 12 northern **Nigerian** states.

South Africa: The European Union (EU) last week gave \$10.6 million to **Zimbabwe** to buy textbooks for primary schools, promoting revival of an education sector which was reported to be in a *dire state*.

Central Africa: The leader of the **Rwandan** yet-to-be registered political party, Forces Démocratiques Unifiées-FDU-Inkingi, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, was intercepted last at Kigali International Airport, as she attempted to flee the country, as investigations into her FDLR activities continue.



According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) a recent upsurge in threats against aid agencies in the Kivu provinces of **eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** has raised concerns that the humanitarian space in the region could shrink again.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: World Water Day was celebrated on the 22nd of March around the world, where this year's theme was *Clean Water for a Healthy World*.

Last week the organizers of a week-long African Rice Congress in Bamako, **Mali**, proposed that African countries can decrease hunger and save millions of dollars if they wean themselves off rice imports and increase local production; while experts favor a "drastic" move away from rice to native grains. Meanwhile **Nigeria** is expected to save about \$500 million annually when the Federal Government implements a major strategy that has been designed to triple domestic rice production while also improving indigenous processing capacity as well as enhancing the marketability of rice grown and processed.

According to reports Rampant illegal fishing is hitting some of the poorest **West African** countries the hardest as this practice is globally most rife in the east central Atlantic Ocean area, which covers the territorial waters of some 15 African countries from **Morocco** and **Mauritania** in the north to **Angola** in the south.

This year the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners hope to eliminate the circulation of the polio virus in **West Africa** as soon as June by launching the first round of national synchronized immunization days against the debilitating disease. **Nigeria** would be the only country to curb the circulation of the polio-causing virus as late as 2011, according to the WHO.

Meanwhile The Tenth European Development Fund (2008 -2013) has allocated EUR 402 million to **Ghana** for development, especially for the improvement of the water and sanitation sector.

Relief officials say nearly 60 percent of families in **Niger** are facing food shortages because of poor rains, which has triggered a large scale migration towards the capital in search of sustenance.

Meanwhile according to officials a vital World Food Programme (WFP) project to feed more than 400,000 vulnerable **Senegalese** will be delayed since local authorities blocked imports of half a million metric tonnes of refined palm oil.

A recent comprehensive forest reviews conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization shows that the rate of forest loss had dropped by three million hectares every year between 2000 and 2010.

South Africa: Health officials are using this year's World Cup in **South Africa** to boost awareness of preventing *malaria*, which kills one million Africans each year.

Extensive flooding along the rivers of central and southern **Mozambique** during March, in tandem with persistent drought in other parts of the same areas, have left 465,000 people in need of food assistance

POLITICAL ECONOMY

West Africa: According to reports **China** is opening a factory in **Cameroon** to manufacturer buses for West and Central Africa. **China** is **Africa's** third largest trading partner with a ten-fold jump in commercial transactions over the last decade.

Meanwhile the Forum on *China-Africa* Cooperation (FOCAC), which includes 49 African countries, plans to implement several large-scale science and technology projects across Africa in the next three years. The details are to be discussed in a meeting this week in *Beijing*. These include the training of 2,000 Africans in agricultural technology; 100 clean-energy projects to tackle climate change and the funding of 100 African postdoctoral students to undertake research in China.

Major petroleum products marketer, Conoil Plc, is continuing to post an impressive performance on the floor of the **Nigerian** Stock Exchange (NSE) as investors continue to cash in on the expected favorable returns from the company's investment foray into the lucrative **West African** oil marketing industry.

A Senior Vice President of AngloGold Ashanti (Ghana), Dr. Toby Bradbury, has reiterated that the government should exercise the political will in fighting illegal mining activities (*galamsey*), which are diminishing the mining sector's contribution towards economic growth. Meanwhile as **Ghana** prepares to start crude oil production from its Jubilee deepwater oil field in the last quarter of 2010, the government has said it is determined to put measures in the place to avoid squandering oil revenues otherwise known as *oil curse*.

African cotton-producing countries are hoping that *Brazil's* intended retaliation after last year's success in the Brazil-U.S. commercial war at the *World Trade Organization's* (WTO) dispute settlement body will have a positive spin-off for them. The C4, a group of four cotton-exporting African countries including **Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Chad** are optimistic that the episode has indirectly put the issue of "white gold" on the WTO





agenda.

Last week **Nigeria's** National Assembly approved a budget of N4.608 trillion for the 2010 fiscal year with an increase of N530 billion to the N4.079 trillion proposed by the executive arm.

Central Africa: **Rwanda** signed a 3 million loan agreement last week with the government of **France** to increase electrification in rural areas. §

Zone 3- Euro-America: *Transatlantic Community*

WESTERN EUROPE

Spain has raised its terrorism alert level after Basque separatists were blamed for killing a policeman in France last week.

The long-flailing **French** left made a big-time comeback last week, crushing Nicolas Sarkozy's conservatives in regional elections colored by voters' economic worries — and informally kicking off the 2012 presidential race. Meanwhile Sarkozy dismissed his labor minister and reshuffled several other Cabinet posts after leftists walloped his conservatives in the regional elections.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown put economic recovery at the heart of his battle for re-election this week, as he unveiled his Labour party's key pledges for the vote expected shortly.

Germany's economy minister said his government remains opposed to paying financial aid to Greece. Following this, European leaders clinched a deal to rescue **Greece** from its debt crisis, with a standby package of loans backed by the International Monetary Fund halting the euro's slide. The euro rebounded from a 10-month low on but European stocks dropped, as markets gave a cautious welcome to the eurozone's bailout program for Greece.

Thousands of **British** civil servants across the country staged a strike last week over plans to cut redundancy pay. Meanwhile Prime Minister Gordon Brown has urged railway and union bosses to keep negotiating to avoid a threatened four-day strike that could cause travel chaos over the Easter holidays.

Italy's postal service intercepted a threatening letter containing a bullet addressed to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi; meanwhile a letter bomb sent to a minister caught fire last week.

According to **Israeli** media reports the diplomat who is to be expelled from **Britain** over the alleged forgery of British passports connected to the killing of a top Hamas militant, is a Mossad officer who will be replaced by the Jewish state.

The **European** Commission said last week that it wanted to develop its own system to track terrorist finances and that such a system would require the United States to contribute information on *American* citizens' transactions. The announcement is part of intensifying efforts by *Brussels* to resolve an acrimonious battle within the European Union over how to identify, track and pursue suspected terrorists and their financiers.

In separate appearances at the *Brussels* Forum — an annual security conference three senior EU officials said it was imperative for Washington and the EU to craft a "more dynamic partnership" European Commission, claiming that Europe is a more significant ally than China and other emerging economies.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

PM Donald Tusk is to represent **Poland** at the high-level summit on nuclear security in Washington D.C. on April 12-13, a summit that will further verify the influential role of **Poland** on the international arena. Meanwhile **Czech Republic** will host the Summit scheduled to be held on April 8 in Prague for the signing of a new *Russian-US nuclear arms reduction* treaty. **Russia** and the *United States* are hopeful to finalize the deal before a "Washington Nuclear Security Summit".



British Foreign Secretary David Miliband addresses the House of Commons after Britain expelled an Israeli diplomat last week

Former **Czech** Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek has stepped down as his party's top candidate for a May general election after making contemptuous remarks about gays, Jews and the church.

The International Monetary Fund has released a \$700 million trenches for **Belarus** amid a growing rift over the Gas tariff between **Belarus** and *Russia*. **Belarus** has already filed a lawsuit against Russia over oil export fees in an official Commonwealth of Independent States Court.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich warned last week that he would call a snap parliamentary election if a court ruled that a coalition supporting him in parliament had been formed illegally. His comment to European parliamentarians appeared aimed at assuring **Ukraine's** Western partners of his democratic credentials.

The **Estonian** press protested against the possible passing of a bill that stipulates the mandatory exposure of news sources upon request from the authorities. Many **Estonian** newspapers were published with at least one blank page on March 18.

In **Latvia** 4 ministers including Foreign Minister had tendered their resignations. Last week their political party withdrew from the ruling coalition. Meanwhile after the biggest coalition party pulled out, the **Latvian** First Party began talks to support the government. The next elections in the Baltic state are due in October.

On the economic front **Poland's** economy is expected to grow by 2.5 to 2.8 percent in the first quarter of the year; meanwhile **Poland's** unemployment rose to 13 percent in February.

The **Czech** central bank voted last week to hold interest rates at record lows as previously forecast, as the export-driven economy continues to recovering modestly.

According to the finance ministry's Debt and Liquidity Management Agency (ARDAL), **Slovakia** has sold 239.5 million euros (\$323.6 million) worth of two-year, zero-coupon state bonds in an auction. The bonds mature on January 27, 2012.

Meanwhile **Hungary's** central bank sold 2,083.8 billion forint (\$10.65 billion) worth of two-week bills at a weekly tender last week, boosting the total stock of bills to 4,155.1 billion forint (\$21.24 billion). The stocks in **Hungary** have done better than its other neighbors this year, but some investors are becoming more cautious ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections amid the over sizing of the budget deficit and slower pace of economic growth.

Estonia last passed its last major economic test for entering the euro zone in 2011 after its budget deficit met bloc rules, and analysts now expect political approval to join from the crisis-hit currency zone.

A statement issued by the bio-ethics experts unit of the Conference of the **Polish** Episcopate stresses that *In vitro fertilization* (IVF) violates human dignity and the rights of the child and is contrary to Christian faith and "natural law". Currently, IVF has no clear legal standing in **Poland** despite the fact that there have been six bills submitted to Parliament so far.

According to media reports Civil rights leaders in **Belarus** are facing a campaign of persecution and harassment as 'autocratic' President Aleksandr Lukashenko looks to crack down on the opposition especially the Polish minority ahead of local and presidential elections over the next year.

The Constitutional Court of the **Slovak Republic** has turned down the complaint filed by Prosecutor General about the discriminatory and unconstitutional nature of the law governing the registration of churches and religious organizations in the Slovak Republic.

About 3,000 police officers staged a peaceful protest in *Sofia*, **Bulgaria** on Saturday (March 20th) against planned salary cuts. To curb spending, the government wants to force police and others to make their own contributions to social security, effectively reducing wages by just over 12%.

In **Kosovo** the public is growing increasingly dissatisfied with the government, according to an Early Warning Report from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), published last week.

The head of the European Commission (EC) delegation to **Serbia**, Vincent Degert, has voiced support for an initiative of a number of NGOs from the region to set up a fact-finding regional commission on war crimes committed during wars in the Balkans.

Meanwhile a summit of **Western Balkan** leaders near Ljubljana ended last week (March 20th) by adopting a joint statement on their countries' commitment to the European perspective. The Serbian president however was absent from the forum.



RUSSIA

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told reporters last week that **Russia** is prepared to invest in the reconstruction of Ukraine's gas transportation system, although Russia is implementing the **NORD STREAM** and **SOUTH STREAM** pipeline projects, which bypass the *Ukrainian* territory, it is ready to get engaged in the modernization of transit pipelines in *Ukraine*.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has called for improved ties between Moscow and Vilnius as he met his **Lithuanian** counterpart last week in the first such talks in six years.

Activists of some political and public organizations attempted last week to organize mass rallies not sanctioned by Moscow authorities. They were however contained while 70 people have been detained in the process.

French Defense Ministry has confirmed that if France reaches an agreement with **Russia** on selling the **Mistral** class helicopter carriers to it, they will be sold without onboard weaponry.

Russia's central bank cut key rates by 25 basis points, knocking the rouble off multi-month highs last week, and analysts forecast more easing to come as the economy remains sluggish and the currency still strong. The widely expected cut, the 12th in a year, puts the benchmark refinancing rate at a fresh historic low of 8.25 per cent effective this week.



The **Russian** Far East opened a tsunami center in Vladivostok last week that will decrease the warning time from half an hour to one minute. Meanwhile the **Russian** space vehicle Proton-M launched from Baikonur last week has successfully put the EchoStar-14 American communication satellite into the planned orbit.

Russian lawmakers have passed a bill that would allow those accused of economic crimes to be released on bail instead of being sent to jail. President Dmitry Medvedev has said the bill would help end a practice common among corrupt police officers, who jail businessmen and then extort money to set them free.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has demanded that the U.S. administration lower hurdles to **Russian** investment and offered U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a list of trade complaints during a meeting last week.

US/CANADA

President Barack Obama signed into law historic, sweeping reforms last week that lay out health care coverage for almost every **American**. Meanwhile Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin is accusing Republicans of engaging in a "political exercise" by slowing progress on a bill designed to complete congressional passage of the health system overhaul.

Sticking to a hardline position before the White House talks last week, *Israel's* Netanyahu said that peace efforts would be held up by what he called "unreasonable" demands for a freeze on new settlers' homes in east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The **U.S.** and *Russia* will drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals under a historic treaty to be signed this month in Prague.

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina increased pressure on the British government over sovereignty of the **Falkland** Islands last week by threatening to ban companies operating in the colony. Firms could be forced to choose between the *Falklands* and *Argentina* under proposed new legislation.

Argentina's Senate failed last week to vote on the appointment of a close government ally as central bank chief, prolonging uncertainty over the president's bid to pay debt with foreign reserves.

Brazil's president in a recent trip to the region criticized *Israeli* policies towards the Palestinians, warning that *Israel's* separation barrier, its blockade of Gaza and its continued settlement building was

extinguishing "the candle of hope". Further more he reaffirmed that his country can make a significant contribution to the peace process in the Middle East

Meanwhile the **Brazilian** government has announced plans to double the size of its railroad expansion plan as it seeks to cut transportation costs and make the country's goods more competitive abroad.

The *United States*, as part of its \$1.4-billion multiyear Merida Initiative, is sending Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to accompany Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in **Mexico** this week for talks on the country's drug war.

Venezuela and **Belarus** strengthened energy and trade co-operation last week, with President Hugo Chavez saying that the two allies are seeking to increase their independence from the US and other "imperialist" states.

According to local media in **Venezuela** lawmakers have begun debating ways to police the Internet at the urging of President Hugo Chavez, as opposition groups increasingly use the Web to organize against him. Chavez denied these allegations saying on the contrary that Web use had shot up more than nine fold during his decade in power. He also called upon his supporters to wage an Internet battle against false news and calls to overthrow his government.

Meanwhile the chief of the U.S. military's Southern Command said last week that **Venezuela's** socialist government is a "destabilizing force" in Latin America and continues to back leftist guerrillas in **Colombia**.

Hernán Martínez, the Colombian Minister of Mines and Energy, has said that **Venezuela** has not yet responded to the offer made by **Colombia** to resume power supply to its neighboring country. The offer still stands, reiterated Martínez. Meanwhile **Venezuela's** President announced in his Sunday TV program a special \$ 1 bn fund to strengthen the country's power grid and prevent another energy crisis like the one the country is now suffering.

Polls show Chavez's traditionally high popularity, especially among the poor, is suffering from the power crisis. The latest survey, by Alfredo Keller and Associates, which is perceived by many to favor the opposition, gave Chavez a 43 percent approval rating, saying it was his lowest since 2003.

Meanwhile former **Colombian** President Andrés Pastrana has denied allegations that his government (1998-2002) authorized a meeting between the **Venezuelan** President Hugo Chávez and members of the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

According to media reports the **Venezuelan** Supreme Tribunal of Justice has approved a request of the government to extradite former President Carlos Andres Perez from the United States. Perez is accused of being responsible for the death and disappearance of hundreds of people during street protests in 1989, which was known as the "*Caracazo*."

AUSTRALASIA

As **Australia** gears up for an election expected later this year, the centre-left Labor leader Rudd and conservative Liberal Party leader Abbott squared off in an unprecedented debate on health at the National Press Club. **Australia's** Prime Minister Kevin Rudd won the bruising nationally televised debate against opposition leader Tony Abbott.

About 100 **Australian** police are being investigated for circulating racist and pornographic e-mails via an internal system, following a scandal blamed for one officer's suicide. §



Business and Politics in the Muslim World (BPM) refers to a study funded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, and is conducted at the International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad.

Principal Investigator- DR. IJAZ SHAFI GILANI



BPM- Business & Politics
In the Muslim World