



**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.

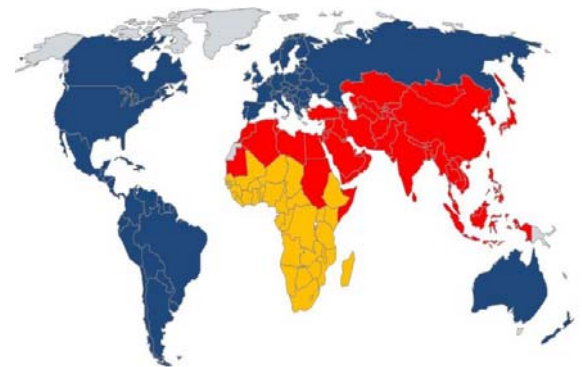
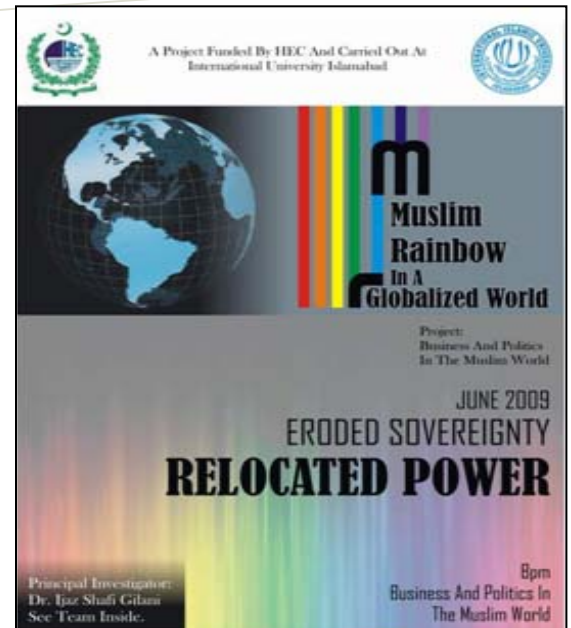
Why should one add another e-letter to many similar exercises already underway? We have pondered this question and here is what we believe to be our possible contribution or *Competitive Advantage*.

- ◆ 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.



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## Globalized Opinions

This week's report consists of **17** national surveys and **1** Regional poll.

Week # 114

Dated 4–10 April, 2010

### Gallopedia Highlights

**ASIA zone-** 1 national poll covering:  
*East Asia-* Japan

**AFRICA zone-** 0 national polls:

**EURO-AMERICAS zone-** 16 national polls and **1 regional** poll covering:  
*East Europe-* Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovakia  
*West Europe-* UK, France  
*North America-* U.S.A, Canada  
*Latin America-* Mexico

#### Subjects covered include:

Politics and Elections

Political economy

Governance

Sovereignty and

Nationalism

Social issues/ Health and

Disease

Environment



### State of Democracy in Hungary

At the eve of 2010 parliamentary elections in **Hungary**, surveys show the **Hungarians** disappointment at the state of democracy in their country. **Hungarians** were among the earliest and most enthusiastic nations to endorse the shift from *communism* to *free market* economy and democracy. Twenty years down the line today their perceptions of both the free market economy and democracy the way they experienced it are dismal.<sup>1</sup>

Among the *Central* and *East European* countries they are the most dissatisfied nation with democratic institutions and practice. Similarly in a comparative perspective they have the most disappointing image of free market economy today as opposed to the enthusiastic demonstrated two decades ago. They feel they are worse off today than they were under communism. But does this indicate that they are rejecting *democracy and free market economy*?

**Hungarians** still highly admire the basic principles of *democracy*. They believe it is imperative to have *multiparty elections, free speech, religious freedom, and civilian control* of military in the country. But such values are lacking in their system. Thus they have the spirit to support democracy but suffer from dysfunctional democratic institutions in their county, the actual source of their disapproval.

The survey findings bring attention to two significant issues. A strained *ethnic and religious* relation within **Hungary** is one of the problems that the nation is facing. A high majority of **Hungarians** (69%) have an unfavorable view of *Roma* one of the key ethnic minorities. Similarly a sizable number of **Hungarians** (33 % & 29%) have an unfavorable view of *Romanians* and *Jews* respectively.<sup>1</sup> This reflects a problem that is quite common in *African* or *Asian* democracies. The same survey also discovers that **Hungary** is no exception in the region facing problems of corruption. Over **seven** in **ten** states identify corruption as the nation's most malicious problem.

**Hungary** as a 'democracy' that is just two decades old, with its eyes set on the Euro bloc membership, is it too ambitious a task to set right institutions and nurture a democratic culture in a short period of time?

## NORTHEAST ASIA

### *Over Half of Japanese Disappointed with Government*

People in Japan continue to grow dissatisfied with the government led by prime minister Yukio Hatoyama, according to a poll by Nikkei. 57 per cent of respondents disapprove of Hatoyama's cabinet, up eight points since

February.  
April 08, 2010

## Zone 3- EURO-AMERICAS

### WEST EUROPE

#### *Britons Despondent About Economy as Election Nears*

Many adults in Britain believe the country has not rebounded from the global financial crisis, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 83 per cent of respondents rate the economic conditions in the United Kingdom as poor or very poor.

April 06, 2010

#### *British Tories Start Campaign with 11-Point Lead*

Britain's Conservative Party holds a comfortable lead over Labour as the electoral campaign begins, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 37 per cent of respondents would vote for the Tories in the May ballot, down one point since early April.

April 10, 2010

#### *Sarkozy's Popularity Slides Further in France*

Just over a third of people in France are still satisfied with Nicolas Sarkozy, according to a poll by LH2. 35 per cent of respondents have a positive opinion of the president, down four points since February.

April 09, 2010

### NORTH AMERICA

#### *Green Behaviors Common in U.S., but Not Increasing*

Americans are today no more environmentally friendly in their actions than they were at the turn of the century.

While more than three in four recycle, have reduced household energy use, and buy environmentally friendly products, these numbers have barely budged since 2000.

April 9, 2010

#### *Democratic Party Image Drops to Record Low*

Americans' favorable rating of the Democratic Party dropped to 41% in a late March USA Today/Gallup poll, the lowest point in the 18-year history of this measure. Favorable impressions of the Republican Party are now at 42%, thus closing the gap between the two parties' images that has prevailed for the past four years.

April 8, 2010

#### *Voters Rate Economy as Top Issue for 2010*

Fifty-seven percent of registered voters say the economy will be extremely important to their vote for Congress this year, making it the top issue in the 2010 elections. Healthcare, unemployment, and the federal budget deficit rank behind the economy in importance, with the environment the least important of the seven issues tested in the

March 26-28 USA Today/Gallup poll.

April 8, 2010

#### *Voters Issue Strong Rebuke of Incumbents in Congress*

A record-low percentage of U.S. voters -- 28% -- say most members of Congress deserve to be re-elected. The previous low was 29% in October 1992.

April 7, 2010



***Parties Even in Congressional Midterm Preferences***

Gallup Daily tracking for the week ending April 4 finds the two major parties tied at 46% in the congressional voting preferences of registered voters nationally. In the two weeks since Congress passed healthcare reform on March 21, Democrats have tied or trailed the Republicans, after having at least a slight advantage in the weeks prior.

*April 7, 2010*

***U.S. Birth Rate Decline Linked to Recession***

Birth rates in the United States began to decline in 2008 after rising to their highest level in two decades, and the decrease appears to be linked to the recession, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of state fertility and economic data.

*April 6, 2010*

***Most Support Stronger Regulations on Big Banks, Taxing Them To Pay Back Bailouts***

Legislative proposals to regulate financial institutions and limit their size have the support of a majority of likely voters, including 55% who favor a tax on large banks to cover any government losses from bailouts.

*April 08, 2010*

***Americans Prioritize Energy Over Environment for First Time***

Americans are more likely to say the U.S. should prioritize development of energy supplies than to say it should prioritize protecting the environment, the first time more have favored energy production over environmental protection in this question's 10-year history.

*April 6, 2010*

***U.S. Job Creation Improves in the West in March***

Gallup's Job Creation Index -- based on 16,778 U.S. employees' self-reports of hiring and firing activity at their workplaces -- shows that employees' perceptions of current job market conditions nationwide were essentially unchanged in March. Twenty-six percent report that their companies are hiring, while 24% say their companies are letting people go.

*April 2, 2010*

***Canadians Content with Governor General Jean***

Many adults in Canada are satisfied with the performance of their governor general, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 57 per cent of respondents approve of the way Michaëlle Jean has handled her duties, while 26 per cent disapprove.

*April 05, 2010*



**LATIN AMERICA**

***Majority in Mexico Share Neighborhoods With Gangs***

Nearly three years after Mexico launched its war against the drug cartels, Gallup data show drug traffickers and gangs remain entrenched in many neighborhoods -- particularly in Mexico's northern and central regions. More than half of Mexicans surveyed in August 2009 said gangs are present in their vicinity and 43% said drug trafficking takes place there.

*April 9, 2010*

**REGIONAL POLL**

***Hungary Dissatisfied with Democracy, but Not its Ideals***

With parliamentary elections approaching, Hungarians are in a funk. Nearly unanimously, they say the economy is in bad shape, and a stunning 72% say most Hungarians are actually worse off now economically than they were under communism. But Hungary's malaise is not all about economics -- most are frustrated with politics too. Overwhelmingly, Hungarians are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working and discontent with political elites, with about three-in-four saying political corruption is a major problem.

*April 7, 2010*

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## Zone 1- **Asia: Summary**

### *Asia, Middle East & North Africa*

#### **TURKEY**

**Political Front:** Seven members of the militant *Kurdistan Workers' Party* (PKK) have been killed by the **Turkish** Armed Forces (TSK) during operations carried out in Hakkari.

The ruling party has re-opened constitutional amendment bill for signatures. Despite strong opposition by CHP, MNP and BDP; the government seems quite optimistic about getting some votes from a few of the deputies of these opposition parties. At the same time Baykal has also expressed flexibility in his stance regarding the approval of bill by saying that his party would back AKP if the government rules out the articles that intend to bring changes in judicial structure.

**Geo-strategic Front:** **Turkish** PM has reiterated his support for a diplomatic solution to resolve Iranian nuclear issue and claimed that sanctions would not play an effective role in compelling Iran to avoid pursuing nuclear program.

The **Turkish** Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned *Israeli* FM for his remarks condemning **Turkish** PM. Meanwhile **Turkish** PM has declared Israel as main threat to the peace in Middle East.

**Turkish** envoy is visiting **Armenia** to hold talks on the delayed ratification of agreements to improve ties. All the while **Turkey** and *Greece* have reached an agreement on five new Confidence Building Measures during



the visit of *Greek* Deputy Foreign Minister to Ankara. **Turkish** PM also paid a visit to *Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

**Economic Front:** **Turkey's** annual inflation figures reached 8.52% in March 2010. All the while industrial production has also started growing at a constant pace.

**Social Front:** **Turkish** police have rounded up nine more suspects, including a former international footballer, in connection with a match-fixing probe.

Increasing number of suicide attempts being carried by youth has emerged as a serious social issue being faced by **Turkey**.

#### **GCC**

**Political Front:** **Yemen's** southern separatists observed civil disobedience in the two southern provinces of Al Dhaleh and Lahj where secession sentiments run highest among the country's six southern provinces. **Yemeni** government has released 236 men, who had been arrested for supporting Al Houthi rebels. The release of prisoners is part of the six conditions for peace framework agreed upon by the government and the rebels. Later on government announced to stop efforts to end the *Al Houthi* armed rebellion north of **Yemen** after alleged violations by the rebels including the kidnapping of 11 soldiers.

**Geo-strategic Front:** The **Syrian** government has canceled a deal with **Kuwait's** AL-Noor Financial Investment Company to build a 140,000 barrel per day refinery in eastern **Syria**. The announcement has been regarded as a setback for the Gulf country that aimed to attract investments to meet their domestic needs.

A new air route *Riyadh - Mumbai - Riyadh* has been launched on March 31, 2010 with frequency of 4 flights in week. *India* and **Saudi Arabia** have expressed keenness to boost their strategic ties. **Saudi Arabia** and *Vietnam* have also started working on boosting their bilateral relation. Meanwhile **Saudi Arabia** has announced that it would not interfere in **Iraqi** affairs.

A **Saudi** scholar has voiced his intention to visit *Jerusalem* next week, and has been told by the *Israeli* authorities to seek a visa. Meanwhile **Kuwait** has denied reports that *Israeli* nationals have been allowed into the country.

The *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* and the State of **Kuwait** have reached an unprecedented agreement according to which the two sides would organize joint courses and **Kuwaiti** lecturers would educate NATO personnel on some regional issues.

The *Palestinian* ambassador to **Bahrain** has urged the local sports authorities and the national football team to go ahead with a match scheduled for May 28 in *Palestine*, assuring them that they would not deal with *Israelis*

and that their passports would not be stamped by *Israel*. Despite the reassurance the **Bahrainian** MP has called for cancellation of the match.

**Economic Front:** **GCC** has started working on some \$2trillion worth projects in the region that would create extensive opportunities for global construction and investment community. The annual political and economic dialogue between the 27-member European Union and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would take place in Brussels next week with the aim to foster cooperation and ties between the two regional groupings. Above all this, **GCC** stock markets have started posting gains since the end of the month of March 2010.

**Oman** has recently pledged \$100 million in aid to **Yemen**. Meanwhile an increase in **Saudi** stock exchange has been observed. Rapid growth has also been observed between **UAE** and *Norway*.

The price of **Kuwaiti** crude oil reached \$ 81.07 per barrel on April 6, an increase of \$ 3.89 per barrel compared to a week earlier.

**Social Front:** The Human Rights Watch has asked the United Nations, the government of **Yemen** and *Al Houthi rebels* to investigate violations of the rules of war committed during a recent conflict in the north of the country. Meanwhile UN agencies have asked the government to grant them access to distressed civilians in the former war zone.

President of the *General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW)* in **Saudi Arabia** has ordered a full investigation of the beating of a TV reporter during a major soccer match.

**Kuwaiti** lawyers have called for a number of major judicial reforms in the country. Meanwhile **Kuwaiti** Minister of Education and of Higher Education recently said that the updated English syllabus being taught in **Kuwaiti** schools indicated the country's increased "openness" to the rest of the world.

**Oman** has unveiled a new cyber-security agency tasked with defending the nation's rapidly expanding IT and e-governance infrastructure from criminal attack.

**Qatar** has started working on new media laws.

## FERTILE CRESCENT

**Political Front:** In **Egypt** last week tension erupted during a joint meeting of the human rights committee and the national security committee in the People's Assembly between delegates from the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood. Strain escalated over the discussion of 12 information requests submitted by the Brotherhood in which they accused police officers of breaking into houses and violating the sanctity of women.

**Egypt's** ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) decided to hold its annual one-day conference to announce its election platform before the upcoming parliamentary elections slated for the end of this year.

**Iran** has urged **Iraqi** leaders to form a national unity government that includes Sunni Muslims. The idea has sparked a debate in **Iraq** over the merits and deficiencies of unity government, with various factions and political figures lining up on either side of the proposal.

Recent announcement of an agreement between *Hezbollah* and the *Amal Movement*, has compelled the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the **Lebanese** Democratic Party (LDP) to declare their alliance; for upcoming municipal elections in **Lebanon**.

**Geo-strategic Front:** **Egypt** has been putting efforts to hold direct negotiations with *Somali* pirates and to persuade them to stop piracy.

More than 5,000 *Sudanese* voters in **Egypt** headed to polls last week to cast their votes in the presidential election. The electoral process in **Egypt** was being observed by representatives of the electoral commission as well as **Egyptian** civil society organizations.

The Washington Post has recently reported that U.S. President, Barak Obama, has seriously started putting efforts to present a new plan for resolving the **Palestinian-Israeli** conflict.

**Economic Front:** In accordance with the announcement made by **Egypt's** National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA) in February the country's three mobile operators have blocked service to all anonymous users and made-in-*China* cell phones which have repetitive serial numbers.

**Social Front:** Reporters for the *Islam Online website* went on strike three weeks ago, protesting the "unethical involvement" and "lack of transparency" displayed by their parent organization's newly-elected board of directors.



According to reports *the Islamic Message Society*, based in **Qatar**, had apparently been pushing the website--previously known for its moderate tone and tolerant views--in a “more conservative direction,” according to a former employee of the organization.

Reports indicate that Millions of **Iraqis** exist below the poverty line in a country which floats on oil and earned more than \$60 billion from oil sales last year.

## IRAN

**Political Front:** **Iranian** President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called on Majlis deputies to spare no efforts to support the government and help remove existing obstacles to implementation of subsidy reform plan. Senior Iranian diplomat has claimed that conducting the upcoming meeting on disarmament in **Iran** would signify the country’s honesty and firm intention for elimination of nuclear weapons.

**Geo-strategic Front:** Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has called for a rapid release of the two **Iranian** nationals held by *Italy*, and asked the *Italian* official to avoid playing into the hands of the CIA and the Pentagon.

**Iranian** Defense Minister has rejected the speculations that *Israel* might launch an attack against the country, warning that any aggression by the regime will be reciprocated with a crushing response causing its annihilation. Lastly, **Iran** has warned international community that imposition of sanctions against the nation would lead to radicalization.



**Economic Front:** *Iraq*, *China*, *United Arab Emirates*, *India* and *Afghanistan* were the major importers of **Iranian** products in the last Iranian year (ended March 20, 2010).

**Social Front:** **Iran** and *Turkey* have dismantled 15 networks of drug trafficking during last **Iranian** calendar year started on March 20, 2009.

## CENTRAL ASIA

**Political Front:** An **Azerbaijani** opposition party has postponed a protest after

Baku authorities rejected a formal request to stage a protest outside city hall. Various international organizations have decided to present their plans for assisting **Azerbaijan** to prepare for the November Parliamentary elections. The **Azerbaijani** government has announced to create the necessary conditions for all political parties to hold activities under the law in the run up to the parliamentary elections.

**Kyrgyz** President has denied any chances of stepping down amidst opposition’s calls. All the while the opposition party has launched massive protests against government and claimed to have its own mini government in Bishkek; the Government employed force to counter protestors.

**Geo-strategic Front:** **Azerbaijani** Interior Ministry has announced to launch large scale counter-terrorism operation along *Russian* border. **Azerbaijan** has also warned military intervention in *Nagorno-Karabakh* in case of failure of peace talks.

*Russia* has moved toward recognizing the self-proclaimed new leadership of **Kyrgyzstan** by the **Kyrgyz** opposition party -- while the United States says it has not yet decided whether to recognize the new authorities.

Meanwhile flights supporting NATO operations in *Afghanistan* from an air base in **Kyrgyzstan** have been temporarily suspended following violent political upheaval in Bishkek.

**Turkmenistan** is looking forward to boost cooperation with *France*.

President of **Uzbekistan** held meetings with the head of US Central Command and the General Secretary

of UN respectively. Meanwhile UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged restraint in a growing dispute between **Uzbekistan** and **Tajikistan** over the building of a massive **Tajik** hydroelectric dam.

**Economic Front:** Marketing and economic operations department of **Azerbaijan** State Oil Company (SOCAR) exported 13, 317 tons of fuel, 177,499 tons of diesel oil, 11,309 tons of aircraft fuel and 235 tons of gasoline in March.

**Tajik** and *Russian* finance Ministers have discussed specialist training program for **Tajik** Financial system. Meanwhile the forum of business circles



Baku-Supsa pipeline project



"Zhas alash" editor in chief Rysbek Sarsenbai

of **Uzbekistan** and **Vietnam** was held in Tashkent on 6 April.

**Social Front:** Private houses and state institutions, as well as 6 villages have been flooded as a result of torrential rains in **Azerbaijan's** Agsu region.

A Chinese man has been sentenced by a **Kazakh** court to five days in jail for attacking the office of an independent newspaper "Zhas alash".

## SOUTH ASIA

**Political Front:** The Dhaka High Court has rejected the bail pleas of five

*Jamaat-e-Islami* (JeI) leaders, including its chief Matiur Rahman Nizami, in two cases filed against them for hurting the religious sentiments of Muslims.

Acute power shortage in **Bangladesh** brought people on the streets whereby the government deployed forces to control the masses. Meanwhile the Prime minister has called upon market owners and shopkeepers not to use electricity from the national power grid after 7:00pm in order to help the government to tackle the present power crisis.

The government of **Nepal** has started holding consultations with various political parties over the fate of UNMIN. The Unified CPN-Maoist decided to call **Nepal** bandh on April 12 to protest the government's decision to award the Machine Readable Passport (MRP) contract to **India**. As a result **Nepal's** Supreme Court told the government not to proceed with the award of the contract until further orders.

Normal life in the southern plains of **Nepal**, adjoining **India**, remained paralyzed for a day due to the two day general strike called by the *Madhesi People's Rights Forum* (MPRF) demanding more autonomy and rights. The leader of **Nepal's** opposition Maoists demanded the government step down, calling it the "main obstacle" to the country's faltering peace process.

Parliamentary elections have been held in **Sri Lanka**, where a few incidents of violence grabbed attention. Besides that voters turn out remained lower than expected; many assume that IDPs particularly faced difficulty in casting votes.

**Geo-strategic Front:** A top **Bangladeshi** minister has asked **Pakistan** to formally apologize for the atrocities committed by the **Pakistan** Army during the 1971 'Liberation war' so as to strengthen bilateral ties.

**Bangladesh's** parliament has adopted a resolution giving full support to the U.N. secretary general's proposal for a total nuclear disarmament plan.

**India** has announced plan to form a holding company in **Bhutan** to undertake hydropower development in order to enhance its strategic influence.

**Nepal** and the *US* have agreed to sign the new *Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA)*, replacing the bilateral *Economic and Trade Agreement (ETA)* that they signed in 1947.

**Economic Front:** **Bangladesh** has received its first sovereign credit rating that has given it much needed access to foreign financial markets and made it a lucrative destination for foreign investors. All the while **Bangladesh's** exports to the *European Union* increased by more than 6 per cent in 2009, despite significant decline in Europe's two-way trade with almost all countries due to the fall-out of the global recession.

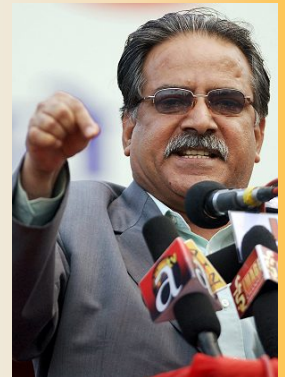
**Social Front:** The US President Barrack Obama has selected **Bangladesh** as a model for food security. In this regard, the US would provide **Bangladesh** with a good portion of the assistance of \$100 million pledged for food security of the developing nations.

The **Maldives** Journalists Association (MJA) has become a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

Inadequate water supply in urban areas has emerged as potent social challenge being faced by **Bhutan**.

## INDIA

**Political Front:** BJP has strongly condemned government's policies to improve minorities' status in the country by



Chairman of UCPN (Maoist)  
Pushpa Kamal Dahal

calling it the policy of appeasement by Congress. It further added that such policies would deepen the existing divide between various groups hence it would hurt the spirit of unity.

Meanwhile SP and RJD have voiced against *Women's Reservation Bill* in its present form and demanded quota for Muslim women and backward classes.

The VHP has again started talking about the issue of Ram temple at Ayodhya; raising fears of disrupting harmony. Muslims however have announced to accept court's decision that is expected by the end of this year; regarding this issue.

Maoist rebels have accepted the responsibility of killing 74 members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and two policemen from the Chhattisgarh police, and destroying an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) in Dantewada district. Congress and the opposition parties held protests against Maoist guerillas for their violent activities. All business and academic activities observed stalemate in *Chhattisgarh*. All the while Special Investigation Team has revealed the involvement of international Maoist groups in providing arms training to **Indian** Maoist rebels.

On the **Kashmir** front, a railway track was blown up last week. Besides that opposition leaders in **Kashmir** have asked their people to participate in national census.

**Geo-strategic Front:** After the February 25 fruitless Foreign Secretary-level talks, **India** has expressed willingness to have the second round of talks with *Pakistan* in order to discuss critical water issue. Meanwhile **India** has reiterated her commitment to the *Indus basin treaty* and denied its violation.

**India** has expressed desire to seek membership of SCO. **India's** External Affairs Minister during his visit to *China* asked the *Chinese* government to invest in **Kashmir**, to improve ties with **India** and to support the nation in gaining membership of UNSC.

**Social Front:** Annual Flow Report released by the US Department of Homeland Security indicates that the number of **Indians** being granted the Green Card has declined each year since 2007. **Indian** officials have called this process as 'reverse brain drain' to the home country.

*Kerala* has decided to seek Rs 165 crore as assistance from the Centre to tackle drought conditions.

## KOREA

**Geo-strategic front:** **North Korea** has sentenced a U.S. man to eight years of hard labor for illegally entering the country.

**North Korea** has also denied involvement in the sinking of a **South Korean** navy ship that broke in half after an explosion last month, leaving 44 sailors still missing.

**Economic Front:** **South Korea's** POSCO (005490.KS), the world's No. 4 steelmaker, has raised prices of stainless steel products for a third straight month on rising raw material costs and to match global competitors.

Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T) recalled 12,984 vehicles sold in **South Korea** due to floor mat problems. Annual growth in **South Korean** domestic retail sales likely slowed in March after posting a 12.9 percent rise in February.

**Social Front:** According to reports, in **Korea** about one in five drug addicts have attempted suicide in the past as a side effect of narcotics usage.

Foreign students in **Korea** have welcomed opening of a center to counsel the foreign nationals.

## JAPAN

**Political front:** According to a recently released poll, nearly half of **Japanese** voters do not support any political party in their country.

**Geo-strategic Front:** **Japanese** Foreign Minister has appreciated the new U.S. policy of limiting the use of atomic arms, calling it a big step toward a "world without nuclear weapons" but adding that other nuclear powers need to follow suit to make it effective.

**Economic Front:** **Japan** has agreed to resume talks on reopening its market to U.S. beef. **Japan's** government has also announced to use budget reserves to support the economy rather than compiling an extra budget.

**Social Front:** *China* has executed a **Japanese** citizen for drug smuggling, ignoring concern from *Tokyo* that the move, along with plans to execute three other **Japanese**, could inflame public opinion. §



Officials investigate the stern of the salvaged South Korean Cheonan Navv ship that sunk

### POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

**West Africa:** ECOWAS has launched an appeal to its *European Union* partners to help limit the influx into **West Africa** of small arms and light weapons which has contributed to more than a decade of instability in the region.

Acting **Nigerian** President Goodluck Jonathan last week warned the new ministers not to allow their personal interests override that of the nation. He added that he will not tolerate any form of mediocrity and ministers who fail to measure up to expectation will be sacked. Meanwhile no substantive minister of power would be



named for the time being following the decision of the Acting President to take charge of this critical sector.

*Lagos* Pastor and leader of the pro-democracy *Save Nigeria Group*, Tunde Bakare, has criticized the recent visits of Muslim and Christian clerics to President Umaru Yar'Adua as "the theatre of the absurd." He emphasized that **Nigerians** deserve to know the state of health of their president.

U.S. Secretary for Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, visited Abuja, **Nigeria** last week on the invitation of the federal government to assess steps taken so far to strengthen aviation security at the nation's international airports.

In **Benin** former military President General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) declared last week his intention to run for the 2011 Presidential election.

Meanwhile **Angolan** Head of State, José Eduardo dos Santos, discussed bilateral cooperation with his counterpart of **Guinea Bissau**, Malam Bacai Sanhá.

The *US* and some *European* countries have adopted new laws allowing the prosecution of war criminals from other countries who live in *America* or some *European* states. Under this officers from Mr. *Charles Taylor's* army are amongst those that *British* Immigration and security services will be searching for in the country for prosecution.

In **Rwanda** Victoire Ingabire, the controversial leader of *FDU-Inkingi*, an exiled group trying to register as a political party, has been deposed in a well-orchestrated move by her European-based colleagues. According to sources cracks began to appear in the shaky alliance after Ingabire's Assistant, Joseph Ntawangundi, was exposed as a Genocide fugitive.

**South Africa:** Bishop Abel Muzorewa, leader of a brief interim administration which paved the way for **Zimbabwe's** independence elections that swept President Robert Mugabe into power died last week at his Harare home at the age of 85.

**South African** President Jacob Zuma last week chastised the head of the ANC youth wing, who has stirred controversy with a series of racially tinged outbursts.

**Central Africa:** On Easter Day, rebels attacked Mbandaka, the capital of the Equatorial Province in the **DRC**. They crossed the **Congo** River and headed for the Provincial Assembly, the governor's residence, and the airport but were eventually driven out by the **Congolese** army and UN *MONUC* troops.

Meanwhile the leader of the *sMai Mai Kifuafula* rebels in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** has said that a new rebel coalition comprising over 17 different armed groups will be unveiled in the eastern part of the country.



Didier Bitaki said the various armed groups decided to join forces after President Joseph Kabila's government failed to fully implement several peace accords.

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

**South Africa:** The High Court in Western Cape Province, **South Africa**, originally set 6 April as the deadline for evicting the last remaining foreigners from the Blue Waters safety camp, set up outside Cape Town after xenophobic attacks drove them from their homes in May 2008; the police

however are yet to carry out the eviction order.

Racial tensions remain high in **South Africa** following the recent murder of white supremacist Eugene Terre'Blanche. Meanwhile two suspects have been charged with murder. The charges were announced after hundreds of black and white supporters faced off outside the courthouse west of Johannesburg.

In **Malawi** the newly formed *Anti Gay Movement (AGM)* has said that it will conduct a general referendum to give **Malawians** a chance to choose if they want it or not. AGM Interim Chair, Grandy Chikweza, said that the



Eugene TerreBlanche and the quasi-Nazi regalia of the white supremacist AWB movement. AP

referendum follows the arrest of the gay couple and the increasing number of gays in the country.

**Central Africa:** Members of the *US Diplomatic corps*, officials from the *US government* and members of the civil society last week joined the **Rwandan Community** in Washington DC to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

Meanwhile Hassan Bubacar Jallow, the Prosecutor of the Arusha-based United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for **Rwanda (ICTR)** has said that **Kenya** must arrest and hand over the fugitives for prosecution for their role in the 1994 genocide. The most sought after fugitive among eleven remaining key suspects is Felicien Kabuga, the businessman who owned a radio station which is claimed to have fuelled the massacre of over 800,000.

## HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

**West Africa:** More than 1,500 **Ghanaians**, mainly from Kintampo, are participating in the third phase of a trial to determine the efficacy of the first vaccine for malaria.

In **Niger**, Aid agencies are asking donors for US\$133 million to help the government feed millions of people at risk of going hungry, adding to \$57 million already received or committed, seeking to improve the food security



Niger Food Crisis

of 3.2 million people.

**South Africa:** An assessment at the beginning of April indicated that crops have failed in all seven districts of *Matabeleland South province* of **Zimbabwe**, and an estimated 9,000 tons of maize would be required each month to mitigate the effects of the expected food shortages.

According to a review of 52 **African** countries' health spending by *The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*, in the continent government spending on health care, as a percentage of national expenses, rose

just 0.3 percent from 2001 to 2007, while donor funding of the sector during the same period increased from 15.3 to 20.1 percent,

**Central Africa:** According to the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** Ministry of Health about 530,000 children younger than five and more than a million women need urgent nutritional support in the country. Meanwhile according to reports at least 700 children under-five die each day in the five provinces where only 20 percent of children have a varied diet.

## POLITICAL ECONOMY

**West Africa:** As of 6 April, 9800 km of the *East African Submarine Cable System* (known as EASSy) have been deployed to nine countries along the East African coast, offering more advanced internet and better connectivity to *Europe*, the *Americas*, the *Middle East*, and *Asia*.

*ABB*, the leading power and automation technology group in **Ghana**, has won an order worth over \$13 million from the Volta River Authority, to supply equipment to improve the country's power

transmission network.

**Central Africa:** A high speed ferry between **São Tomé** and **Cape Verde** is planned for operations in June this year following the establishment of a joint ferry company Expresso LDA, which is to operate the new maritime link. §

## Zone 3- Euro-America: *Transatlantic Community*

### WESTERN EUROPE

In the **British** general elections a row over tax and spending has dominated the opening days of the campaign. The dispute between the Conservatives and Labour over payroll tax and public spending has eclipsed worries about a large budget deficit.

In the Netherlands, according to PVV's party leader Geert Wilders, a ban on headscarves for city council workers and in all institutions and clubs which get

local authority money will be the most important point in the party's negotiations to join governing coalitions in Almere and the Hague.

Meanwhile the **European** rights chief while urging politicians to promote understanding of different cultures has warned that a ban on face-veil would violate individual privacy rights and alienate Muslim women.

*The Guardian* reports that **French** Muslims of North African descent have spending power worth an estimated of 5.5bn euros a year. The young ones want high-end halal luxuries and a range of halal cuisines, rather than the foods that their parents grew up with.

### CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

**Polish** President Lech Kaczynski, 60, along with the country's highest military and civilian leaders died last week when the presidential plane crashed as it came in for a landing in thick fog in western **Russia**, killing 97 people. On board were the army chief of staff, national bank president, deputy foreign minister, head of the National Security Office, deputy parliament speaker, civil rights commissioner and at least two presidential aides and three lawmakers. The plane was taking the president and his delegation to events marking the 70th anniversary of the massacre of 22,000 **Polish** officers in KATYN forest by Soviet secret police. Reflecting the sensitivity of the incident on bilateral relations, *Russian* Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has personally assumed charge of the investigation.

Putin also made an unprecedented gesture of good will to **Poland** by attending the memorial ceremony for 22,000 **Poles** executed by Soviet secret police during World War. However after attending the solemn event he said *Soviet* dictator Josef Stalin ordered the atrocity as revenge for the death of Red Army soldiers in **Polish** prisoner of war camps in 1920.

Last week *US* President Barack Obama wrapped up a two-day visit to the **Czech Republic** that saw the signing of a new US- Russian nuclear arms control treaty.

In **Slovakia**, several groups have sought to make an election issue out of the questions of nationhood and ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, the **Czechs** look like they might swing to the left. The **Czech** voters will

choose their next government on May 28-29, while in **Slovakia** the general election is scheduled for June 12.

According to **Hungary's** national election office OVI after processing 99% of the votes, the country's center-right opposition party headed by FIDESZ got 52.8% of the vote in last week's first round of parliamentary elections, while all other parties gained considerably less support. The second round of the elections is scheduled for April 25.

**Ukrainian** President Victor Yanukovich during a meeting with visiting *Russian* Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov last week reiterated his



country's willingness to strengthen strategic partnership with *Russia*. Meanwhile The **Ukrainian** president has dissolved the government's commission working toward NATO membership. The move has buried the ambitious *pro-NATO* policies by his predecessor, *Orange Revolution* hero *Viktor Yushchenko*.

On the economic front, according to a report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), **Poland's** GDP may rise 3 percent this year and up to 3.6 percent in 2011.

**Czech** consumer prices rose by 0.3 percent on the month in March, putting year-on-year inflation at 0.7 percent. According to the Central bank, it saw inflation near the 2 percent target in the first half of 2011, the bank's policy horizon.

Latest report from the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF) forecast that the total external debt of **Belarus** in 2010 would reach the highest level in history to take up some 52 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP).

**Ukraine's** Finance Ministry has received offers from nine lenders as the government prepares to sell Eurobonds after it resumed talks with the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF). The ministry is still receiving offers from banks across the globe, including the *United States* and *Japan*.

According to reports The *Baltic* countries of **Latvia**, **Lithuania** and **Estonia** were in the top four in unemployment among European Union countries in February. **Latvia** led with a **21.7 %** unemployment rate, followed by *Spain* at **19%**, **Lithuania 15.8%**, and **Estonia** at **15.5%** jobless rate. The average unemployment rate in the 27-member European Union member states was **9.6 %** in February.

Several local start-up software developers attended the first **Czech Republic** Microsoft Business

Academy held in Brno last week

More than 20,000 **Lithuanians** have signed an electronic petition to the government against the planned construction of a nuclear power station in neighboring **Belarus** for the safety of 500,000 inhabitants around 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the planned site of the plant. **Belarus** plans to build a new nuclear



plant that could possibly export energy to **Lithuania**. **Lithuania** agreed to close its own Soviet-era *IGNALINA* nuclear station by 2009 as part of its 2004 EU accession agreement.

**Estonia's** banking, media and government presence online was disrupted by several waves of distributed denial of service attacks that knocked services offline. The country is heavily wired - 90 percent of all financial transactions are conducted over the Internet and 70 percent of the population files their tax returns electronically.

## **RUSSIA**

**Russia's** ambassador to the United Nations has introduced a draft resolution to the Security Council calling for new measures to ensure Somali pirates are punished when they are caught.

As *USA* President *Obama* signed a landmark arms-control treaty with **Russian** President Dmitry Medvedev last week, a chorus of skeptics in Russia has raised concerns that Moscow may have conceded too much in the deal. Meanwhile according to officials the Obama administration plans to send the new arms-control treaty package with **Russia** to Congress by the end of April, hoping for ratification by year's end.

**Russian** Prime Minister and a top Foreign Ministry official have strongly condemned suggestions that **Russia** could be involved in the disturbances in **Kyrgyzstan**.

In a statement from the kremlin, President Dmitry Medvedev has signed into law amendments to legislation on economic crimes that should increase the use of bail for suspects awaiting trial and cut abuse of the system.

On the economic front the first Russian-Arab cooperation forum is expected to be held in the capital of **Russia**, Moscow, by the end of 2010.

The *Nord Stream pipeline* project was laid last week in *PORTOVAYA* Bay, north of St. Petersburg, **Russia**. The dual-pipeline project, the first phase of which is to be completed in 2011, will allow **Russia** to pump its natural gas directly under the **Baltic** Sea to *Germany*. But the project has been hugely contentious in Europe, especially for *Poland*, who accused *Germany* of going behind the backs of its Eastern European neighbors by forging a closer energy alliance with **Russia**. The European Union obtains nearly **45 %** of its gas imports from **Russia**, while **70 %** of **Russia's** gas exports are earmarked for the **27-country** bloc.

**Russian** president *Medvedev* arrived in *Slovakia* last week to take part in activities

commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe and liberation of former *Czechoslovakia*. In 2008, the bilateral trade exchange between **Russia** and *Slovakia* reached the record USD 9.6 billion, but in 2009 it dropped to a half of the figure. An important point in the *Bratislava talks* was the extension of the broad-gauge railway from the *Ukrainian-Slovak* border to *Vienna*, which would for the first time directly connect central Europe with the **Russian** railway system, including the *Trans-Siberian Railway*.

A joint **Russian-US** project has created a new 117-proton element, provisionally called *ununseptium*, making the second heaviest substance created thus far.

According to reports Over 4,000 **Russian** inmates died in 2009. There are currently 861,867 people imprisoned across **Russia**. The country's prisons are notorious for their overcrowding and the high incidence of infectious diseases.

## US/CANADA

Last week in the **USA** a prominent national Muslim civil rights and advocacy group welcomed reports from *Pakistan* that **American** Al-Qaeda spokesman Adam Gadahn has been arrested. The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) also repudiated Gadahn's latest call to violence contained in an Al-Qaeda video released recently.



## LATIN AMERICA

*President Cristina Kirchner* admitted last week that **Argentina** would never succeed in claiming the **Falkland Islands** by military force. However she expressed the hope that diplomatic and political pressure would wrest them away from *Britain*.

China's Ministry of Commerce recently suggested that its traders cancel soy oil cargoes from **Argentina** due to sanitary problems, a move that elicited objections from the **Argentine** government. **Argentina**, Latin America's No. 3 economy, is facing a financing crunch this year to meet debt obligations of up to \$15 billion.

Under **Brazil's** electoral law, the deadline for departure from government positions to participate in general elections is April 3, six months before the elections. **10 Brazilian** ministers quit their posts last week in this stead. The most notable departing minister is *Dilma Rousseff*, who has been handpicked by *President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva* as his successor. Meanwhile Lula da Silva called for continuity of government policies and plans in the first cabinet meeting following the pre election reshuffle.

President Dmitry Medvedev visited **Argentina** and **Brazil** last week, as *Russia* strengthens relationships in a region long influenced heavily by the *United States*. Preceding that, in his first visit to **Venezuela** Prime Minister Vladimir Putin offered *Russian* assistance to help the nation set up its own space industry, including a satellite launch site. The two nations also agreed on a joint oil production project worth \$20 billion. Meanwhile President *Hugo Chavez* affirmed last week that **Venezuela** and *Russia* are forging a strategic alliance aimed at the establishment of a new international order based on multilateralism.

*Chinese* President *Hu Jintao* is also expected to pay visits to **Brazil**, **Chile** and **Venezuela** this month.

**Venezuela's** main thermoelectric plant, Planta Centro, was shut down last week due to failures in five of its generating units, exacerbating the country's worsening electricity crisis.

**Mexico's** Finance Ministry raised its forecast for economic growth this year to **4.1%**, which would be the fastest pace in a decade, as U.S. shoppers increase demand for the country's exports.

## AUSTRALASIA

According to latest Roy Morgan findings a clear majority (81%) of **Australians** do not want **Australia's** population to exceed 35 million by 2040.

**Australians** are more divided on the question of immigration where 46% say immigration should 'remain about the same,' while 39% say immigration should 'be reduced' and just 11% say immigrations should 'be increased.' §

