



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*.

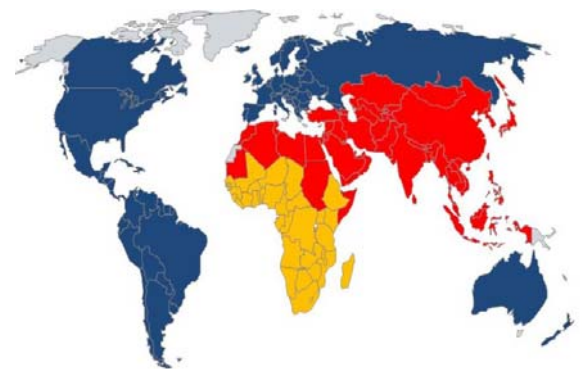
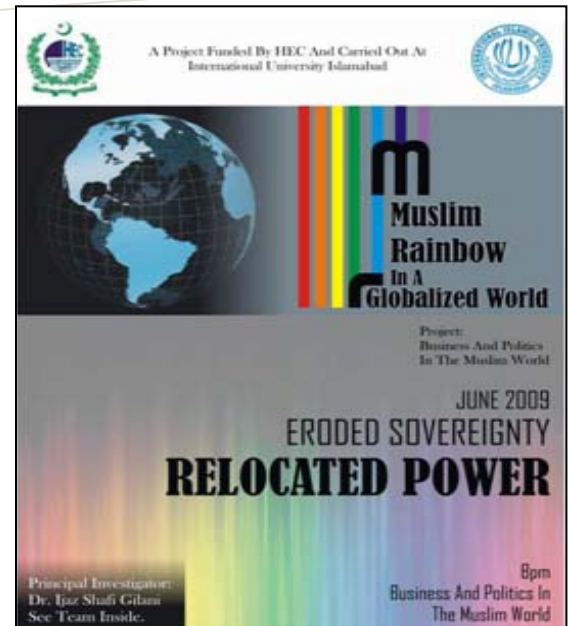
- ◆ We will make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Facebook will provide clicks to deeper levels of information; for comprehension (Maps and Data) as well as for elaboration



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 '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.



Globalized Opinions

This week report consists of **23** surveys. **3** of these are multi-country surveys while the rest are national surveys.

Gallopedia Highlights Week # 117

Dated 25 April- 1 May, 2010

ASIA zone- 1 national poll and 2 Global polls covering:

Middle East & N.Africa: Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon,

West Asia: Turkey

South Asia: Pakistan,

South East Asia- Indonesia,

North East Asia: Hong Kong,

AFRICA zone- 0 national polls & 2 Global Polls covering:

West Africa: Nigeria,

EURO-AMERICAS zone-19 national polls and 1 Multi-Country Poll & 1 Global poll covering:

East Europe- Russia,

West Europe- UK, France,

North America- U.S.A, Canada

Latin America- Brazil,



Subjects covered include:

Politics and Elections

Political economy

International Security

Governance

Social issues/ Health and Disease

Migration

Environment



It Is More Important to Educate...

	Boys	Girls	Both equally
	%	%	%
Egypt	16	12	71
Jordan	19	15	65
Lebanon	1	2	96
Shia	2	2	96
Sunni	*	1	98
Christian	*	2	98
Palest. ter.	7	8	85
West Bank	6	8	86
Gaza Strip	9	8	83
Turkey	3	6	89
Israel	2	3	93
Jew	2	3	93
Arab	4	3	91
Indonesia	4	2	93
Pakistan	6	3	87
Nigeria	19	3	78
Muslim	29	2	68
Christian	8	4	87

Question 55.

8 of 8 - Educating Boys and Girls in the Muslim World

In all eight predominantly Muslim nations surveyed in 2009 a strong majority say it is equally important to educate girls and boys. This opinion is shared by more than eight-in-ten in Lebanon (96%), Indonesia (93%), Turkey (89%), Pakistan (87%) and the Palestinian territories (85%). Very few in any of these countries say education is more important for either boys or girls. In Egypt (16%) and Jordan (19%) a considerable number say it is more important to educate boys, but in both countries (12% in Egypt and 15% in Jordan) comparable percentages say it is more important to educate girls. Only among Nigerian Muslims do far more say it is more important to educate boys (29%) than say it is more important to educate girls (2%); still a majority (68%) says girls and boys should be educated equally. Egalitarian views are somewhat more widespread than in 2007 in Pakistan (+13 percentage points) and the Palestinian territories (+11 points).

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PEW GLOBAL ATTITUDES PROJECT

<http://pewresearch.org/databank/dailynumber/?NumberID=960>

SUMMARY OF POLLS

Zone 1- ASIA NORTHEAST ASIA

Rating for Tsang Falls Slightly in Hong Kong

Public support for Hong Kong's chief executive dropped this month, according to a poll by the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme. The support rate for Donald Tsang stands at 50.7 points, down 1.8 points since late March.

April 29, 2010



Zone 3- EURO-AMERICAS

EAST EUROPE

No Party Able to Compete with United Russia

Russia's governing party remains remarkably popular, according to a poll by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center. 52 per cent of respondents would vote for United Russia (YR) in the next legislative ballot.

April 27, 2010

WEST EUROPE

Tories Lead Lib-Dems, Labour Third in Britain

The Conservative party is once again ahead of its rivals in Britain, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion published in *The Economist*. 33 per cent of respondents would support the Tories in next week's General Election.

April 30, 2010

Just a Third of Britons Back Mission in Afghanistan

Public support for the military deployment in Afghanistan has fallen this month in Britain, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 32 per cent of respondents back the operation involving UK soldiers, down six points since February.

April 25, 2010

Millions of UK Consumers Punish Businesses Who Don't Treat Workers Fairly

Within the committed Fairtrade consumer sector, more than two thirds say they will always or often punish companies for not being socially responsible and nearly a third of mainstream consumers are likely to reward companies for being socially responsible.

May 1 2010

British Sense of Fair Play Helps Workers in the Developing World

Britons overwhelmingly expect fair pay and fair treatment for workers in developing countries, and the vast majority, 86%, feel a personal responsibility to ensure workers are fairly compensated. Within the committed consumer sector, almost nine in ten people believe they can make a difference through their own shopping choices.

May 1 2010

President Sarkozy Keeps Dropping in France

The popularity of Nicolas Sarkozy continues to erode in France, according to a poll by CSA published in *Le Parisien*. 34 per cent of respondents have confidence in their president to face the country's problems, down two points since March.

April 27, 2010



NORTH AMERICA

How Americans Interact with Government Online

As government agencies at all levels bring their services online, Americans are turning in large numbers to government websites to access information and services. Fully 82% of internet users (representing 61% of all American adults) looked for information or completed a transaction on a government website in the 12 months preceding this survey. Americans get information about public policies online, download official forms, and renew their license and card online.

April 27, 2010

More Americans Favor Than Oppose Arizona Immigration Law

More than three-quarters of Americans have heard about the state of Arizona's new immigration law, and of these, 51% say they favor it and 39% oppose it.

April 29, 2010

"Enthusiastic" Voters Prefer GOP by 20 Points in 2010 Vote

Although U.S. registered voters are closely divided in their 2010 congressional election preferences, those who say they are "very enthusiastic about voting" this year show a strong preference for the Republican Party.

April 27, 2010

Hispanics and Arizona's New Immigration Law

Arizona last week passed a law authorizing local police to check the immigration status of anyone they reasonably suspect of being in the United States illegally.¹ The law has generated sharp debate between advocates who say it is

needed to combat illegal immigration and opponents who say it is an infringement on civil liberties and an invitation to racial/ethnic profiling of Hispanics by the police. Opinion polls show that Hispanics are most critical of anti-immigration laws.

April 29, 2010

Pessimistic Public Doubts Effectiveness of Stimulus, TARP

The public remains doggedly downbeat about the condition of the national economy, even as many experts and economists see signs of recovery. As has been the case for most of the past two years, about nine-in-ten (88%) rate national economic conditions as only fair or poor, and over the past year there has been no decline in the percentage saying the economy will stay the same (36%) or get worse (19%) a year from now.

April 28, 2010

Obama Approval Drops to 46% in United States

Public support for Barack Obama fell slightly last month in the United States, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 46 per cent of respondents approve of their president's performance, down two points since March.

May 01, 2010

Republicans Prioritize Immigration; Dems, Financial Reform

When asked which of three current legislative initiatives in Congress should be the priority, Americans who identify as Democrats favor a focus on financial reform, while independents and Republicans choose immigration.

All three political groups give a new energy bill low priority.

April 30, 2010

Few Americans Satisfied with Economic Standing

Adults in the United States hold gloomy views on the country's finances, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 83 per cent of respondents rate the economic conditions in the U.S. as "poor" or "very poor."

April 30, 2010

Americans Support Arizona Immigration Bill

Many adults in the United States would like several regulations included in the Arizona immigration bill to be



Thousands of protesters rally at the Arizona Capitol on Sunday, April, 25, 2010. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

implemented in their own state, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 76 per cent of respondents support making it a crime to transport someone who is an illegal immigrant.

April 29, 2010

Americans Split on Next Supreme Court Justice

Adults in the United States do not agree on a specific set of principles for the country's next Supreme Court justice, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 32 per cent of respondents would prefer a person with a conservative ideology, while 30 per cent would choose someone with a liberal ideology.

April 28, 2010

Volcano-Related Disruptions Affected 14% of Americans

The volcano that erupted in Iceland earlier this month affected 14% of U.S. adults in one way or another, including 1% who say their personal travel plans were disrupted, 3% who say other plans were affected, and 5% who said it disrupted their business.

April 30, 2010

More Canadians Satisfied with Domestic Economy

Many people in Canada believe the country's financial standing has improved this year, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 58 per cent of respondents rate the economic conditions in Canada today as good or very good, up four points since March.

April 28, 2010



LATIN AMERICA

Rousseff Gains, Almost Ties Serra in Brazil

Brazil's presidential election will require a run-off, according to a poll by Instituto Sensus. 32.7 per cent of respondents would vote for Jose Serra of the Brazilian Party of Social Democracy (PSDB) in the

ballot, while 32.4 per cent would support Dilma Rousseff of the ruling Workers' Party (PT).

April 24, 2010

MULTI-COUNTRY POLLS/ GLOBAL POLLS

Views on Global Warming Vary in Three Countries

People in three countries hold differing views on climate change, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 58 per cent of respondents in Canada believe global warming is a fact and is mostly caused by emissions from vehicles and industrial facilities, but only 41 per cent of Americans and 38 per cent of Britons concur.

April 27, 2010

Educating Boys and Girls in the Muslim World

In all eight predominantly Muslim nations surveyed in 2009 a strong majority say it is equally important to educate girls and boys. This opinion is shared by more than eight-in-ten in Lebanon (96%), Indonesia (93%), Turkey (89%), Pakistan (87%) and the Palestinian territories (85%).

Young, Less Educated Yearn to Migrate to the U.S.

Fifteen countries attract about 500 million of the roughly 700 million adults worldwide who say they would like to relocate permanently to another country if they could. Gallup finds the U.S. is clearly the No. 1 desired destination among these potential migrants, with more than 165 million saying they would like to move there, and neighboring Canada is a distant second with 45 million.

April 30, 2010

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Zone 1- **Asia: Summary**

Asia, Middle East & North Africa

TURKEY

Political Front:

The **Turkish** Government has allowed Labor Union to celebrate May Day.

Three Military officers who were suspected of involvement in the *Sledgehammer* security operation plan have been released.



Thousands rally for workers' rights in **Istanbul's Taksim Square**

Geo-strategic Front:

Turkey has reiterated its commitment towards diplomatic resolution of the *Iranian* nuclear issue. Meanwhile **Turkey, Iran, Iraq** and *Syria* have launched cooperation on environment and meteorology.

Israel has expressed serious concerns regarding **Turkey-Syrian** Military Exercises. Meanwhile **Turkey** seems keen to enhance ties with *New Zealand, Australia* and *Georgia*.

Economic Front:

Azerbaijan has agreed to provide gas to **Turkey** at cheap prices. All the while inflation has increased in **Turkey**.

Social Front:

A **Turkish** prosecutor has rejected the demand to investigate the wives of the president and prime minister for wearing an Islamic headscarf at official functions.

Meanwhile the US-based independent watchdog organization *Freedom House* has appreciated **Turkish** Press for being open and free. However they claimed that the media usually lacks news and focuses more on insignificant issues.

GCC

Political Front:

Yemeni Shia rebels have demanded release of 1,000 prisoners.

Geo-strategic Front:

Bahrain and **Kuwait** have expressed interest in enhancing bilateral ties. Meanwhile **Kuwait** and the other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have emphasized greatly the need for coordination in the face of terrorism, possible nuclear threats and external aggression.

The foreign minister of the **United Arab Emirates** has refused to back down in the face of *Iranian* anger and repeated his call for *Tehran* to end its "occupation" of three islands in the Gulf.

Meanwhile the **GCC** Secretary General has greatly admired the relation between GCC states and Russia. He further appreciated Russian efforts to urge *Tehran* to solve the problem of the three **UAE** islands currently occupied by *Iran* either through direct negotiations or international arbitration.

Economic Front:

Inflation rates remained low in **Gulf countries**. Meanwhile the *IMF* has appreciated fiscal policies of the region to effectively counter the economic crisis.

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Commerce & Industry and General Electric Company (GE) announced strategic partnership aimed at building sustainable economy through industrialization, research and education, and creating new jobs for **Saudi** nationals.

Also the governments of the **Sultanate of Oman** and the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** have signed a power *grid* agreement. The two sides have also signed technical agreements for the exchange of energy between the respective companies and authorities in both countries to benefit from the linkage project.

Meanwhile *wind and solar power* resources have been regarded as best possible means to cope with **Bahrain's** energy needs.

Kuwait's crude oil exports to *China* have jumped **26.4 %** in March from a



year earlier to 945,100 tons, equivalent to around 224, 000 barrels per day (bpd).

Social Front:

Kuwaiti women have called on the parliament and government to treat them equally in accordance with the country's constitution. Meanwhile a human rights campaigner in **Kuwait** has slammed the government's decision to rule out the introduction of a minimum wage for foreign workers.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Police in the **Azerbaijani** capital detained dozens of opposition activists on their way to a rally outside the mayor's office. Meanwhile **Kazakh** authorities refused to allow the *People's Power political bloc* to hold demonstrations on May 1.

The former chief of staff of **Kyrgyzstan's** presidential office has been arrested. Also **Kyrgyz** interim regime has announced that it would allow **Kyrgyz** first president Askar Akaev to return from Russia. Meanwhile **Kyrgyzstan's** interim government has introduced a draft constitution that would alter the country's political system by giving more power to parliament while reducing the president's authority.

Leaflets and compact discs have been circulated in southern **Kyrgyzstan** calling on citizens to create a "*South Kyrgyzstan Democratic Republic*" with ousted President *Bakiev* as its leader.

Geo-strategic Front:

Pakistan and **Azerbaijan** have discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the field of defense. Meanwhile growing **Azeri** ties with **China** also grabbed attention.

President of **Turkmenistan** has paid a visit to China. Also President of **Uzbekistan** held meetings with member of the **Chinese** State Council.

Last week dozens of **Kyrgyz** activists gathered in front of the **Kazakh** Embassy to demand an apology from **Kazakh** President Nursultan Nazarbaev for contemptuous comments he made about the uprising in **Kyrgyzstan**.

Tajik officials have asked Russia to detain and deport 41 people suspected of belonging to the banned *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU).

Economic Front:

The European Union has appreciated **Azerbaijan-Turkey** agreement on gas transportation. Meanwhile **Uzbek** and Chinese Ministries signed an economic cooperation protocol.

Social Front:

Some reports have indicated outbreak of *polio* in **Tajikistan**.

EAST ASIA

Political front:

Thai security forces and anti-government protesters clashed on 28 April in Bangkok leaving dozens of people injured.

A **Malaysian** opposition politician, who lost a recent by-election in the rural Hulu Selangor constituency, said that he would ask a court to nullify the result, claiming he was a victim of vote buying and other irregularities by the ruling party. Meanwhile the Barisan Nasional's (BN) recapture of a parliamentary seat in central Selangor stat gave the coalition a much-needed boost after losing seven out of nine previous by-elections since disastrous national polls in 2008.

The **Philippines'** largest Muslim rebel group has agreed to help avoid violence on a troubled southern island during voting in this month's national and local elections. **Philippine** presidential candidate Aquino has posted a double-digit lead over his nearest opponent in a recently published opinion





poll by Social Weather Stations, showing that support for the son of the country's late democracy icon, Corazon "Cory" Aquino, edged up 1 point to 38%.

The **Cambodian** government has told all foreign diplomatic envoys to avoid criticizing the country, insisting it is not a "banana republic".

Geo-strategic Front:

Indonesia has offered assistance to **Thailand** in order to bring back stability and order in the country. In this regard **Thai** foreign Minister held a

meeting with his **Indonesian** counterpart.

Economic Front:

Indonesian coal prices have increased following strong demand from *China* and *India*, while wet weather hindered supplies in Kalimantan, the country's coal producing region on *Borneo Island*. Meanwhile President *Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono* has pledged to make **Indonesia** the world's biggest user of clean, renewable geothermal energy, and urged private investors to back him.

Malaysia has declared *Chinese* economic growth to be a source of motivation for the nation and not a threat.

The **Thai** political crisis has adversely affected the country's economy.

Meanwhile the **Cambodian** PM has expressed optimism regarding the country's future economic growth.

According to a report in the *Voice of Vietnam* News, **Vietnam** has been ranked second among world coffee exporters.

Social Front:

A Census has been started in **Indonesia**.

Meanwhile the number of *malaria* cases recorded in **Cambodia** has increased significantly.



FERTILE CRESCENT

Political Front:

In **Egypt** one of the opposition leaders has out rightly denied any opposition within the *Muslim Brotherhood*. Meanwhile the **Egyptian** Parliament approved a law on combating human trafficking during its parliamentary session.

Former **Egyptian** President's son *Gamal Mubarak* has returned to politics, paying visits to villages and supervising preparations for Shura Council elections.

The **Iraqi** prime minister harshly criticized calls by his rival for international involvement in setting up a new government following the close-fought parliamentary elections, saying such a role would harm **Iraq's** efforts to become a self-reliant country. Nouri Al-Maliki also hinted at some sort of international plot to stage a coup through ballots — in the latest escalation of the war of words in **Iraq's** post-election impasse following the March 7 vote. The front-runner in **Iraq's** recent parliamentary elections has called for the formation of an impartial caretaker government to prevent the country from sliding into violence and counter efforts to change the vote results.

Thousands of protestors have gathered in **Beirut** to demand a separation of politics and religion in **Lebanon**. The demonstrators marched on parliament chanting "secularism" and waving placards calling for the recognition of civil marriage in the Mediterranean country. The idea of a secular political system has faced stiff opposition from ruling politicians.

Geo-strategic Front:

Egyptian President has assured **Lebanon** that **Israel** would not launch an attack against the later. Meanwhile *Israeli* officials also denied any chances of such an attack. **Israeli** Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* has expressed hope that the stalled peace process between *Israel* and *Palestine* would resume next week.

Representatives of the *Muslim Brotherhood* and the *Kifaya* (Enough) coalition, along with a number of independent politicians filed a report last week to state prosecutor demanding the immediate arrest of Netanyahu on his arrival in **Egypt** this week for talks with President Hosni Mubarak.

The overwhelming majority of *Nile Basin countries in east Africa*, including **Kenya**, have decided to sign a new treaty that governs the future usage of the Nile River, which the **Egyptian** government has rejected.

Meanwhile **Iraq's** foreign minister blamed the *US* and *Britain* for not taking an active role in resolving the war torn nation's bitter election dispute, while accusing Washington of being more concerned with sending home US soldiers.

Economic Front:

Iraq has completed 25% of the plan to develop its Nasiriyah oil field. Meanwhile **Iraq** has asked *Iran* to continue supplying it with electricity in the future.

Business representatives from the controversial *Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* held meeting with a handful of **Lebanese** businessmen in a bid to expand their business ties in the country.

Social Front:

Iraqi officials have recently disclosed that Hundreds of Sunni men disappeared for months into a secret Baghdad prison under the jurisdiction of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's military office, where many were routinely tortured until the country's Human Rights Ministry gained access to the facility. Human Rights Watch has called for a thorough investigation into the detention centre and has urged **Iraq** to prosecute those responsible for the abuse. Nouri al-Maliki, the **Iraqi** prime minister, has denied any connection with the facility, which housed mainly Sunni Arab prisoners from the volatile northern city of *Mosul*.

INDIA

Political Front:

Union Minister of State for External Affairs *Shashi Tharoor* has resigned amidst allegations of his involvement in the Kochi IPL cricket franchise bid.

Meanwhile BJP has strongly condemned UPA ruling regime for its inability to control prices on common goods. They even launched a cut motion to pressurize government but could not win support of parties like SP and RJD. Opposition parties have also criticized government for phone tapping deeming it to be against individuals' liberty.

The **Indian** Government has thus far failed to conduct census in areas under *Naxalites* control.

Geo-strategic Front:

Chinese Foreign Minister has assured that the dam being built by it on river Brahmaputra will have no impact on the downstream flow of the river into **India**.

A junior diplomat (Madhuri Gupta) in the **Indian High Commission** in *Islamabad, Pakistan* has been arrested by the special cell of the *Delhi* police on the charge of leaking sensitive national secrets to **Pakistani** intelligence agencies.

Meanwhile **India** and *Pakistan* have ended a diplomatic stalemate by resuming dialogue at the foreign-ministerial level.

Economic Front:

Many analysts claim that food inflation in **India** would soften on arrival of the Rabi crop harvest in markets by the middle of this month. Meanwhile the *IMF* has appreciated **India** for tightening of its monetary policy to deal with the problem of inflation. The leaders of *Brazil, Russia, India* and *China* have demanded a commitment to reform the *Breton Woods* financial institutions.

Social Front:

In **India** the *Shahi Imam* of the *Jama Masjid*, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, has sought an independent, high-level inquiry into bomb blasts of all kinds, fake encounters and confinement of *Muslim youth*, to nail the lie that Muslims are involved in acts of terrorism. He asserted that "99 % of Muslims arrested on accusations of terrorism are innocent."

The **Indian** Meteorological Department has issued its first-stage, long-range forecast for the Southwest Monsoon.



AFGHANISTAN

Political Front:

In **Afghanistan** some members of the lower house of parliament have accused the executive of refusing to respect the decisions made by the legislature. Meanwhile the powerful head of *Kandahar's* provincial council, *Ahmad Wali Karzai*, has denounced the UN for pulling its foreign staff out of the southern city.

A number of senators have demanded the trial of those involved in the *Russian-backed* military coup against former president *Sardar Muhammad Daud Khan* on April 27, 1978.

Last week the killing of three **Afghanis** led hundreds of protestors to block the highway in **Afghanistan** and to burn a NATO truck.

Meanwhile a *Pentagon* Report has claimed that the influence of *Taliban* has enhanced in **Afghanistan** while the support for *Hamid Karzai* has significantly decreased.

Geo-strategic Front:

Karzai paid a visit to **India** last week in order to explore ways to collaborate in countering terrorism. Meanwhile he held meeting with *Bhutanese* PM and discussed various areas of cooperation.

Economic Front:

A delay in the approval of **Afghanistan's** budget this year has left many ministries complaining that they have not been able to push forward with development projects.

Social Front:

Thirteen more **Afghan** schoolgirls have fallen ill in a case of suspected gas poisoning in *Kunduz* Province, raising the total number of such cases to 80 in the past week.

WHO suggests that about half a million of **Afghans**, with majority of them in southern areas, have no access to basic health services due to continued instability and conflicts.

Meanwhile **Afghanistan's** government has started introducing new rules to ban internet users from accessing sites promoting pornography, alcohol and gambling or other activities that conflict with the country's *Islamic* culture.

IRAN

Political Front:

The **Iranian** opposition groups have claimed that they would never exert effort to replace the Islamic system with any other.

Meanwhile **Iran** has refused to agree to exchange its low-level enriched uranium for nuclear fuel rods enriched abroad.

Geo-strategic Front:

The *Pentagon* last week released a 12-page report that identified an "increased presence" by **Iran's** elite military force in *Latin America*, particularly in *Venezuela*.

China has clearly denied supporting sanctions against **Iran**. Meanwhile ahead of **Iranian** President's

intended visit to address a *UN conference on nuclear non-proliferation* this week in *New York*, several U.S. Congressmen have demanded to deny his entry into the country. Following these demands the **Iranian** Foreign Minister reminded the US to fulfill obligations as per its role as a host of the UNO.

Economic Front:

Iran has exported over 18.5 billion dollars worth of industrial and mineral goods to different countries during the last Iranian year of 1388 (March 21, 2009-March 21, 2010).



Afghan guards of honor carry a portrait of **Afghanistan's** first president, **Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan**, during a ceremony to rebury him at the presidential palace in Kabul, **Afghanistan**



Kamal Kharrazi, foreign minister of **Iran**, at the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Conference, New York



Meanwhile **Iran** seems quite active in boosting economic ties with *Cuba, Belarus, Bosnia, Tehran, Ukraine, Japan, Iraq* and the *Republic of Guinea*.

Social Front:

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on the eve of Teachers Day in **Iran** (May 2) to commemorate the martyrdom of Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari, appreciated the personalities who have been quite active in the field of *divine philosophy*. §



Zone 2- Africa: Sub Saharan Africa

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield has informed **Liberian** legislators that setting a population threshold for legislative representation and constituency demarcation is a compelling and essential factor for the 2011 elections.

At the Summit Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the countries of Mano River Union comprising, **Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire** and Liberia, held in on 24 April 2010, Heads of states discussed the current prevailing and emerging challenges facing the sub-region. They also voiced their support and commitment to ensuring the conduct of free and fair presidential and legislative elections in **Guinea** and **Cote d'Ivoire**.

Last week *Charles Taylor*, ex **Liberian** leader refused to attend his trial in protest of security measures by *Dutch* security personnel responsible for taking him from his detention facility to the courtroom in The Hague.

Special Envoy of President Laurent Gbagbo of **Cote d'Ivoire**, Bahi Seri, has called for closer ties between his country and **Nigeria**. He also voiced the need to seek ways for both countries to partner in forging closer collaboration and cooperation among member states of the **ECOWAS**.

South Africa: **South Africa's** ANC youth leader Julius Malema, in trouble for singing banned apartheid-era songs, faced a disciplinary hearing last week. Malema has defied calls from **South African** President Jacob Zuma to cease making inflammatory comments and earned a rebuke last month for supporting **Zimbabwean** President Robert Mugabe and his controversial land reform policies, under which white-owned farms have been



Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, Chairperson of the *Unified Democratic Forces (UDF)* a coalition of **Rwandan** opposition parties

given to black **Zimbabweans**.

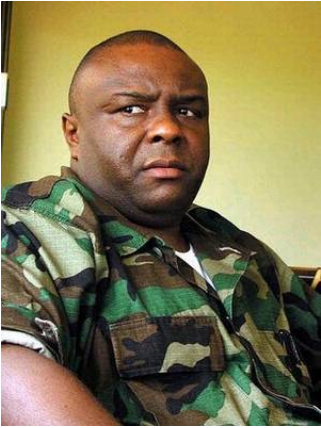
In **Madagascar** Interim leader Andry Rajoelina and his three predecessors failed to reach an agreement last week after three days of talks. The Political rivals have agreed to reconvene in two weeks to continue their talks aimed at creating a unity government.

In **Botswana**, Sydney Pilane, spokesman of the newly formed *Botswana Movement for Democracy* has said that the country's democracy is deteriorating and under serious threat after describing President Khama's rule as festooned with dictatorial tendencies.

Central Africa: According to reports an arrest warrant is soon to be issued for a former ex-FAR, Maj. in *Holland*, allegedly a key mastermind in the massacre of thousands during the 1994 **Rwandan** Genocide.

Meanwhile two suspects accused alongside Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza, for

planning activities aimed at causing state insecurity, Lt. Col Tharcisse Nditurende and Lt. Col Noel Habiyaambere, who were senior commanders of the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), have admitted



Former **Congolese** rebel leader
Jean-Pierre Bemba

having worked with Ingabire and Paul Rusesabagina to form rebel groups to launch offensives in **Rwanda**.

Lawyers for former **Congolese** rebel leader *Jean-Pierre Bemba* are challenging the case against him at the International Criminal Court. ICC prosecutors are charging *Bemba* with two counts of crimes against humanity and three counts of war crimes for leading troops into the **Central African Republic** to put down a coup attempt against then-president Ange-Felix Patasse.

Elections in the **Central African Republic** have been postponed for a second time, raising the likelihood that the president will remain in office past the end of his June mandate. Francois Bozize, President of CAR agreed to delay the May 16 vote after meeting with opposition leaders who say the **Central African Republic** must first update its voter lists and disarm rebel groups.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: In **Ghana** Malam Issah Hassan Tikumah, a former Social Studies lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria has alleged that he is being hounded by security men and some "reactionary forces" because of a book he wrote on the niqab (face veil worn by Muslim women).

In **Liberia** a stunning discovery of the HIPC audit on the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) has revealed that the dead are on payroll and earning salaries along with even those who were long dismissed or retired by the Ministry.

The head of UNESCO the *United Nations* agency tasked with upholding press freedom, last week called for a full investigation into the "tragic" death in jail of a newspaper editor in **Cameroon**. According to *Reporters Without Borders*, a non-governmental organization, detained for nearly two months, Ngota Ngota Germain, editor of the weekly *Cameroon Express*, suffered from asthma and high blood pressure.

South Africa: **Zimbabwean** journalists have accused a commission set up to drive media reforms of delaying the registration of new newspapers. However a cabinet minister said that the issue was being used for anti-government propaganda.

According to media reports the **Zimbabwe** high court has approved the sale of diamonds from a field plagued by human rights abuses, as Harare moves to defy the Kimberley Process. The sale of the *Marange* diamonds belonging to *British-owned African Consolidated Resources* was blocked last year by the international regulator after it found that **Zimbabwe** had failed to comply with human rights standards.



Harare initially stopped the sale pending authorization from local authorities and the *Kimberley Process* -- set up to prevent the sale of so-called **blood diamonds**, which are used to fund rebel movements. However last week the high court approved the sale of 129,000 carats of diamonds belonging to *African Consolidated Resources* (ACR).

Central Africa: At a five-day workshop on human rights that took place in the DRC capital city Kinshasa last week, hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC), Church leaders from the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC), **Burundi** and **Rwanda** have made a 'firm commitment' to *Promote Human Rights* in the region.



Tanzania has taken a bold decision to offer citizenship to 162,000 **Burundian** refugees who fled their country in 1972 and have since been living as refugees in the nation.

France has offered to help the **Congo Republic** feed more than 100,000 refugees who have been displaced by fighting in the western *Equateur* Province.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: According to recent reports **Cameroon** is to construct a Medical Emergency Centre with aid from Korea. Meanwhile The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the **Sierra Leonean** Government embarked last week on a new initiative to provide free health care for pregnant women, lactating mothers and

children under five across the West African nation. Donors and NGOs welcomed the **Sierra Leone** government's launch on 27 April of free health care for some 1.5 million women and children, but health experts say it is just one step in a long, complex process as critical gaps in the health system remain.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

West Africa: In **Ghana**, former Chief of Staff and Minister for Presidential Affairs, Mr. Kwadwo Okyere Mpiani, who was the Chairman of the National Planning Committee (NPC) of the Ghana@50 celebrations, along with some other officials may be prosecuted for causing financial loss to the state during the course of the celebrations.

The *Czech* Government has expressed its willingness to support **Ghana** to explore its oil and gas potentials while providing the needed expertise to increase **Ghana's** power generation capacity. According to the nation's vice president **Ghana** is on track to deliver oil from the Jubilee field from December this year, with initial output doubling to 250,000 barrels per day by 2013.

Meanwhile **Ghana** cedi depreciated last week to the major international trading currencies that pushed up the GCS-Cedi Index by 0.54 points to close the week.

The Government of the People's Republic of *China* has revealed that its investment in **Liberia** has reached a total of US\$9.9 billion dollars.

Ghana and **Cote d'Ivoire** held a two-day meeting last week on demarcation of the maritime border boundary between them to draw up a road map on the negotiating process.

South Africa: According to a government source **Angola** expects to receive its first credit rating in the coming days, paving the way for the African nation to issue up to \$4 billion in bonds to foreign investors.

Zimbabwe has signed a \$400 million agreement with *China's* Sinohydro to expand its Kariba hydro electricity plant at a time when rolling power cuts are threatening to dim the country's economic recovery prospects.

According to the **SA** Finance minister **South Africa's** government will amend the country's *Reserve Bank Act* to tighten rules on shareholding in the central bank and will undertake a wider review that may change it to public ownership.

South Africa's biggest union said last week that it had declared a wage dispute with the world's top diamond producer *De Beers*, and had asked an arbitration authority to mediate.



Central Africa: The *East African Community* (EAC) and the *European Union* has reached consensus on most of the contentious clauses rooted in the *Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)*, signaling a commitment between the two trading blocs to ink the deal by the end of the year.



The *African Development Bank's* (AfDB) shareholders have authorized the request to tripling its (Bank's) capital resources to nearly US\$100 billion to allow the bank to sustain a higher level of lending in response to overwhelming demand in all countries. The

decision was made in Washington last week during the meeting by the Committee of Governors that represents the Bank's shareholders. According to the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)* forecasts, output in **sub-Saharan Africa** in 2010 will expand by **4 %** in 2010 compared to **2 %** in 2009. §



Zone 3- Euro-America: *Transatlantic Community*

WESTERN EUROPE

Hundreds of thousands of people joined May Day rallies across Europe last week, many protesting against government austerity policies in the wake of the global financial crisis. In **Greece**, where the debt-stricken government has pledged budget cuts to secure a European Union and IMF rescue, protesters burned garbage cans and set a TV van on fire.

In **France**, an estimated 300,000 people took to the streets in various cities as part of the traditional May Day demonstrations held by trade unions amid President Nicolas Sarkozy's plans to reform the country's costly pension system, as well as general fears over job security due to the financial crisis.

In Sofia, **Bulgaria** more than 5,000 Bulgarians protested against high unemployment and what they called an inadequate response to the economic crisis of the center-right government.

A fierce global equities sell-off was sparked last week after ratings agency Standard & Poor's cut **Greek** debt to junk status, while a downgrade to **Portugal** also stoked concerns about a widening Euro zone crisis.

Shares of BP - a leading energy provider, continued falling last week as the company felt the impact of the massive oil spill from an exploratory well in the Gulf of *Mexico*.

Belgium's Premier Yves Leterme, whose government collapsed last week, has stepped aside, paving the way for Marianne Thyssen, 53, the first woman who could become **Belgium's** next prime minister. Early elections are likely in June. Until then Leterme's five-party alliance of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists from both sides of **Belgium's** linguistic divide stays on a caretaker role.

Meanwhile **Italian** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi insisted last week that his government would serve out the remaining three years of its term, despite mounting infighting and trouble within his coalition.

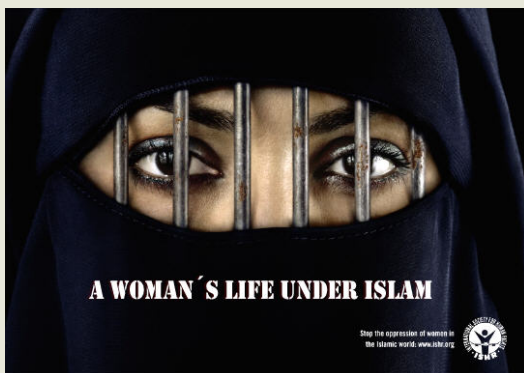
Belgium's lower house of parliament has banned burqa-type Islamic dress in public, but the measure faces a challenge in the Senate which will delay early enactment of the law. The law holds that no one can appear

in public "with the face fully or partly covered so as to render them no longer recognizable."

A study by the US-based watchdog Freedom House, released last week has revealed a decline in press freedom for the eighth year in a row.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Syrian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov announced last week that **Syria** will repay \$17m of its debt to **Bulgaria** within 30 days.



Last week **Croatia's** government approved amendments to the constitution and forwarded them to the parliament for passage. The amendments involve issues related to minorities, fighting crime and completing **Croatia's** EU accession negotiations.

Kosovo Border Police officially took over control of the country's border with **Albania** from KFOR last week (April 28th).

Meanwhile Prime Minister Hashim Thaci confirmed in a cabinet meeting last week that the Montenegrin community will be added to the list of minority communities in **Kosovo** and will be legally recognized and equal to other minorities there.

The United States and **Poland** plan to resume a strategic dialogue designed to address issues mutually shared by both countries, the nations' top diplomats announced last week.

The **Polish** opposition Law and Justice (PiS) has appointed Jaroslaw Kaczynskithe, twin brother of **Poland's** late president Lech Kaczynski, as the party's presidential candidate.

The **Czech Republic** is scheduled to hold a general election on *May 28-29* that looks likely to bring the centre-left Social Democrats to power after a four-year hiatus, handing them the task of slashing a crisis-inflated budget gap.

According to the **Czech Republic's** vice premier the government has approved an agreement with the *United States* on scientific cooperation in defense research.

Greenpeace denounced the **Czech** Environment Ministry's decision last week to accept a seriously flawed environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the expansion of the **Czech Republic's** largest coal-fired power plant as a shamefully manipulated political decision, which does not respect expert analysis.



The **Slovak** parliament last week buried a controversial *patriotism act*, which had sparked public outrage in **Slovakia** months before the June general election. Under the failed law, state-run schools would have been forced to play the national anthem before class each Monday and fit classrooms with an array of state symbols.

On the economic front data released by the **Slovak** Statistics Office shows that **Slovakia's** budget deficit swelled to **6.77 %** of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009.

Hungary's centre-right party Fidesz secured the unprecedented

two-thirds majority that it had hoped for on April 25, when it secured 263 of 386 seats in the country's next parliament with **98 %** of second round votes counted. The centre-right party won the elections by a landslide, which will enable it to pass deep state reforms. Meanwhile Gypsies in the nation fear that big gains made by an extreme-right party in national elections could further feed the climate of hatred that spawned an unprecedented string of serial killings of gypsies last year.

Iran will inaugurate copper wire factory in **Belarus** in the presence of *Iranian* Minister of Industries and Mines Ali-Akbar Mehrabian this week. *Iranian* private sector has invested eight million U.S. dollars on the project. Meanwhile the first tanker carrying **Belarus-bound Venezuelan** oil arrived at **Ukraine's** Odessa seaport last week.

Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko warned citizens last week to be on guard against **Kyrgyz-style** turmoil, suggesting that outside forces were bent on pushing him from power as a 2011 presidential election approaches. Meanwhile voters began going to the polls in communal elections in **Belarus** last week in the first voting under new election laws adopted under pressure from the *European Union*.

Members of the *National Congress of Armenians of Ukraine* and Analitika.at.ua information and analytical center called on the **Ukrainian** President and Supreme Rada last week to recognize the Armenian Genocide. **Ukrainian** public figures, politicians and representatives of national communities have put signatures to the statement.

Eggs were hurled during a rowdy **Ukrainian** parliamentary debate during the ratification of the controversial **Russian-Ukrainian** naval base deal that extends the lease by another 25 years. Meanwhile last week **Ukraine's** state prosecutor opened a criminal case relating to what it said was misuse by the government of Yulia Tymoshenko of about \$290 million cash received for selling carbon quotas.

Lithuanian Prime Minister *Andrius Kubilius* expressed concern last week over plans by *Russia* and **Belarus** to build nuclear power plants close to his country's borders, while insisting that **Lithuania's** own plans for a nuclear facility will go ahead. '

Lithuania's economy shrank in the first quarter, after growing for the last two quarters of 2009, but the fall on an annual basis was less than expected.



RUSSIA

Kyrgyzstan's provisional government revealed last week that Russian Special Forces had seized and extradited *Kyrgyzstan's* former interior minister, who had been convalescing in *Moscow* after being severely beaten during bloody antigovernment riots last month. The move further signals *Moscow's* support for the new *Kyrgyz* government.

NATO secretary general Anders Rasmussen has opined that bringing **Russia** into the plans will help to allay its concerns about the project and contribute to further arms control measures. Meanwhile according to *Russia's* envoy to NATO *Russia* will seek direct opportunities to sell weapons to NATO member states. In return, it is hoped, the Alliance might lift all barriers for free military trade between *Moscow* and NATO member states.

On the geo strategic front there seems to be some hope regarding *Poland* and **Russia** taking a step toward possible reconciliation, drawn together by the death of *Poland's* President Lech Kaczynski, who was killed last month in a plane crash in **Russia** along with 95 other high-level *Poles*. In this stead **Russia** has published documents related to the 1940 massacre of thousands of *Polish* officers in Katyń, in a gesture of solidarity with *Warsaw* after the recent tragic incident. Also a decision has been taken by *Moscow's* local government to remove posters of Stalin is a gesture heralding the recent thaw in **Russian-Polish** relations.

The 15th assembly of governors from **Russia** and *Japan* met in *Moscow* on May 3 to discuss developing relations at a regional level. Observers hope that such contacts may contribute to the development of political, cultural and economic ties, still marred by the territorial dispute over the *South Kuril Islands*.

On the economic front *Russia's* economy grew **0.6 %** in the first quarter this year, extending the recovery to three consecutive quarters. Meanwhile the administration of Prime Minister *Vladimir Putin* has been powerless to stem gains in the ruble, which has surged **15 %** against the dollar in the past 12 months, tracking a **75 %** rise in *Urals* crude in the same period.

Russian Prime Minister *Vladimir Putin's* spokesman, *Dmitry Peskov* has said that **Russia's** proposal to merge OAO *Gazprom* and *Ukraine's* national energy company NAK *Naftogaz* *Ukrainy* won't affect plans to build the *South Stream* gas pipeline to Europe, bypassing the neighboring country.

On the social front *Moscow* saw a traditional May Day gathering by the Communist Party, **Russia's** second biggest -- as well as a rare, officially-sanctioned opposition demonstration.

Russian women's gymnastics team has won gold in the team competition of the *European Gymnastics Championships* this year.

The bombing in the **Russian** North Caucasus republic of *Kabardino-Balkaria* on May Day has claimed one life while the number of injured has been reported at 30.

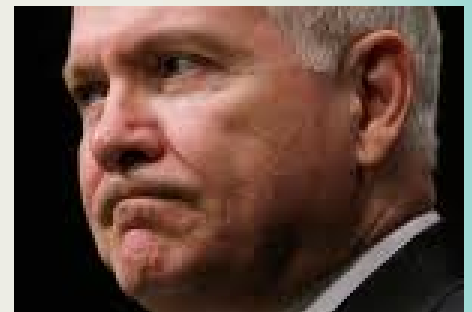
Russian President *Dmitry Medvedev* has signed a law ratifying an agreement that extends **Russia's** lease on naval bases in *Ukraine* for 25 years after the previous lease agreement's expiration date in 2017.

According to the *Russian Interior Ministry* a \$9 billion money-laundering operation partly run by several **Russian** bank employees has been broken up by police.

US/CANADA

US Defense Secretary *Robert M. Gates* has opened an inquiry into whether a top Defense Department official violated *Pentagon* rules by setting up a network of private contractors to gather intelligence in *Pakistan* and *Afghanistan*.

President *Barack Obama* said last week that there "may not be an



appetite" in Congress to deal with immigration immediately after going through a tough legislative year. Meanwhile Former Alaska GOP Gov. Sarah Palin has criticized Obama's reservations regarding a new Arizona immigration law perpetuating racial tensions.

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has said that any attempt by *Iranian* President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to undermine what the **U.S.** sees as the central purpose of next month's nuclear conference at the United Nations will meet with failure. Meanwhile the Obama administration has warned Iran and Syria that **America's** commitment to *Israel's* security is unshakable and that they should understand the consequences of threats to the Jewish state. In a speech, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that *Syrian* transfers of increasingly sophisticated weaponry including rockets to militants in southern *Lebanon* and *Gaza* could spark new conflict in the *Middle East*.

A recent Harris-Decima survey for the **Canadian** Press has put the Conservatives at **29 %** popular support -- down three points from earlier this month -- while the Liberals were at **27 %**, down two points. The New Democrats were up three points at **20%**.

Meanwhile the **Canadian** speaker of the House of Commons, charged with settling a power struggle between opposition legislators and the Conservative government, has given both sides two weeks to sort out their differences.

LATIN AMERICA

In a recent scandal a complaint has been made by ex **Argentinean** Ambassador to **Venezuela** Eduardo Sados, who stated that during his tenure as ambassador a number of Argentine businessmen told him that they were asked to pay bribes to do business with Caracas, under former President Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007).

A World Court's ruling on April 20 faulted **Uruguay** for failing to consult with **Argentina** before building a eucalyptus pulp mill with Finnish help, but rejected Buenos Aires' demand for relocating the plant

away from the river on the **Uruguay-Argentina** border. However, protesting pickets blockading a bridge that links the countries refused to accept a summary end to their cause and are carrying on with their protests.

Meanwhile Dozens of **Argentine** anarchists attacked *Greece's* embassy with sticks, Molotov cocktails and paint bombs to demand the freedom of an imprisoned activist. The anarchists were answering calls on the Internet for demonstrations against *Greek* embassies worldwide ahead of last week's appellate court hearing in the case of *Yiannis Dimitrakis*, an anarchist convicted of participating in a bank robbery in Athens.

Indigenous activists threatened a clash with **Brazil's** government last week as they dispatched boats carrying 150 men to occupy the planned site of a controversial hydro-electric dam in the Amazon, after environmentalists, indigenous groups and local

residents lost a protracted court battle to halt the bidding process for the giant Belo Monte dam, projected to be the world's third-largest. Meanwhile **Brazilian** President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has thrown his weight behind the controversial project deeming it a necessity for the nations Energy needs.

The **Brazilian** President Lula da Silva is scheduled to visit Iran this month (May 2010) during the course of which he hopes to encourage an agreement on the nuclear dispute between *Teheran* and the international community.

At the environmental front Environment ministers of the BASIC bloc -- **Brazil**, *South Africa*, *India* and *China* -- have voiced the need for a legally binding global agreement to limit climate change by 2011, noting that the world could not wait indefinitely for the *US* to finalize its legislation on the issue.

Meanwhile heads of state and government, of **Brazil** and 14 Caribbean countries signed the Brasilia Declaration last week at the end of the first *Brazil-CARICOM* Summit, expressing their mutual desire for further integration and cooperation.

Also **Venezuelan** President Hugo Chávez arrived in **Brazil** for a new quarterly meeting with his **Brazilian** counterpart Lula da Silva.

Last week, amid a growing sex abuse scandal the church in **Chile** formally apologized to abuse victims, saying nothing could justify it.

Visiting **Chilean** Foreign Minister in Japan has said that his quake-hit nation intends to make technological



exchange with *Japan* a high priority and establish an effective early quake warning system.

The *Canadian* government has warned its citizens against traveling to **Mexico**, especially to Ciudad Juarez where three people linked to the U.S. consulate were killed over the weekend. Meanwhile gunmen armed with high-caliber weapons ambushed the top security official in **Mexican** President *Felipe Calderon's* home state last week, wounding her and killing at least four other people.

According to the **Mexican** government, a strict new anti-immigration law enacted by the US state of Arizona is 'an obstacle to the solution of common problems' in North America. In reciprocation **Mexico's** Foreign Ministry issued a travel alert for Arizona after the law was signed, warning that its passage shows "an adverse political atmosphere for migrant communities and for all *Mexican* visitors."

Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe rejected last week the installation of a bust of Manuel Marulanda, the late founder of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of **Colombia** (FARC), in a **Venezuelan** border town and asked people "to defeat terrorists wherever they are."

Meanwhile **Venezuela's** Chavez dismissed a retired general's warnings about a growing **Cuban** presence in **Venezuela's** military, accusing the officer of helping opponents portray his government a pawn of Fidel Castro.

Venezuela's energy minister said last week that the government of plans to pay off a \$20 billion loan from *China* with daily shipments of 100,000 barrels of oil over a 10-year period. Also **Brazil's** Lula has commented that the upcoming purchase of oil from **Venezuela** will balance the trade between the two countries.

Meanwhile the interior minister has said that **Venezuelan** authorities raided eight drug laboratories near the **Colombian** border this past week,



seizing 4.5 tons of cocaine in one of the largest hauls in recent times.

President Chavez said last week that he wants to repair strained relations with **Colombia**, saying he hopes a breakthrough is possible regardless of which candidate wins the neighboring nation's presidential ballot next month. However in a contradictory statement he warned of worse ties, and even possible military hostilities, if *Bogota's* ex-defense chief *Juan Manuel Santos* wins the presidency. Meanwhile President Alvaro Uribe accused his **Venezuelan** counterpart, Hugo Chavez, of meddling in **Colombia's** presidential election campaign by trying to influence the outcome of the vote.

Minister of State for the Red Crescent Affairs Bashar al-Sha'ar conveyed a verbal message from President Bashar al-Assad last week for President Chavez seeking to enhance **Syrian-Venezuelan** relations in all fields.

Chavez last week termed the US report regarding *Iranian* Special Forces having an increasing presence in the country as "absolutely false". He warned that the USA could be looking for an excuse to attack **Venezuela**.

Russian Ambassador to **Venezuela** Vladimir Zaemsky has denied claims that both countries signed an agreement under which Caracas would purchase weapons from Moscow, as reported following Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's visit to **Venezuela**.

Chavez threatened to nationalize gold mining concessions, adding them to the oil, utility and metal assets he's taken control of in the country. The president said on state television last week that the government may end the grants because of "capitalist mafias" comprising national and multinational companies that destroy the environment and exploit workers.

Meanwhile *Chavez*, who already writes a weekly newspaper column, created a radio program and speaks for as many as seven hours every Sunday, has now added a Twitter Inc. account to his media arsenal. *Chavez*, who has been in power since 1998, said last week that he did not know when he would hand power, adding that no successor was in sight for now.

AUSTRALASIA

Last week **Australia** shelved plans for a carbon trading scheme to cut greenhouse gas emissions until at least 2013, blaming the slow pace of global action and an obstructive opposition for the delay. §

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