



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*.

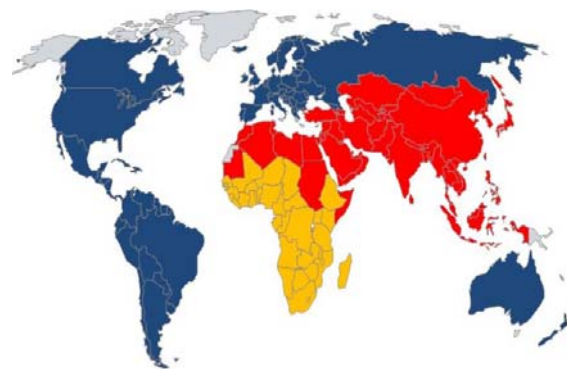
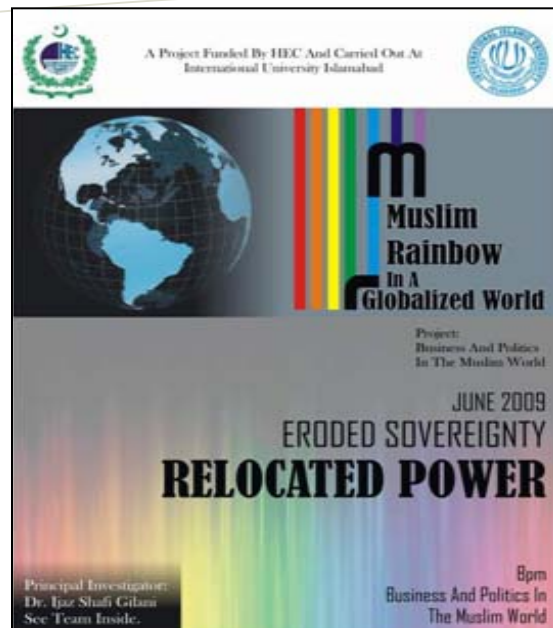
- ◆ We will make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Facebook will provide clicks to deeper levels of information; for comprehension (Maps and Data) as well as for elaboration



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's report consists of **22** surveys. **1** of these is a multi-country survey while the rest are national surveys. **13** polling organizations have been represented.

Gallopedia Highlights Week # 119

Dated May 09-15, 2010

ASIA zone- 2 national polls:

West Asia: Turkey

North East Asia: Japan, Taiwan

AFRICA zone- 1 National Poll & 1 Multi-Country Polls:

West Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Niger

East Africa: Kenya

Central Africa: Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Cameroon, DRC, Chad, Burundi

Southern Africa: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia

EURO-AMERICAS zone-18 national polls:

East Europe- Ukraine, Russia

West Europe- France,

North America- U.S.A, Canada

Latin America- Brazil, Peru

Australasia: Australia



COMMENTARY- **Constitutional Reforms and the Future of Turkey-** **'The Most Democratic Muslim State'**

Turkey is among the most prosperous and democratic Muslim countries. However it also has a long history of military involvement in politics as well as restricting political activity by way of banning political parties in the name of preserving the secular traditions of the Turkish Republic established by Kemal Attaturk. Given this dichotomous history the current constitutional reform package has initiated a hot debate in all the political circles in the country. Some critics are of the view that it will result in the banning of the ruling AKP leading to early parliamentary elections. Given such a scenario how would **Turkey's** bid for the EU fair? Or conversely are such aspirations a credible deter for any drastic steps in the national arena?

Since **AKP** came to power in **2003** there have been several occasions when it came into conflict with the constitutional courts and the military. Despite holding a majority in parliament, several of the initiatives of **AKP** have been stopped by the judiciary. In 2008, the constitutional court annulled a bill aimed at ending the ban on Islamic headscarves at universities. This year, the **AKP** was irked by the decision of the HSYK, a panel of the judiciary known for its anti-government stance, to fire a prosecutor who was investigating an alleged coup attempt against the government. Now the AKP says the *constitutional court* and **Turkey's** Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (**HSYK**) need to be reformed. Critics say the government wants to control the judiciary. In the same stead it is feared that if such an amendment is passed the secular nature of the **Turkish** republic will cease to exist.

The proposed reforms will make some **30 amendments** to **1982** constitution. These deal with the appointment of judges, banning of political parties, and trying the military leaders in civilian courts along with several other changes suggested in the package. Primarily the package directly hurts the interest of the constitutional courts and military leaders.

European Union, U.S, and legal scholars have welcomed the reforms. The **Turkish** public too seems to support the reforms package. The polls indicate that in the case of a referendum, half of the **Turks** will vote in favor of the reforms.¹ Meanwhile the opposition parties and circles of constitutional courts seem to oppose the package staunchly. *Tayyib Eurdogan*, still widely deemed as the most trustworthy politician¹ in the country, vows that his party '*will either write history or become history*'.

Amid this situation, is it likely that the constitutional courts will follow through on dismantling the AKP's efforts once again as they did in case of efforts to lift the *hijab* ban from universities? Will **AKP** also become history as was the case with *Rifah* and other political parties? *Or conversely would the AKP's stance drastically harm the nation's secular setup?* §

SUMMARY OF POLLS

Zone 1- ASIA

CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA

Politics » Elections/Referendum

Turks Would Vote to Have a New Constitution

Half of adults in [Turkey](#) are ready to endorse constitutional reform, according to a poll by [MetroPOLL Strategic and Social Research Center](#). **50.6 %** of respondents would back the changes in a referendum.

May 12, 2010

Politics » Approval Ratings

Baykal garners increased trust as a 'victim,' poll shows

A recent survey in [Turkey](#) has revealed that newly resigned Republican People's Party (*CHP*) leader Deniz Baykal's public image has improved compared to past months despite being at the center of a sex tape scandal, a finding that suggests that Baykal has been successful in portraying himself as a victim in the eyes of the public. Nevertheless Erdogan is still the most trustworthy politician for [Turks](#). [Ankara-based MetroPOLL Strategic and Social Research Center](#)

May 11, 2010



Zone 2- SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA SOUTHERN AFRICA

Politics » Approval Ratings

South Africans Split on Zuma's Performance

Public support for Jacob Zuma has dropped this year in [South Africa](#), according to a poll by [TNS Research Surveys](#). **43 %** of respondents approve of their president's performance, down 15 points since November.

May 12, 2010

Zone 3- EURO-AMERICAS

EAST EUROPE

Politics » Political Perceptions

Ukrainians Have Patience with New Government

More than a third of people in [Ukraine](#) believe their new national administration needs time to deal with the country's problems, according to a poll by [Research & Branding Group](#). **37.8 %** of respondents think it will take more than two years to improve the current situation.

May 10, 2010

Politics » Approval Ratings

President, PM Still Very Popular in Russia

Many [Russian](#) adults are content with their prime minister, according to a poll by the [Yury Levada Analytical Center](#). **78 %** of respondents approve of Vladimir Putin's performance.

May 09, 2010

WEST EUROPE

Politics » Approval Ratings

Sarkozy Gains Three Points in France

Public support for Nicolas Sarkozy improved slightly in [France](#), according to a poll by [CSA](#) published in *Le Parisien*. **37 %** of respondents have confidence in their president to face the country's problems, up three points since April.

May 13, 2010

NORTH AMERICA



Politics » Approval Ratings

Obama Approval Continues to Show Party, Age, Race Gaps

US President Barack Obama's approval ratings remain polarized by political party and race, and continue to show a significant gap between younger and older Americans. **Gallup USA**

May 11, 2010

Society » Communication/Media

Americans Reject Censorship in South Park

Many adults in the **United States** believe the animated sitcom South Park should be allowed to feature any images they want, according to a poll by **Angus Reid Public Opinion**. **51 %** of respondents agree with this view, while **28 %** believe South Park should not feature any images that may offend specific religions.

May 15, 2010

Society » Immigration

Americans Value Both Aspects of Immigration Reform

As President Obama and Congress consider whether and how to go forward with comprehensive immigration reform in an election year, a new **USA Today/Gallup poll** finds **Americans** placing about equal importance on the two sides of the immigration-policy coin; controlling the further inflow and dealing with the already present illegal immigrants.

May 4, 2010

Society » Immigration

Public Supports Arizona Immigration Law

The **US** public broadly supports a new Arizona law aimed at dealing with illegal immigration and the law's provisions giving police increased powers to stop and detain people who are suspected of being in the country illegally. **Pew Research Center**

May 12, 2010

Society » Environment

Oil Spill Seen As Ecological Disaster

A majority of **Americans** see the massive oil leak in the *Gulf of Mexico* as a major environmental disaster, but nearly as many voice optimism that efforts to control the spill will succeed. **Pew Research Center**

May 11, 2010

Society » Health Issues

The New Normal on Abortion: Americans More "Pro-Life"

The conservative shift in Americans' views on abortion that Gallup first recorded a year ago has carried over into 2010. Slightly more **Americans** call themselves "pro-life" than "pro-choice," **47% vs. 45%**, according to a May 3-6 **Gallup poll**. This is nearly identical to the **47% to 46%** division found last July following a more strongly pro-life advantage of **51% to 42%** last May.

May 14, 2010

Economy » Economic Perceptions

"Jobs" Drops to No. 2 on Americans' List of Top Problems

After two months as the clear No. 1 perceived problem facing the country, US unemployment/jobs dipped to No. 2 in May, while "the economy" in general moved back into the top position. At the same time, **Americans** grew more likely to name immigration (including illegal immigration) as the nation's most important problem, moving that issue into fifth place. **Gallup USA**

May 12, 2010

Economy » Economic Perceptions

Economic Confidence Remains at High for the Year

Despite the financial crisis in *Greece* and the *European Union*, extreme stock market volatility, and the surging price of gold, **Americans'** economic confidence remains at its best level of the year in early May. **Gallup's Economic Confidence Index** is at **-22** for the week ending May 9 -- matching its April level and representing an improvement of **8 %** points compared with March.



May 13, 2010

Economy » Economic Perceptions

U.S. Wellbeing Ties Highest Level Recorded

Americans' wellbeing score climbed to **67.0** in April, the highest level so far in 2010 and tying the all-time high scores found in August 2009 and February 2008 for this measure initiated in January 2008. The April **Well-Being Index score** is an improvement from the **65.8** in April 2009 and the **66.7** in April 2008.

May 13, 2010



Politics » Political Institutions

Congress Holds Healthcare Bump, Save for Independents

In the **US** Democrats continue to rate Congress more favorably than before it passed healthcare reform, but independents' ratings have retreated to their pre-healthcare low of **13%**. Democrats and Republicans are relatively steady compared with last month, at **38%** and **10%**, respectively. **Gallup USA**

May 14, 2010

Security/IR » Terrorism

55% Not Very Concerned About Being Terror Victim

A majority of likely **US** voters say they are not very concerned or not at all concerned that they or a family member could be the victim of a terrorist attack. **The Zogby Interactive poll** also found **50%** would support increasing federal homeland security funding to New York City, even if that meant their community might see a decrease in such spending.

May 13, 2010

Security/IR » Terrorism

Almost Half of Canadians OK Khadr's Gitmo Trial

More people in **Canada** believe Omar Khadr should face trial by military commission in Guantanamo Bay, according to a poll by **Angus Reid Public Opinion**. **46 %** of respondents agree with this course of action, up six points since February.

May 14, 2010

LATIN AMERICA

Politics » Approval Ratings

Serra Leads Rouseff, Run-Off Imminent in Brazil

Jose Serra of the **Brazilian** Party of Social Democracy (PSDB) is ahead in the South American country's presidential race, according to a poll by **Ibope**. **36 %** of respondents would vote for Serra in this year's election.

May 11, 2010

Politics » Approval Ratings

President García Keeps Low Numbers in Peru

Less than a third of **Peruvians** are satisfied with the way their president is doing his job, according to a poll by **CPI**. **27.3 %** of respondents approve of Alan García's performance as president.

May 14, 2010

AUSTRALASIA

Politics » Approval Ratings

Australian Coalition Pushes Labor to Second Place

Australia's governing party is now trailing its conservative opponents, according to a poll by **Newspoll** published in *The Australian*. **43 %** of respondents would vote for the opposition Coalition of Liberals and National, up three points since mid-April.

May 15, 2010

MULTI-COUNTRY SURVEY

Society » Economic Perceptions

Few in Sub-Saharan Africa Have Money in a Bank

Gallup surveys in **18 sub-Saharan African** countries show few residents put money in the bank: **19%** overall say they have personal bank accounts. **South Africans (49%)** are the most likely to say they have a bank account, while **1%** of respondents in **Niger** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** say the same.

May 11, 2010 §

Zone 1- **Asia: Summary**

Asia, Middle East & North Africa

GCC

Geo-strategic Front:

Top leaders of member states of the **Gulf Cooperation Council** started their *12th consultative summit meeting* in **Saudi Arabia** last week. Main areas of focus remained *Palestinian-Israeli peace talks*, *Iraqi elections* and *Iran's nuclear issue* apart from general political, economic and security issues being faced by the member states. All the while **Saudi** Foreign Minister reiterated the Arab stand regarding guaranteeing the rights of all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. **Kuwait** took a similar stand while also asking Israel to open its nuclear facilities to IAEA.

Economic Front:

Bahrain has advocated the peaceful use of nuclear energy to serve economic development. Growing **Chinese** economic ties with the Arab world also seem to be important. Meanwhile amendments to the *US-Bahrain* FTA have been approved by the Shura Council.

Social Front:

Qatar-based Islamic scholar Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi has urged those European countries which are considering outlawing the full veil (niqab) to review their plans, saying that such a move might prompt some Muslims to campaign for imposing a "modest dress code" on foreigners living in Muslim countries.

Floods in **Jeddah** have caused severe damage to lives and properties of residents. Meanwhile the media has declared corruption to be the main cause of poor infra-structure being badly affected by floods.

An annual Reports released by **UAE's** National Committee to combat Human Trafficking has clearly evinced remarkable performance of the state in controlling such activity.

FERTILE CRESCENT

Political Front:

Egyptian Parliament has approved a two-year extension of an amended emergency law despite vociferous objections from opposition and independent MPs.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the **IAEA** has issued a public call for political change in **Egypt** ahead of presidential elections planned for next year. He has also denied emergency law that bans gatherings critical of the government of *Hosni Mubarak*. Meanwhile Human Rights activists and opposition parties mainly Muslim Brotherhood have also condemned government's implementation of the emergency law.

Following the March elections in **Iraq** a functional government is yet to be established. Existing uncertainty has led *jihadi* groups to fuel their activities. Meanwhile an effort on the part of Shia parties to form government risks the fear of marginalization of the *Sunni* minority. Meanwhile the recount of votes in *Baghdad* hasn't brought any remarkable change in over all election results.

In the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary election in **Lebanon** reportedly an estimated \$35 million was spent on election-related activities by different political parties. Meanwhile a further \$32 million was spent on political advertising and media in the period from August 2008 and July 2009.

Geo-strategic Front:

Four African countries i.e. *Rwanda*, *Ethiopia*, *Uganda* and *Tanzania* have signed a new treaty on the equitable sharing of the Nile waters despite strong opposition from **Egypt** and *Sudan* who have the lion's share of the river's water.

Meanwhile **Israelis** and **Palestinians** have finally started indirect talks regarding the *Middle East Peace Process*.

Economic Front:

The **UN FAO** seems optimistic about wheat production in **Iraq** this year mainly because of suitable weather conditions.



Consultative summit to bolster progress in **GCC** countries
May 11, 2010



Social Issues:

Egypt's National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority has announced to block Skype's voice over Internet protocol, via mobile phones. Cairo said Skype was violating **Egyptian** law by providing international calling outside the "approved gateways."

Meanwhile active participation of **Lebanese** women in local elections clearly indicates progress in the country.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

The top military commander in the breakaway **Azerbaijani** region of **Nagorno-Karabakh** has dismissed **Azerbaijan's** continuing threats to take back the disputed region by force.

Kazakh lower and upper houses of Parliament have approved constitutional amendments, one after the other, granting President **Nursultan Nazarbaev** the status of "leader of the nation". Opposition however has strongly condemned this major amendment.

Supporters of **Kyrgyzstan's** interim government have clashed with supporters of ousted President **Bakiev** in the south of the country, where **Bakiev** loyalists have already occupied several regional government buildings. Meanwhile large numbers of protestors have launched demonstrations in the capital city and have demanded trial of the ousted President. Under enormous pressure, interim government has requested **Latvian** government to detain the son of their ousted President **Bakiev**. Meanwhile a difference of opinion has

emerged among the members of ruling regime over the issue of constitutional changes.

The **Tajik** President has reinstated the State Committee on Religious Affairs to oversee the country's religious organizations.

The **Turkmen** parliament has approved a new edition of the country's Criminal Code that reduces the maximum sentence for the most serious crimes.

Uzbek President **Islam Karimov** has signed a decree to abolish private notary offices in order to avoid criminal situations.

Geo-strategic Front:

The **Kyrgyz-Kazakh** border remains closed despite an agreement between the two countries' leaders to reopen it.

The US has demanded greater transparency in the supply of aviation fuel to a key U.S. air base in **Kyrgyzstan**.

Meanwhile **Iran** has offered to play the role of a mediator between **Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan**.

Turkmenistan has expressed keenness to enhance ties with **CIS** countries.

Economic Front:

Azerbaijan, **Georgia** and **Romania** have signed a Protocol on the Export of Liquefied natural gas to Europe.

Kazakhstan has invited **India** to join its industrial program. Russian companies also seem keen to start energy projects in the **Kazakh** oil and gas sectors. Meanwhile **China** has lifted a ban on grain exports from the country.

Tajikistan and **Pakistan** have discussed ways to expand their bilateral economic and trade ties.

Social Front:

Floods in South eastern part of **Azerbaijan** have compelled a large number of people to leave their homes.

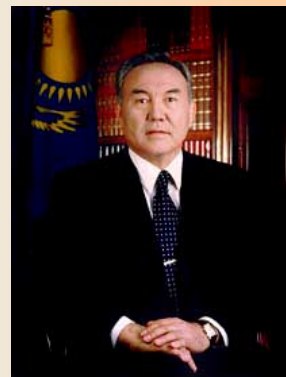
Meanwhile floods in **Tajikistan** have reportedly caused deaths of more than 20 people. The President has expressed serious concerns regarding coping with the issue effectively.

In a separate development the **Tajik** government has suspended a ban on advertisement of mobile phones.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front:

The **BNP** led regime has been declared as the main reason behind *emergency rule* that was imposed in **Bangladesh** in





January 2007, by ruling regime.

Meanwhile in **Nepal**, Maoists have resumed their hard-line approach over the issue of integration of *Maoist* cadres into the Royal Army. They carried out a six days strike to mount pressure on the government. The Business communities have also called for an end to the ongoing dispute. Amidst such pressure it seems unlikely that the government would succeed in promulgating the new constitution by **May 28**. Meanwhile the EU has asked **Nepalese** PM to quit his seat in order to restore stability.

Geo-strategic Front:

Saudi Arabian Airlines suspended all its flights from the Kingdom to **Bangladesh** last week following a strike by air fuel station workers in **Bangladesh**.

Meanwhile **Bangladesh** and *South Korea* held a summit on **May 18** to discuss bilateral economic cooperation.

The Foreign Minister of **Maldives** discussed bilateral ties as well as regional issues with the **Pakistani** government during his visit to the nation last week.

The **Maldivian** Minister of Home Affairs has promised to allow *International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)* officials to enter the island state without a visa.

India and **Nepal** have signed two MoUs that aim to enhance economic ties between the two countries.

Sri Lankan President has urged the international community to be aware of the threats being faced by the nation at the hands of remnants of the subdued *Tamil tigers*.

Economic Front:

The *Asian Development Bank (ADB)* has devised a costly lending program for **Bangladesh** this year as it has increased its hard-term loans up from the softer ones in the revised aid scheme.

Economic growth in **Bhutan** slowed sharply last year to **6%** as tourist numbers fell. Meanwhile according to the *World Bank's* report **Sri Lanka's** economy expanded by **3.3%** in the second half of **2009**, the fastest rate recorded since **2002** showing stability despite a weak global economy.

Social Front:

According to reports **Bangladesh** has announced to send its first all-female contingent of police officers on a United Nations peacekeeping mission, to help with reconstruction in quake-devastated *Haiti*.

Nepal is suffering from food shortage of **316,465 metric tones**, affecting over **1.6** million people this year.

INDIA

Political Front:

BJP national president *Nitin Gadkari* has strongly criticized the Congress-led UPA government for being soft on terrorists and their sympathizers because of vote bank politics. He blamed UPA for price rise and increasing *Naxal* insurgency in the country. He also condemned *Samajwadi* party for betraying opposition parties during cut-motions in the parliament.

Recently made remarks by the **Indian** Environment Minister urging the need to lift restrictions over Chinese investments, have brought huge criticism against him mainly by opposition parties and to certain extent by Congress as well.

The Election Commission of India (EC) has announced the poll schedule for the biennial election to 11 Rajya Sabha seats from *Uttar Pradesh* as eleven members of the Rajya Sabha from the state will retire on July 4.

Meanwhile 7 police jawans have been added to the list of deceased this week at the hand of the *Maoists*.

Geo-strategic Front:

During a recently held meeting in *Tehran*, **Indian** Deputy NSA has asked Iran to extend cooperation in order to bring stability in *Afghanistan*. They however remained quiet about security-related issues.

Meanwhile The US administration has named **India's** oil and gas flagship ONGC and **Indian** Oil Corp (IOC) among the 41 firms worldwide having energy ties with *Iran*, an act for which it may impose sanctions on them.

Indian government has extended the ban on **LTTE** by another two years following intelligence reports that remnants of the *Sri Lankan* Tamil terror outfit were trying to re-group in *Tamil Nadu*.

Economic Front:

Last week the *Bombay Stock Exchange* benchmark *Sensex* registered its biggest single day gain of **561** points in ten months after EU and IMF agreed on a 1 trillion dollar emergency fund for the Union to help contain the region's credit crisis.

Social Front:

Strong criticism by media and civil society against *Darul Uloom Deoband's* statement that women should not work with men; led Darul Uloom to withdraw from its stance.

Meanwhile a faction of the *Gujjars* has warned to launch a fresh agitation against the **1%** additional quota offered to the community by the government, saying it was not ready to settle for anything less than the **5%** separate reservation.

Meanwhile an increase in the number of cases of honor killings has been observed in **Indian Punjab**.

EAST ASIA

Political Front:

A group of militants has been arrested by the **Indonesian** police during raids.

Meanwhile in **Malaysia** the campaign for bi-elections of mainly urban and ethnic *Chinese parliament seat of Sibu* has led to a historic win where **Malaysia's** opposition snatched the parliamentary seat in a ruling coalition stronghold.

Besides that *Anwar Ibrahim's* ongoing trial has increased tension between ruling regime and opposition party.

The **Thai** Prime Minister has put forward a plan to end the rallies that have crippled Bangkok but it remained in limbo as talks dragged on over the details, including a proposed early election in mid-November.

Opposition Parties have agreed to accept government's plan but warned to continue their sit-in protest as until the government allows their satellite television to go back on the air and until key government leaders face charges related to bloody April 10 clashes in which 25 people were killed and more than 800 others wounded.

Finally elections have been held in **Philippines**. More than **85,000** candidates have contested elections for **17,000** seats. Meanwhile President-apparent *Benigno Aquino III* refused to take an oath of office before the *new chief justice*, alleging impropriety in the appointment by the outgoing president in the ending days of her term.



Geo-strategic Front:

The **Cambodian** government has recently signed a treaty with *China* to enhance cooperation. Meanwhile *Southeast Asian* leaders have raised concerns about regional stability in the wake of **Thailand's** political crisis.

Economic Front:

Indonesia's economic growth has accelerated in the first quarter to its fastest pace since the third quarter of 2008. In the 2010 budget, government of **Indonesia** has allocated Rp. **9 billion** for modernization of old textile and leather machineries in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The **Indo-Indonesian** trade has expanded by over **20%** in the first two months of 2010. **Sino-Thai** links too have further enhanced. Economists hope to witness economic growth in the post election scenario. Meanwhile **Vietnam** has announced to invest around US\$8.6 billion in island infrastructure to boost national defense and economic development on its remote ocean outposts.

Social Front:

In recently held elections in **Philippines** nine people were killed. Despite such election violence it should be noted that poverty and disease have decreased significantly in the country, but people are still at risk from crime, road accidents, food safety, pollution, human trafficking, drugs, domestic and sexual violence, the destruction of natural resources, and political disorder.

AFGHANISTAN

Political Front:

The *United Nations* has agreed to provide \$149 million to **Afghanistan's** election commission for the upcoming parliamentary polls. Meanwhile the *Southern Province* of **Afghanistan** remained the hub of violence as **3 NATO** soldiers, **1** former police chief and his **2** body guards along with **20 Taliban** fighters were killed. In the *Western Province* too **5** pro-government militiamen were killed by the *Taliban*. In eastern province the US has killed **15** Afghan civilians.

Geo-strategic Front:

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai has asked foreign troops to pay more attention to securing civilian lives in the fight against insurgents. Karzai and *US* Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have vowed to put aside their differences and work together to build a stable and prosperous **Afghanistan**.

Meanwhile *Estonia* has announced to keep its troops in **Afghanistan** as long as their presence is required.

Social Front:

More than **2 dozen** people were killed in *Northern Afghanistan* because of heavy floods.

Meanwhile the Counter-Narcotics Ministry has lashed out at the *Kandahar* governor for not cooperating in efforts at eradicating opium poppies from the troubled southern province.

CHINA

Political Front:

Chinese Mainland has once again urged *Taiwan* to give up its pro-independence stance.

Meanwhile **China** has also started putting efforts to reforms in its judicial system. Also the **Chinese** Vice President has asked Communist Party officials to eradicate political jargons from their speeches.

Geo-strategic Front:

Chinese President paid a visit to *Russia* last week at the occasion of their Celebration Day in the memory of their victory against *Germany*. Both States discussed areas of bilateral cooperation. **Chinese** growing ties with *Sweden, Denmark Cambodia* and *Namibia* also remained significant.

China has urged the international community to enhance cooperation to deal with the global financial crisis in an *effective* manner. Meanwhile **China** has also expressed its intention to maintain peace and stability at the *Indo-Sino* border. Improvement in **Chinese** ties with *Japan* as well as *South Korea* has also been observed.

China has rejected U.S. President Barrack Obama's recent accusation that the country's press was not free. At the same time the *US* has expressed its desire to work with **China** in order to expand global economy.

China has welcomed the start of indirect talks between *Israel* and *Palestine*. The **Chinese** government has also congratulated *Philippines* over smooth conduct of their general elections.

This week **Chinese** close cooperation with the *Arab* world and African countries also grabbed attention.

Economic Front:

Chinese government has been putting efforts to improve environment for foreign direct investments. **China** has asked developed nations to assist the developing world in its green economy endeavor by technology transfer, financial assistance and market liberalization.

China's fiscal revenue in April rose **34.4%** year on year to **792.6 billion Yuan** (**116.03 billion U.S. dollars**), boosted by rising tax revenues and domestic prices. Meanwhile **China's** government has opened a new range of government-run industries to



the private sector, either through investment in existing companies or establishment of new firms.

China has made an Exhibition Centre to increased imports of *African* commodities.

President of the *Asian Development Bank* has said that exchange rate of *Yuan* is **China's** internal affair.

China has asked banks to freeze more money from lending through a higher reserve requirement. However despite droughts, agricultural price increases and other unfavorable factors, **China's** agricultural exports have seen a **20 %** growth in the first quarter of 2010.

Social Front:

The **Chinese** government has set up environmental protection agencies to build capacity with the confidence to balance economic growth and protection of environment.



According to reports the world's most populous nations, **China** and *India*, have improved the lives of more slum dwellers than any other country. Meanwhile **China** is engaged in efforts to stop floods.

Internet services have been resumed in North-West **China's** Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region after **10** months, originally stalled after a riot in Urumqi on **July 5** last year. §

Zone 2- **Africa:** *Sub Saharan Africa*

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa The **Nigerian** Executive Council of the Federation (EXCOF) held a special valedictory session in honor of its late Chairman, President **Umaru Musa Yar'Adua** who passed away this month on the 6th of May 2010. Following the demise of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was sworn in as the nation's 14th head of state.

Soldiers and policemen in Katsina, Nigeria averted protests as former President Olusegun Obasanjo visited the city to condole the family of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The visit to the bereaved family had been shrouded in secrecy following security reports that Yar'Adua's supporters, who were angry with Obasanjo over his recent outburst on the health of Yar'Adua, were planning to hold a demonstration against the visiting former president.

In **Gambia** a major shakeup occurred at the National Intelligence Agency in Banjul, as there was a massive transfer of Intel officers at the agency's main headquarters that came into effect in April. The NIA directorate said the move was aimed at strengthening the work of the Agency, as well as its smooth running.

A high powered delegation consisting **Senegalese** and **Gambian** officials last week had a meeting in The **Gambian** village of Tranquil in the Western region of The **Gambia**, seeking to chart a way forward to find a lasting solution to the looming border impasse between the two countries.

South Africa: Madagascar's President, Andry Rajoelina, surprised many by announcing on state television that he will not participate in the upcoming presidential elections he has scheduled for **26 November** this year, in a bid to end the political crisis on the Indian Ocean island.

Last week The National Democratic Institute, a pro-democracy group, gave one of its highest honors, the NDI's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award, to **Zimbabwean** Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. The award recognizes individuals and groups who have demonstrated a commitment to democracy and human rights.

Comoros' highest court has annulled a law which extended the mandate of the islands' leader after weeks of heightened political tensions on the coup-prone archipelago. The Constitutional Court said President *Mohamed Abdallah Sambi's* term in office would end later this month, and not November 2011, and recommended an interim period to agree on when the next ballot should be held.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: a Forum of NGOs and the **47th Ordinary Session of African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights** (ACHPR) was organized by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) and ACHPR in collaboration with United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR). The **three-day** meeting in the **Gambian** capital, Banjul, reviewed the situation of human rights violations in the continent.



13th President of
Nigeria Umaru
Musa Yar'Adua

16th Aug 1951- 5th
May 2010

The lingering crisis that engulfed the American giant, Pfizer Pharmaceutical company, over the 1996 Trovan clinical test in Kano, **Nigeria** has taken a dangerous dimension as all the 192 victims of the test withdrew their quest for the payment of compensation through the fund technical hospital board voicing issues of mistrust and asked the trust fund to return all their documents and other valuable items in their custody in seven days' time.

Following criticism leveled against **Gambia's** worsening human rights record by delegates attending the African Commission's *47th Ordinary Session* in Banjul. Justice Minister Edward Gomez rejected the notion while accusing media of destroying **Gambia's** image.

South Africa: *Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert*, one of **South Africa's** most prominent white opponents of apartheid who initiated talks between Afrikaner businessmen and the then-banned ANC in 1987, died last week.



Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert

In **Malawi**, NGOs and the government are working together to end forced marriages and other traditional practices that violate the rights of girls. The effort follows reports that more and more girls are being forced into marriage with older men.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

South Africa: With one month to go before the kick-off of the football (soccer) World Cup in **South Africa**, organizers say they are pleased with the preparations.

South Africa has achieved near universal access to health services for pregnant women and their children, but maternal and infant mortality rates have continued to rise making the chances of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on maternal and child health increasingly remote.

Meanwhile a South African government agency has become the first to join the world's leading patent pool for neglected diseases, a move that could bolster home-grown innovations in the fight against diseases including tuberculosis (TB).

POLITICAL ECONOMY

West Africa: *China* continues its run on *African* commodities with a \$23 Billion **Nigeria** Oil Deal. Meanwhile the *Central Bank of Nigeria* (CBN) is proposing a minimum core capital of N25 billion for establishing a non-interest bank in the country.

Abba Abacha, one of the sons of former **Nigerian** Head of State, Late Gen. Sani Abacha, is facing trial in Geneva, *Switzerland*, to defend an earlier appeal against his conviction of plundering state resources estimated at \$2.2 billion and involvement in criminal organizations.

In its search for investors for its sovereign bonds, **Nigeria's** Federal Government has commenced an aggressive drive to sensitize **Nigerians** in Diaspora on the need to invest in the debt instrument. Meanwhile the Senate approved the Asset Management Corporation of **Nigeria** (AMCON) Bill to buy bad debts from the rescued commercial banks and inject funds into the industry through share purchases.



Nigerian Justice Wada Abubakar Omar of a Kano State High Court has dismissed the application of three tobacco companies challenging, among other issues, the jurisdiction of the court to entertain a suit filed against them by the Attorney-General of the state. Meanwhile a civil society

organization, *Socio Economic Rights Advocacy Project (SERAP)*, has vowed to challenge the Federal Government in court if it fails to probe the former military president, *General Ibrahim Babangida's* alleged involvement in the missing \$12.4 billion oil revenue accrued to the government during the Gulf war.

Meanwhile the **Nigerian** federal Government has fine-tuned plans to jack up the Value Added Tax (VAT) by **100 %** as President Goodluck Jonathan

recently met federal lawmakers and other stakeholders, lobbying them to support the proposed increase when brought to the floor of the National Assembly.

In **Nigeria** hundreds of passengers were stranded at the international wing of the Murtala Mohammed Airport Lagos last week following a power outage that paralyzed operations.

A collaboration which will ensure that the **Nigerian** entertainment industry is taken to the international market kicked off last week, with the World Bank pledging a whopping \$20 million to the project.

Gambia is gearing up to host the Africa Travel Association (ATA)'s 35th Annual Congress this week.

South Africa: China has announced a 170 million euros deal with **South Africa** aimed at building a giant cement plant in the **African** nation.

Thousands of **South African** transport workers went on strike last week, an action that could cripple port, freight rail, and pipeline operations across the country. The union called the strike after rejecting a proposed pay raise by the state-owned ports and Rail Company.

The leader of **Zambia's** main opposition Patriotic Front (PF) party says the government's announcement of a \$1 billion Chinese investment to help build an electric power plant is a "cheaply conceived" ploy to garner votes ahead of next year's general elections.

Central Africa: A three-day gathering of the *World Economic Forum (WEF)* on **Africa** was held in Dar es Salaam, **Tanzania**, where delegates exchanged ideas on **Africa's** growth strategy and the continent's response to the global economic crisis earlier this month. §

Zone 3- Euro-America: *Transatlantic Community*

WESTERN EUROPE

Britain's humbled Labour Party has begun a potentially bitter race for *Gordon Brown's* successor following its ouster after 13 years in office. Ex-foreign secretary *David Miliband* leads the field to become the opposition leader who'll take on **Britain's** new coalition chiefs *David Cameron* and *Nick Clegg* —meanwhile his younger sibling *Ed Miliband* has emerge as his closest challenger.

Meanwhile **Britain's** new Prime Minister David Cameron has banned the use of mobile phones at cabinet meetings in a bid to ensure his top team stay focused on the challenges facing them.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has abandoned hopes of pushing through tax cuts for Europe's biggest economy after what she called a "bitter defeat" in an election overshadowed by the **Greek** debt crisis. Merkel's center-right coalition lost control of **Germany's** most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, in an election last week that also erased its majority in the upper house of parliament — making the country harder to run.





PM- Zapatero, left, has been under pressure from **EU powers** to lower **Spain's deficit**

Spain's leading labor union has called a civil servants strike next month to protest government plans to cut salaries as part of a plan to reduce the deficit. Meanwhile **Portugal** ordered deep wage and spending cuts along with higher taxes to slash the public deficit by more than half. As governments stepped up their war on debt, **German** Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that the whole European Union would be under threat if the euro was allowed to fail in the debt crisis. The European single currency slumped to a new 14-month low at **1.2517 dollars** on Thursday amid persistent concerns over the debt crisis.

Pope Benedict has said that the greatest threat to

Catholicism came from "sin within the Church," one of his most forthright comments so far on a sexual abuse scandal that has created turmoil in the church. Meanwhile an **Austrian** bishop who has pushed the *Vatican* for reforms said in an interview last week that the Catholic Church should drop its celibacy requirement for priests.

Iran is willing to hold talks with **the European Union's** foreign policy chief over its disputed nuclear activities, a senior official said last week, after the bloc's top diplomat spoke of new sanctions against *Tehran*.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

President Bamir Topi began talks with **Albanian** leaders and international representatives on (May 7th), in another bid to end the political stalemate that is threatening the EU integration process. Meanwhile local media reported that **Albania** may be included in a list of countries where **NATO's** missile defence shield will be deployed.

The *European Commission* (EC) is pressing **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** to approve a law on holding a population census across both entities.

Hundreds of students and professors in **Bulgaria** staged a protest last week (May 11th) outside the country's biggest university over cuts in education subsidies.

Bulgarian Environment Minister Nona Karadzova announced last week that companies are being denied the right to participate in revenue-raising carbon emissions trading, while blaming a lack of appropriate action by the previous government and its disregard for specific recommendations made to **Bulgaria** regarding the issue.

Political and economic criteria that **Kosovo** is required to meet are the main priorities of the integrations ministry, Minister Besim Beqaj said last week on May 9th, Europe Day, a state holiday in **Kosovo**.

European Parliament (EP) official Hannes Swoboda said on Thursday (May 13th) that one solution for *Serbs* in northern **Kosovo** would be broad autonomy, similar to that offered Serbs in **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)**, based on the *Dayton Peace Accord*.

Meanwhile **Kosovo's** Opposition parties say that early elections would be a better option than maintaining the current government coalition. They blame strained relations between the government and international personnel, such as EULEX and the International Civilian Office. EULEX personnel recently raided Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications offices as part of an anti-corruption investigation.



Kosovo's Foreign Minister Skender Hyseni has asked *Belgrade* to provide facts about mass graves dating from the 1998-1999 conflict. Meanwhile **Serb** Authorities have found a new mass grave believed to contain the remains of about 250 ethnic **Albanians** killed during the 1998-1999 Kosovo conflict.

Djibouti has formally recognized the **Republic of Kosovo**, the 68th country to do so since Pristina declared independence from Serbia in February 2008.

The second world conference on inter-religious and inter-cultural

dialogue closed in the town of Ohrid **Macedonia** last week. The two-day forum brought together 500 representatives of religious communities, experts and politicians from 30 countries. Meanwhile several thousand **Albanians** rallied in downtown *Skopje* on May 10th to protest what they describe as discriminatory policies against them. They called for halting legal proceedings against ethnic **Albanians** involved in the 2001 conflict and insisted **Albanian** be recognized as an official language. The peaceful march ended without incident amid heavy police presence.

Macedonia has also taken over the six-month chairmanship of the Council of Europe's (CoE) Committee of Ministers from **Switzerland** earlier this month.

Thousands of farmers blocked the area around the government building in Bucharest **Romania** earlier this month, demanding the resignation of all officials at the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry, due to alleged incompetence. The protestors demanded government subsidies for fuel and irrigation water that they say are late.

According to local media Serbia will have to pay **36m** euros in damages to an **Israeli** company for violating a contract to rent a spy satellite. *Belgrade* also reportedly must pay about 13,800 euros in legal fees.

Speaking at a conference on **Polish** EU presidency organized by Warsaw University, Deputy **Polish** Prime Minister said last week that Eastern Partnership, energy security, commerce and competitiveness will be among priorities of the **Polish** Presidency of the EU due to start on July 1, 2011. Meanwhile while affirming that there is no reason to believe that **Poland** is threatened in connection with the **Greek** crisis. PM Tusk

admitted that the nation's zloty has come under pressure against major currencies that has delayed entry to the ERM-2 mechanism, a pre-requisite for adopting the European single currency.

Hungary's new parliament plans to take up the bill, under which the nation would offer citizenship to **Hungarian** minorities living abroad. Responding to this proposal **Slovakia** has recalled its ambassador to **Hungary**.



Meanwhile a **Hungarian** government spokesperson has said that the incoming government's plans to annul retroactively the outgoing government's Jan. 1 personal income tax measures would widen the 2010 budget deficit to a level the IMF and EU would disprove of. The center-right opposition Fidesz party recorded a landslide victory at April's parliamentary elections and is in the process of forming the next government.

Regarding the **Greek** aid package hammered out in crisis this past weekend, while **Slovakia** has not formally rejected the package, the **Slovak** Prime Minister has said he cannot grant **Greece** a loan before it fulfils its commitments. The **Austrians** have also chimed in with words of doubt.

Belarus has recalled its ambassador from *Kyrgyzstan* for consultations. The Foreign Office said that it has taken this step for security reasons because extremists have threatened its personnel.

Ukraine's foreign minister Kostyantyn Hryshchenko said last week that the country is unlikely to join a customs union involving **Russia**, **Belarus** and *Kazakhstan* because it is already a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Meanwhile the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)* had accepted *Israel*, **Slovenia** and **Estonia** as members, bringing the organization's membership total to 34.

Latvia's prime minister said last week that the fragile economy was recovering faster than expected leading to a quicker exit from price deflation. **Latvia** has promised gradually to reduce its budget deficit as one of the conditions of winning funding from a 7.5 billion euro bailout agreed at the end of 2008 with **IMF** and the **EU**.

At the economic front the **Polish** government asked the reluctant central bank to support its request to extend the \$20.5 billion (13.8 billion pound) credit line, which expired last week. **Poland** and several other

countries received it to help weather the financial crisis a year ago.

The **Czech** government needs to find about **40** billion to **45** billion crowns (\$2.12 billion to \$2.39 billion) in tax hikes and savings to achieve next year's deficit target of **4.8 %** of gross domestic product. Meanwhile the country's caretaker cabinet is set to quit after the May 28-29 election.



The *European Commission* has recommended that **Estonia** be allowed to adopt the common euro currency next year, as it meets all the economic criteria.

Most **Hungarian** workers with children will pay less tax under a family tax system to be launched next January. The measure is part of the incoming centre-right Fidesz government's efforts to stimulate **Hungary's** economy, which suffered its worst downturn in nearly two decades last year, and is expected to lag its European peers on the path to recovery.

The **Latvian** hacker, a "virtual Robin Hood", who stole millions of classified tax documents from government computers and leaked the information via Twitter, has been caught by police. Meanwhile economic data released in **Latvia**, **Lithuania** and **Estonia** last week suggested the worst of the Baltic States' deep recessions may be over.

The **Lithuanian** president during a visit to Dublin last week talked about 'Brain Drain' suffered by the nation. The impact of the global economic crisis on **Lithuania** has made the flow of migration from the country "more aggressive" and almost 90,000 **Lithuanians** currently live in Ireland.

Poland's Catholic Bishops Conference announced that Papal diplomat Jozef Kowalczyk has been appointed new Catholic Chief Clergy of the nation.

Last week marked the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. Most countries from the former communist bloc mark the defeat of Nazi Germany on May 9th every year.

RUSSIA

Somalia's transitional government has called on **Russia** to explain about why **Russian** forces after arresting pirates set them free aboard their small vessel. A military official admitted that they were stripped of their weapons and navigation equipment. A **Russian** media later quoted a military source saying the pirates were now likely dead.

The *Moscow* department of the **Russian** Prosecutor's Investigative Committee (SKP) has opened a criminal case against vice mayor of Moscow Alexander Ryabinin accused taking commercial property from a company as a bribe for agreeing in December to a development project in a Moscow district.

Regarding the recent visit of the **Russian** Premier to Syria, *Syrian* media has welcomed the visit, with government newspaper Tishrin hailing **Russia's** "growing role" in the Middle East, especially in the context of Washington's "failure to protect stability and world peace, because of its flagrant bias" towards Israel.

Turkey agreed last week to let Russia build and own a \$20 billion nuclear power plant in a deal that opens a new page in **Russia's** global expansion in the industry. Rosatom, the state nuclear corporation, signed the

agreement to build four reactors on *Turkey's* southern Mediterranean coast during a visit by President Dmitry Medvedev to the country.

Meanwhile a *Moscow* court sentenced a map enthusiast to four years in prison last week for passing classified information to the *United States* that one report said could help the U.S. military in a missile strike against **Russia**.

A Major agricultural group *Rusagro* became the latest **Russian** company to postpone plans for initial public offering amid uncertainty on international markets. Meanwhile *Swedish* retailer IKEA, the biggest owner



Moscow map enthusiast convicted of espionage

of commercial real estate in **Russia**, has been beset by accusations of corruption.

An explosion in the Rapsadskaya coal mine of the West Siberian town of Mezhdudechensk has left at least 12 dead, 59 injured and over 80 trapped. Also reports from southern **Russia** say a car bomb exploded near a military base in the *Daghestan* region today, killing at least one person.

The reception at the **Russian Victory Day parade** on Red Square, that marked the final defeat of Nazi Germany by the Soviet Union in World War II., was attended by 21 foreign leaders, including **Chinese** President Hu Jintao, **German** Chancellor Angela Merkel and the heads of state of almost all the ex-Soviet nations.

Russia and Ukraine are release unified history textbook by end of 2010. The two nations differ in their interpretation of the 1930s famine in **Ukraine**. Ukrainian nationalists say **Russia**, as the legal successor of the Soviet Union, should bear responsibility for the famine in which more than 3 million people perished.

A **Russian** helicopter company is planning to develop the world's first fifth-generation combat helicopter, which according to experts would be able to attack fighter jets and be invisible for radars.

According to reports Imams in **Russia** will be able to access the country's prison system and work with Muslim prisoners according to a new agreement signed between the federal prison authority (FSIN) and the **Russian** Council of Muftis.

Everyone entering **Russia** from *Tajikistan* is to be vaccinated against polio, the Foreign Ministry said last week after two babies became ill with the disease after arriving from the Central Asian state. Some 300 cases of polio were registered in *Tajikistan* recently with 13 deaths. Around 90% of those infected are children under five years old.

US/CANADA

US Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke described the *Greek* debt crisis as a European problem but one that could affect **U.S.** banks if not dealt with.

Several lawmakers are urging the Obama administration to put the *Pakistani Taliban* on a State Department terrorism blacklist that would impose sanctions on the group, which officials say is linked to the failed Times Square car bombing. The move would freeze the group's **U.S.** assets and make it a crime for *Americans* to offer it material support.

According to a new Associated Press-GfK Poll the *Gulf of Mexico* oil spill hasn't stained President Barack Obama nor dimmed the public's desire for offshore energy drilling.

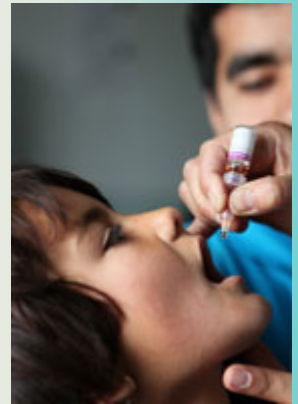
With public anxiety over the fragile economy threatening Obama's Democrats in November's congressional elections, he tried last week to turn the tables on Republican critics, accusing them of sitting on the sidelines last year when he was tackling the financial crisis. Meanwhile President Obama's nomination of *Elena Kagan* to the Supreme Court seat is elevating touchy social issues in an election year.

President Obama sent a landmark arms-reduction treaty with *Russia* to the Senate last week for ratification and called for \$80 billion in nuclear funding, which could help win opposition support.

Meanwhile Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched fence-mending talks with *Afghan* government leaders last week by assuring President *Hamid Karzai* that the **U.S.** will help rebuild and defend *Afghanistan* long after the last **U.S.** combat troops have left.

Six U.N. human rights experts said last week that Arizona's new law on illegal immigration could violate international standards that are binding in the United States.

Canadian legislators grilled the head of BP Plc **Canadian** unit last week, concerned about the risks of the

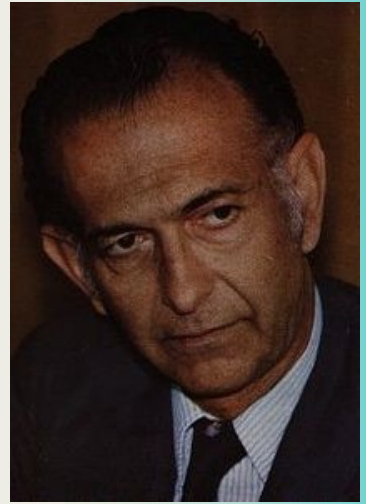


company's plans to drill in Arctic waters after the catastrophic *Gulf of Mexico* oil spill.

LATIN AMERICA

According to an **Argentine** court official, former economy minister **Jose Martinez de Hoz**, the economic brains behind the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, was arrested last week following the lifting of an amnesty law.

According to reports **Brazil** is to build a **US\$483 million (S\$671 million)** nuclear reactor to produce radioactive material for medical use as well as industrial-grade enriched uranium. Meanwhile **Brazil's** government is starting a program to replant deforested areas of the Amazon with palm trees and harvest their oil for *bio-diesel*.



Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega announced last week that his country will lend 286 million U.S. dollars to *Greece* through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The money will come from the country's foreign exchange reserves, which currently amount to 245 billion dollars.

According to the **Brazilian** Health Minister Jose Gomes Temporao a total of 50 **Brazilians** have died and 361 others have been hospitalized due to the A/H1N1 flu in the country since April 3.

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera met last week with 53 provincial governors to unveil his work plan highlighting goals and commitments of the government. He specifically stressed the challenges in reconstructing the earthquake-devastated areas and the need to create a new financial plan that underlines the reallocation of resources.

A *Pakistani* man has been charged with violating gun control laws in **Chile** after traces of explosives were detected on his body and belongings during a visit to the US embassy in **Chile**.

Mexico's President Felipe Calderon last week defended the army's record in fighting organized crime, saying that the soldiers and sailors are fighting for freedom and justice in the country. Meanwhile **Mexico** has extradited a former state governor to the United States to face charges of helping smuggle cocaine through Cancun to the U.S., in a high-profile demonstration of the nation's increased willingness to extradite suspects as it battles surging drug violence.

Hugo Chavez, the President of **Venezuela**, has called for the institutionalization of the Latin American Common Market, **UNASUR** and has warned that its twelve member states should remember the commitments they made to **Haiti**. Meanwhile a former **Venezuelan** defense minister and critic of President Hugo Chavez was sentenced to more than 7 years in prison last week after being convicted of embezzlement and abuse of power.

Chavez, who only recently signed up to Twitter, has rapidly risen up the ranks to become the top tweeter in the country despite having previously described the service as a "tool of terror." The leader has also hired hundreds of staffers to reply to tweets.

Meanwhile Business leaders have accused President Hugo Chavez of attempting to strangle **Venezuelan** businesses that rely on imports by making them pay more for foreign-made products. They said Chavez is irresponsibly allowing the black-market rate for U.S. dollars to spiral upward, which increases costs for close to half of the country's importers. §