



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



**AFRICA**

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



**EUROAMERICA**

WEST EUROPE; EAST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA



**GLOBALIZED OPINION...**



**GLOBALIZED FINANCE...**



**GLOBALIZED ELECTIONS...**

# Friday on the facebook

WEEKLY NEWS MONITOR OF OPINIONS & EVENTS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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

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

## WELCOME REMARKS for new readers What is FOF?

Dear Colleagues,

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

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

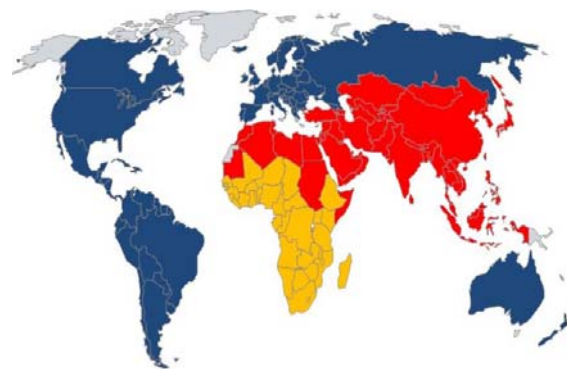
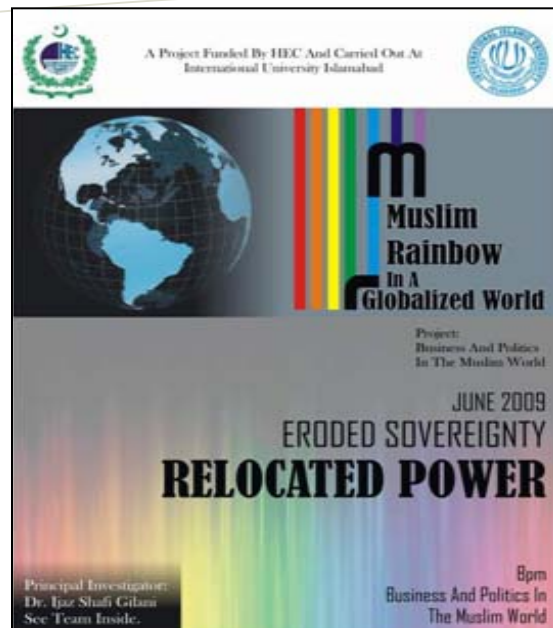
- ◆ We will make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Facebook will provide clicks to deeper levels of information; for comprehension (Maps and Data) as well as for elaboration



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

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

With best wishes and prayers we present our '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 **23** surveys. **4** of these are multi-country surveys while the rest are national surveys. **10** polling organizations have been represented.

**ASIA zone-2** national polls & **2** Multi National poll:

*West Asia:* Turkey

*South Asia:* India

*Northeast Asia:* China, South Korea, Japan

**AFRICA zone- 1** national polls:

*West Africa:* Nigeria,

**EURO-AMERICAS zone-14** national polls & **4** Multi national polls:

*East Europe-* Russia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Austria,

Bulgaria, Finland, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Hungary, Romania

*West Europe-* Ireland, UK, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Denmark, Netherlands,

*North America-* U.S.A, Canada

*Latin America-* Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Uruguay, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia

*Australasia:* Australia, New Zealand



### Commentary: May 2010 Snap Poll Nigerians want Mr President to Solve Power Problems<sup>1</sup>

Following the death of *President Umaru Musa Yar Adua*, Acting President *Goodluck Jonathan* was sworn in as the 14th Head of State of the Federal Republic of **Nigeria** on the *6th of May, 2010*. President Jonathan has cited anti-corruption, power and electoral reform as the key issues he hopes to tackle between now and next year, when elections are scheduled to hold.

A recent survey of **Nigerians** conducted by *NOI Polls* shows that the President's targets are in line with the key concerns of the citizenry. When asked the question 'What policy area do you think the president should focus on in the remaining months of his tenure?', a majority of the respondents (45% to be precise) said he should focus on power. 20% of Nigerians believe that the president should concentrate on jobs/employment, 12% listed electoral reform as priority while infrastructural development was mentioned by 9% of the respondents.

#### Future Elections and the Emergence of Presidential Candidates in Nigeria

As part of the poll, Nigerians were also quizzed about the application of a Zoning Formula in selecting Presidential candidates. To the question 'Do you think/agree that there should be a zoning formula for the emergence of Presidential candidates in Nigeria?', more than 6 in 10 (63%) respondents answered 'No'. 33% responded in the affirmative while 4% either didn't know or refused to answer the question.

#### Competence is more important.....

Rather than zoning, Nigerians consider other factors to be more significant when choosing the country's president. In response to the question 'What do you consider to be the most important criteria that should be applied in choosing/selecting the Nigerian President?', 38% of respondents answered 'perceived competence'.

Also considered to be important by respondents is the level of education of the candidates (22%) and election manifesto/promises (20%). Ethnicity was considered the least significant factor (2% of respondents), while religion polled just 7% amongst the respondents.

#### Survey Results:

This survey shows that Nigerian's want the President to prioritize tackling the problems in the nation's power industry. In addition, a majority of **Nigerians** do not consider a zoning formula necessary in the emergence of presidential candidates but feel that selection of candidates should be based on their level of competence.

#### Survey Methods:

Respondents for the snap poll were randomly selected from a database of phone-owning Nigerians aged 15 and above, compiled by NOI Polls. 1,207 people took part in the telephone interviews from the 27th and 30th of April, 2010. For a sample of this size, we can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 2.82$  percentage points. The margin of error reflects the influence of data weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Source: <http://www.noi-polls.net/Poll-Results/may-2010-snap-poll-nigerians-want-mr-president-to-solve-power-problems.html>

## SUMMARY OF POLLS

### Zone 1- ASIA

#### WEST ASIA

***Turkey's Reaction to Israeli Raid Not Strong Enough, Say Turks*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

A recent survey by the [MetroPOLL Research Company](#) of [Turkish](#) population show that *six in ten* Turks believe their state's reaction to Israeli attack on Gaza bound flotilla was not strong enough. Turks also perceive the attack as a move by Israel to put Erdogan in a difficult situation at home and abroad.

June 04, 2010

[Security/IR](#) » [Domestic Views](#)

#### NORTHEAST ASIA

***Japanese Government Cannot Stop Freefall*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

People in [Japan](#) are decidedly rejecting the government, according to a poll by [Asahi](#). **64%** of respondents disapprove of the administration led by prime minister Yukio Hatoyama, up three points since April.

May 31, 2010

[Politics](#) » [Approval Ratings](#)

### Zone 2- AFRICA:

#### SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

***Nigerians want Mr. President to Solve Power Problems*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

A recent survey of [Nigerians](#) conducted by [NOI Polls](#) shows that the President Goodluck Jonathan's targets are in line with the key concerns of the citizenry. A majority of the respondents (**45%**) said he should focus on power. **20%** of Nigerians believe that the president should concentrate on jobs/employment, **12%** listed electoral reform as priority while infrastructural development was mentioned by **9%** of the respondents.

May 2010

[Politics](#) » [Governance](#)

### Zone 3- EURO-AMERICAS

#### EAST EUROPE

***Poland Not Keen on Euro Adoption Yet*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

While most of the recent discussions related to [Poland's](#) political life have centered on the upcoming presidential election, the country has to make a major decision related to the adoption of the euro. In April 2010, two-in-five Poles (**41%**) said they supported the adoption of the euro as the national currency, while half (**49%**) voiced opposition. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk had established 2015 as the target date for the euro to replace the zloty. [Angus](#)

[Reid Global Monitor](#)

June 03, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Economic Perceptions](#)

#### WEST EUROPE

***Britons Decidedly Reject Adopting the Euro*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Very few people in [Britain](#) are interested in adopting the euro as the national currency, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **79 %** of respondents would vote against this idea in a referendum.

June 02, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Economic Perceptions](#)

#### NORTH AMERICA

***President Obama Back at 48% in U.S.*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Public backing for Barack Obama increased this month in the [United States](#), according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **48 %** of respondents approve of their president's performance, up two points since April.

May 31, 2010

[Politics](#) » [Approval Ratings](#)

***Federal Debt, Terrorism Considered Top Threats to U.S.*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Terrorism and federal government debt tie as the most worrisome issues to [Americans](#) when they consider threats to the future wellbeing of the U.S. **4 in 10** Americans call each an "extremely serious" threat, with healthcare costs ranking a close third. [Gallup USA](#)



June 4, 2010

Society » Social Perceptions

### ***Marrying Out: One-in-Seven New U.S. Marriages is Interracial or Interethnic*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

A record **14.6%** of all new marriages in the [United States](#) in 2008 were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another. This includes marriages between a Hispanic and non-Hispanic (Hispanics are an ethnic group, not a race) as well as marriages between spouses of different races -- be they white, black, Asian, American Indian or those who identify as being of multiple races or "some other" race. [Pew Research Centre](#)

June 4, 2010

Society » Social issues

### ***Firm Support for Arizona Immigration Law in U.S.*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

A month has passed since the Arizona State Legislature first gave the go-ahead to the controversial Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Act. a large majority of respondents are in favor of implementing four of its key components in their own state. Three-in-four [Americans \(76%\)](#) believe that transporting someone who is an illegal immigrant should be a crime; **two thirds** would arrest people who are unable to provide documentation to prove they are in the U.S. legally (**69%**). [Angus Reid Global Monitor](#)

June 04, 2010

Society » Immigration

### ***Republicans Move Ahead in Generic Ballot for Congress*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

[Gallup](#) tracking of 2010 congressional voting preferences in the [US](#) shows Republicans moving back ahead of

Democrats, **49%** to **43%**, by two points their largest lead of the campaign to date. Registered voters' preferences had been closely divided for the last several weeks.

June 2, 2010

Politics » Political Affiliation

### ***Hope of Finding Work Halved After 6 Months of Unemployment*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Unemployed [Americans'](#) hopes for finding work in the next four weeks drop sharply as their length of unemployment increases, from **71%** for those who have been unemployed less than a month to **36%** among those unemployed for more than six months. [Gallup USA](#)

June 3, 2010

Society » Unemployment

### ***Many Americans Would Modify Oil Pollution Act*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Many [Americans](#) would like to increase the civil liability for companies responsible for oil spills off the U.S. coast, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **65 %** of respondents support raising the \$75 million cap on damages under the Oil Pollution Act.

June 02, 2010

Society » Environment

### ***Views of Canadians on Economy Remain Steady*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

As was the case last month, a majority of [Canadians](#) are content with their national economy, and concerns over the future are significantly lower than in the United States or Britain. [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#)

June 04, 2010

Economy » Economic Perceptions

### ***Canadian Tories Lead, But Merger Could Sway Voters*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

The Conservative Party is still in first place in [Canada](#), according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **35 %** of respondents would support the Tories in the next federal election.

June 01, 2010

Politics » Political Affiliation

## **LATIN AMERICA**

### ***Peruvian Race Lacks Clear Frontrunner*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

No candidate is commanding the early stages of [Peru's](#) next presidential election, according to a poll by [Datum Internacional](#). **22 %** of respondents would vote for Lima city mayor Luis Castañeda Lossio of the National Solidarity Party (PSN) in next year's ballot, down four points since December.

June 02, 2010



Politics » Political Affiliation

### ***Serra Drops, Presidential Race in Brazil is Tied*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

This year's presidential election in [Brazil](#) promises to be a tight contest, according to a poll by [Datafolha](#) published in *Folha de Sao Paulo*. **37 %** of respondents would vote either for Jose Serra of the Brazilian Party of Social Democracy (PSDB) or Dilma Rousseff of the ruling Workers' Party (PT) in the October ballot.

May 30, 2010

Politics » Elections

## **AUSTRALASIA**

### ***New Zealanders Urge Rise of Drinking Age*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

[New Zealanders](#) are renewing calls for the return of a higher drinking age following the death of a teenager who chugged a bottle of vodka at a party. Three quarters of respondents to a May 2010 poll (**74%**) would support increasing the drinking age by two years to 20—just as it was before being lowered 11 years ago. [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#).

June 05, 2010

Society » Social issues



## **GLOBAL/MULTI-COUNTRY SURVEYS**

### ***Child Abuse Underreported in Latin America*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Forty million children younger than age 15 are victims of violence, abuse, and neglect in [Latin America](#) and the [Caribbean](#), according to a 2006 [UNICEF](#) report. Much of this violence takes place in the home, but [Gallup surveys](#) in the region show most adults who know of a child who was beaten or physically mistreated by a family member in the past month say this incident went unreported.

June 4, 2010

Society » Social issues

### ***Most Europeans See Biodiversity Loss as Serious Problem*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

As millions worldwide celebrated World Environment Day last week and reflected on how they can conserve the diversity of life on Earth, a [Flash Eurobarometer](#) survey finds more than **9 in 10** adults in the [European Union](#) agree that biodiversity loss is a very or fairly serious problem globally.

June 2, 2010

Society » Environment

### ***Chinese Consumers Increasingly Sceptical of Companies' CSR Communications*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

[Chinese](#) consumers are becoming as cynical as those in the West about the way companies communicate about their social and environmental performance, according to the latest wave of [GlobeScan's](#) annual global tracking research on public views of corporate social responsibility.

June 01, 2010

Economy » Economic Perceptions

### ***Increase in Green Behavior Seen, As Indians Rank Most Sustainable, Americans Rank Lowest, In 2010 Greendex Survey*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Environmentally friendly behavior among consumers in 10 of 17 countries has increased over the past year, according to the third annual survey by the [National Geographic Society](#) and international polling firm [GlobeScan](#).

June 3, 2010

Society » Environment

## **CYBER WORLD**

### ***Your New Tube: Online Video Continues to Grow*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

**Seven-in-ten** adult internet users (**69%**) -- or roughly half (**52%**) of all U.S. adults -- have used the internet to watch or download videos. Meanwhile Young adult internet users, 18-29 year-olds, continue to be the heaviest consumers of online videos. [Pew Research Center](#)

June 3, 2010

Society » Communication/Media

### ***Blogs Poke Facebook, Apple Leads on Twitter Again*** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

When the oil spill in the *Gulf of Mexico* dominated the mainstream press, the social media was focused on news that revolved around computer technology. Privacy of facebook users remained the top issue on blogs followed by computer virus infecting human. Meanwhile on Twitter, apple dominated again last week. [Pew Research Center](#)

June 3, 2010

Society » Communication/Media §

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

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

#### **TURKEY**

##### **Political Front:**

Despite government's efforts to resolve **Kurdish** issue tension still prevails between Kurdistan Workers' Party and security officials. Meanwhile in *Southeastern* region **6** soldiers were killed and a few others were injured as a result of armed clash between PKK and Turkish soldiers.

##### **Geo-strategic Front:**

As a reaction to the recent attack by the *Israeli* forces on *Freedom Flotilla* carrying humanitarian aid for *Gaza*, **Turkey** called back its senior diplomat from Israel and warned to cut off all sort of diplomatic ties unless the later apologizes. However some defense related projects with *Israel* haven't been cancelled yet but all water and energy projects have been suspended. The Civil society has announced to launch a rally in the *Golan Heights* that would continue till aid reaches the *Palestinians*.

**Turkey** has expressed keenness to accelerate its economic activity in *Iraq*. Meanwhile **Turkish** close collaboration with *Saudi Arabia*, *Egypt* and *Azerbaijan* in various sectors remained significant.

##### **Economic Front:**

**Turkey** has earned \$1.1 billion from hazelnut exports in the first nine months of the export season that began in September 2009. Meanwhile **Turkish** exports increased by **24.8 %** to 9 billion U.S. dollars in May 2010 compared to May 2009.

##### **Social Front:**

Amnesty International (AI) has noted little progress made on enhancing human rights protections in **Turkey**.

#### **GCC**

##### **Geo-strategic Front:**

The **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** too has strongly condemned **Israeli** "criminal aggression" against the freedom Flotilla which was destined to deliver humanitarian aid to the *Palestinians* in *Gaza Strip*. GCC has also asked international community particularly UNO to take serious action against Israel.

Officials from the **UAE** and the **GCC** nations assembled last week in a seminar to discuss issues relating to the implementation of legislation regarding nuclear security, safety and safeguards.

##### **Economic Front:**

*China* has expressed serious interest in making a Free Trade Agreement with **GCC**. Two-way trade between *China* and the **Middle East** has tripled in the last five years to \$ 107 billion in 2009. *Chinese* companies have also become more active in the **Middle East**, especially in the infrastructure sector, winning \$ 2.1 billion worth of the construction deals in the **UAE** alone in 2008.

Islamic loan volume has exceeded \$ 5.66 billion (Dh20.78bn) in **Saudi Arabia** during the May 2009 to May 2010 period. The Economic Development Board (EDB) and Greater Paris Investment Agency have signed a deal to promote **Bahrain** and *France* as business hubs and boost investments.

##### **Social Front:**

**Gulf** countries mainly **Oman** made preparations last week to counter expected cyclone. Meanwhile heavy rains have also hit some areas of **Oman**.



**Oman's** labor official has urged private companies in the country to reduce dependence on expatriate manpower. He further asked them to concentrate more on workers' safety and occupational health. Meanwhile the number of illegal workers in **Bahrain** has dropped by 5,000 in the last three months.

#### **FERTILE CRESCENT**

##### **Political Front:**

In **Egypt** the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) candidates got a sweeping majority by

winning 60 out of 74 seats in the Shura Council mid-term elections. However the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) ran 15 candidates but could not win any seats. Human Rights Groups have claimed that irregularities have been observed in the elections.

Meanwhile proposed Reforms in **Lebanese** Electoral laws have yet to be enforced.

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

**GCC**, *Turkey*, *Palestine*, *Egypt*, *Lebanon*, *Pakistan* and *Iran* are the main Muslim countries that strongly condemned *Israel* following the brutal attack against *Freedom Flotilla*. Meanwhile *US*, *UK*, *EU*, *China*, *Africa* and *UNO* have also criticized *Israel's* use of force.

Nearly 190 nations have agreed to a declaration that pressures *Israel* to join the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and calls for a 2012 conference on nuclear weapons in the **Middle East**.

A war of words over control of the Nile has broken out between **Egypt** and countries upstream complaining they are denied a fair share of the river's water. Opposite political parties have entered into negotiations in order make coalition government however haven't reached at conclusion till now. Meanwhile **Iraqi** Supreme Court has approved final results of March 7 elections.

### **Economic Front:**

Climate change in **Egypt** seems threatened to cut key agricultural crops, force millions to migrate, flood or alter tourism destinations, and dramatically cut water supplies.

**Iraqi** Oil Minister has started talks with Syria on the possibility of resuming oil exports via the pipeline and the construction of new lines to ferry *Iraqi* oil and gas via **Syria**.

Meanwhile the **Lebanese** Finance Minister has urged investors to explore the great investment opportunities in **Lebanon**.

### **Social Front:**

An **Egyptian** court has ordered the government to consider revoking the citizenship of **Egyptians** married to *Israelis* if the marriage posed a threat to **Egypt's** national security.

**Egyptian** Minister of Communications has announced that *Arabic*, spoken by about 280-million people worldwide, would soon appear in domain names and Web addresses.

## **CENTRAL ASIA**

### **Political Front:**

The **Azerbaijani** draft military doctrine has been discussed at a meeting of a relevant committee of the Parliament.

**Kazakh** President Nursultan Nazarbaev has rejected a draft law to make him "Leader of the Nation" and grant him special powers for life if he resigned.

Seven residents of a northern city in **Kyrgyzstan** have launched a hunger strike to demand that all associates of ousted former President Bakiev be dismissed from official posts in the region. In the meantime supporters of the former Mayor in the northern region launched demonstration against his dismissal.

**Turkmen** President has been ranked among the heads of the most repressive countries.

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

**Azerbaijan** has strongly condemned *Israeli* act of aggression against *Freedom Flotilla*.

While discussing close **Russian-Azeri** ties speaker of **Azerbaijan** emphasized that both the countries do not have any unresolved issue. Despite the fact that **Azerbaijan** denies any news regarding US intention to open military base in the country, some of the newspapers including New York Times have reported US interest in doing so. Meanwhile the U.S. military has stopped refueling tanker planes at its *Manas* air base in **Kyrgyzstan** due to the issue of fuel prices.

A human rights organization has indicated that a **Tajik** citizen wanted by the **Uzbek** authorities for terrorism has been detained in southern **Kazakhstan**.

### **Economic Front:**

**Azerbaijan's** President has announced his plan to produce some 52 tons of oil and 30 billion cubic meters of gas this year.

A senior U.S. envoy urged **Azerbaijan** and *Turkey* to sign a long-





Journalist Eynulla Fatullayev (left) and his lawyer Isakhan Ashurov

awaited gas-transit deal.

Meanwhile the **Kyrgyz** political condition has started affecting the country's economy.

**Social Front:**

A jailed **Azeri** journalist has announced hunger strike to demand authorities comply with a ruling by the European Court for Human Rights to release him from jail.

Meanwhile the Karabakh Freedom Organization held a protest outside the *Israeli* embassy in Baku.

A regional leader of **Tajikistan's** Islamic Renaissance Party has been charged with human trafficking.

An art exhibit in Ashgabat for a well-known **Turkmen** artist has been canceled by **Turkmen** authorities without explanation.

The independent Tashkent-based human rights activist Tatiana has been invited for interrogation with one of the district investigator in **Uzbekistan**.

**IRAN**

**Geo-strategic Front:**

*Iran* has strongly condemned *Israel* for launching an inhuman attack against *Freedom Flotilla* and asked the Muslim world to support Palestinians.

Former Secretary of State *Colin Powell* has said that proposed stricter United Nations sanctions won't bring an end to **Iran's** nuclear program.

Meanwhile the Head of **Japan-Iran** Friendship Group Masahiko Komura in a meeting with visiting Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki in Tokyo stressed the right of all signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to acquire and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

**Economic Front:**



The total value of **Iran's** exports to *Turkey* would soon reach 8.8 Billion dollars. Meanwhile **Iran** and **Lebanon** have signed an economic cooperation act. Also **Iran's** growing ties with *African* countries remained significant.

**Iran** has expressed readiness to export natural gas and electricity to *Pakistan*. Meanwhile **Iranian** Minister of Commerce has declared western world's sanctions against shipping industries to be futile.

**Social Front:**

**Iran** and *Iraq* have agreed to fight against dust pollution.

According to reports only **3%** of **Iranians** living abroad have criminal record

however rest of **97%** hold high profile economic positions.

**EAST ASIA**

**Political Front:**

**Indonesian** President has asked his countrymen to put their country before race and religion.

Dr. Mahatir Mohammad has requested **Malaysians** to provided undivided support to PM Najib that would enable him to boost country's economic development. He also asked *Malays* to get united in order to regain their political power.

In response to various offers made by the international community to help **Thai** government to over come ongoing political crisis Foreign Minister claimed that his government would cope with these issues without foreign intervention.

**Geo-strategic Front:**

Close **Sino-Cambodian** ties seem to be significant at geo-strategic front. Apart from various aid packages, *China* has recently promised to provide more than 250 new military trucks to **Cambodia**.

### **Economic Front:**

On one hand energy exports have been contributing a lot in **Indonesian** economic growth. However energy demand has been increasing rapidly in the country because of increase in population and change in their living standards. Besides that environmental campaigners have been raising their voice against country's trade policy.

**Malaysia** has been planning to increase investment in **Indonesia** for mutual benefit.

**Thailand** has refrained from joining **Malaysia, India** and **Australia** in raising borrowing costs this year even as a rebound in exports helped the economy expand the most in 15 years last quarter. Inflation in **Thailand** accelerated for the eighth consecutive month in May, driven by higher food and fuel prices.

A recently released study in **Vietnam** indicates that **Singapore** has been ranked the best place to do business in the world, but barriers remain for the rest of ASEAN. **Vietnam's** PM has asked the central bank to implement measures to reduce interest rates and help the country achieve economic growth of **6.5 %** this year.

Princess of **Brunei** has stressed the importance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to seek strategic alliances and enter into viable partnerships with foreign companies, to further succeed in promoting halal products and **Brunei's** Halal Brand.

### **Social Front:**

The **Philippines** government and Muslim rebels have pledged to continue working towards a peace deal as they ended a final round of talks under President Gloria Arroyo's outgoing administration.

Meanwhile Floods have stalled traffic in some areas of **Philippines**.

## **SOUTH ASIA**

### **Political Front:**

A court in **Bangladesh** has thrown out a corruption case that accused Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of unnecessary spending.

**Bangladeshi** authorities have jailed 54 activists of the largest Islamist party Jamaat that had planned a rally to oppose the trial of those accused of genocide during the 1971 'Liberation War'.

In **Nepal** the CPN-UML has recently claimed that Prime Minister would step down only after the guarantee of past agreements on peace process and Constitution-writing.

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

**Bangladesh, Maldives** and **Sri Lanka** have strongly condemned *Israeli* aggressive attack against *Freedom Flotilla*.

Many analysts have claimed that in order to balance the effect of *China* in the region **India** has been pressurizing **Sri Lanka** to sign trade deal with her.

### **Economic Front:**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed an agreement with the government of **Bangladesh** to provide \$266 million in loans to help the country address its natural gas supply constraints, and thus spur economic growth and reduce poverty.

**China** has announced to grant an aid of US\$ 7.3 million to **Maldives**. **Australia** has also expressed interest in enhancing economic ties with **Maldives**.

Gold prices have increased in **Nepal**. The **Nepali** government has proposed special programs worth 3.71

billion **Nepali** rupees (some 50 million U.S. dollars) for the coming fiscal year to boost agriculture production to deal with widening food deficit in the country. **India** has expressed readiness to improve access for **Sri Lankan** goods and services to its markets by creating mechanisms like common standards and recognizing professional certifications.

### **Social Front:**

**Bangladeshi** government blocked face book in order to protest against blasphemy. Meanwhile a pro-opposition newspaper was shut down and its editor got arrested over fraud charges.



An explosion in a transformer resulted in death 100 people while leaving many others injured in the capital of **Bangladesh**.

The **Bangladeshi** government has approved legislation mandating eight years of compulsory free schooling for all children, replacing the current five-year minimum. All the while Science, English and Computers have been made compulsory even in Religious Islamic schools.

**Nepali** government has decided to ban smoking in restaurants, bars and other public places. Meanwhile tourist arrivals in **Nepal** by air in May have increased by **6 %** to 26,634 compared to the same month last year. The **Sri Lankan** government has issued a new deadline to resettle tens of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) who are still living in camps.

## INDIA

### **Political Front:**

The Left parties have strongly condemned *Israeli* attack against flotilla of six ships carrying humanitarian aid to *Gaza*. The CPI (M) has also asked the Government of **India** to officially condemn this brutal and inhuman act. The party further asked the government to work actively with other countries from the non-aligned nations in the United Nations and other bodies to force *Israel* to lift the illegal siege.

**Indian** Parliamentary Affairs Minister has extended full support to the inclusion of cast in census and negated any apprehension that the demand would lead to a division in society. RSS seem seriously concerned about their escalating image as a terrorist outfit in media and masses. The proved link of its personnel in various bomb blasts and terrorist activities has worried the party and it has decided not to support any of its member involved in such activities.

Meanwhile Maoists blew up a *panchayat* office building and a godown in Malkangiri district in a bid to prevent security personnel from camping there. Meanwhile government has asked concerned states to enhance their police training capabilities in order to cope up with Maoist threat.

### **Regional Front:**

Shibu Soren has resigned as Jharkhand Chief Minister after failing to get the support of Congress and its ally JVM (P) ahead of trust vote in the Jharkhand assembly. As a result Jharkhand came under Central rule with President Pratibha Patil accepting a recommendation of the Union Cabinet after the Congress and the BJP gave up efforts to form an alternative government following the resignation of Chief Minister Shibu Soren.

### **Social Front:**

**Indian** Prime Minister has ensured that no untreated waste and industrial effluents would flow into the Ganga River by 2020.

A month after being sentenced to death for the *Mumbai* terror attacks, Ajmal Kasab has filed an appeal in *Bombay* High Court challenging the verdict and sought a lawyer from the legal aid panel to argue his case.

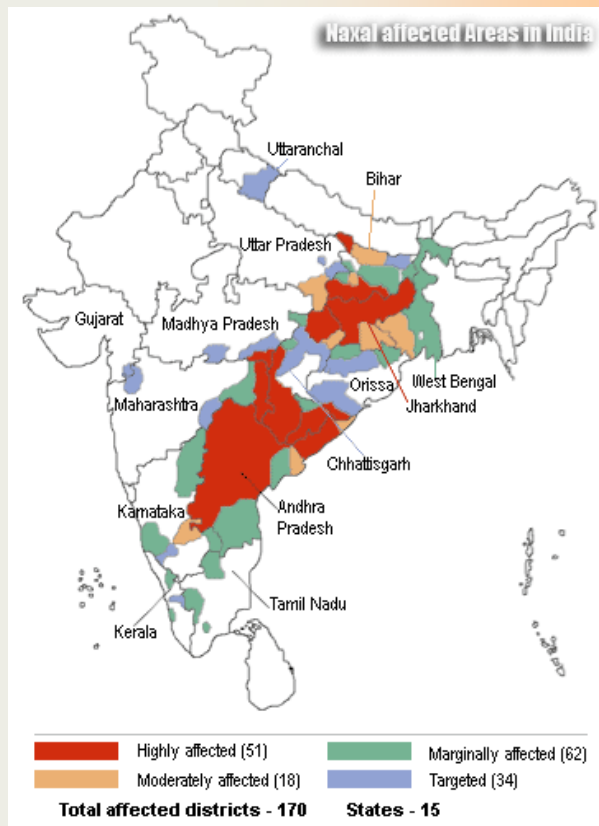
### **Regional Front:**

The National Socialist Council of Nagalim has reiterated that

Naga-inhabited areas should be integrated just in accordance with the people's aspiration. Government however claimed that integration of Naga-inhabited areas would need consensus among the States concerned, as boundaries would have to be altered. In the meantime Assam, Nagaland and Manipur have strong reservations regarding this issue.

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

*China* has agreed to take required measures in an effort to resume ties with **India**.



Canada has regretted the use of the language that “cast false impressions” in the denial of visa to former or serving members of the **Indian** armed forces and security institutions and assured **India** that it is reviewing the admissibility policy set forth in the legislation on visa policy. **India** and the **USA** have concluded their first Cabinet-level Strategic Dialogue, pledging to deepen ties between two countries for mutual benefit and global stability while committing to work to strengthen global legal regimes against terrorism.

#### **Economic Front:**

In **India** the annual food inflation went up by **0.32 %** to reach **16.55 %** for the last week. Meanwhile fiscal deficit in the country has increased by **24.89 %** to Rs 4, 12,307 crore in 2009-10 compared to the year ago period.

## **AFGHANISTAN**

### **Political Front**

The **Afghanistan** Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and members of affected families have called for serious action against NATO-led service-members involved in civilian killings. All the while top *Taliban* commander has been killed in Kandahar province.

A US military vehicle was partially damaged in a bomb explosion in the restive central province. Besides that a NATO helicopter crashed in southeastern province.

Heads of 28 committees of the Peace Advisory Jirga got elected to officially start and conduct the program. A number of key politicians and jihadi leaders, including President Karzai's principal rival Dr. Abdullah, stayed away from the long-awaited peace jirga in Kabul. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the chairman of the three-day peace jirga urged participants to put aside their political, tribal and ethnic rivalries and seek a sustainable solution to decades of conflict in **Afghanistan**. **Afghanistan's** Peace Jirga finally ended after three days with a call for a comprehensive

process, including talks with militant groups, to extricate the country from an unrelenting Taliban insurgency and pave the ground for stepped-up reconstruction.

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

US and EU have greatly appreciated **Afghanis** efforts to hold peace Jirga and also endorsed jirga declaration.

### **Social Front:**

Hundreds of university students launched protest in **Kabul** demanding the government stop international groups from converting Muslims to Christianity and Judaism. President Karzai has also started paying attention to the allegations that aid groups have been trying to convert **Afghan** Muslims to Christianity.

## **CHINA**

### **Geo-strategic Front:**

**China** has urged *South Korea* and *Japan* to release tension in the region. **Chinese** PM during his visit to Japan and South Korea also made a four points proposal to enhance trade with the two countries. Meanwhile *Indian* President on his official visit to **China** also emphasized greatly the need to enhance collaboration. At the same time Chinese growing ties with *GCC, Tanzania, Mongolia, Myanmar, Kenya, Italy, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan* and *Philippines* also remained significant.

**China** and *North Korea* have strongly condemned *Israel* for its act of aggression and asked Israel to break blockade against *Palestine*. **China** has also urged UN not to take any action that would affect the lives of *Iranian* people.

### **Economic Front:**

Despite recent gains in **China's** property stocks, investors remained concerned that uncertain effects of the government's clampdown on property market might lead to further tightening measures.

Manufacturing growth from **China** to Europe has decreased significantly. Meanwhile **China** has expressed its intention to stick with opening up of markets.

### **Social Front:**

A senior **Chinese** official has called for promoting the values of the ‘country's religions’, such as sincerity, harmony, safeguarding the nation and loving the people. §



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

### POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

**West Africa:** Ghana's ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) last week intensified strategies to retain power in Elections 2012 with the inauguration of the Greater Accra Regional Women's wing of the Zongo Caucus in Accra.

**Liberia's** Upper House of the 52nd National Legislature has again failed to passage the Population Threshold Bill into law due to another Writ of Prohibition filed before the Full Branch of the Supreme Court of **Liberia**.

Meanwhile the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Board of Directors, chaired by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, has approved an approximately \$15 million grant for **Liberia** to support the country's ongoing efforts to improve governance.

According to a senior UN official the ongoing political impasse in **Côte d'Ivoire** contributes to heightened tensions and hampers efforts to normalize the situation in the West African nation, which has been trying for eight years to overcome the crisis that split the country. Meanwhile UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed skepticism over the holding of **Ivorian** elections and warned of imminent violence. However **Côte d'Ivoire** President Laurent Gbagbo has pledged that long-delayed elections will take place before the end of the year.

In line with the provisions of the Economic Community of West African States, **ECOWAS**, protocol on democracy and good governance, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Aliyu Idi Hong, has restated that **Niger** and **Guinea** remain suspended until constitutional order was restored in both countries.

In **Sierra Leone** the political parties registration commission (PPRC) has appointed 18 new core members to beef up the staff strength of the commission countrywide.

Justice Jon Kamanda of **Sierra Leone** has been re-elected to serve as President of the United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal set up to deal with the worst acts committed during the long and brutal civil war in the West African nation.

**Central Africa:** Burundi's main opposition party says it is pulling out of this month's scheduled presidential election because of concerns that the vote will be rigged. Five other opposition parties pulled out because they believe the vote will be rigged. Burundi's National Electoral Commission says the election will go ahead despite the boycott.

The president of the **Central African Republic** will stay in power beyond the end of his electoral mandate, in June, because of delays in organizing a new vote. His political opponents want voter lists updated and rebel groups disarmed.



### HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

**West Africa:** A number of Muslims in **Ghana's** Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly have demonstrated against the activities of homosexuals in the area with a call on government to enact Sharia Law in Ghana.

Defense lawyers for Charles Taylor last week asked Special Court for **Sierra Leone** judges to deny the

request by prosecutors to issue a subpoena for Supermodel Naomi Campbell, who is alleged to have received rough diamonds from Mr. Taylor while on a visit to *South Africa* in 1997. A defense witness for Mr. Taylor also told judges this week that members of Mr. Taylor's rebel group, who assisted **Sierra Leonean** rebels during the country's civil conflict, did so voluntarily and were not sent by the former **Liberian** president.

Aid groups allege that progress on a "Zero Tolerance" national campaign in **Côte d'Ivoire** to eliminate female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) by the end of 2010, has been slowed down by health and education infrastructure

**Southern Africa:** Zimbabwe's first private daily newspaper hit the streets last week to break a state monopoly established years ago after President Robert Mugabe's government banned a pro-opposition newspaper over a registration dispute.

**Central Africa:** It has been announced that **Rwanda** will not short circuit legal procedures to release American lawyer, Prof. Peter Erlinder, despite a request by the *United States* State Department to release him on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. Erlinder is charged with denying the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and minimizing it. Erlinder had come in the country to represent Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza in her case which also involves genocide denial.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, U.N. officials say while humanitarian conditions improve in one region, they're getting worse in others. For example, civilians are starting to return to their homes in Gemena in Equateur Province, following inter-communal fighting, but insecurity persists in parts of North and South Kivu Provinces.

More than 50 human rights organizations have called for an independent investigation into the death of a well-known human rights activist Floribert Chebeya in an open letter to **DRC** President Joseph Kabila. Meanwhile The president of Congolese non-governmental organization, La Voix des Sans-voix or VSV (Voice for the Voiceless) was found dead on the road going out of Kinshasa, **Democratic Republic of Congo**.

## **HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS**

**West Africa:** In **Ghana** the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) in Kumasi and the Himalayan Cataract Project (HCP) of the US has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build a \$1,000,000 state-of-the-art Eye Centre at the hospital.

According to reports National programme manager of Onchocerciasis in the ministry of health and sanitation has revealed that Bombali district in **Sierra Leone's** north currently has the highest number of *elephantiasis* cases.

**Southern Africa:** A **Zambian** editor was given four months hard labor last week for criticizing the arrest of another journalist who sent the vice president images of women in childbirth to highlight the country's dire hospitals.

According to reports **South African** AIDS organizations have had limited success in getting FIFA to allow them to distribute condoms and HIV education materials during the World Cup. Meanwhile South Africa promised last week to protect foreign migrants from attacks amid fears of a rise in violence coinciding with the World Cup.

**South Africa's** public education system shows signs of serious decline. Reports of dismal graduation rates, bad teachers and crumbling buildings have become commonplace.

MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières) has launched a campaign called Starved for Attention to reform humanitarian food assistance and nutrition programmes for malnourished children, which will run until World Food Day on 16 October.

**Central Africa:** The U.N.Children's Fund and the government of the **Central African Republic** are distributing more than one-million insecticide treated mosquito nets in the African nation to protect children

and pregnant women from malaria. The **Central African Republic** has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world. More than 170 out of 1,000 children die before reaching their fifth birthday.

In **Rwanda** over 10,000 people across the country tested for HIV/AIDS and 100,000 condoms were distributed during the "Police Medical Services" week.



## POLITICAL ECONOMY

**West Africa:** The **Ghanaian** government has declared that they would not turn against the maintenance and production of high quality cocoa, despite the discovery of oil in the country.

According to a new report on Ghana's mining, between 2007 and 2009, the nation lost approximately €36 million, in mining revenues that have been repatriated without the necessary taxes to government.

**Southern Africa:** **South Africa's** COSATU trade union federation threatened on Tuesday to pull out of an alliance with the ANC if the ruling party persists with disciplinary charges against union leader Zwelinzima Vavi who has accused President Zuma of not getting tough enough on corruption.

Madagascar is going through a financial crisis where stock prices are plummeting in the country. §

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

### WESTERN EUROPE

**France's** former top anti-terrorism judge said last week that the *Turkish* Islamic charity behind a flotilla of aid ships that was raided by *Israeli* forces on its way to Gaza had ties to terrorism networks, including a 1999 al-Qaida plot to bomb Los Angeles International Airport.

Meanwhile **France's** official Muslim council has warned the government not to expect it to impose a planned ban on full face veils for women that legal experts argue will be unconstitutional and police predict will be unenforceable.

**Europe** and the *United States* last week agreed on a common strategy in the fight against terror, presented as a message to Islamabad on the eve of an *EU-Pakistan* summit. "This declaration is a message to the Muslim world," said Spanish Interior Minister Alfredo Rubalcaba, whose country's chairmanship of the **European Union** ended last month.

A senior *Iranian* envoy has accused the *International Atomic Energy Agency* last week of false reporting in saying that agency inspectors probing a laboratory for suspected undeclared nuclear experiments found some equipment removed.

### CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

**Poland** last week marked 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of parliamentary elections (1989) which brought a new



political dawn to the country. The election success ended decades of communism in **Poland**.

Last week's **Czech** election was distinctive owing to the high turnout of youth, owing to the lure of free beer, facebook campaigns, and greater electorate seats for women. All the winning parties in the election unanimously agreed on a centre-right coalition and resolved to reform the economy through austerity measure.

**Hungary's** parliament despite opposition from neighboring nations passed an amendment to its controversial new dual citizenship



Act on May 26 granting an easier route to citizenship for over two million ethnic **Hungarians** living in the region. Also June 4 has been designated the National Unity Day to commemorate the anniversary of a traumatic treaty that left much of the **Hungarian** nation outside the country's borders.

At the economic front EU and IMF warnings which demand budgetary consolidation and tight deficit management are expected to impair the new **Hungarian** government from carrying on with its tax cut and economic stimulus package. **Hungary** is still on the bailout package

of *EU* and *IMF* as a result of its last financial crisis

**Poland** and the Baltic states are geared at joining the Eurozone but with greater consideration after the Greece financial crisis. Yet Polish government is still determined to integrate its economy with the Eurozone as highlighted during the three days European Economic Congress held in Katowice, Silesia.

The **Polish** Central Statistical Office reveals that Poland's economy grew by 0.5 per cent in the first quarter, expanding at a slower pace than in the previous quarter but still on track for a strong full-year performance, meanwhile unemployment rate fell to 12.3 % in April.

The massive flood in **Poland** as a result of torrid rain has affected many neighborhoods in the country; meanwhile the EU and **Russia** are extending humanitarian assistance to the affected region.

A **Bahrain** delegation is in **Prague** to showcase the Kingdom's logistics credentials at the annual European Supply Chain & Logistics Summit this week and will attend the event in the **Czech Republic** capital from 7-9 June.

The small Baltic state of **Estonia** is reported to have signed an accession treaty with the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* to become the first former Soviet republic to join the exclusive club. *Israel* was the last country integrated into the Paris based organization.

**Ukrainian** President Viktor Yanukovich marked his 100 days in office amidst blames from the opposition accusing him of limiting civil liberties and surrendering national sovereignty to **Russia**.

**EU-Russia** visa regime might soon become a reality as leaders from the EU along with the **Russian** president extensively discuss the scheme that will facilitate movement of people between **Russia** and EU countries without visa hurdles. Meanwhile, **Bulgarian** government has relaxed visa rules for **Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusian** and **Moldavians** to visit the country.

The European Parliament took an uncomfortable stance against Tirana last week; refusing to have a resolution vote on **Albania's** EU integration. This follows the political impasse in the country following last June's disputed elections.

The unresolved vote is also implicative for **Albania-EU** visa liberalization scheme. Meanwhile, the parliament supported **Bosnia-EU** visa liberalization scheme but added that ethnic tensions and slow pace of political development in the country needed to be rectified.

UN war crimes tribunal has demanded more of **Croatia's** support in its investigation of war crimes associated with Zagreb where its cooperation is essentially attached to its political criteria for EU accession. Meanwhile as a sign of reconciliation and readiness for peaceful co-existence, **Croatian** President Ivo Josipovic made the first ever visit by to a **Croatian** head of state to Republika Srpska (BiH), visiting three major sites of massive killing of ethnic Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks.

**Croat** Labour union leaders are geared at gathering signatures required to call a referendum on recently proposed amendments to the labour law.

Local elections were held at the Serb populated northern **Kosovo**, organized by **Serbia** in bid to create a parallel structure in **Kosovo**. The election has been rejected by EULEX, International Civilian Representative and EU Special Representative Pieter Feith and the **Kosovo** authority as unauthorized and unrecognizable.

Meanwhile **Serbia** is maintaining good military standing aboard. Belgrade currently has peacekeepers with UN missions in the *Ivory Coast, Liberia, Congo* and *Chad* but plans to send missions to *Lebanon* and *Cyprus*, possibly this year.

The European commission has warned **Kosovo** authority from issuing biometric passports considered

dangerous at this moment. Violation of the recommendation might hurt and delay Pristina-EU visa liberalization scheme.

**Romanian** labour unions are on the streets protesting against government's austerity measures that will cut salaries and pension. The plan by the **Romanian** government is expected to help in managing deficit and meeting IMF requisite.

A 2 days NATO summit held in Bitola, **Macedonia** has reiterated the need to accelerate and integrate Western Balkans into the military bloc; where a failure to do so will make **Balkans** remain a bastion of potential tension.



## RUSSIA

The **Russian** economic ministry sees growth accelerating to **3.5 %** in 2012 and **4.2 %** in 2013, perhaps augmented by the president's proposal to establish a global financial centre in *Moscow*. This could be another indication that **Russia** is on the verge of showcasing its economic stamina. Meanwhile **Russia** and *New Zealand* are set to start Free-trade talks.

A latest report of experts of the international monitoring of economic conditions in Russia (RLMS) supports **Russian** claims of economic strength. The report holds that the number of households with the income level below the poverty line in **Russia** has dropped from 38 to 3 percent in 1998-2009.

**Russia** and *Japan* are soon to ink agreement upon which both countries will work together in car production. Chelyabinsk is a Russian area having high concentration of metallurgy and thus hopes to be viable car producing plants.

**Russia** is spearheading an anti-terrorism summit that will host top security and law enforcement officials from 63 countries and the UN counter-terrorism bodies.

Meanwhile the old trust deficit between **Russia** and *Poland* is resurfacing after the twin brother of the late *Polish* president Lech Kaczynski, Jaroslaw, said that he does not completely trust the **Russian** authorities to be included in the investigation into his brother's death.

Ruling *Armenian* Republican Party and the **Russian** Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS) are set to have a roundtable meeting in order to foster **Russian** and **Armenian** political and economic cooperation, interaction in the sphere of security, the settlement of *Nagorno-Karabakh* issue and perspectives for normalization of relations between *Armenia* and *Turkey*.

## US/CANADA

The chief **U.S.** negotiator of the new **U.S.-Russia** nuclear arms treaty *Rose Gottemoeller* has said that she hopes the "New START" signed by Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama in April will spur the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament to begin talks this summer on banning the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium needed for atomic bombs.

Following mounting criticism regarding the oil spill off the *Gulf of Mexico* Obama has sent a legal threat to BP the oil company involved threatening litigation for the spill. The spill crisis has forced the president to cancel his foreign trips.

Obama's White House is trying to diffuse the allegation that his government has been involved in political maneuvering and deal making geared at favoring particular candidate for Senate primaries and State governorship. The allegation is a dent on Obama's pledge of playing a clear politics devoid of interest. Meanwhile the Republicans have tagged the alleged deal making as Chicago-style politics.

At the international front **U.S-Israel** relation has been strained recently and both parties are finding ways to patch their differences. Unlike the rest of the world condemning *Israel* for attacking the flotilla, **U.S** vice president Joe Biden has voiced his opinion that *Israel* has the right to protect itself.

The slipping support for the conservative minority government in **Canada** does not suggest the support has shifted to the opposition. According to the weekly Ekos survey, support for the Conservatives is at **31.7 %**, down from **33.9 %** last week. Support for the Liberals, the biggest opposition party, dropped to **26.2 %** from

27.1 %.

The **Canadian** authority is preparing a high security arrangement for the forthcoming G 8 and G20 summits scheduled for Toronto. The arrangement is estimated around one billion-dollar, a bill challenged by the opposition parties as wasteful expenditure.

The **Canadian** government and the Central Bank are not expected to change present policy until the economy regains its stamina. The government hopes to see the currency stable, more employments and entire health economy. The economy saw an improvement last week with an increase of 24,700 jobs.

## LATIN AMERICA

The **Brazilian** economy is expected to grow by 6-7% this year and the country is witnessing a fall in unemployment.

In **Venezuela** Political tussle between President Hugo Chavez and opposition politicians continues as accusation and counter accusation are made. Chavez is accused of undermining freedom of speech and privatization, an accusation taken by the president as baseless and contravening his style of socialism.

Saifur Rehman Khan, the *Pakistani* arrested for the presence of traces of explosives on himself at the US embassy in Santiago, **Chile** has been released but remains under investigation and has been asked not to leave the country.

The MoU signed between **Argentina** and **Bolivia** has opened the way for gas sharing ties till 2026. According to the agreement **Bolivia** will supply natural gas to **Argentina's** Northeastern side at a fairer price.

**Mexican** health authority is launching a campaign against obesity, especially targeting over weight school children. The campaign will require school canteens and vendors to adhere to the permitted products and

laid down rules of the health ministry. The **Mexican** government is also eyeing the possibility of reducing consumption of fossil oil because of its environmental implications. Such reduction will then pave the way for increasing **Mexico's** dependence and capacity on cheap nuclear energy.

Meanwhile the increasing threat caused by the oil spill on the **Gulf of Mexico** is now creating concern for the **Mexican** government that shares part of the sea with the *United States*.

**Brazil** and **Argentina** are both seeking greater linkages and



cooperation with *Angola*. Meanwhile Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's recent visit to **Brazil** marked the first visit of *Turkish* premier to the largest Latin American country, where both seek greater cooperation. Erdogan also extended his reach to neighboring **Chile** with the aim of increasing trade relations; however the visit to **Chile** was shortened due to the attack by *Israeli* commandos on the *Turkish* flotilla. **Brazil** and **Venezuela** too have joined the world in condemning the *Israeli* assault on the vessel carrying humanitarian aid for Palestinians.

The **Mexican** government is seeking cordial relations with neighbors and trade partners; this was on the agenda last week when President *Calderon* was in Washington and Ottawa to streamline ties with other members of NAFTA. Increasing border troops to combat illegal immigration and drug trafficking were highlighted in Washington and relaxation of visa rule for Mexicans was another important discussion *Calderon* had with PM *Stephen Harper*.

**Mexico** is expected to open its embassy in *Nigeria* which will be serving the rest of ECOWAS countries. The diplomatic presence in the region will facilitate multilateral relations in field of agro-industry and telecommunication.

**Venezuela** hopes to accelerate ties with **Cuba** through police training. Previously **Cuba** has been also responsible for the training of **Venezuelan** doctors and nurses. §