

Friday on the facebook

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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.



Who are we?

Friday on the Facebook is 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 make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Face-book provides 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 is grounded in a thorough Analytical framework of Relocation of Power in the 21st Century.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter is targeted to produce an annual synthesis of Global Trends. Each issue will serve as an input for the annual analysis.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter is designed to become a teaching tool for class-room instruction in courses dealing with global political sociology or related fields.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter is designed to build a theoretically inclined community of political sociologists.

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Global Opinions

For the week

This week's report consists of 27 surveys. 1 of these is a multi-country survey. 12 polling organizations have been represented.



Topic of the week:

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER EQUITY

► This page is devoted to opinions of countries whose polling activity is generally not known very widely or where a recent topical issue requires special attention .



Commentary: (Pew Research Center): Fifteen years after the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women's Beijing Platform for Action proclaimed that "shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities," people around the globe embrace

the document's key principles.

Almost everywhere, solid majorities express support for gender equality and agree that women should be able to work outside the home. Most also find a marriage in which both spouses share financial and household responsibilities to be more satisfying than one in which the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children. In addition, majorities in most countries reject the notion that higher education is more important for a boy than for a girl.

Yet, despite a general consensus that women should have the same rights as men, people in many countries around the world say gender inequalities persist in their countries. Many say that men get more opportunities than equally qualified women for jobs that pay well and that life is generally better for men than it is for women in their countries. This is especially so in some of the wealthier nations surveyed. And while majorities in nearly every country surveyed express support for gender equality, equal rights supporters in most countries say that more changes are needed to ensure that women have the same rights as men.

Should Women Have Equal Rights With Men?

	Total	Men	Women	Gap
% Yes	%	%	%	
Egypt	60	45	76	+31
Nigeria	45	35	56	+21
Kenya	73	63	83	+20
Indonesia	64	55	74	+19
Jordan	61	54	69	+15
Pakistan	79	72	86	+14

Only countries with a double-digit gender gap shown.

Pew Research Center Q80.

A special in-depth 22-nation survey by the *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, conducted April 7 to May 8, looks at views on gender equality, done in association with the International Herald Tribune. It suggests that while egalitarian sentiments are pervasive, they are less than robust; when economically challenging times arise many feel men should be given preferential treatment over women in the search for employment.

This is especially true in the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed as well as in India, China, South Korea and Nigeria. In these countries, solid majorities agree that women should be able to work outside the home; yet, most also agree that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce. For example, about six-in-ten in Egypt (61%) and Jordan (58%) say women should have the right to work outside the home, but even larger shares (75% and 68%, respectively) say the priority should be for men to have jobs.

Majorities in every country polled agree that women should be able to work outside the home. In 17 of the 22 countries, most say they completely agree with this assertion, including at least three-

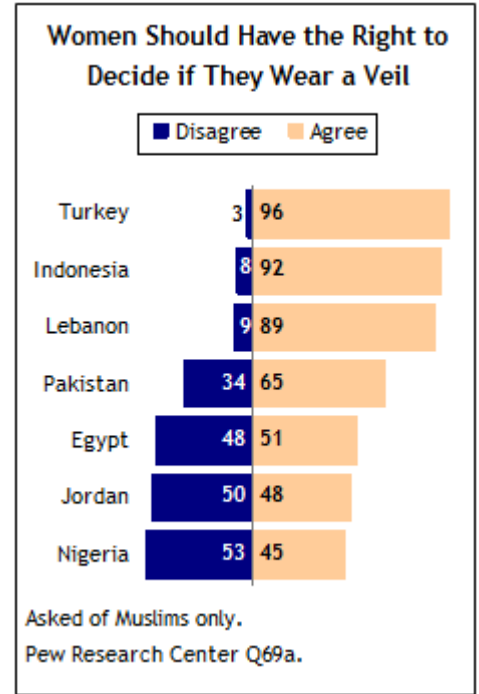
quarters in Brazil (88%), Britain (84%), the U.S. (81%) and Germany (79%).

Solid majorities in virtually every country surveyed say that women should have the same rights as men. This opinion is nearly unanimous in

Western European and Latin American countries, as well as in the U.S., Poland, Lebanon, China, India, and South Korea; at least nine-in-ten men and women in these countries express support for gender equality. Only in Nigeria does a majority (54%) reject the idea that women and men should have equal rights.

In 19 of 22 countries, majorities say that a marriage where both husband and wife have jobs and take care of the house and children is a more satisfying way of life than having the husband provide financially while the wife cares for the household.

Publics across the countries surveyed offer mixed views on whether men should have more of a right to a job than women during tough economic times. Majorities in 11 of 22 countries surveyed reject this idea, and this is particularly true in the U.S. and Western Europe. In Nigeria as well as in many Asian and predominantly Muslim countries, however, most respondents say that men should receive preferential treatment when jobs are scarce.



	Men?	Women?	Same	DK
<i>Where more say men do</i>	%	%	(Vol) %	%
France	75	14	9	2
Poland	55	15	25	6
Germany	49	15	27	9
Nigeria	46	25	26	3
Spain	45	16	33	5
Brazil	42	30	27	1
India	40	33	26	2
Britain	39	16	36	9
U.S.	39	23	24	15
Kenya	36	28	34	2
<i>Where more say both the same</i>				
Mexico	27	14	56	3
Indonesia	29	15	55	1
Russia	29	14	52	5
China	22	24	49	6
Jordan	28	23	47	2
Lebanon	18	34	47	1
Egypt	32	16	46	7
Argentina	27	21	46	6
Pakistan	37	16	42	6
Turkey	33	27	38	2
<i>Where more say women do</i>				
S. Korea	26	49	23	3
Japan	29	47	20	5

Pew Research Center Q6.

	Agree	Disagree	DK
	%	%	%
U.S.	15	83	2
Britain	9	87	3
France	14	87	0
Germany	16	83	1
Spain	7	93	0
Poland	34	58	8
Russia	22	73	5
Turkey	25	69	6
Egypt	50	47	3
Jordan	44	54	2
Lebanon	4	97	0
China	48	50	2
India	63	32	5
Indonesia	28	71	1
Japan	35	64	3
Pakistan	51	39	10
S. Korea	27	69	3
Argentina	10	88	2
Brazil	11	87	1
Mexico	14	84	3
Kenya	22	77	0
Nigeria	34	66	1

Pew Research Center Q33.

Publics in 18 of 22 countries disagree with the notion that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. And in 10 of these countries, many strongly reject this idea; majorities in Lebanon (84%), Brazil (78%), Argentina (72%), Britain (71%), France (70%), Mexico (65%), Germany (64%), Spain (62%), the U.S. (60%), and Kenya (59%) completely disagree that it is more important for a boy to receive a university education. Still, a solid majority in India (63%) and about half in Pakistan (51%), Egypt (50%) and China (48%) say that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl, and sizeable minorities in several countries agree.

In four of the seven countries where the question was asked, clear majorities of Muslims say that women should have the right to decide if they wear a veil. This view is most widespread in Turkey, Indonesia and Lebanon.

Opinions about who has a better life – men or women –are mixed. In 10 of 22 nations, majorities or pluralities say that, all things considered, men have the better life in their countries. In 10 others, more volunteer that there is no difference than say that life is better for one sex than the other. Only in Japan and South Korea do pluralities say that life is better for women in their countries (47% and 49%, respectively). §

SOURCE: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1639/global-survey-gender-equality-women-rights-job-priority-education-girls>

SUMMARY OF POLLS



Asia zone

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



► MIDDLE EAST

Fatah Clearly Ahead of Hamas among Palestinians (Click for Details)

The next election to the **Palestinian** Legislative Council would see Fatah winning, according to a poll by the **Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research**. **45 %** of respondents would vote for Fatah in the next election, up three points since March.

July 01, 2010

Domestic Politics » Political Parties

► NORTHEAST ASIA

Taiwan's Ma Fails to Regain Public's Trust (Click for Details)

Most people in **Taiwan** remain disappointed with the performance of Ma Ying-jeou, according to a poll by **Global Views**. Only **28.4 %** of respondents are satisfied with their president, down two points since May.

June 27, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Performance Ratings](#)

Kan Already Facing Negative Trend in Japan (Click for Details)

Japan's new administration led by Naoto Kan is already losing public support, according to a poll by **Mainichi**. **52 %** of respondents approve of Kan's appointed cabinet, down 14 points since early June.

July 02, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Performance Ratings](#)

Global poll- Gender Equality Universally Embraced, but Inequalities Acknowledged (Click for Details)

[Society](#) » [Gender Issues](#)



Africa zone

▶ WEST AFRICA; EAST AFRICA; CENTRAL AFRICA; SOUTHERN AFRICA

▶ **SUB SAHARAN AFRICA**

Global poll- Gender Equality Universally Embraced, but Inequalities Acknowledged (Click for Details)

[Society](#) » [Gender Issues](#)

Multi-Country poll- East African Community Citizens Favor Freer Labor Flow (Click for Details)

[Economy](#) » [Employment Issues](#)



Euro Americas zone

▶ EAST EUROPE; WEST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA & AUSTRALASIA



EUROPE

▶ **EAST EUROPE**



Half of Russians Would Back EU Entry (Click for Details)

Half of people in **Russia** would agree with their country's potential accession to the European Union (EU), according to a poll by **Yury Levada Analytical Center**. **50 %** of respondents think the country should enter the EU, down nine points since December 2004.

June 28, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [International / Regional Organizations](#)

► WEST EUROPE



Britons Clearly Dismayed with Economic Conditions (Click for Details)

People in [Britain](#) are dissatisfied with their country's financial standing, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). Only **9 %** of respondents rate the economic conditions in the United Kingdom as good or very good, down four points since May.

July 03, 201

[Economy](#) » [Perceptions on Performance/ Well-Being](#)

Britons Assess Government on Deficit Reduction (Click for Details)

Almost half of adults in [Britain](#) trust their government to deal with the country's budget deficit, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **46 %** of respondents are "very confident" or "moderately confident" that the government will be able to carry out its deficit reduction plan in a way that strengthens and unites the country.

July 01, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Perceptions on Performance/ Well-Being](#)



AMERICAS

► NORTH AMERICA

Majority of Americans Favor Obama's Afghanistan Timetable (Click for Details)

A majority of [Americans](#) (**58%**) favor President Barack Obama's timetable that calls for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan beginning in July 2011. Most of the **38%** of Americans who are opposed reject the idea of setting any timetable rather than setting one with an earlier or later date. [Gallup USA](#)

June 29, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [Afghanistan War](#)

Most Americans Still Troubled by Economy (Click for Details)

Many adults in the [United States](#) are dissatisfied with their country's economic standing, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **85 %** of respondents rate the economic conditions in the U.S. as poor or very poor.

July 02, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Perceptions on Performance/ Well-Being](#)

One in Three Americans "Extremely Patriotic" (Click for Details)

According to [Gallup USA](#) survey one in three [Americans](#) (**32%**) now say they are "extremely patriotic," up from **26%** in 2005 and **19%** in 1999.

July 2, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [National Image/ Trust](#)

Republicans, Democrats Still Fiercely Divided on Role of Gov't. (Click for Details)

[Gallup poll](#) finds that **81%** of Republicans say the government is trying to do too much that should be left to individuals and businesses, while **63%** of Democrats say government should do more to solve the country's problems -- underscoring what will certainly be one of the most contentious issues facing voters in this fall's midterm elections

June 28, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Political Parties](#)

Tea Party Supporters Overlap Republican Base (Click for Details)

There is significant overlap between [Americans](#) who identify as supporters of the Tea Party movement and those who identify as conservative Republicans. Their similar ideological makeup and views suggest that the Tea Party movement is more a rebranding of core Republicanism than a new or distinct entity on the American political scene. [Gallup USA](#)

July 2, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Political Parties](#)

The Great Recession at 30 Months (Click for Details)

More than half (**55%**) of all [American](#) adults in the labor force say that since the Great Recession began 30 months ago, they have suffered a spell of unemployment, a cut in pay, a reduction in hours or have become involuntary part-time workers, according to a new survey by the [Pew Research Center's](#) Social and Demographic Trends Project.

June 30, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Employment Issues](#)

Voting Intentions Even, Turnout Indicators Favor GOP (Click for Details)

With four months to go before Election Day in [America](#), voting intentions for the House remain closely divided, and neither party has gained or lost much ground over the course of 2010. However, Republicans are much more engaged in the coming election and more inclined to say they are certain to vote than are Democrats.

July 1, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Elections](#)

U.S. Congress Falls Below 20% Mark (Click for Details)

[Americans](#) have a favorable view of the way members of the House of Representatives and the Senate are doing their jobs, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **18 %** of respondents approve of the performance of Congress, down seven points since May.

July 03, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Performance Ratings](#)

Half of Americans Disapprove of Obama (Click for Details)

Fewer adults in the [United States](#) are satisfied with Barack Obama, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **50 %** of respondents disapprove of their president's performance, up five points since May.

June 30, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [Performance Ratings](#)

Americans Agree with McChrystal's Dismissal (Click for Details)

People in the [United States](#) believe their president was right in accepting the resignation of the Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **53 %** of respondents agree with General Stanley McChrystal's dismissal.

June 29, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [Military Issues/ Defence](#)

Flag is Most Cherished Symbol for Canadians (Click for Details)

Many adults in [Canada](#) hold positive feelings on their flag, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **88 %** of respondents are very or moderately proud of the Canadian flag.

July 03, 2010

[Domestic Politics](#) » [National Image/ Trust](#)

Police Reaction in Toronto Justified for Canadians (Click for Details)

People in [Canada](#) and residents of the latest G20 summit host city believe the reaction of the police to the demonstrations that took place during the meeting of world leaders was justified, according to a poll by

Angus Reid Public Opinion. 66 % of respondents in Canada—and 73 % of people in Toronto—agree with this view.

July 02, 2010

Society » Civil Society

Justice System Unfair for Three-in-Five Canadians (Click for Details)

Many adults in **Canada** seem disappointed with their justice system, according to a poll by **Angus Reid Public Opinion.** 59 % of respondents think the justice system in their country does not treat every person fairly.

June 30, 2010

Society » Justice



► **AUSTRALASIA**

More Australians Call for Afghanistan Withdrawal (Click for Details)

The proportion of people in **Australia** who want to end their country's commitment in Afghanistan has risen considerably, according to a poll by **Essential Media Communications.** 61 % of respondents think Australia should withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, up 11 points since March 2009.

June 30, 2010

Foreign Affairs & Security » Afghanistan War

Half of New Zealanders Back Governing National (Click for Details)

Support for **New Zealand's** governing conservatives has remained stable, according to a poll by **Roy Morgan International.** 50.5 % of respondents would vote for the National party in the next legislative election, down two points since May.

June 27, 2010

Domestic Politics » Performance Ratings



GLOBAL/MULTI-COUNTRY POLLS

Gender Equality Universally Embraced, but Inequalities Acknowledged (Click for Details)

Fifteen years after the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women's Beijing Platform for Action proclaimed that "shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities," people around the globe embrace the document's key principles. Almost everywhere, solid majorities express support for gender equality and agree that women should be able to work outside the home. **Pew Research Center**

July 01, 2010

Society » Gender Issues

East African Community Citizens Favor Freer Labor Flow (Click for Details)

Services, capital, and labor should move more freely when the East African Community (EAC) common market opens Thursday, but people will still need permits to work in most of the five partner states. Although only **Rwanda** has eliminated work permits and **Kenya** looks to follow suit, **Gallup surveys** last year show the idea of moving freely for work within the EAC is popular in all countries.

July 1, 2010

Economy » Employment Issues

► **CYBER WORLD**



McChrystal's Comments Turn the Social Media to Afghanistan (Click for Details)

The removal of Gen. Stanley McChrystal as the top commander in Afghanistan led to a rare week when the war captured the attention of social media. For the week of June 21-25, **27%** of the news links on blogs and **10%** on Twitter were about [Afghanistan](#) according to the New Media Index from the [Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism](#) and this was the highest level of coverage that war has received since PEJ began News Media Index in January 2009.

July 1, 2010

[Society](#) » [Media/ New Media](#) §

Events of the week in

Asia zone

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

GCC

Geo-strategic Front:

Growing ties of **GCC** and **EU** remained in focus this week as well. Meanwhile the US President held meeting with **Saudi King** at G-20 Summit and discussed various issues primarily related to the *Middle East* peace process and *Iranian* nuclear issue.

A joint **UK-UAE** diplomatic taskforce has been established in the first move by the new British government to forge stronger ties with the world's emerging economic powers.

OIC has announced to hold a meeting in order to express solidarity with *Palestinians*. Meanwhile **Qatar** and Pakistan have signed a joint cooperation agreement on military affairs. **GCC** countries have been putting maximum effort to collaborate with various countries against the menace of terrorism.

Economic Front:

Saudi Kingdom has increased its production capacity to 12.5 million barrels per day in order to stabilize international oil market. **Saudi** leader at G-20 summit also called upon consumer countries to establish effective financial and commodity markets to avoid fluctuations in oil prices. He further asked consuming countries to cooperate with the producing countries in order to ensure market stability and the flow of investments required for energy production.

On June 28 the **UAE** froze the accounts of dozens of Iran-linked firms named in the UN sanctions resolution. Dubai, home to some 80,000 *Iranians* and thousands of Iranian businesses, re-exported \$ 5.8 billion of goods to Iran last year.



Despite the global economic crisis the investment atmosphere in the **Arab** states remained largely regular due to the enacting of some vital legislations, increasing incentives for investors, slashing taxes and drawing up bilateral and multi-party transactions.

Social Front:

Kuwait Ministry of Higher Education has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with two universities in Hong Kong. A number of **Kuwaiti** MPs have expressed their rejection of any amendments to the Islamic teaching curricula in **Kuwaiti** schools. The parliamentarians accused education minister of 'making a mistake' in instructing ministry officials to remove 'controversial' lessons from the Islamic Studies curricula. **Bahraini** King has assured his public that they stand at top priority for him. He also emphasized his keenness to co-opt citizens and ensure their active participation in making crucial decisions, through the National Assembly and municipal councils.

AFGHANISTAN

Political Front:

President *Hamid Karzai* has submitted a list of seven nominee ministers to fill his cabinet posts. Five of the nominees got approval of the Lower House of The Parliament.

Meanwhile violence remained high in various regions of **Afghanistan**. In this regard two NATO supplying fuel tankers were set afire, while a CD shop was blown up in the eastern province of Nangarhar. Likewise, two tribal elders have been killed in two separate incidents of violence in southern Helmand province and three NATO soldiers got killed in separate explosions in the increasingly volatile eastern and southern regions of **Afghanistan**. Over all the death of foreign troops has hit the record toll of 100 in June, making it the deadliest month since beginning of the war in **Afghanistan**.

Geo-strategic Front:

The government of *United States* officially has handed over the 105-megawatt Tarakhil power plant to the **Afghan** government.

Despite the fact that many countries consider US policies in **Afghanistan** to be a failure; newly appointed US commander in **Afghanistan** *David Petraeus* has denounced any chances of bringing change in the **Afghan**-war strategy.

Meanwhile the UN secretary-general's special envoy to **Afghanistan** has expressed his deep concerns over deteriorating security situation in the war-torn country. **Afghan** Ministry of Defense rejected a report published in an influential US newspaper that said President Karzai has agreed to send a group of military officers to *Pakistan* for training.

Economic Front:

The US government recently stated that it has no objection to the *Chinese* investment in **Afghanistan**.

Meanwhile a U.S. survey has discovered almost \$1 trillion of mineral deposits in **Afghanistan**. Nearly 200 international firms have shown their interest to invest in **Afghanistan's** mines.

Social Front:

President Hamid Karzai has called on the international community to show sincerity in fighting the menace of drug trafficking that benefited international drug traffickers and dealers, who encouraged **Afghans** to grow poppy.

The *Danish* government has pledged to provide a major assistance of \$60 million to the Ministry of Education to boost the quality of education in **Afghanistan**. A huge



demonstration attended by more than one thousand people has asked the government to ensure that the two official languages, *Pashto* and *Dari*, should be treated equally in the public sector.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front:

Bangladesh has witnessed a number of strikes by garment workers as well as opposition party. Involvement of police to contain protestors has been leaving many people wounded. PM has urged opposition to leave the politics of protests and to rejoin parliament. Meanwhile **Bangladeshi** police has arrested three top leaders of **Bangladesh's** Islamic Party on the charge of offending religious sentiments of the Muslim majority.

United Nations has expressed serious concern regarding prevailing political instability in **Nepal**. Meanwhile amidst huge pressure, PM of **Nepal** has resigned from his designation last week. Opposition party appreciated his decision. In the meantime parties have started struggle to grab power. Caretaker Prime Minister Madhav Kumar of **Nepal** called the heads of all four security agencies to a meeting directing them to maintain necessary vigil to avert possible security threats in the transitional situation in the aftermath of his resignation.

In response to the UN concern **Sri Lankan** PM claimed that government could cope with the internal security issues without foreign intervention.

Meanwhile **Sri Lankan** government has assured the United Nations that a threat made by a government minister on the UN office and staff in *Colombo* was an individual opinion and not the government's policy. Also the **Sri Lankan** government has refused allegations that it is creating an "alliance" with the followers and the supporters of Tamil Tigers.

Geo-strategic Front:

The Unified Communist Party of **Nepal**-Maoists (UCPN-M) has decided to express solidarity with **Indian** Maoists, who have intensified their armed struggle against the state.

Economic Front:

A senior **Bangladeshi** professor has warned that continuing energy crisis would cause a whopping 16.6 billion dollars annual loss to the country's economy. *China* has promised to provide duty-free entry to major Bangladeshi products with an aim to offset the annual trade gap of \$2.5 million. **Sri Lanka** has retained much of its heavy defense budget this year more than a year after ending the country's civil war. The **Sri Lankan** government has presented the Appropriation Bill for the 2010 Budget with an estimated Rs. 974.748 billion as expenditure for its services for the remainder of the financial year of 2010.

Social Front:

Bangladeshi Parliament has passed a bill increasing retirement age of workers employed in various industries.

INDIA

Political Front:

BJP has asked people not to criticize security forces for their use of force in **Kashmir** until judicial commission submits its report regarding killings of innocent civilians in the state. Meanwhile BJP and Left



Bangladeshi policeman appears to be about to hit a child during clashes with garment workers in Dhaka. Photograph: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP/Getty Images

parties have separately given a call for a nationwide strike on July 5 against the fuel price hike. Oil Minister however defended the government's position.

The JD-U has begun serious efforts to consolidate its Muslim vote by assuring recognition to over 2,400 madrasas and demanded Scheduled Caste status for over one crore Dalit Muslims of Bihar. In the meantime The BJP and JD-U have finalized seat sharing in Bihar for the upcoming Assembly election in the state.



security personnel preparing to leave for a raid on Naxal hideouts, near Angara forest, in Ranchi.

Maoists continued their attacks last week against CRPF in Chhattisgarh leaving a number of people dead and injured.

Geo-strategic Front:

Much to **India's** relief, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has failed to adopt new guidelines that would have led to the denial of enrichment and reprocessing (ENR) technology to countries like itself that have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Meanwhile **India** and *Canada* have signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement.

Britain and France have voiced their support for **India's** case for permanent membership of the UN Security Council and favored deepening of bilateral.

Economic Front:

India's current account deficit (CAD) rose to \$38.4 billion during 2009-10 from \$28.7 billion a year ago. Meanwhile software exports fetched \$49.7 billion in 2009-10, up 7.4% over the previous year. Leaders of the G-20 group of nations have decided against immediate withdrawal of economic stimulus, strongly

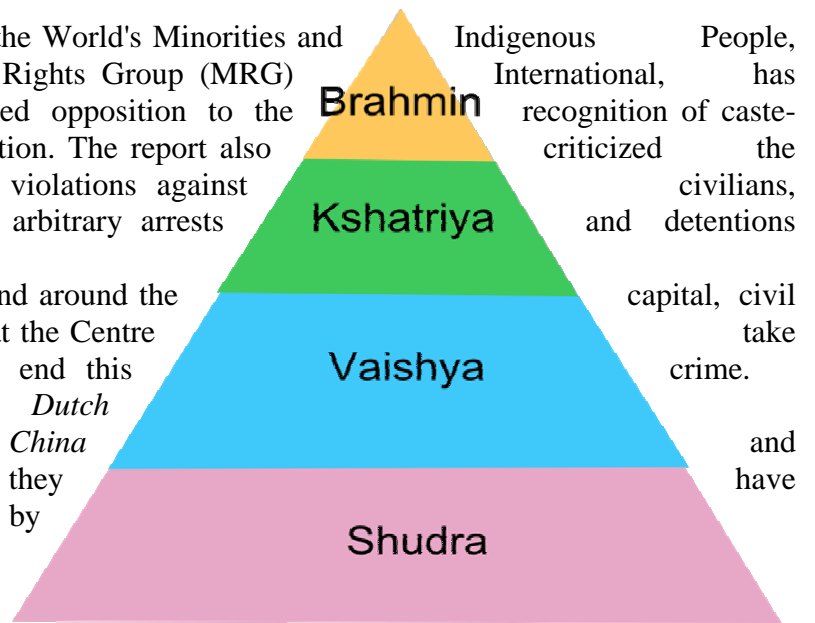
pushed for by **India**, to preserve the "fragile" global recovery, while agreeing that countries should themselves decide on the contentious financial levies.

Social Front:

The South Asia chapter of the 2010 State of the World's Minorities and brought out by the London-based Minority Rights Group (MRG) criticized the **Indian** government's continued opposition to the based discrimination as a human rights violation. The report also Indian army for committing human rights violations against including extra-judicial killings, abductions, arbitrary arrests in the guise of counter-terrorism.

Outraged by the spate of 'honor' killings in and around the society groups got together and demanded that the Centre exemplary and comprehensive measures to end this

At the environmental front a *Dutch* environment report has blamed high growth in *China* **India** for the rise in carbon emissions, saying they "completely nullified" the reductions achieved by rich nations. §



Events of the week in

Africa zone

► WEST AFRICA; EAST AFRICA; CENTRAL AFRICA; SOUTHERN AFRICA

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa: Nascent political group, **Nigerians** in the Diaspora for Jonathan 2011, has said President Goodluck Jonathan is the candidate to beat in next year's presidential election.



At a Civil- Military Forum in **Nigeria** organized by the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshall Paul Dike, the federal government has been urged to extend the *Niger Delta Amnesty programme* to include an apology by the **Nigerian** military to victims of its high-handedness over the years. Meanwhile The House of Representatives Committee on Defence summoned the Minister of Defence, Chief Adetokunbo Kayode and his Minister of State (Defence), Alhaji Murtala Yar'Adua, over the alleged premature retirement of about 79 officers from the **Nigeria** Armed Forces.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited **Nigeria** last week in a move considered by analysts as an attempt to build alliances against stronger United Nations sanctions over its nuclear programme. He was in *Nigeria* for a summit of an organization known as the *D-8*, for a group of developing countries.

In **Nigeria** the people of Okigwe South Federal Constituency of Imo State have condemned the suspension of their member in the House of Representatives, Chief Austin Nwachukwu and accused the Speaker, Hon. Dimeji Bankole, of diverting N1billion ecological fund meant for the area to Ogun State. Consequently, they have given Bankole a seven-day ultimatum to reverse the suspension and restore in the 2010 budget the N1billion fund meant for checking erosion in Umuariam, Obowo Council area of Imo State.

Meanwhile **Nigeria's** House of Representatives has passed the Electoral Act 2010 and empowered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to deregister political parties, which fail to meet a set of criteria embedded in the new law. The new legislation if adopted by the Senate will effectively checkmate the proliferation of political parties and discourage the existence of 'mushroom parties' most of whom have existed only in the portfolios of their founders.

Nigeria's The National Democratic Party (NDP) clarified last week that it had not taken a decision to endorse former Military President, General Ibrahim Babangida as a candidate for the 2011 presidential election.

Nigeria last week assumed the presidency of the United Nations (UN) Security Council. **Nigeria's** Permanent Representative to the UN Professor Joy Ogwu is to occupy the presidency for the month of July, taking over from *Mexico*, which presided over the Council in *June*.

Ghana's Vice President John Dramani Mahama last week gave the assurance that government would provide logistics and resources that would enhance and deepen decentralization. "We however plead with all the stakeholders in the process to play their roles responsibly to ensure that decentralization and democracy become realities at the grassroots level." he said.

In **Liberia** George Weah's Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP), Mr. Alhaji Kromah's disqualified All Liberians Coalition Party (ALCOP), along with Winston Tubman's Liberia National Union (LINU) and the New Deal Movement, last week announced a merger in their bid to defeat the ruling Unity Party. The National Elections Commission (NEC) has however barred ALCP because, it says, it has failed to meet the requirements for a functioning political party, amongst them having national offices.



International observers noted that **Guinea's** first free election since independence in 1958 was hit by some technical problems but appeared to have gone off smoothly. According to preliminary results Former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo won the first round of **Guinea's** presidential election to restore civilian rule but failed to secure a majority. The second-placed party in **Guinea's** presidential vote has said it will challenge some poll results. The two are due to go head to head in a July 18 run-off for the presidency of the world's biggest bauxite exporter after the election commission said Diallo won with **39.72 %**, ahead of Conde on **20.67 %**, but short of an overall majority.

Meanwhile the peaceful poll in **Guinea** has added to widespread skepticism among residents of neighboring **Ivory Coast** about whether their leaders are really committed to holding an election already delayed for five years. Just like **Guinea, Ivory Coast** badly needs a poll to produce a government with the mandate to get the country and its economy back on its feet. But unlike its vastly poorer neighbor, the world's top cocoa-grower seems incapable of doing so, with half a dozen election dates missed since 2005 while politicians wrangle over voter identification or procedures for disarming rebels.

In **Sierra Leon** the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) charged with the responsibility to serve as a guide and providing checks and balances for political parties in the country, has started putting its house in order to face the challenges pose by the crucial 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Central Africa: **Gabon's** actions to fight corruption and protect the environment were the focus of discussions today between Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the leader of the African nation as he began the final leg of the United Nations chief's third official trip to the continent over the past month. Mr. Ban and President Ali Bongo Ondimba also discussed the situation in the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, **Gabon's** border dispute with **Equatorial Guinea** and its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping

operations. The Secretary-General acknowledged **Gabon's** strides towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** marked 50 Years of Independence last week. As *Belgium's* King Albert II attended the **DRC's** 50th anniversary celebrations, rights campaigners were pointing the finger at his country's controversial record as the former colonial power. Half a century after independence, *Belgium* has still to come to terms with the legacy of the harsh treatment of the colony through the end of the 19th century and its involvement in the assassination of independence hero Patrice Lumumba.



Democratic Republic of Congo President Joseph Kabila has pledged to work towards permanent democracy in his country, saying the Central African giant is poised to become "a tree of peace and power" on the continent.

In an audiotape made available to reporters, former **Burundian** rebel leader Agathon Rwasa says the government plans to arrest him on charges of planning to mount a new insurgency. He said he is being targeted because he led the opposition in alleging that crucial local elections in May were rigged.

The leader of the opposition Democratic Green Party of **Rwanda** has called on President Paul Kagame's government to help end the escalating violence ahead of the general elections scheduled for August this year.

East & the horn of Africa: Formal negotiations have begun on a new international treaty to control the trade of conventional weapons. More than 190 nations are taking part at U.N. headquarters in New York. Supporters of the treaty say it would save thousands of lives every year. Also vast majority of governments in **Africa**, Europe and Asia have voted in the General Assembly for the development of the treaty.

Somaliland, which lies on the Horn of Africa in the north-western corner of Somalia, is not formally recognized by any country – this past week however a peaceful presidential election was held there. International observers said it met all the western standards for a free election. Also the incumbent president accepted the result and has handed over power to his successor and bitter political rival. The region is peaceful, stable and has had several transfers of power and free elections in its 20-year history.

Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke will face a vote on a motion of no confidence that some 72 **Somali** lawmakers are planning to table against him in the parliament. The members of parliament said the constitutional tenure of Omar's government has expired, urging the premier to present his new cabinet list to the parliament for approval.

Southern Africa: The former head of **South Africa's** national police force and former president of Interpol has been convicted of corruption. The former top cop and president of the international police organization Interpol was accused of taking bribes totaling more than \$160,000 during a five-year period beginning in 2000.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

East & the horn of Africa: On July 2nd, the U.N. General Assembly voted unanimously to create a new agency dedicated to promoting the rights and needs of women and girls around the world. The U.N. Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is more commonly known as UN Women.

At least two men were killed and three more were injured last week after unidentified assailants hurled a grenade at a house in an area south of the **Somali** capital *Mogadishu*. It is believed that those inside were targeted for watching the Germany-Uruguay World Cup clash. Hezb al-Islam and its Al Qaeda-inspired allies from the *Shabab* movement have banned Somalis in the areas they control from gathering to watch the football World Cup, an activity they deem "un-Islamic".



United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign

Southern Africa: Madagascar female activists are asking that the right of women to participate directly in politics be included in a new draft of the country's Constitution, so that there can be **30 %** of female politicians in parliament by 2012 and **50 %** by 2015.

Reportedly one of **Zimbabwe** President Robert Mugabe's closest lieutenants is at the European Union to discuss lifting travel and financial restrictions on the ZANU-PF Party and some of its companies. Meanwhile The U.S. Treasury Department has placed **Zimbabwe's** president, his wife, and his nephew on its list of people believed to have funded terrorist groups.

Zimbabwe Mines Minister Obert Mpfu claimed in the pro-ZANU-PF Sunday Mail in Harare that two international rights organizations, Human Rights Watch and Partnership Africa Canada, tried to "bribe" him at the Kimberley Process Certification conference in Tel Aviv to financially support their work. Mpfu made his 'bribe' allegation after returning to **Zimbabwe** from a Kimberley Process conference in Tel Aviv that deadlocked on certification of **Zimbabwe's** diamonds from the Marange area. Meanwhile a statement by Mpfu, that the Cabinet had approved the sale of diamonds from the controversial Marange fields has been dismissed by another minister as "lies".

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: A Coalition comprising 47 groups including **Nigeria** Liberty Forum, UK, and Center for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), **Nigeria**, Stepping Stones Nigeria, Stakeholder Democracy Network, UK/Nigeria, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, Netherlands, PLATFORM / remember Saro-Wiwa, UK, Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, UK, Justice in Nigeria Now, USA, has canvassed a new compensation body to address the recurring issues of oil spills in the **Niger Delta** region.

Meanwhile **Nigeria** and other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have called on the United States to reconsider a recent ban on new deepwater drilling in response to the disaster caused by a ruptured BP oil well in the *Gulf of Mexico*. This development comes as **Nigeria** warned last week that it will henceforth impose heavy sanctions on **Nigerian** and other International Oil Companies that fail to implement the **Nigerian** Content Law to the letter.

Also the leadership of Environmental Health Service Providers Association of **Nigeria** has asked the Anglo-Dutch oil exploration giant, Shell Petroleum Development Company to commence the process of remediation of all areas affected by its operations and to also ensure that the affected communities are adequately compensated. Their demand is coming as *Mobil Producing Nigeria* (MPN) Unlimited, an affiliate of American oil giant, Exxonmobil is battling to contain the effect of oil spill recorded June 20, 2010. The company has also just recorded another spill from its facility discharged into the Atlantic Ocean.

Meanwhile for the first time, oil giant Shell has admitted that oil companies are not doing enough to deal with oil spills in their areas of operation. The company also said it was not ignorant of its obligation under the **Nigerian** law to clean up oil spills, but that it would not jeopardize the safety of its staff because of the law.

A new regional centre to help develop the renewable energy potential for West Africa opened last week in **Cape Verde's** capital Praia. The new Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), a specialized agency of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is supported by the UN's Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the governments of **Cape Verde, Austria and Spain.**

Guinea's Vice President John Dramani Mahama, last week called on the 16 member-states engaged in the prevention of pollution at the **Gulf of Guinea** to adopt pragmatic Regional Strategic Plan of Action that would combat all threats to marine life.



Southern Africa: For the first time in half a century, the number of new diagnosed cases of human African *trypanosomiasis* -also known as sleeping sickness - has dropped below 10,000 thanks to partnerships with drug companies and improved screening, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO). Meanwhile without a major breakthrough in preventing and treating diabetes, the number of cases in **sub-Saharan Africa** is projected to double, reaching 24 million by 2030, according to the Brussels-based International Diabetes Federation (IDF).

The outbreak of measles has so far claimed 758 lives, mostly in **Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Lesotho and South Africa.** Ahmadu Yakubu, Regional Immunization Adviser at the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) told IRIN there had been lapses in the measles immunization programme because "countries were not seeing cases anymore".

Swaziland has made remarkable progress in reducing HIV transmission from infected mothers to their babies, but health activists worry that this may be stalled or even reversed if lapses in basic health services are not addressed.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

West Africa: The World Bank, said last week that its commitments to Sub-Saharan Africa, which is its top priority area, rose to \$13.85billion in fiscal year 2010, a 28 per cent increase from the \$9.9billion recorded in 2009.

According to the 2010 technology and innovation report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development policymakers should "strengthen the competitiveness of small-holder farmers, thus avoiding a rural exodus that would put pressure on the cities and lead to more food imports". Also according to Bakari Seidou, food security advisor to Save the Children UK, the ongoing food crisis in the **Sahel** is actually a purchasing power crisis: there is food in the markets, but the poorest households cannot afford it. "Cash transfers need to be immediately organized to allow families to buy food," he said. Meanwhile the beginning of the rainy season in the arid **Sahel** region of **West Africa** is bringing hopes of renewed grazing land and harvests, but also apprehension in **Niger** as weakened animals are succumbing to the first rains, according to the government, aid workers and herders.

Nigeria's crude oil production tumbled 75,000 barrels to 2.01 million barrels, the first decrease since February and the largest reduction of any member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a Bloomberg survey of oil companies, producers and analysts has revealed.

Nigerian company Main One last week launched the commercial service of its 1,920 Gbps, 7000 kilometres long, submarine fibre optic cable system linking West Africa to Europe, two weeks ahead of schedule. The cable is expected to deliver unprecedented broadband capacity to West Africa, more than 10 times what is currently available.

According to the *United States* Justice Department, Global Engineering firm Technip S.A. has agreed to pay \$338 million for scheming to bribe government officials in **Nigeria**. The Paris-based company conducted the alleged bribery scheme to obtain more than \$6 billion in contracts to build the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in Bonny Island of Rivers State.

According to a press release from the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in **Ghana**, two-way trade between **Ghana** and the *United States* amounted to a total of \$361 million in the first four months of 2010, a 98% increase from the same period last year.

According to field operator Tullow Oil PLC, **Ghana's** Tweneboa and Jubilee oil fields could contain up to 1.4 billion and 1.5 billion barrels of oil equivalent in oil and gas reserves respectively. Meanwhile President John Evans Atta Mills has interacted with a delegation from Tullow Oil and assured **Ghanaians** that the government would account for every pesewa which would accrue from oil revenues in the country.

The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) has, in a landmark ruling, granted an award in favour of **Ghana** over an arbitration dispute instituted against her on September 24, 2007 by a *German* investment company, Gustav F. W. Hamester.

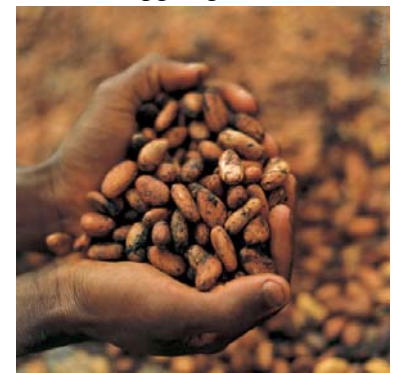
The World Bank Board has approved financing in the amount of US\$44.7 million from the International Development Association (IDA) to the Government of **Ghana** as additional funding for the ongoing *eGhana* Project. The original eGhana Project of US\$40 million was approved in 2006 to support the Ghana Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Accelerated Development Program.

Liberian media Executives and officials of the Ministry of Finance Revenue Department last week held a one day roundtable aimed at soliciting the media support in the Ministry of Finance tax awareness and sensitization campaign.

Legislators in **Ivory Coast** have proposed a general inquiry into corruption in the world's top cocoa grower, focusing on rampant graft in the cocoa export sector and continued diamond smuggling.

As the **Sierra Leone** government continues to engage the United States government to see reason and return the 1,200 carats of diamonds allegedly smuggled out of the country by some US jewelers in 2009, it is unlikely the government will get back the precious stones as the U.S. state department says America does not have any law sanctioning the release or return of any items seized within the US borders to their state of origin.

Central Africa: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank last week decided to support US\$ 12.3 billion in debt relief to the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC). The IMF decision was however controversial, with several countries protesting.



East & the horn of Africa: The **East African** Community took a giant leap as member states simultaneously launched the Common Market Protocol. The protocol, which was signed on November 20, last year, allows free movement of goods, services, capital and labor in the bloc. §

Events of the week in

Euro Americas zone

► WEST EUROPE; EAST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA & AUSTRALASIA

WESTERN EUROPE

Britons are expected later next year to vote through referendum to change the present British voting system. The reform could further point out the differences in the conservative-liberal coalition government. The reform is expected to touch on current British system of first-past-the-post system, under which a candidate needs the highest number of votes, not an absolute majority, to win a House of Commons seats. That system has favoured the biggest parties, the Conservatives and Labour. It will also consider whether or not to continue with current voting age of 21 for 18.

Political miscalculation has caused the coalition-led **German** government unexpected loss. Polls continue to show the falling approval of **German** Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government and if **Germans** are to go for elections, it is more likely to be a problematic election for the CDU-led government. The elections will be disastrous upon the fall-apart trend in the coalition.

The **EU** Commission has warned that if the Eurozone must be saved from the kind of **Greek** financial crisis, then country at the verge of such financial troubles should cut their spending. Caution was particularly sent to Club Med (**Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal**), thus explains the reason why the Portuguese government plans to bring down its public deficit to three % of GDP by 2012, bringing it into line with EU rules on budgetary discipline

Suffering a long-term fall in sales and a collapse in advertising revenue as the world goes online, some newspapers in **London** and elsewhere want to start charging readers for online access to their journalism.

Sweden has abolished a 100-year tradition of compulsory military service for men during peacetime, replacing it with a voluntary system with rigorous requirements to join. The new policy means that required military service will be applied only if the neutral Nordic nation of 9 million feels threatened. Lawmakers approved the change in a 2009 vote.



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Brussels is urging **Serbia** and **Kosovo** to start practical talk, regardless of whether Pristina's legality is confirmed or not. For **Serbia** it will be a further step on its EU accession and for **Kosovo** it will be a measurement of its sense of neighbourhoodness.

A mini summit hosted by **Kosovo** President Fatmir Sejdiu stressed the importance of regional co-operation, free movement of people, the rule of law and the fight against organized crime. The summit conveyed **Kosovo**, **Macedonia**, **Albania** and **Montenegro**, while **Serbia** was uninvited.

Meanwhile, the latest Freedom House's report shows an improvement in democratic practices in the **Balkan**, though all of the countries are still facing certain domestic problems.

Albania political landscape remains traumatic in view of the political impasses between ruling and opposition parties over the transparency of last June election. On a separate note, the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) leader Ilir Meta is urging the political leaders to facilitate electoral legislation that will give reasonable representation to smaller parties.

Croatia-EU accession got a boost from the EU Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) as the committee agreed to the three remaining chapters (judiciary, competition and foreign, security and defence policy) upon which its EU membership will be finally decided.

On the economic front: Despite the strong support for **Kosovo** government by his country, US Ambassador to **Kosovo** Christopher Dell criticized Pristina for failing to allow serious privatization. Dell believes **Kosovo's** economy is heavily and needlessly dominated by the government such trend was inherited from UNMIK and certainly from ex-**Yugoslavia** times

Croatian law requires 450,000 signatures for Labour unions to call referendum, but the union said they have gotten (813,016) more than enough. With this union can seek public view on whether collective or individual bargaining should ensue between employee and employer.

Serbs from **Kosovo** and **Serbia** celebrated Vidovdan (St Vitus Day) at the Gracanica monastery on Monday (June 28th), commemorating the anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo when the Ottoman Empire defeated the Serbian kingdom.

Macedonian government is getting the heat from the opposition, asking the ruling government to call an early election which Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski has rejected. Meanwhile thousand **Macedonians** are protesting against government domestic and foreign policy. The protest is reported directed by the main opposition party SDSM.

In the same fashion, the **Serbian** Progressive Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia have launched general demonstrations throughout Serbia demanding early election from the government.

Montenegro and **Croatia** will sign an agreement on the extradition of people suspected of organized crime and corruption, **Croatia** had earlier signed a similar document with **Serbia**.

Although the austerity measures are resented by the opposition and general public and after scaling through a vote of no confidence, **Romanian** Prime Minister Emil Boc announced his government has



decided to raise the VAT from 19% to 24% as of July 1st, in order to narrow the budget deficit, which will be in accordance with IMF requirement.

In order to get on well with its EU accession, the UN has signed a new five-year partnership strategy worth of \$250m with **Serbia**.

RUSSIA

A recent Freedom House's report delineated that 2009 was the gloomiest year for the **Russian** democracy in recent decade.

Russia, *Kazakhstan* and *Belarus* all planned to have a common Custom union, a union expected to give them common representation in the WTO. Belarus has formally ratified the union code after a long hesitation even though the Custom union came into existence on January 1, 2010. Membership of WTO for **Russia** will not be easy without Moscow addressing problems with the protection of intellectual property rights, a major requirement to WTO accession. Meanwhile, *Belarus* has raised the transit fees for **Russian** oil products through its territory, both **Russia** and *Belarus* have been in energy price tussle.

The growth in Russian economy is indicated by recent borrowing of two **Russian** financial firms. Sberbank and Vneshekonombank are borrowing as much as \$2.5 billion in the international bond market for the first time in two years.

The World Bank's report released in March, has warned **Russia** of a shrinking population more likely to affect the nation. The working population is predicted to shrink between 800,000 and 1.1 million people a year until 2013, and will need around 12 million immigrants to fill the gap. The report tallies with the fear of population decrease in the Far East Federal District.

Foreigners and Diasporas wanting permanent settlement in Moscow will have to live by certain code refer to as Muscovite's Code. The latter will require them to avoid slaughtering sheep in the backyard, not grilling *shashliks* on the balcony, not walking around the city in national attire, and speaking in Russian.

The growing **Russia-Ukraine** friendship is unravelling in different dimensions. The new Ukrainian government is critiqued for too much dependence on Russia. The government is now proposing that **Russia** and the European Union build a new gas pipeline across its territory to increase **Russian** gas transit to Europe.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has not reached a consensus on the **Russian-Georgian** dossier. PACE has repeatedly asked Russia to reverse its recognition of the former *Georgian* republics of *Abkhazia* and *South Ossetia*, after the five-day war in August 2008.

Both **Russia** and the United States have played a mature game in the recent espionage debacle ending with spies' exchange. It was a remarkable step from the Cold War era and a display that both countries are not interested to see their rebuilding relations sour.

The **Russians** are hesitant finalizing weapon transaction with Iran after the new UNSC sanction which punishes any country having related deal with Iran. The latter claims the weapon (S-300) deal was completed before the sanction and if **Russia** must refuse fulfilling the transaction, Moscow stands to lose.



US/CANADA

In the **US** the unstable **American** economy appears responsible for the divide between the House and Senate over war spending. Both Houses are divided on the amount to be added to the existing fund, which further tipped the question of why domestic spending should not be accorded serious attention as war fund.

Ten *Russian* agents who infiltrated suburban **America** and acted as spies for Moscow headed back to *Russian* last week, just hours after a US judge ordered their deportation as part of a swap between the **United States** and *Russia*. The talks that led to exchange of spies in Vienna began, an official said, shortly after the FBI arrested the Russian agents, because both sides wanted a speedy resolution of the case to avoid casting a shadow over improving US-Russian relations

Elena Kagan, the new Supreme Court nominee is facing the Senate Judiciary Committee for her confirmation. The committee examined her based on her past statements and rulings on critical social issues in the **U.S.**

In the aftermath of removal of Gen. Stanley McChrystal new rules from the pentagon require top military officials to get Pentagon clearance before taking interviews or having contact with reporters.

Meanwhile the *Gulf of Mexico* oil spill is becoming a mess and embarrassment for both BP and Obama administration. Complaints continue to mount on BP and Obama of not doing much to accelerate the cleanup. Willingness to help from at least 44 nations with technical advice to skimmer boats and booms are all reported to have been taken with levity, thus irking concerned **Americans**. Meanwhile, the administration insists that cleanup work is unabated on the coast and the view that they rejected help is a myth.

Low confidence in economic recovery was depicted by the report of the Conference Board of **Canada** and a poll done by Angus Reid, but that sentiment was challenged by survey released by Royal Bank of **Canada** (RBC) showing that Canadians hold positive view about the economy. Although the RBC's report delineated certain degree of worries about personal savings and rising interest rates among the public

LATIN AMERICA

The **Argentine** government appointed Hector Timerman as its new foreign minister. Hector is a Jew and the President Kirchner said the appointment of the Jew as foreign minister displays **Argentine** non anti-Semitic society. The former foreign minister resigned due to clash with President Kirchner.

Mayor and gubernatorial elections have started in **Mexico**, but the atmosphere is replete with violence, as upshot of drug lord involvement in politics. There has been a correlation between politics and drug in **Mexico** and a big concern for neighboring states like the *United States* that has sent more than 500 security forces to the southern border for securing the **US-Mexican** border

Meanwhile the target killing of a popular gubernatorial candidate in the northern **Mexican** state of Tamaulipas was disheartening but the **Mexican** economy minister has diffused the fear that the death might affect foreign investment

At the economic front: **Argentine-China** relations were strained over *Chinese* refusal to buy **Argentine's** Soy oil, even though it is one of the cheapest in the market. *Buenos Aires* retaliated by taking a strict position on Chinese dumping in **Argentine**. Both countries hope to resolve their difference as President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner pays her first visit to China this week.

The **Brazilian** economy is witnessing an unexpected growth according to the chief economist of Brazil. The government estimated growth falls around 5.2 % but experienced figure runs up to 5.7 %.

Colombian economy is expected to retain its pace even as Juan Manuel Santos is elected as president. Meanwhile, IMF hoped that mutual relation between **Colombia** and Venezuela will further strengthened Colombian economy.

A heavy flood in the northeastern part of **Brazil**, where President Lula de Silva hails from prevented him from attending the G 20 summit in Toronto, Canada.



The new British coalition government does not intend to de-track from the legacy of previous British governments on **Falkland** Island. **Argentina** received that strong signal as the new government of Downing Street will not deny British sovereignty over the island.

Argentina-Syria relations attained a new level as President Bashar al-Assad of Syria visited **Argentina** and signed several agreements with the government ranging from the field of technology, transportation and culture.

Departing from **Argentina**, his next stop was in **Brazil** where he met with President da Silva and lauded his leadership skill within the region and the world at large, particularly in the Middle East conflict and **Brazil's** role in UNSC.

Assad also visited Venezuela for the first time where he received a warm reception from President Hugo Chavez.

Similarly, **Brazil-Italy** tie was consolidated by the visit of Prime Minister Berlusconi to Brasilia. During the august visit Berlusconi praised President da Silva's good leadership and inked several agreements of mutual interests with the largest nation in *Latin America*.

Mr. Jose Serra, one of the fore runners in the upcoming **Brazilian** election is not satisfied with **Brazil's** relations with certain countries like **Venezuela** and **Cuba**, if elected president, he will reverse the direction of the relation. Meanwhile, **Brazil** and **Venezuela** have inked agreement to increase cooperation in trade, electricity, cars and agricultural goods.

On the other hand, **Brazilian** government also signed agreement with **Argentina** by which **Brazil's** central bank will provide US \$100 million to **Argentina's** trading companies in **Brazil** and in response **Argentina** will also provide financial advantages to the **Brazilian** trading commercial companies in the country.

Colombian President Juan Manual Santos will want to continue with the legacy of fighting drug lords and revolutionary groups championed by the former President Uribe. Santos has requested the French president to scout out foreign minister of FARC rebel group allegedly present in *France*.

Colombia has a good economic standing within the region and plans to extend its economic tentacles beyond the region. Colombian Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism Luis Guillermo Plata said **Colombia** will sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Korea. With the agreement Korean companies will provide auto vehicles plants of KIA, Daewoo and Hyundai in Colombia.

ALBA countries (**Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines**) had their 10th summit in Ecuadorian city of Otavalo. The summit reiterated the concern for trade and environmental issues.

Meanwhile, **Venezuela's** President Chavez has invited **Ecuadorian** president to Caracas. The visit is expected to see both countries sign several agreements on social sovereignty, scientific knowledge, security and defense, energy and trade issues.



AUSTRALASIA

The new **Australian** Prime Minister Julia Gillard is determined to retract the tax policy on mining industry. The tax policy among others damaged the reputation of ex-PM Kevin Rudd, whose two years government ended dozen years of conservative rule. Meanwhile, the new government has brokered a deal with the industry limiting the heavy tax the previous Rudd's government demanded. Both the government and the industry want a solution to the issue although elements in the industry are sceptical of the whole plan. Election is expected and Gillard hopes to take advantage of the respect she now commands for an election victory. §