

Friday on the facebook

From: **Project BPM at International Islamic University, Islamabad**

Published with the collaboration of Gilani Research Foundation

July 2010, Week # **128**

Compiled on a weekly basis since January 2007



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 31 surveys. 2 of these are multi-country surveys. 14 polling organizations have been represented.

Topic of the week:

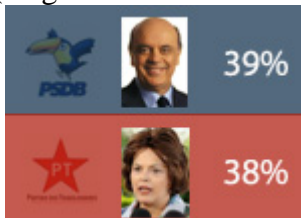
Serra and Rousseff Contest Tight Election in Brazil

► 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: Serra and Rousseff Contest Tight Election in Brazil

July 15, 2010

(Angus Reid Global Monitor) - Conservative candidate Jose Serra and left-leaning contender Dilma



Rousseff are neck-and-neck in the race to become Brazil's next head of state, according to a poll by Datafolha published in *Folha de Sao Paulo*. 39 per cent of respondents would vote for Serra of the Brazilian Party of Social Democracy (PSDB) in this year's ballot, up two points since May.

Rousseff of the ruling Workers' Party (PT) is a close second with 38 per cent, followed by Marina Silva of the Green Party (PV) with 10 per cent. 12 per cent of respondents remain undecided or will cast a blank ballot.

In a run-off scenario, Serra is ahead of Rousseff by a razor-thin margin of two points.

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva—a member of the PT—won the October 2002 presidential election with 61 per cent of the vote in a run-off against Serra. In October 2006, he earned a new four-year term, defeating PSDB candidate Geraldo Alckmin with 60.8 per cent of the vote in the second round.

Lula has publicly endorsed Rousseff as his preferred successor. In



February, the PT officially selected Rousseff as the party's presidential candidate.

In March, Rousseff stepped down as Lula's chief of staff and Serra resigned as governor of the state of Sao Paulo in order to launch their presidential bids.

On Jun. 30, Serra presented Indio da Costa, a lawmaker with the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), as his running-mate. The PMDB is the second largest opposition group in the legislature after the PSDB. Serra introduced da Costa, saying, "He's a young man, but experienced. We are two different generations together."

Lula is ineligible for a third term in office. The first round of Brazil's next presidential election is scheduled for Oct. 3.

Polling Data

Which candidate would you vote for in the 2010 presidential election?

	Jun. 2010	May 2010	Apr. 2010
Jose Serra (PSDB)	39%	37%	42%
Dilma Rousseff (PT)	38%	37%	30%
Marina Gomes (PV)	10%	12%	12%
Blank vote / Undecided	12%	14%	16%

Run-Off Scenario

	Jun. 2010	May 2010
Jose Serra (PSDB)	47%	45%
Dilma Rousseff (PT)	45%	46%
Blank vote / Undecided	8%	9%

Source: Datafolha / Folha de Sao Paulo

Methodology: Telephone interviews with 2,658 Brazilian adults, conducted on Jun. 30 and Jul. 1, 2010.

Margin of error is 2 per cent.

SOURCE: http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/serra_and_rousseff_contest_tight_election_in_brazil

SUMMARY OF POLLS



Asia zone

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



► MIDDLE EAST

Palestinians Back, Israelis Oppose Saudi Plan (Click for Details)

The majority of people in the [Palestinian](#) territories agree with the so-called Saudi Plan for peace with Israel, according to a poll by the [Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research](#) and the [Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#). **67 %** of respondents approve of the plan.

July 11, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [Palestine/ Israel Conflict](#)

► NORTHEAST ASIA

Naoto Kan's Cabinet Chastised by Japanese (Click for Details)

The appointed cabinet of prime minister Naoto Kan has dramatically lost public backing in [Japan](#), according to a poll by [Kyodo News](#). **36.3 %** of respondents approve of Kan's team, down 28.5 points since June.

July 16, 201

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



Euro Americas zone

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



EUROPE



► EAST EUROPE

Russians Would Pick Putin Over Medvedev (Click for Details)

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin could defeat President Dmitry Medvedev—the man who appointed him to his current job—in the next presidential election, according to a poll by the **Yury Levada Analytical Center**. **37 %** of respondents would vote for Putin in the next ballot, up 10 points since April.

July 11, 2010

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

PM Kubilius Greatly Unpopular in Lithuania (Click for Details)

A large majority of people in **Lithuania** reject the leadership of Andrius Kubilius, according to a poll by **Vilmorus**. **70.8 %** of respondents see the prime minister unfavourably, up one point since April.

July 10, 2010

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



► WEST EUROPE

French Brand Sarkozy's Pension Reform as Unfair (Click for Details)

Most people in **France** say a government proposal to reform the national pension system is unfair, according to a poll by **CSA** published in *Le Parisien*. **52 %** of respondents share this opinion, while **38 %** call it a fair reform.

July 13, 2010

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

Most Italians Distrust PM Berlusconi (Click for Details)

Most people in **Italy** say they have no confidence in their country's prime minister, according to a poll by **IPR Marketing** published in *La Repubblica*. **54 %** of respondents distrust Silvio Berlusconi, down one point since May.

July 12, 2010

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

Many Britons Want Abortion Window Shortened (Click for Details)

Many people in **Britain** believe the time limit to perform legal abortions—currently set at the first 24 weeks of pregnancy—is too long, according to a poll by **Angus Reid Public Opinion**. **46 %** of respondents say the time limit should be shortened.

July 16, 2010

[Society](#) » [Morality, Values & Customs](#)

[Society](#) » [Family](#)

Greeks Still Side with Governing PASOK (Click for Details)

Greece's ruling Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) remains highly popular, according to a poll by **Public Issue**. **43 %** of respondents—all of them decided voters—would support PASOK in the next general election.

July 17, 2010

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

Opposition Labour Party Rebounds in Ireland (Click for Details)

Ireland's Labour Party (Lab.) has seen its popularity rise and is now second only to Fine Gael (FG), according to a poll by **Red C**. **27 %** of respondents would vote for Labour in the next legislative election, up five points since May.

July 11, 2010

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

Few Dutch Expect New Government Soon ([Click for Details](#))

A third of people in the **Netherlands** think that, following a recent election that resulted in no definitive winner, a new government will not be formed until the end of the summer, according to a poll by **Maurice de Hond**. **32 %** of respondents say the new administration will take office in September.

July 10, 2010

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

AMERICAS



► NORTH AMERICA

U.S. Satisfaction Steady at 21%, Down Among Dems ([Click for Details](#))

Americans' satisfaction with the direction of the country continues to be meager in July: **21%** are satisfied and **76%** are dissatisfied. The nation's mood is comparable to last month, when **23%** were satisfied. **Gallup USA**

July 16, 2010

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

Palin's 76% Favorable Among Republicans Tops Others in GOP ([Click for Details](#))

In **America** former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is the best known and most positively rated of five possible contenders for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination. Her **76%** favorable rating among Republicans is higher than those for Mike Huckabee, Newt Gingrich, Mitt Romney, and Bobby Jindal. **Gallup USA**

July 16, 2010

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

Public's Wish List for Congress -- Jobs and Deficit Reduction ([Click for Details](#))

In **America** the public overwhelmingly views the job situation as a major priority for Congress during the coming months. Fully **80%** say it is very important for Congress to pass legislation to address the job situation, which is virtually unchanged from May (**81%**). **Pew Research Center**

July 12, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Employment Issues](#)

Health Care Legislation Remains Unpopular ([Click for Details](#))

Almost four months after the passage of major health care legislation, the law remains unpopular with the public. Nearly half of **Americans** (**47%**) disapprove of the health care law while just **35%** approve of the measure. **Pew Research Center**

July 12, 2010

[Society](#) » [Health](#)

More Opposition than Support for U.S. Challenge of Arizona Law ([Click for Details](#))

More **Americans** disapprove than approve of the U.S. Justice Department's decision to challenge the state of Arizona's recently passed immigration law in federal court. **Pew Research Center**

July 12, 2010

[Society](#) » [Immigration/Refugees](#)

Opinion about Afghan War Largely Stable (Click for Details)

Americans Public opinion about the war in Afghanistan has been relatively stable over the last several months. Today, a **49%**-plurality says that the military effort in Afghanistan is going very (**9%**) or fairly (**40%**) well, while **40%** say the effort is going not too (**31%**) or not at all (**9%**) well. **Pew Research Center**
July 12, 2010

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

41% - Jesus Christ's Return to Earth (Click for Details)

By the year 2050, 41% of **Americans** believe that Jesus Christ definitely (23%) or probably (18%) will have returned to earth. However, a **46%**-plurality of the public does not believe Christ will return during the next 40 years. **Pew Research Center**

July 12, 2010

[Society](#) » [Religion](#)

Americans Want Action to Prevent New Crisis (Click for Details)

Many adults in the **United States** believe specific entities are not ready to avert a new economic downturn, according to a poll by **Angus Reid Public Opinion**. **66%** of respondents think the big corporations who made the wrong decisions have not taken the necessary steps to prevent a new global financial crisis.

July 12, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Financial systems & Institutions](#)

Military Wellbeing Remains High Among Previously Deployed (Click for Details)

In **America** Active duty military personnel who have ever been deployed to a foreign war have strikingly similar wellbeing levels as active duty personnel who have never been deployed. In both cases, these levels exceed the wellbeing scores found among U.S. workers in general. **Gallup USA**

July 14, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [Military Issues/ Defence](#)
[Economy](#) » [Perceptions on Performance/ Well-Being](#)

Economy Dominates as Nation's Most Important Problem (Click for Details)

Americans name the economy in general and the jobs situation specifically as the top problems facing the country today. Top-of-mind mentions of "natural disaster response and relief" efforts are down significantly after spiking in June. **Gallup USA**

July 14, 2010

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

VP Favorable Ratings: Gore Down; Cheney, Biden Flat (Click for Details)

Americans' current views of former Vice President Al Gore have become significantly more negative compared with three years ago, and are among the worst for him in more than a decade. **Gallup USA**

July 14, 2010

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

Americans behind Petraeus; See Tough Job in Afghanistan (Click for Details)

As Gen. David Petraeus takes charge of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the majority of **Americans** like him personally while at the same time viewing the conflict there as going badly for the U.S. **Gallup USA**

July 13, 2010

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

Voters Rate the Parties' Ideologies (Click for Details)

In broad terms, in [America](#) voters view the Democratic Party's ideology as the opposite of the Republican Party's: **58%** say the Democratic Party is either very liberal or liberal while 56% say the GOP is either very conservative or conservative. [Pew Research Center](#)

July 16, 2010

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

Americans Unsurprised at Russian Espionage (Click for Details)

The revelation that there are Russian spies posing as American citizens in the [United States](#) did not shock many people in the North American country, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). 77 % of respondents say they were not surprised about this situation.

July 14, 201

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

Tories Have Nine-Point Advantage in Canada (Click for Details)

The Conservative Party remains ahead of its rivals in [Canada](#), according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **36 %** of respondents would vote for the Tories in the next federal election.

July 13, 201

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

Canadians Remain Split on Guantanamo Inmate (Click for Details)

People in [Canada](#) remain divided on how to handle the case of the last western inmate left at the American detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **43 %** of respondents say Canadian citizen Omar Khadr should be left to face trial by military commission in Guantanamo, down three points since May.

July 16, 201

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [Terrorism](#)

Queen's Visit Raises Monarchy Profile in Canada (Click for Details)

A recent trip by Queen Elizabeth II to [Canada](#) has slightly improved the monarchy's standing in the country, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **36 %** of respondents want Canada to remain a monarchy, up three points since May 2010.

July 15, 2010

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



► **LATIN AMERICA**

Serra and Rousseff Contest Tight Election in Brazil (Click for Details)

Conservative candidate Jose Serra and left-leaning contender Dilma Rousseff are neck-and-neck in the race to become [Brazil's](#) next head of state, according to a poll by [Datafolha](#) published in *Folha de Sao Paulo*. **39 %** of respondents would vote for Serra of the Brazilian Party of Social Democracy (PSDB) in this year's ballot, up two points since May.

July 15, 2010

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



► **AUSTRALASIA**

U.S. Leadership Approval Soars in Australia, New Zealand (Click for Details)

Approval of U.S. leadership nearly tripled among [Australians](#) and [New Zealanders](#) between 2008 and 2010. Approval jumped from **25% to 69%** in Australia and from **22% to 65%** in New Zealand. The 44- and 43-percentage point increases are two of the highest jumps [Gallup](#) has measured worldwide pre- and post-Obama.

July 15, 2010

[Foreign Affairs & Security](#) » [US image](#)



GLOBAL/MULTI-COUNTRY POLLS

Canadians, Americans and Britons Ignored Summits (Click for Details)

Few people in [Canada](#), the [United States](#) and [Britain](#) paid close attention to the recent G8 and G20 summits, according to a poll by [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). **23 %** of respondents in Canada, **20 %** in the U.S., and **19 %** in Britain followed the final communiqués from participating nations.

July 17, 2010

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

World's Underemployed Often Most Likely to Desire to Migrate (Click for Details)

Underemployed adults in many parts of the world are often the most likely to say they would like to move to another country permanently if given the chance. Job status makes little difference, however, in some places in Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa. [Gallup USA](#)

July 12, 2010

[Economy](#) » [Employment Issues](#)

[Society](#) » [Immigration/Refugees](#) §

Events of the week in

Asia zone

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

TURKEY

Political Front:

More than 5,000 demonstrators clashed with police in the southeastern **Turkish** city of Diyarbakir after a rally in support of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Geo-strategic Front:

Greece has complained to Ankara about a **Turkish** naval research ship monitored between the eastern *Greek* islands of Rhodes and Kastelorizo.

Slovenia has extended enthusiastic support to **Turkey** in its European Union membership bid. **Turkey** and **Serbia** have signed a number of agreements, including one on lifting visa requirements, expanding cooperation between the two countries despite past tensions.

Meanwhile *US* Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a phone conversation with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, has urged **Turkey** to maintain dialogue with *Israel*.



Economic Front:

Turkey's exports of white meat have increased by **30 %** in the first half of 2010 when compared to the same term last year. Also the unemployment rate in **Turkey** has declined from **14.9 %** a year ago and **12.5 %** in March. **Turkey's** current account deficit has increased **84.5 %** to 2.9 billion USD in May, 2010 when compared to May, 2009. Istanbul has attracted **4.6 %** fewer tourists in the first half of the year compared to one year ago.

Social Front:

New principles determined by a consensus of all national television channels have been proposed for broadcasting news on terror-related incidents and extraordinary events. According to that fear provoking news would be avoided. The State Meteorology Bureau has issued a high temperature alert for the entire country this week. According to the bureau, temperatures are expected to rise by one to three degrees Celsius in most parts of Turkey.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front:

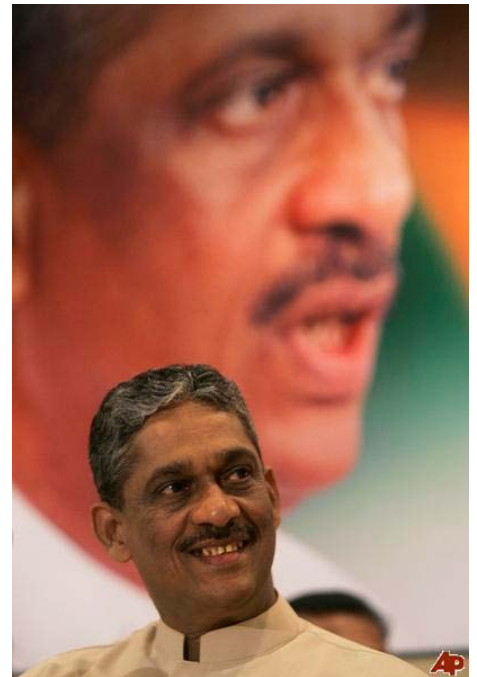
Most prominent issue in **Bangladeshi** politics seems to be ongoing debates regarding religious politics. The chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council called on activities and volunteers to monitor the political situation in **Bangladesh** and blamed the government for the lack of improvements in the situation of the CHT. Leading vernacular daily newspaper in **Bangladesh**.

Major political parties in **Nepal** have failed to reach at a consensus regarding transfer of power to the new government. People from Terai region went to the centre in order to get power share in making of the new government.

Sri Lankan police has filed a new case against former army chief and defeated presidential candidate for allegedly employing military deserters.

Geo-strategic Front:

Three East-Asian nations namely, *Japan*, *China* and *South Korea*, have expressed keenness to improve their ties with **Bangladesh**.



Nepal has criticized UN for supporting Maoists in their demand for integration of rebels in Royal Army. UN however denounced these charges. **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** have revived a deal signed more than three decades ago to work out a transit route through which landlocked **Nepal** can access the Mongla port.

India and **China** have sealed two separate contracts to build railway lines and communication links in **Sri Lanka**.

Economic Front:

Nepali Finance Minister has presented the advance budget of Rs.110.21 billion for the fiscal year 2010/11. **Nepal** has asked New Delhi to lift the ban on the transaction of **Indian** Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 500 currency notes in the country so as to boost business and ease the hardship of travelers from **India**.

Social Front:

Bangladesh's highest court has banned punishments handed down by fatwa, or religious edict, after a series of cases of Muslim women who were beaten or caned for religious offenses.

UN rights agency OHCHR-**Nepal** has expressed concern over threats by Maoists to human rights defenders. A **Sri Lankan** minister has ended his fast aimed at forcing the UN to abandon a probe into crimes allegedly committed during the final months of the country's civil war.

Sri Lankan government has announced that it would take strict measures to control the spreading of dengue epidemic.

INDIA

Political Front:

Some of the reports have indicated the involvement of senior RSS leaders in a number of blasts. Keeping those reports in mind Congress spokesman has asked BJP to keep distance from such outfits otherwise it would have to pay price. SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav has regretted taking support of those responsible for the Babri mosque demolition in the last election and sought pardon of the **Indian** Muslim community.

Home Minister has claimed that casualties because of *Naxals* have been more than those because of terrorist activities. He said between 2004 and 2008, the Naxalites had killed about 500 civilians every year. This number rose to 591 in 2009. In just the first six months of this year, 325 civilians have been killed in Naxal violence.

Garment exports from **India** dropped 2.64 % to \$ 10.64 billion in 2009-10 compared to \$10.93 billion in the previous financial year. India's Industrial output rose by 11.5 % in May, growing in double digits for the eighth straight month, on good showing by manufacturing, particularly capital and consumer goods.

As tension still exists in **Kashmir** hence the **Indian** government has re-imposed curfew to ease the situation.

Geo-strategic Front:

China has urged **India** to abide by its commitments to restrict political activities of exiled Tibetans in **India**.



France has reiterated its support for **India's** bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Meanwhile the foreign ministers' meetings between **India** and *Pakistan* ended without any result mainly because of the blame game.

Social front:

26 years after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in **India**, five Sikh high priests have declared it as genocide carried out to eliminate Sikhs from the country.

A recently published survey has indicated that amidst acute poverty across South Asia, the five **Indian** states of Delhi, Kerala, Goa, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have the least number of poor people in India.

After the flood claimed 33 lives in Punjab and Haryana and caused an estimated loss of nearly Rs 1,400 crore, a blame game has started between the two agrarian states over the floods.

EAST ASIA

Political Front:

In **Malaysia** an anti-graft activist who had been investigating some top police officials for their involvement in corruption was attacked and injured.

Malaysian PM has urged the leaders in the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), which is a component of the ruling coalition of Barisan Nasional, to stop the internal bickering and change with the times. He also asked them not to create instability.

After surviving **Thailand's** 10-week red shirts anti-government protest in May and vote of no confidence last month, the Abhisit administration is currently facing another wave of political uncertainty as his government seems to be challenged by the constitutional court.



Geo-strategic Front:

The *United States* and **Laos** have pledged to step up cooperation after their highest-level talks since the *Vietnam War*.

Economic Front:

Indonesian Finance Minister said that the government would boost food supply to reduce rising pressure from inflation.

Malaysia has been paying special attention to attract investments. Meanwhile **Vietnam** and EU have expressed interest in boosting economic ties.

Social front:

The Islamic Authority in **Indonesia** has recently declared that Muslims in the country have been praying in the wrong direction and hence they should change the direction.

Alleging discrimination, a group of 20 ethnic *Indians* in **Malaysia** have approached the country's royal constitutional head for more scholarships and loans to help deserving students pursue higher studies.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Another official in **Kyrgyzstan's** interim government has announced his resignation in order to take part in upcoming parliamentary elections.

Geo-strategic Front:

The presidents of **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** avoided face-to-face talks on the sidelines of an informal summit of seven former Soviet republics held in Yalta.

Two **Kyrgyz** shepherds were killed and a **Kazakh** border guard wounded in a shoot-out on the **Kazakh-Kyrgyz** border. Senior US Advisor held meeting with Kyrgyz President and discussed various issues. UN country team in **Uzbekistan** has highly evaluated the effective efforts of **Uzbekistan** in response to the humanitarian crisis, which became a result of the violence in **Kyrgyzstan** in June and led to mass flow of refugees to eastern regions of **Uzbekistan**.

Economic Front:

Russia has announced to lend **Kazakhstan** \$700 million to build the third unit of the Ekibastuz GRES-2 power plant. The Federation Council approved the Federal Law "On Ratification of Agreement between the Government of the *Russian* Federation and the Government of **Turkmenistan** for the Promotion and Mutual Protection of Investments".

Social Front:

Azerbaijani media reported that several people, including two police officers were injured on July 6 during a large-scale brawl in the village of Shotlanly between local residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs) recently relocated there.

The office of **Kyrgyzstan's** prosecutor-general has sent a complaint to **Kazakh** authorities about two journalists from regional Internet sites. The complaint says journalist Asror Muminov and website owner Valery Khlyupin were inciting ethnic hatred by writing and posting an article on centrasia.ru on July 3 that claimed "**Kyrgyz** were killing **Uzbeks** even in mosques" in the southern city of Osh last month, when there were clashes between the **Kyrgyz** and **Uzbeks** resulting in hundreds of deaths.

The Red Cross has warned that the fate of missing people has renewed tensions in southern **Kyrgyzstan**. Turkmen President has voiced support for the creation of new political parties as well as private media.

GCC

Political Front:

Various political parties seem to be keen to contest upcoming parliamentary elections in **Bahrain**.

Geo-strategic Front:

Saudi civil airliner touched down in the main southern **Iraqi** city of Basra on the first such flight between the neighboring countries since **Iraq's** 1990 invasion of **Kuwait**. Situation at **Iraq-Kuwait** border remained normal as **Iraq** has assured to abide by the UN Resolution.

Oman has expressed keenness to enhance ties with **India**. The European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have agreed to hold an "economic dialogue" every year to boost and expand economic and trade cooperation and relations between the two major regional blocs.



Economic Front:

Saudi Arabia's Shura Council has approved the 9th Development Plan with a margin of just one vote after 75 members voted for the plan while 41 others opposed it. The plan, prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Planning, includes priorities to continue improving citizens' standard of living, develop national manpower, achieve balanced development in different regions, develop the national economic structure and upgrade the competitiveness of national products in national and international markets.

EU has been enhancing economic ties with different countries of **GCC** mainly **Saudi Arabia** and **UAE**. **Oman** and **India** have signed agreements to enhance economic cooperation. **Saudi Arabia**, **Qatar** and **Iraq** have also enhanced cooperation in economic sector.

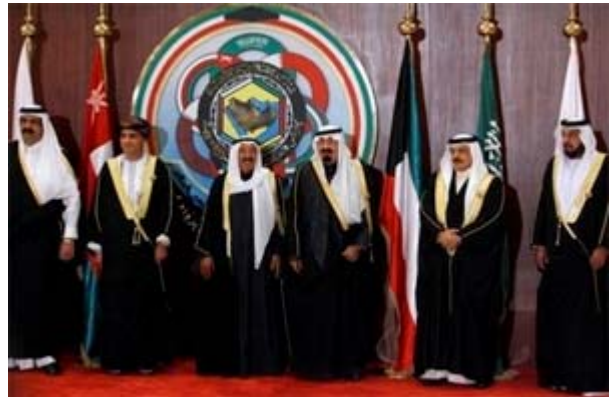
Social Front:

The six-nation **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** has finalized a plan to set up a human rights panel in the region.

AFGHANISTAN**Political Front:**

As many as 111 candidates have been disqualified from contesting the second parliamentary election in **Afghanistan** since the overthrow of the Taliban regime.

Seven International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) soldiers were killed in separate attacks in southern and eastern **Afghanistan**. Amidst tensions NATO supported the idea of the establishment of a supportive force tasked with maintaining security in areas regular security forces could not access.

**Geo-strategic Front:**

The **Afghan** government and some political analysts have strongly condemned a former US diplomat's remarks in which he said a de facto partition of **Afghanistan** was the best option for the *United States* and its allies.

Economic Front:

The minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock has announced an ambitious program worth \$3 billion to improve the living conditions of rural families and farmers. Meanwhile the **Afghanistan** Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) called upon *Pakistan* to sign the **Afghanistan-Pakistan** Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) at Kabul conference, held last week, July 20.

Increased demand for **Afghan** currency has seen it rise against the US dollar and Pakistani rupee leading to a reduction in price of commodities.

Social Front

Various human rights groups as well as the *US* have stressed that 'women issues' would be a priority in any political deal with the *Taliban*.

Logar province in central **Afghanistan** was declared poppy-free five years ago, but since then the number of drug addicts has shot up.

Meanwhile *Japan* has agreed to spend one million US dollars on various development projects in **Afghanistan**.



KOREA

Political Front:

In **South Korea** the court has laid down guilty verdicts to people indicted for spreading messages in support of their favorite election candidates through the micro-blogging service Twitter.

Geo-strategic Front:



North Korea has expressed readiness to rejoin the six-party negotiations on its denuclearization. A working-level meeting scheduled between the United Nations Command and **North Korea** was postponed at Pyongyang's request. Officers from the U.S.-led United Nations Command (UNC) and **North Korea** had to discuss matters regarding the holding of generals' talks on the sinking of the **South Korean** Navy ship Cheonan but **North Korea** cancelled the meeting.

A group of scholars have called for the **South Korean** government to push through an amendment to the Constitution, aimed at reducing presidential power.

Economic Front:

South Korea's 30 major industrial groups have announced their plan to invest 22.4 trillion won (\$18.5 billion) by 2013 in clean energy, including batteries and solar power. Posco, Asia's third-largest steelmaker, posted its third straight gain in quarterly profit after increasing prices and production on revived demand from automobile and appliance makers.

South Korea's unemployment rate rose for the first time in five months in June as government employment programs began to wind down. The jobless rate climbed to 3.5 % from 3.2 % in May, which was the lowest level since October 2008.

Social Front:

A total of 232 people attempted suicide in Seoul's Han River in the first half of the year.



JAPAN

Political Front:

Political leaders made last-minute efforts to drum up voter support in some of the most hotly contested constituencies in recently held Upper House election in **Japan**. The Democratic Party of **Japan**-led ruling coalition lost its Upper House majority as Prime Minister Naoto Kan's sudden emphasis on tax reform pushed voters back to the Liberal Democratic Party. Of the 121 seats up for grabs, the DPJ secured 44, compared with 51 for

the LDP. Despite defeat of the ruling party; 73% of the people being surveyed have asked PM not to resign from his position.

Economic Front:

Election results have directly affected various economic sectors of **Japan**. Toyota Motor Corp. and Nissan Motor Co. have decided to invest a combined \$1.2 billion to expand production in *Latin America* amid growing regional and export demand.

Social Front:

Increasing numbers of counterfeit **Japanese** goods such as watches and cosmetics have been spread on *Chinese* online shopping sites.

Hundreds of thousands of people in western and southern **Japan** have been urged to evacuate their homes as heavy rains caused mudslides and flooded houses, killing two and leaving some missing.

CHINA

Political Front:

A recently made regulation extends the list declarable assets for officials and introduces dismissal as the maximum penalty for failing to report assets honestly and promptly. Nowadays thousands of **Chinese** have joined a heated discussion about new rules that are designed to curb corruption and increase transparency about the assets of government officials.



Geo-strategic Front:

China has denounced US allegations regarding human rights issues over there. Meanwhile

China has also emphasized on the need to resume six-party talks. **China** has urged India to honor its commitments and cautiously handle issues related to the exiled *Tibetans* in *India*.

The **Chinese** have been paying attention to enhance ties with various countries including *Serbia, Argentina, Canada, Iceland, Ukraine, Singapore, Germany, Ecuador, Qatar* and *ASEAN*.

Economic Front:

Growth of **China's** foreign exchange reserves has been slow as the total reached 2.4543 trillion U.S. dollars by the end of June. The value of welfare lottery sales in **China** as of the end of this May has reached almost 450 billion Yuan (66 billion U.S. dollars), since the welfare program was first launched 23 years ago, helping to raise about 149 million Yuan for the public welfare fund. **China's** exports for June hit a record high since July 2008 and the trade surplus also surged to the highest this year. **China** has said its economic growth slowed in the second quarter of the year, as massive stimulus spending was scaled back and moves to rein in soaring property prices started to bite. Its GDP however maintained double-digit growth for the third quarter in a row, expanding at an annual rate of 10.3% in the three months to June. **China's** consumer price index (CPI), the main gauge of inflation, rose 2.9 % year on year in June. **China's** fiscal revenue rose 27.6 % in the first six months of 2010 from a year earlier to 4.34 trillion Yuan.

At the same time increase in the stock exchange of **Hong Kong and Macau** has been observed.

Social Front:

Chinese President has urged the Communist Party of **China** and the whole country to give priority to education in their work, in order to build a moderately prosperous society, push forward socialist modernization, and achieve the great rejuvenation of the **Chinese** nation. **Chinese** Foreign Minister has called on all countries not to provide stage for **Tibetan** separatists, saying Tibet-related issues are purely **China's** internal affairs.

China and the European Union have strengthened their cooperation in space technology to better monitor climate change and improve the ability to prevent and control natural disasters. **China** has approved renewing the operation license of Google's **China** web site. §

Events of the week in

Africa zone

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

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa: President Sarkozy's government invited 14 armies from *France's* former **African** colonies to celebrate their 50th independence anniversary during a military parade. The invitation was extended to **Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal** and **Togo**.

Guinean security forces have uncovered a suspected armed plot to destabilize the West African country as it approaches the decisive round of a presidential election, its prime minister said last week. The world's biggest bauxite exporter is in the process of replacing a military-led government with what would be its first freely elected administration. The first round of voting last month produced no clear winner, and a second round is expected within weeks.

The Union of Islamic Citizens of **Liberia** in Collaboration with the Concern Muslim of **Liberia** demonstrated against the leadership of Sheik Kafumba Konneh for what the group termed as election fraud, Corruption and misapplication of funds that were intended for *Liberian Muslims*. The protest which was held on Saturday, July 10, 2010 at the UMIL Headquarters in Sinkor brought together a group of aggrieved Muslims who demanded that the Supreme Court place an injunction on the induction of the officers elect of the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL).

In the aftermath of the **Nigerian** Jos crisis five members of the



military Special Task Force (STF) who are on peace keeping mission in Plateau State have been given various jail sentences for offenses committed while on duty. These offences include manslaughter, theft, assaults, house breaking and failure to perform military duties.

Meanwhile No fewer than 13,000 ex-militants are to be sponsored by the Federal Government through the *Ministry of the Niger Delta Affairs* to various tertiary institutions both in **Nigeria** and abroad in pursuance of the post –amnesty programme of the Federal Government.

In **Nigeria** fifty legal practitioners and anti-corruption crusaders have filed a suit in the Federal High Court, Abuja Judicial Division, asking it to compel the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate former president *Olusegun Obasanjo* and others for their alleged involvement in the Halliburton bribery scandal.

A new dimension has been added to the debate on President Goodluck Jonathan's alleged 2011 presidential aspiration and the contentious zoning of the presidency to the North. A group of Northern leaders and politicians led by former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Chief Solomon Lar last week rose from its Northern Political Summit with a resolution that the President's alleged plan to contest the 2011 presidential poll should be seen as a continuation of his joint presidential ticket with late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua till 2015.



Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade denied last week that he was grooming his son Karim to step into his shoes. Karim, 41, was given a ministerial position in May and is considered a close presidential advisor to his 84-year-old father. "I have no intention of putting my son in my place before I go," Wade told Europe 1 radio. "But he is free to stand elections when he wants to," he added.

Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) has registered 38,129 people who turned 18 years this year during the Voters Registration Exercise in the Upper West Region, according to Mr. Mahama Yahaya, Regional Director of EC.

Central Africa: **Sudan's** army says it killed at least 300 rebels in clashes last week, while losing more than 70 of its own troops. **Sudanese** state media quoted General Al-Tayeb al-Musbah Osman who claimed that during the series of clashes with the Darfur region's Justice and Equality Movement government forces destroyed rebels' vehicles. Violence in **Darfur** has increased since insurgent forces withdrew from peace talks in May.

The order issued by judges for **Congolese** war crimes accused Thomas Lubanga to be released has received wide coverage online. Judges have ruled that Mr. Lubanga - the first person tried at the International Criminal Court (ICC) should be released unconditionally if the prosecution did not appeal the release order within five days.

An official with **Burundi's** army said the military has been put on high alert to protect unarmed civilians, as well as the country's sensitive installations, following recent deadly twin blasts in **Uganda's** capital, Kampala.

The United Nation's estimates 20,000 civilians in eastern **Congo** have been forced to flee their homes over the past week as violence increases along the volatile border with **Uganda**. The **Congolese** Armed forces has been trying to root out the remnants of the Allied Democratic Forces, a **Ugandan** rebel group that has remained dormant for several years in North Kivu.

The head of delegation of the European Union has clarified that the union will not send observers to **Rwanda** for the presidential elections slated for next month because of limited financial resources.

East & the horn of Africa: **Uganda** President Yoweri Museveni has vowed to retaliate against the **Somali** Islamic extremist group that took responsibility for the bomb attacks in Kampala that claimed more than 70 lives. Mr. Museveni will push the African Union to upgrade the size and the mandate of its peacekeeping mission in **Somalia**. He has also charged that al-Shabab has been taken over by powerful *Middle East* extremist groups trying to establish **Somalia** as a safe haven for terrorists. Meanwhile U.S. President Barack Obama has said Washington will "redouble" its efforts against the **Somali** Islamist group al-Shabaab (The Youth).



Southern Africa: The **South African** government says it is taking measures to address threats of violence against foreigners. **South African** police have stepped up patrols in several impoverished communities after some foreign-owned shops were looted and hundreds of foreigners reported being threatened with violence if they do not leave the country.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: Aid agencies are struggling to meet the food and water needs of people and their livestock in drought-hit **Mali**, with potentially "catastrophic gaps" in the humanitarian response, according to Oxfam's country head, Gilles Marion. Some 258,000 people are in need of urgent assistance in **Mali**, according to the government-led early warning mechanism (SAP), with a further 371,000 at risk, following poor rains across the *Sahel* region.

Central Africa: *Spanish* Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero opted out of an UN-sponsored meeting with **Rwandan** leader Paul Kagame, after protests that Kagame's regime was linked to **Rwanda's** genocide. It is the first of the MDG Advocacy Group set up last month by the United Nations to advance the Millennium Development Goals, which include halving extreme poverty by 2015, with Zapatero and Kagame named co-chairs. The *Spanish* judiciary accuses Kagame of fomenting the ethnic clashes in a bid to seize power. The **Rwandan** officers are accused of murdering nine *Spanish* missionaries and expatriates allegedly witnesses to massacres.

Advocates for refugee rights are criticizing the **Ugandan** government for forcibly returning hundreds of refugees to **Rwanda**, calling it a violation of national and international law.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

Southern Africa: The prevalence of chronic malnutrition (in **Zimbabwe**) is now **33.8 %**, according to World Health Organization standards, that means one in every three children is chronically malnourished - a significant public health threat, said George Kembo, director of the *Zimbabwe Food and Nutrition Council*. Only **8.4 %** of children less than two years - meaning one in 10 children - is receiving a diet that is minimally acceptable.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

West Africa: Nigeria's state oil firm is insolvent, unable to pay debts of \$5bn (£3.3bn), a government minister has said. Junior Finance Minister Remi Babalola said the **Nigerian** National Petroleum Corporation has asked for help to cover its debts and fund its operations.

Air Nigeria (formerly Virgin Nigeria Airways) has announced that it has cleared all debts it owed banks and is now poised to expand operations, targeting to carry 10,000 passengers daily in its domestic operations.

Ghana's inflation for the month of June hit 9.52% according to the **Ghana** Statistical Service. This was the 12th consecutive time that the country's inflation dropped. Inflation for the month of May stood at 10.68% fueling expectations that the Bank of **Ghana** will cut its policy rate further down from the current 15%.

African Minerals (AML), with significant iron ore and base metal interests in **Sierra Leone**, has reached an agreement with its Chinese partner Shandong Iron & Steel Group (SISG) Co Limited to hit a strategic investment of \$1.5 billion. The business is in respect of AML's flagship iron ore project at Tonkolili district in the north and related infrastructure projects which valued at approximately US\$6 billion.

Southern Africa: Human rights groups have said that they are partially satisfied with the recent agreement made by an international diamond monitor to allow **Zimbabwe** to export some of its precious stones mined from controversial fields.



Events of the week in

Euro Americas zone

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

WESTERN EUROPE

EU foreign policy Chief *Catherine Ashton* along with other top western officials hopes to return *Israel and Palestine* to the negotiation table. Similarly, the bloc has extended handsome aid package to *Africa* to combat social problems of the continent. Meanwhile, **EU** was resentful of the expulsion of two top aid officials in Darfur and urged *Sudan* to protect humanitarian groups in the strife-torn region.

The **EU** is once again sending message to *Iran* that door of negotiation remains open and EU foreign policy Chief *Catherine Ashton*, whose country **Britain** supports Turkey-EU membership, has asked Ankara not to surrender its bid.

A **British** High Court judge has given a go ahead to former **British** Guantanamo detainees to proceed with lawsuits against **Britain**. The detainees claim **British** agents were complicit in their overseas torture.

Misuse of office and dishonest financial doing is yet again featuring in the **British** parliament but this time around it's coming from the House of Lords. Lord John Taylor has been accused of dishonestly claiming more than 11,000 pounds (\$17,000) for accommodation and mileage in 2006 and 2007.

Eurogroup Chairman Jean-Claude Juncker and EU Monetary and Economic Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn have expressed satisfaction with **Greece's** budget stabilization process, amid national wide austerity protests.

Despite its economic problem, the *Euro* saw a rise above the **British Pound**, while within the **Eurozone** and **EU**, *Malta* is taking a lead in export, followed by *Romania* and *Estonia* (non-Eurozone members) **Luxembourg** and **Finland** headed other **EU** members the previous year.

Meanwhile **EU** plans to tighten its grip on accident prevention and liability for offshore oil drilling in response to BP's *Gulf of Mexico* spill and at the same ready to punish states that does not stop illegal importation of timber into the bloc. **EU** commercial ties in Latin America saw a drop as a result of the brawl between economic giants (Brazil and Argentina) of the region and the EU.

In **Germany** Ole von Beust, the popular mayor of Hamburg is tipped as the next top official to resign from the coalition government of Chancellor Angela Merkel. According to reports the government is politically falling apart and could be exploited by the opposition.

Sino-German economic relations attained a new height as both countries signed deal worth billions of dollars in making trucks and power equipment. It was an achievement for **German** Chancellor Angela Merkel's turbulent government and was success for *China* reaching such a deal with Europe largest market.

The **German** government has banned the **Turkish** humanitarian organization *Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief* (IHH) from activities in **Germany** on the ground that it is financing the *Palestinian* Islamist organization *Hamas*, which the **EU** regards as a terrorist organization. IHH lead the **Gaza** flotilla attacked by **Israeli** commandos

The resignation of **Italian** economy ministry Nicola Cosentino marked the third resignation that has rocked Premier Silvio Berlusconi's government in months. Cosentino is being implicated in an alleged influence-peddling investigation.

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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Albanian long political impasses cold reach its end if the plan by the opposition party to return to negotiation table works out. The opposition resolved to negotiate based on implementing proposals of European Parliament (EP) resolution on **Albania's** EU progress, adopted earlier this month.



Croatian opposition parties are calling for snap elections believe to be the solution to the problems facing the country claiming to be equipped with alternatives, which the ruling government lacks. The ruling party has ruled out any sort of early elections.

Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu reiterated that Pristina and Belgrade could hold talks with **Serbia** on any issue except **Kosovo's** status. He further dissuades Belgrade not to be part of the problems in the northern region of **Kosovo**.

Macedonia will have to manage its political landscape well if it must get the approval of the EU. Opposition Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) has been boycotting the parliament and is not ready to return not until the ruling party redresses what the DPA calls self-centered policies of the ruling party and failure to recognize Albanian as second official language in **Macedonia**.

Meanwhile, a vote of no confidence filed by the **Macedonian** main opposition party SDSM against the Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanoski did not yield. The vote was initiated by SDSM accusing the police of spying on their activities after a police agent tried to record their conversation with a group of disgruntled worker.

Montenegrin lawmakers have approved a bill to hold a population census from April 1st-15th 2011.

A mouth drop incident by **Romanian** Finance Minister Sebastian Vladescu has forced the Prime Minister Emil Boc to ban all ministers from speaking publicly about issues that have not been discussed and approved by the government

As **Serbia** enhances good relations with its neighbors and co-operating with the ICJ tribunal on war crime, it has started receiving praises from the EU. Most recently, European Commission (EC) director for the Western Balkans Pierre Mirel praised **Serbia's** progress in implementing reforms, fighting organized crime and boosting regional co-operation. He also urged Belgrade to take a constructive approach to the customs issue in Kosovo.

Slovenian parliament approved a declaration on Western Balkans, describing the region as a key priority and establishing guidelines for future actions aimed at strengthening co-operation.

Many **Bosniaks** celebrated the 15th anniversary of **Srebrenica** massacre. The families of the victims are prone to be more sensitized as massive graves are being exhumed.

Such empathetic celebration was also seen among the **Bosnian Serbs** at the Bratunac Military Cemetery honoring **Serbs** killed during the 1992-1995 conflict in BiH.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing Rachel Rolnik urged **Croatia** and **Serbia** to co-operate in resolving housing problems of refugees.

The plan by **Kosovo** authority to send special police to the Serb dominated northern part of the country has irked Serbia President Tadic, instead wants EULEX to oversee the investigation. It remains clear that **Serbia** wants the northern region as a parallel structure and out of the authority of **Pristina**. Such partition option according to Vincent Degert, the head of the European Commission (EC) delegation to **Serbia**, will be consequential and could have domino effect in the region.

The wife of fugitive former **Bosnian** Serb commander Ratko Mladic has repeatedly requested the government to declare his husband dead so as to be relieved from the stress of being perturbed. But she will have to plead for herself as illegal arms were reported uncovered in her possession.



Albania's longing for the EU visa liberalization regime will be assessed by EU experts, as to the extent to which local authorities are exerting enough effort in the areas of law enforcement, fighting crime and corruption and confiscating criminal assets. Nevertheless, the **Belgian** presidency of the EU has set November as the month to discuss whether to lift the bloc's visa regime for **Albania** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)**.



The right to recognize **Kosovo** as a sovereign state will be due only after the ICJ's ruling on the legality of **Kosovo's** independence. This remains the position of **Romanian** government, rejecting the plea of other EU members that have recognised Pristina as a sovereign state. Meanwhile the region awaits the ICJ's ruling on **Kosovo** unilateral independence declaration for next week.

The series of summits conducted in the region are all characterised by the intention of the Western Balkan countries to expedite their EU integration process. The last of such summits held in **Croatia** was no exemption.

Ethnic politics has been the stumbling stone for **Bosnia**-EU integration, yet **Bosnian** Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj said that Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) will delay its EU membership application until it receives more positive signals from Brussels.

Political uncertainty characterised by ethnic politics has contribute to the delay of **Bosnia-EU** talk, which is also responsible for the delay in Bosnia-NATO integration. NATO expects **Bosnian** leaders to resolve the defence property issue before further talks could begin.

Serbia-Turkey relations will be further strengthened by the new visa regime initiated by **Serbia** which will allow **Turks'** entrance into Serbia without visa.

At the economic front in a bid to reduce the tension associated with recent government economic policies, **Romanian** President Traian Basescu said that the VAT rate should be reduced to its previous level and pensions should be taxed instead. In response, Prime Minister Emil Boc said the VAT rate would only be reduced if the government finds alternative revenue-makers.



Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich has finally made the bold decision by signing a decree that cancels the country's previous plans to join the North Atlantic alliance. It was a big strategic u-turn, though the decree emphasises on cooperation and collective security system.

The strength of **Warsaw's** economy is being reiterated by the market value of domestic companies. Warsaw market value is estimated around €13 billion as compared to Vienna with €3 billion.

The **Czech** economy will grow faster this year than previously expected, driven mainly by an increase in exports to the country's main trading partners in Western Europe. **Czech Republic** hopes to accelerate and benefit from its automobile industry.

Deficit cut has been the trend across Europe after the *Greek* financial crisis. For **Ukraine** hiking the price of natural gas was the best option and to put the public aboard as measure to stabilizing the economy and complying with IMF conditions. Ukraine has been shuttling between **Russia** and IMF to balance its economy.

According to the World Bank, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries have the prospect of moving out of the 2010 recession in due course, as economies in the region pick pace. This assertion tallies

with **Hungary's** Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi view that **Hungary** will pose positive economic growth in 2010 and could finally ink a new agreement with IMF.

Estonian government remains hopeful of making it into the Euro zone by January 2011 thus making **Estonia** the 17th Eurozone member. Membership of the zone is expected to further foster strong economy, which according to Danske Bank has the lowest government sector debt in the EU.

Unlike its neighbor, **Lithuanian** economy is experiencing an accelerated inflation creating concern for the transport and alcohol sector.

For outstanding contribution in strengthening **Pakistan-Polish** relations, Ambassador of Pakistan to the Republic of **Poland** Ms. Seema Illahi Baloch was awarded Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of **Poland** during a ceremony.

The **Latvian** parliament reiterates its nationalism by voting for a bill demanding media houses to air programmes largely in **Latvian** language, even though 30% of Latvians speaks Russia.

Drought has not spare **Russia** in recent time, affecting agricultural production and farmers performances with an expected cost of \$1 billion Eleven regions in **Russia** now wrestles with drought and the government is extending fuel discount to farmers even though there is a fresh tax increase on industry.

Being an EU member, **Poland** cannot escape being scrutinized by the European Commission, measuring its compliance with European Union flood-control legislation, tailored at managing flood risk which could pose risk to human health, environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.



The **Gulf of Mexico** oil spill appears to be creating fear syndrome around the world. A **Poland**-based company, Geophysica Torun (GT), working on behalf of Gujarat State Petronet Limited (GSPL) was harassed by local Poles for fear inseparable from environmental issue.

Strengthening its relations with the Central Europe country, Washington is expected to assist **Poland** in building its first nuclear power station.

Polish Foreign Minister welcomed the participation of Armenia and other neighboring states in the Eastern Partnership and re-affirmed Poland's support to induct them into the visa liberalization regime.

Slovakia is set not to decrease the number of soldiers deployed in foreign missions, particularly in Afghanistan, doing this will further elevate **Slovakia** status as a NATO member.

The meeting between the **Austria** and **Hungary** foreign minister raised the level of cooperation between the countries, being neighbors **Austria** has showed full support for **Hungary** to take over the EU presidency in 2011. Meanwhile, **Hungarian** President-elect Pal Schmitt believes Croatia-EU membership should be due during Hungary EU presidency

Georgia eyes are on **Belarus** with a great caution that the former Soviet stronghold will finally not approve the independence and sovereignty of **Abkhazia** and South Ossetia. Meanwhile, **Belarus-Kyrgyzstan** diplomatic relations remain sour upon Belarus refusal to extradite former Kyrgyz's president to **Kyrgyzstan** where he has been charged for misuse of power.

Despite its refusal to join NATO, **Ukrainian** naval force went into days of naval exercise with NATO tagged as Sea Breeze 2010. The exercise was geared at meeting the challenges of pirates and was done on the north-west of the Black Sea.

RUSSIA

Despite **Russia's** political and economic outreach in recent times, foreign countries did not fall short to ask **Russian** authority to do more in strengthening its political structure, curbing corruption, and resolving strained ties with neighbors like **Georgia**. Meanwhile, President Dmitry Medvedev has rejected the meddling of foreign countries in its new bill that expands the powers of the Federal Security Service.

In its economic boom **Russia's** special economic zones hit 144.9 billion rubles (\$4.7 billion) in investment, while **German** conglomerate Siemens entered a deal worth of billions of dollars, and that does not stop Naspers Ltd the Africa Internet company from planning to buy a 28.7 percent stake in Russia's Digital Sky Technologies. The rebounding of **Russia's** Eurobonds since 1998 from the worst loss among developing government securities and the growth in its industrial production, coupled with a 3% GDP expansion attest to Russian economy upturn.



Meanwhile Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is providing investor opportunity for TNK-BP, as the London-based oil company faces a huge financial trauma due to the Gulf of *Mexico* oil spill.

Russia hosted the 34th World Diamond Congress, therein Moscow announced to buy \$1 billion worth of diamonds from the country's Alrosa, a monopoly firm that was plagued with global economic crisis.

Controversial self-styled **Russian** scientist Viktor Petrik faces criticism from the Russian Academy of Sciences and Consumer Rights Society for his water purification programme, deemed as useless water filters. Meanwhile hundreds of people got drowned in bathing accidents caused by alcohol as the Russian temperature rose to 33 degrees Celsius.

Despite its objection to an *Iranian* nuclear bomb, **Russian** leadership believes the world should have an open talk with Tehran. Yet Moscow said it is ready to enter into oil, natural gas and petrochemical cooperation with Tehran in order to soften American sanction on *Tehran's* economy. Meanwhile, **Russia** will be taking part in an international conference in Kabul, aimed at discussing the transfer of power and responsibility to Afghan security.

US/CANADA

Obama administration scored a political goal as the Congress approved a sweeping expansion of federal financial regulation on financial institutions after the Wall Street inspired financial crisis. In the **US** the bill subjects more financial companies to federal oversight, regulates many derivatives contracts, and creates a panel to detect risks to the financial system along with a consumer protection regulator. The bailout issue is expected to be politicized during the midterm election and the president hopes to take advantage of the new financial legislation.

Meanwhile despite the sign of hiring taking place in the *Wall Street*, Warren Buffett's caution note to the **US** president emphasizes the need for more effort to rejuvenate the economy in view of the profound effect of the recession.

BP oil company wrestling with oil spil in the *Gulf of Mexico* said it has been able to cap the leak, though a sign of relief, but the Obama administration is demanding caution as to asceratin its surety.

Pakistan Taliban is a significant non-state actor in the region and is on the verge of being blacklisted by the **United States** as a terrorist organization. Gen. David H. Petraeus added force to the sleeping debate

that Taliban and similar groups should be included on the U.S blacklist. Some fear that doing so is likely to destabilise the process of making peace with the Taliban.

Equipping its arsenal with latest weaponry worth of \$9bn **Canadian** dollars has caused **Canadian** Conservative government another criticism from the Liberal opposition party. Liberal opposition claim the bidding for the 65 new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets from the U.S was done without a competitive bidding process.

The minority government has also been criticized for cutting the work being done by the country's central statistics agency. Statistics **Canada** would scrap its mandatory detailed long-form census, making this happen will affect the overall data analysis of all citizens needed for a comprehensive public policy. The development has irked virtually all sectors of the society.

LATIN AMERICA

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's visit to **Latin America** ended with high praise for the **Brazilian** president. Bashar lauded Lula as a world peace maker who has been able to do what great power like Washington could not achieve.

Gubernatorial elections are completed in 12 **Mexican** states but debate is incomplete about the reason for the defeat of PAN and the success of PRI. The fact however remains that public appears to be fed up with random killings and manner with which the ruling PAN government handles the drug cartels.



The resignation of the **Mexican** interior minister and the chief security advisor is added blow to President Caldron, whose party got defeated during governorship elections. The resignation could be taken as victory for the **Mexican** drug lords

Venezuela's President Chavez has not discontinued his 21st socialism geared at nationalizing companies tailing capitalist exploitation. His recent nationalization attack was the food department. Opposition in **Venezuela** remains charged, criticizing Chavez for clamping down on political opponents and violating human rights.

In recent times, **Argentine-China** relations hit the rock over sale of farm product, even though trade between the two countries has crossed \$14 billion, hence leaders from the two nations plan to resolve their difference as **Argentina** Fernandez Kirchner visits China.

Mexican farmers have hinted that the combination of huge flood in the country and certain governmental hurdles will be responsible for a decrease in productivity of farm products.

Mercosur and *EU* are two potential trade blocs but certain degree of inflexibility is hampering the growth of their economic ties. President Lula of **Brazil** hopes to act more elastically when the presidency of *Mercosur* falls on **Brazil** later this year.

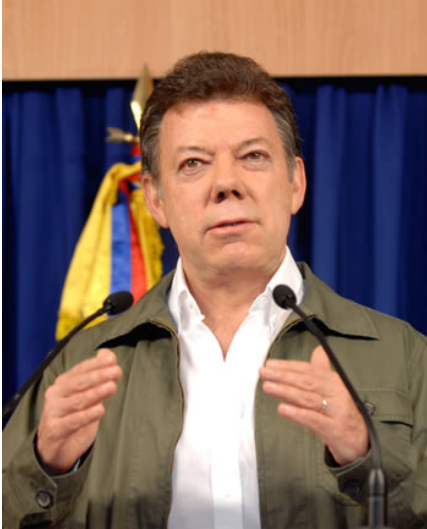
Hosting the forthcoming Olympic Games 2016 will be praiseworthy for President Lula, who believes that all pessimistic views about **Brazil** hosting the world sport events are just side talk.

The **Argentine** Congress has approved , but is awaiting the approval of the Senate amid a growing dissatisfaction by the **Argentine** Catholic Church over legalisation of same sex marriage.

Violence related to drug is one of the characteristics and troubling concern of the region, but **Chilean** government singled out **Chile** as the safest country in the region due to low crime rate and drug violence. Keeping that unbroken, President Pinera has launched an anti drug campaign and has heightened police vigilance.

Prominent **Colombian** journalist and critic of ex-President Uribe's policy towards drug cartel was refused U.S visa by US embassy in **Colombia**, indicating Washington is not comfortable with criticism of its ally. In a bid not to de-track from the policy of fighting FARC as championed by then Uribe's administration, Colombian forces ambushed FARC rebels and also killed 14 innocents, an incident that has grabbed the criticism of UN Human Rights Council.

Venezuela and the *United States* have not always been good bed fellows, but the extradition of wanted criminals from **Venezuela** to U.S is worth mentioning, even though Caracas still accuses Washington of using **Colombia** as proxy channel to attack **Venezuela**.



Manipulating state information is an offence in **Venezuela**, and a court has sentenced two men to eleven years jail term for hacking official blog and disseminating misleading information.

With the discovery of oil in the extreme south of **Chile**, the government hopes that it will contribute to the weak economy, which was devastated by earthquake couple of months back.

Colombia's President-elect Juan Manuel Santos has named a US-educated oil engineer as his energy minister, with the expectation to strengthen a major revenue sector.

President Lula of **Brazil** left a strong message for the *South African* president by urging him to follow the path of Brazil in increasing trade cooperation with developing countries than the developed nations. Lula completed his Africa visit and encouraged African leaders to enter into strong cooperation with **Brazil** in all sectors as Brazilian economy is experiencing an undisputable growth.

Sidelining one of the global systems appears to be the aim of ALBA, a group of Socialist countries in *Latin America* and *Caribbean*. The group is expected to start using 'Sucre' as a common currency for their commercial relations.

Venezuela is irked about the meddling of *Spain* in its domestic affairs and equally dissatisfied with the violation of airspace by *Dutch* aircraft.

AUSTRALASIA

Enjoying a robust relation with the public, **Australian** Prime Minister Julia Gillard of Labor party has called election, opening an electioneering process for August 21 general. She has been retracting from policy of ex-PM Kevin Rudd which she felt were not forthcoming.

The increasingly uncertainty and volatility of global economic has forced **Australia** to slash its annual growth from 3.25 to 3.0. Despite the growing tension, the government still sees a positive outlook for domestic economy.

Neighboring countries are still unsettled for the new **Australian** immigration policy that intends to settle asylum seekers in *East Timor* instead on an **Australian** territory. The plan is believe to be a measure to safe **Australia** from the troubles of immigration. Both *Indonesia* and *East Timor* have shown great resentment for the proposed regional processing immigration unit. §

