

# 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Pg 2 Global **Opinions** of the Week  
**Events of the Week**

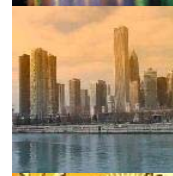
Pg 9 Asia Zone  
▶ MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA; WEST ASIA; SOUTH ASIA; NORTH ASIA ; EAST ASIA

Pg 15 Africa Zone  
▶ WEST AFRICA; EAST AFRICA & HORN OF AFRICA; CENTRAL AFRICA; SOUTH AFRICA

Pg 18 Euro Americas Zone  
▶ WEST EUROPE; EAST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA

Pg Global Islamic Finance  
(Under Preparation)

Pg Global Elections  
(Under Preparation)



# Global Opinions

*For the week*

This week's report consists of **24** surveys. **3** of these are multi-country surveys, **1** is a cyber surveys, & the rest are national surveys. **7** polling organizations have been represented.



## Topic of the week:

### **45 Million Internet Users in India**

#### **A LARGE NUMBER BUT SMALL PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION**

- ▶ 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:* India had as on September 2008 45.3 million active internet users. This is according to the I-

Cube [Internet in India] Study released today and conducted annually by IMRB

International and Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI]. Active internet users are those who have used the internet at least once in the last one month – this is an internationally accepted benchmark for enumerating internet users.



Urban users continue to dominate internet use contributing to 42 million of the 45 million odd users. In September last 2007, the number of active internet users in urban India was 32 million showing a year on year growth of a little more than 30 %. Commenting on the study Dr Subho Ray, president, IAMAI, said, “the growth rate was alarming compared with the rest in past years as well as with some other countries notably v where the number of internet users are more than 250 million”

The study also found that the number of “claimed” internet users in September 2008 was 57 million compared with 46 million in September 2007, recording nearly 24 % growth. Claimed users are those who have used the internet sometime but not in the last one month.

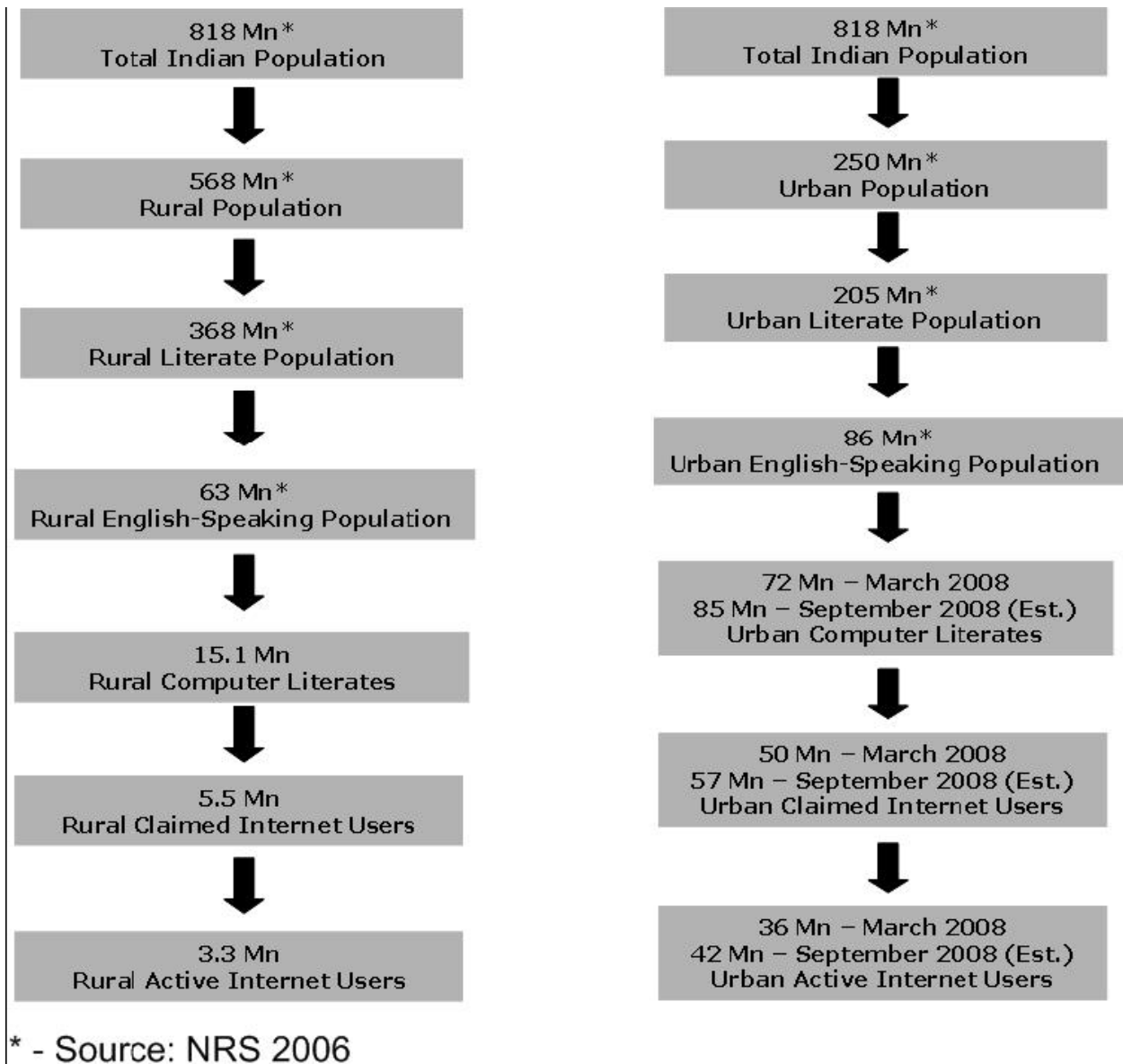
The time series data since 2001 captures this definite slow down in the growth rate of internet users in India.

The proportion of internet users to the total population from the age of 12 and proportion of internet users to the total literate population is also not very encouraging as shown in the tables below.

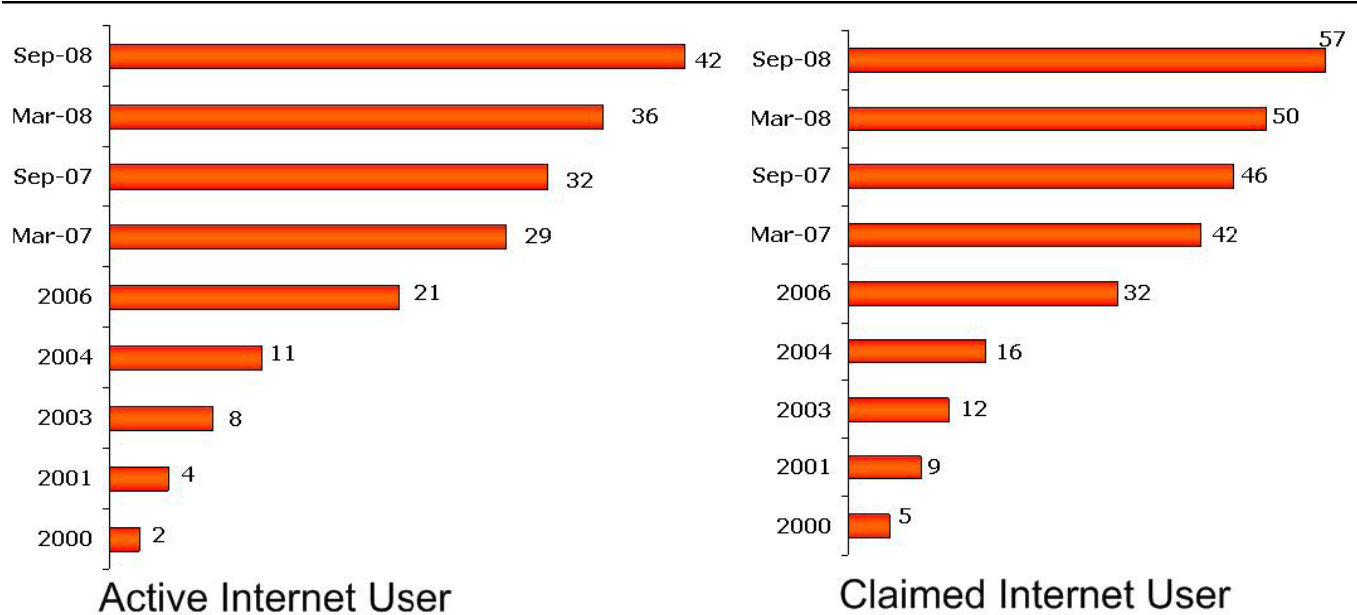
The survey also interviewed the claimed users on the lack of internet user and found there are five main barriers to internet use in urban India. The main reason for lack of internet use was found to be lack of awareness of the use of the medium.

Commenting on the study Mr. Mohan Krishnan, Senior Vice President BIRD, a specialized unit of IMRB International said “Continuing niche growth of the Internet is forcing two major realizations that need to be acted upon. Firstly, with majority of urban literates challenged due to the barrier of English language, there needs to be a strong push in vernacular/local language provision over the Internet. In these markets, in addition to localized content, online applications that matter individuals in their daily lives are needed. At the same time, untouched vast rural markets need to be tapped. §

**SOURCE:** <http://www.imrbint.com/media/45..pdf>



The following figures are in millions



## SUMMARY OF POLLS



### Asia zone

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



### ► SOUTH ASIA

#### **45 Million Internet Users in India** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

India had as on September 2008 45.3 million active internet users. This is according to the I-Cube Study, conducted annually by **IMRB International** and Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI]. Majority of urban Indians cite lack of awareness as a main hurdle in the usage of internet.

March 2009

[Society » Media/ New Media](#)

#### **Multi country poll- Many in Asia Travel Domestically for Medical Care (Multi-country survey)** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Underscoring issues with access to quality local healthcare, a median of about one in five households across **11 Asian** countries say at least one member had to travel to another community for medical care in the past year. Nepalese households are the most likely to have had a member seek treatment outside the community, while those in Indonesia are the least likely. **Gallup USA**

September 17, 2010

[Society » Health](#)



## Africa zone

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

### ▶ SUB SAHARAN AFRICA

*Multi country poll-* **EAC Countries Divided on Creating a Common Currency** [\(Click for Details\)](#)

The [East African](#) Community's next goal after launching a common market in July -- creating a common currency by 2012 -- gets mixed support in the economic union's five partner states. [Gallup](#) surveys last year showed most Ugandans, Burundians, and Rwandans think a single currency is a good idea, but Tanzanians are divided, and the majority of Kenyans think it is a bad idea.

September 14, 2010

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



## Euro Americas zone

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



### EUROPE

#### ▶ EAST EUROPE



*Terrorists and Their Targets: Rating Of Russian Threats* [\(Click for Details\)](#)

Memory of terrorist attacks in Moscow metro makes the [Russians](#) afraid of further attack. According to Russians, the most dangerous thing is transportation including avian transport, rail transport (69%) and public transport (50%) which can again be target of a terror attack. [Russian Public Opinion Research Center \(VCIOM\)](#)

September 08, 2010

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

*Russia's Global Goals: Development Or Superpowerness?* [\(Click for Details\)](#)

A majority of [Russians](#) think that achieving the status of economically developed and politically influential country should be the main goal for Russia in the XXI century. However, 33 % think that Russia should be a super power again. [Russian Public Opinion Research Center \(VCIOM\)](#)

September 07, 2010

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



## WEST EUROPE

### **Britons, Cricket Fans Would Impose Lifetime Ban on Pakistani Bowlers** (Click for Details)

People in [Britain](#) are paying attention to the recent allegations of spot-fixing in cricket, and two-thirds of respondents believe that any player involved in this practice should not be allowed to participate in international competitions again, a new [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) poll has found.

September 14, 2010

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

### **Survey Suggests British Catholics Disagree With Pope's Teaching on Sexuality** (Click for Details)

A survey has suggested that most [British](#) Catholics disagree with the Pope's teachings on homosexuality, abortion and contraception. According to an online [YouGov](#) poll of 1,636 Catholics for ITV's Tonight programme, only 11 % believed gay sex was morally wrong, while 41 % said that both straight and gay relationships should be celebrated.

September 13, 2010

[Society](#) » [Religion](#)

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

### **Few Britons Consider Anti-Social Behaviour Orders as a Success** (Click for Details)

Three-in-four respondents believe anti-social behaviour (such as noise pollution, littering, shoplifting, drunken behaviour) has become frequent, normal and tolerated in the [UK](#). People in Britain are not convinced that the controversial Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) are working, and more than half believe the Government's proposed course of action on this subject will be either unsuccessful or ineffectual, a new [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) poll has found.

September 16, 2010

[Society](#) » [Social Problems](#)



## AMERICAS

## NORTH AMERICA

### **Anti-Muslim Sentiment Makes News** (Click for Details)

In the [US](#) controversies related to Muslim Americans -- one sparked by a Florida pastor's plans to burn the Koran and another by a proposal to build an Islamic community center blocks from Ground Zero -- topped the news last week as the country marked the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. [Pew Research Center](#)

September 14, 2010

[Society](#) » [Religion](#)

### **Public Focused on Tensions over Islam** (Click for Details)

As the nation marked the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks last week, many in the public and the media focused more on current tensions over Islam in [America](#) -- most notably plans by a Florida pastor to burn copies of the Koran. [Pew Research Center](#)

September 15, 2010

[Society](#) » [Religion](#)

### **Democrats Re-Establish Narrow Edge in Party Affiliation** (Click for Details)

Slightly more [Americans](#) identify as Democrats or lean Democratic (44%) than identify as or lean Republican (41%) in September to date, re-establishing a Democratic edge that disappeared in August, when

the parties were even. The Democrats' current positioning remains much weaker than it was at the time President Barack Obama took office, when they enjoyed a 17-point edge in party affiliation. [Gallup USA](#)

September 15, 2010

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

***Obama's Weekly Job Approval Average Improves to 46%*** ([Click for Details](#))

[US](#) President Barack Obama's job approval rating averaged 46% for the week ending Sept. 12, his highest weekly average since mid-July and up from the 43% low point recorded in late August. [Gallup USA](#)

September 14, 2010

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

***U.S. Economic Confidence More Negative Than a Year Ago*** ([Click for Details](#))

Despite the recent upturn in the nation's equity markets, [Gallup's](#) Economic Confidence Index, at -34 during the week ending Sept. 12, confirms a downward trend in [US](#) consumer confidence that started in mid-August.

September 14, 2010

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

***Simple Ads Prove Effective in Courting Independent Voters in U.S.*** ([Click for Details](#))

With the mid-term congressional election less than two months away, [Americans](#)—and Independent voters in particular—are reacting very differently to two recent political advertisements, a new [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) poll has found.

September 16, 2010

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

***Americans Renew Call for Third Party*** ([Click for Details](#))

[Americans'](#) desires for a third political party are as high as they have been in seven years. 58 % of Americans believe a third major political party is needed because the Republican and Democratic Parties do a poor job of representing the American people. That is a significant increase from 2008 and ties the high [Gallup](#) has recorded for this measure since 2003.

September 17, 2010

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

***Obesity Linked to Lower Emotional Wellbeing*** ([Click for Details](#))

Obese [Americans](#), a group already grappling with many physical health problems, are also suffering in terms of their emotional wellbeing. The more than one in four American adults who are obese are significantly more likely than those who are normal weight or overweight to report having been diagnosed with depression and experiencing stress, worry, anger, and sadness. [Gallup USA](#)

September 17, 2010

[Society](#) » [Health](#)

***Majority Thinks GOP Has Moved Right since Obama Took Office*** ([Click for Details](#))

The prevailing view among [Americans](#) is that the Republican Party has become more conservative since Barack Obama took office, but not necessarily because of the Tea Party movement's influence. Among the 54% who say so, about a third -- representing 19% of all Americans -- think the Tea Party movement is the primary reason for this; the rest believe other factors are at work. [Gallup USA](#)

September 16, 2010

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

***Bush Still Takes Brunt of Blame for Economy vs. Obama*** ([Click for Details](#))

Nearly two years into his presidency, 51% of [Americans](#) say President Barack Obama bears little to no blame for U.S. economic problems, while 48% assign him a great deal or moderate amount of blame. More Americans now blame Obama than did so a year ago, but a substantially higher %age, 71%, blame former President George W. Bush. [Gallup USA](#)

September 16, 2010

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

**Americans More Pessimistic About Emerging From Recession** (Click for Details)

Most **Americans** see the U.S. economy as stuck in a recession and the majority doesn't see or expect much improvement any time soon. A majority (54%) now expect the economy to be the same or worse in a year, up sharply from the 35% who expressed similar views a year ago. Americans are also now more likely to say the economy is staying the same or getting worse than to say it is getting better. **Gallup USA**

September 15, 2010

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

**Americans Spending More Time Following the News** (Click for Details)

There are many more ways to get the news these days, and as a consequence **Americans** are spending more time with the news than over much of the past decade. Digital platforms are playing a larger role in news consumption, and they seem to be more than making up for modest declines in the audience for traditional platforms. As a result, the average time Americans spend with the news on a given day is as high as it was in the mid-1990s, when audiences for traditional news sources were much larger. **Pew Research Center**

September 12, 2010

[Society](#) » [Media/ New Media](#)

**Mixed Views of GOP Proposals on Entitlements** (Click for Details)

The **American** public has sharply different reactions to major changes in Social Security and Medicare programs being proposed by some leading Republicans. While a majority favors a proposal to allow some private investments in Social Security, there is considerably less support for the idea of ending Medicare and replacing it with a system of vouchers for purchasing private insurance. **Pew Research Center**

September 14, 2010

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

**More Canadians Are Questioning the Benefits of Immigration** (Click for Details)

More **Canadians** are questioning whether immigration is benefiting the country, with Albertans and Ontarians voicing concern over the role of illegal immigrants in Canadian society, a new **Angus Reid Public Opinion** poll has found.

September 14, 2010

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

## GLOBAL/MULTI-COUNTRY POLLS



**BBC International Trade Promoter Study** (Click for Details)

A study of business influencers was conducted by **GlobeScan** on behalf of BBC World Service across five countries, a total of 265 individuals with an influence over international business decisions were interviewed in **US, India, UAE, Turkey** and **Nigeria**. Proportions saying they access the BBC most days (TV, radio or online) range from 22% (Turkey) to 70% (India).

September 17, 2010

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

## CYBER WORLD



**Rise of the 'Apps Culture'** (Click for Details)

Cell phone use in the **U.S.** has increased dramatically over the past decade. Fully eight-in-10 adults today (82%) are cell phone users, and about one-quarter of adults (23%) now live in a household that has a cell phone but no landline phone. **Pew Research Center**

September 14, 2010

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

Events of the week in

# Asia zone

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

## GCC

### Geo-strategic Front:

**Yemeni** President held a telephonic conversation with **Saudi** Interior Minister on the day of Eid and expressed his desire to expand ties with the Kingdom. Meanwhile **Qatar** has agreed to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire between the **Yemeni** government and *Houthi* rebels, on the request of **Yemeni** government.

**GCC** foreign Ministers have welcomed the re-launch of direct *Israeli-Palestinian* peace talks but warned that *Israeli* “acts of aggression” may compromise them.

The *US* has unveiled its plan to sell **Saudi** Arabia up to \$ 60 billion in aircraft, helicopters and other arms.

Meanwhile **Kuwaiti** Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs has stressed the necessity of exerting earnest efforts to develop and overhaul the Arab order for the common good of the entire Arab world. *Arab League* envoy to **Sudan** has commended efforts being made by **Qatar’s** leadership to resolve the issue of the Darfur region of western **Sudan**. A high-speed railway link has been planned between **Bahrain** and **Doha**, in a bid to boost enrolment at educational institutions in the **Qatari** capital.

**Oman** and *India* have agreed to enhance bilateral investment and economic cooperation in a wide range of mutually beneficial areas.

### Economic Front:

The **GCC** has undertaken some of the world’s largest electricity projects, which include expansion of the electricity network in **Qatar** at a cost of \$ 3.5bn. Meanwhile **Saudi Arabia’s** banking system has topped the financial health chart in the **GCC** and showed more resilience to the consequences of the financial crisis than its peers in the **GCC** region. Meanwhile **UAE** Central bank Governor has reiterated the importance of cooperation among the Arab countries in various fields. Underlining cooperation among the Arab central banks, he asserted **UAE’s** support to all joint Arab projects.

*Japan* has agreed with **Kuwait** to cooperate in capacity building for peaceful use of nuclear energy generation in the Gulf nation, raising the prospect of lucrative deals for *Japanese* companies. **Kuwait** also signed a nuclear cooperation deal with *France* in April. **Bahrain’s** new oil and gas statistics revealed soaring exports over the first half of this year. By-product sales also rose by more 10 per cent. A report released by the National Oil and Gas Authority from January to June showed the positive trend. Production of crude from the **Bahrain** and Abu Saafa fields has dropped slightly to 32.659 million barrels from 32.922m barrels last year.

### Social Front:

Second Deputy Premier of **Saudi Arabia** has commended the services rendered by security officers and government agencies for the millions of pilgrims who came to perform Umrah during the holy month of Ramadan.

## **FERTILE CRESCENT**

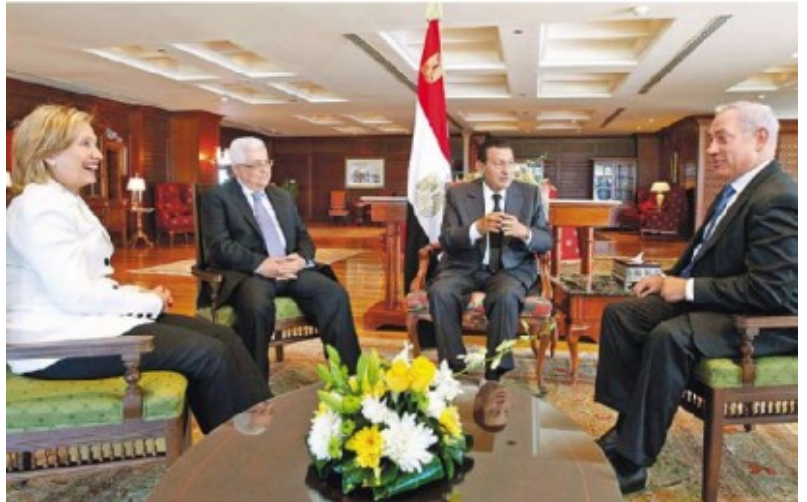
### **Political Front:**

**Egypt's** Foreign Minister has filed a complaint against Qandil, a prominent opposition journalist, alleging that he insulted him in a piece he wrote in the independent daily Shorouk last May. Meanwhile a call for election boycott by **Egypt's** most prominent opposition leader and former atomic energy watchdog Mohamed ElBaradei seems to have gone unnoticed by several opposition groups. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has stated that it is actively preparing for the elections due next November. In the meantime Al-Wafd Party has also decided to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections, sparking divisions among **Egypt's** opposition groups. However Al-Ghad party has announced to boycott upcoming elections. meanwhile the daughter of late President Anwar el-Sadat has lodged a complaint with **Egypt's** Chief Prosecutor against prominent writer Mohamed Hassanein for raising suspicions that her father may have been involved in killing his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nassar.

The National Coalition of Opposition parties in **Jordan** got engaged in dialogue discussing freedom of expression, public participation in the political process and economic difficulties facing the nation as a result of the government's incapable policies. **Iraqi** Kurds have not delivered on promises to ship 100,000 barrels of oil a day to the outside world through **Iraqi** national pipeline network.

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

**Egypt** hosted recently held talks between **Palestine** and **Israel**. Amidst ongoing struggle of concerned states over River Nile; rice farmers in **Egypt's** Nile Delta have been ordered to plant on less land to conserve water. Meanwhile **Palestine** and **Israel** have resumed their negotiations in the **Egyptian** resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh. The talks seem to be the last chance for the two sides to resolve their decades-long conflict. The US President has called for **Israel** to extend its partial freeze of the building of settlements on occupied **Palestinian** land to inject fresh momentum into newly-resumed Middle East peace talks.



### **Economic Front:**

**Egypt's** core inflation has accelerated for a fourth straight month in August, reaching its fastest pace in more than a year. Production from Iraq's major oil center of Kirkuk has reached 750,000 barrels a day. The high production rate, according to an Oil Ministry source, has helped the country double exports from Kirkuk via **Turkey**. The current output rate from Kirkuk has been possible due to large investments in developing producing fields such as Bai Hassan, Jambour and Ujail.

### **Social Front:**

Authorities have blocked off water purification stations along the Nile in southern **Egypt** to prevent some 100 tons of diesel oil that leaked from a barge from polluting drinking water. Meanwhile **Egyptian** Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research has supported a number of universities' decision to ban faculty members wearing the niqab, or the full face veil, from giving lectures.

In an effort to expand their outreach to the public, **Egypt's** biggest opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, has created a social networking website, Ikhwanbook, equivalent to the popular Face book.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has published a report according to which one in every six **Iraqis** is an orphan.

## CENTRAL ASIA

### Political Front:

Chairmen of **Azerbaijan** Popular Front Party and Musavat Party have signed an agreement on establishing an APFP-Musavat election bloc to jointly participate in the parliamentary elections. Later on, APFP-Musavat election bloc submitted documents to Central Election Commission (CEC) for registration.

**Kazakh** President intends to run elections for another term in 2012. A crowd of several hundred people rallied to demand the release of a local man detained on suspicion of illegal arms possession.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, thirty thousand citizens have been disqualified from voting. Meanwhile at the press conference by representatives of research centers "Religion, Law and Politics" and "Reasonable Solutions" experts have warned religious leaders of **Kyrgyzstan** not to participate in the political struggle in the secular parties.

A delegation from **Tajikistan's** power ministries has told former opposition commanders that a military operation in the eastern part of the country is not aimed at them but at a rebel commander and his supporters. Meanwhile the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of **Tajikistan** (IRP) has asked officials from the country's State Committee for National Security (SCNS) for clarification after the apparent detention of one of its members in the capital, Dushanbe.

### Geo-strategic Front:

**Azerbaijani** President has signed an agreement with *Turkey* on the establishment of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation in Istanbul. Meanwhile **Azerbaijan** has withdrawn a controversial draft resolution on the *Nagorno-Karabakh* conflict from the United Nations General Assembly.

Bilateral talks were held on expanding the *Azerbaijan-Germany* military cooperation. Also U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has confirmed *America's* interest in cooperating with *Russia* on a missile defense system using the Gabala radar station in **Azerbaijan**.

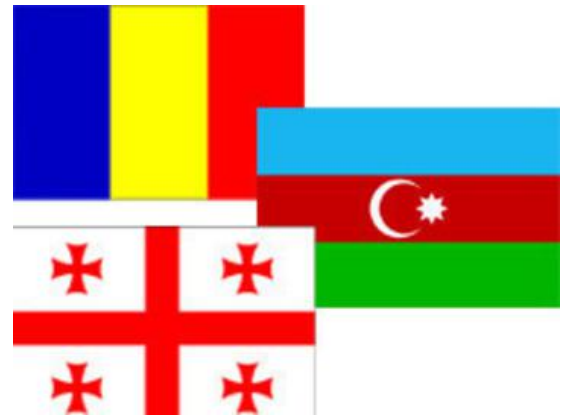
**Azeri** President hosted a meeting with his *Georgian* and *Romanian* counterparts and signed Baku Declaration on *Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania* Interconnector (AGRI) project.

**Kazakh** officials have extradited a **Kyrgyz** citizen of **Uzbek** origin to **Uzbekistan**. In other news **Kyrgyz** Defence Minister has asked *Russia* for more cash for hosting *Russian* military base on **Kyrgyz** territory. In response Russian officials have offered to supply **Kyrgyzstan** with arms as payment for Moscow's use of **Kyrgyz** territory for various military installations.

At least 20 Islamist militants and one border guard were killed in a firefight along the volatile border between *Afghanistan* and **Tajikistan**.

### Economic Front:

The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011 released by the World Economic Forum positioned **Kazakhstan** 72<sup>nd</sup> on the list of 139 countries. Hence Kazakhstan fell 5 places from 67<sup>th</sup> position occupied last year.



Asian Development Bank has announced a grant of US\$122 mln grant to **Tajikistan** for regional power transmission project.

Meanwhile *Turkey*, **Turkmenistan** and **Azerbaijan** have been trying to "develop a set of formulas for the long-term supplies of **Turkmen** gas across the Caspian Sea to **Azerbaijan** and further abroad" to foreign markets.

**Social Front:**

A rally was held in **Azerbaijan** to protest against abuses of the Quran in the United States.

Media Watchdog has condemned **Kazakhstan** for its failure to improve media freedom.

A well-known ethnic **Uzbek** human rights activist has been sentenced to life in prison for involvement in the killing of a **Kyrgyz** policeman. Right groups have strongly condemned this act.

Asian Development Bank has announced a grant of US\$122 mln grant to **Tajikistan** for regional power transmission project.

**SOUTH ASIA**

**Political Front:**

**Bangladeshi** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sought cooperation from all classes of people to build a poverty-free digitally enabled golden **Bangladesh** as dreamt by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Meanwhile Intelligence agencies at home and abroad have warned of a threat to the life of Sheikh Hasina that could take place between September and November.

In a bid to find a way out of the deadlocked prime ministerial polls in **Nepal**, Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has withdrawn his candidature from the race. The Special Committee on Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation has endorsed a new directive, ending UCPN-Maoist command and control over the ex-PLA combatants living in several UN-monitored cantonments across the country. **Nepal's** politicians have given themselves four months to finally complete a peace process after a United Nations report criticized their failure to fulfill pledges made at the end of the war. Vice President's personal secretary has been arrested from the Madheshbani in suspicion of his ties with the armed outfits operating in the Terai region.

A court martial in **Sri Lanka** convicted former army chief of corrupt military supply deals and sentenced him to three years in jail. **Sri Lanka's** crisis-ridden main opposition United National Party (UNP) leaders held meeting to discuss the party's future and the strategy for the upcoming Local Government elections. Meanwhile the **Sri Lankan** government, responding to the concerns expressed by the *United States* on the just passed constitutional reforms, said the passage of 18th Amendment to **Sri Lanka's** Constitution last week in the parliament with a two-third majority is an entirely internal matter.

**Sri Lanka's** main opposition and United National Party (UNP) leader has nominated Tamil national Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian as his nominee to the Parliamentary Council established under the 18th Amendment.

**Geo-strategic Front:**

**Bangladesh** has announced plan to open a new front in agricultural production and trade in West African countries. The government has sought detailed information from *Iran* over its recent offer for joining the proposed multi-billion dollar cross-border gas pipeline that will also connect **India** and **Pakistan**.

The governments of **Nepal** and *Chinese-ruled Tibet* Autonomous Region have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost tourism between the two territories.



**Sri Lankan** President held meeting with *Iranian* Commerce Minister and emphasized on the need to expand economic ties.

**Economic Front:**

**Bangladeshi** Finance Minister has expressed satisfaction with his country's progress at the economic front. The World Bank has announced financial support of \$6.1 billion for **Bangladesh** over the next four fiscals. Meanwhile according to reports infrastructure in **Bangladesh** ranks among one of the worst in the world as it has secured 133<sup>rd</sup> position out of the 139 countries, in accordance with the Global Competitiveness Report-2010-2011.

The *Chinese* private sector has expressed keenness to invest in hydropower, tourism and agricultural sectors of **Nepal**. Meanwhile **Sri Lanka's** economy has advanced by 8.5 percent during the second quarter of 2010 on an annual basis -- the highest quarterly growth rate recorded since 2002 -- following a 7.1 advance in the first quarter.

**Social Front:**

Sultana Arjuman Banu, a headmistress of a government primary school took a **Bangladeshi** official to court on his remark that she was an 'uncultured prostitute' for not wearing Burqa.

More than 500 people have been infected by anthrax as a major outbreak of the disease spreads through **Bangladesh's** dairy belt. In the meantime a 4.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Tripura and adjoining **Bangladesh**, but no casualties were reported.

Almost 60,000 people in **Nepal** have been found to be victims of cancer.

Containers filled with explosives accidentally blew up at a police station in eastern **Sri Lanka**, killing at least 25 people.

**INDIA**

**Political Front:**

The all-party meeting on **Jammu and Kashmir** has failed to arrive at a consensus on partial withdrawal or dilution or revocation of the contentious Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). In the meantime the Bharatiya Janata Party accused the Central and State governments of being completely devoid of any vision on how to deal with the situation. The party criticized the



**Jammu and Kashmir** government under Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and sought his immediate replacement. BJP advised the government not to consider lifting the Armed Forces Special Powers Act [AFSPA] from any disturbed district of the State. BJP further added that government should adopt strict policy to control the recent upsurge in the valley. Meanwhile curfew has been extended to all major towns of the **Kashmir** Valley after violent clashes have claimed life of 17 innocent dead and over 70 injured.

Tripathi, a defendant in the Ramjanambhoomi- **Babri Masjid case**, had filed the application for making another attempt to reach a solution to the dispute through reconciliation and deferment of the verdict. The Allahabad high court however refused to delay the verdict which was originally meant to be pronounced on Sept 24.

**Geo-strategic Front:**

**India** has accelerated its diplomatic effort for reform of the UN Security Council and its permanent membership as external affairs minister S M Krishna geared up to meet his counterparts from other G4 countries, including *Japan, Brazil* and *Germany*, and those of other multi-nation groupings to seek their support.

**Economic Front:**

The rising anti-outsourcing sentiment in the *US* and Ohio State's ban in this regard would most likely create adverse impact on the \$51-billion Indian IT industry. In fact **Indian** IT companies like Infosys Technologies, Wipro, HCL Technologies and TCS get 60 per cent of their export revenue from the *US*.

**Social Front:**

At social front spread of Dengue virus is a major point of concern for the **Indian** government.

**EAST ASIA****Political Front:**

Hundreds of anti-government protesters defied emergency law in the **Thai** capital to call for the release of their colleagues arrested in a crackdown four months ago. Meanwhile Thaksin has denied allegations that he has been trying to plot revenge against his enemies in the homeland.

Following the maritime dispute that has sparked angry protests, **Malaysian** Prime Minister Najib has urged for a better mechanism to resolve border issues with **Indonesia**.

**Geo-strategic Front:**

The *United States* and **Indonesia** have pledged to expand cooperation to a global scale. Meanwhile **Indonesia's** foreign minister has said that recent anti-Islamic anger among some *Americans* would not hurt deepening ties between his nation and the United States.

**Economic Front:**

International Monetary Fund has warned that **Indonesia** must make fighting corruption a priority if it wants to build on its progress as one of the world's best-performing economies.

The implementation of the *ASEAN-China* Free Trade Agreement, which took effect in January, intends to raise trade between the two countries from \$30 billion annually now to \$50 billion within the next three to five years. Meanwhile *EU* and **Malaysia** seem quite keen to sign a Free trade agreement in order to boost economic ties. **Malaysia** has also started negotiations with **Turkey** to sign free-trade agreement. A government think tank has identified a dozen growth industries such as oil and gas, biotechnology and Islamic finance to focus on in a drive to double **Malaysia's** income per capita and propel it into the ranks of "developed nations" by 2020.

**Vietnam's** export earnings reached US\$44.5 billion in the eight months through August, up 19.7 percent over the same period last year.

**Singapore's** exports surged unexpectedly in August, with strong demand for electronics and pharmaceuticals from major economies such as the *U.S.* and *Europe*, suggesting the global recovery remains on track. The city-state's key non oil domestic exports jumped 31.2% from a year earlier, accelerating from July's 18.3% rise and smashing predictions of a growth slowdown to 14.9% forecast by economists in a Dow Jones Newswires poll.

**Cambodia** seems keen to boost economic cooperation with *India* and *China*. Meanwhile over the weekend, the **Thai** currency, the baht, rose to its highest level since 1997 due to an improved outlook for economic growth and expectations of more investor inflows.

**Social Front:**

**Indonesian** President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has strongly condemned an armed attack on Christian church leaders outside Jakarta and called on police to solve the case as quickly as possible.

**Thailand** has threatened to deny visas to activists attending a **Vietnamese** human rights conference amid "pressure" to cancel the event. §



Events of the week in

# Africa zone

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

## POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

**West Africa:** **Benin's** President Boni Yayi has denied involvement in an alleged savings fraud, speaking publicly for the first time about accusations made by lawmakers in the impoverished West African country.

**Nigeria:** The chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Mrs Farida Waziri said the commission will work together with the INEC, the SSS, Police and political parties and advise parties on the candidates they are presenting for the next Election.

### Elections:

**Nigeria's** ruling party has set its presidential primaries for next month between October 18 and 20, said Rufai Alkali, a spokesman for the People's Democratic Party. Meanwhile **Nigerian** President Goodluck Jonathan showed the power of incumbency last week, mustering the support of more than two thirds of powerful state governors for the launch of his re-election campaign.

**Ivory Coast** President Laurent Gbagbo's signing of a decree last week validating a final voter list removed what appeared to be the last political hurdle to repeatedly delayed elections scheduled for Oct 31.

**Guinea:** dozens were wounded in clashes between supporters of rival candidates for **Guinea's** presidential election in the capital this week, witnesses said. The election campaigning had been suspended but there was no immediate threat of a delay to the planned Sept. 19 vote to restore civilian rule. Meanwhile **Guinean** authorities said last week that a presidential run-off would be delayed by as much as two weeks because of organizational failings, a move some fear could trigger unrest.

**Central Africa:** **Rwanda:** A French court has rejected a **Rwandan** government request to extradite a doctor accused of taking part in the 1994 **Rwandan** genocide. A judge in Versailles ruled last week, Eugene Rwamucyo could not receive a fair trial in Rwanda.

Meanwhile **Rwandan** president Paul Kagame has again lashed out at the United Nations after a U.N. report suggested **Rwandan** soldiers were guilty of mass killings and rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Congo:** According to reports violence and human-rights abuses are on the rise in the **Congo**, the international community is stepping up efforts to prevent "conflict minerals" from fueling further bloodshed.

According to reports **China** needs **Sudan** to vote peacefully; China has more to lose than most if things fall apart in **Sudan** this winter, where a potentially explosive national referendum on southern independence is due in January.

**South Africa: Zimbabwe:** Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai says there is slow progress towards democracy, with many serious political and economic problems outstanding.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

**West Africa: Nigeria:** At least ten people suspected of belonging to the radical Islamist sect Boko Haram have been arrested in northern **Nigeria** in recent days.

**Mali:** A kidnap threat blocking Western aid workers from traveling to parts of **Mali** is hampering aid operations and underscoring the importance of local NGOs, humanitarian experts say.

**Mauritania:** *French* foreign minister Bernard Kouchner says he suspects a group linked to al-Qaeda was behind the kidnapping of seven people in **Niger**. Meanwhile **Mauritanian** military forces killed 12 members of al-Qaeda's *North African* wing and suffered two fatalities in fighting in the desert along the border with **Mali**, a **Mauritanian** security source said.

**Liberia:** Liberian Ambassador to the European Union and the Benelux Countries, Conmany B. Wesseh, has outlined the adverse effects of illiteracy on postwar **Liberia** and the advantage of women's education and called for a sustained fight against mediocrity and academic fraud.

Famine threat in **Africa's Sahel** has eased for now after abundant rains in **Chad** have raised hopes for an end to severe food shortages but the effects will linger and lead to new difficulties across Africa's Sahel region in 2011, aid workers predict.

**East Africa/Horn of Africa: Chad:** The United Nations refugee agency sounded the alarm last week about the situation facing thousands of residents of southern and south-eastern **Chad**, where the heaviest rains in 40 years have destroyed homes and infrastructure, wiped out cropland and cut off access to towns and communities.

**South Africa: Malawi:** An attorney for **Malawi's** former President Bakili Muluzi has told VOA defense lawyers will go to court this week to agree on a date to enter a plea for the former leader's corruption charges.

**Zimbabwe's** education ministry has backtracked on a new policy, introduced in August 2010, to grant pregnant schoolgirls and the prospective fathers maternity and paternity leave from school, and has opted for disciplinary measures instead.



**South Africa** is to resume the deportation of **Zimbabweans** on 1 January 2011, on the basis that conditions in their home country have improved sufficiently, while those with valid documents will be issued permits to stay.

## HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

**West Africa: Nigeria** was notably absent at the first high level meeting of the **African-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP)** where the African and European Union (EU) Energy Ministers took a joint action on a shared commitment to bring access to modern and sustainable energy services to an additional 100 million people in Africa by 2020.

Meanwhile the manufacturers association of **Nigeria** (MAN) has called on the National Assembly to enact an Act with stiffer penalties that will deal with criminal acts of smuggling and dumping of toxic products in the country.

Poor diagnostics and weak surveillance helps spread *cholera* and are hampering government efforts to stem cholera in **Nigeria** says a government health worker.

**Cameroon:** U.S. firm Hydromine Inc. said it is studying a \$2.8 billion aluminium smelter project in **Cameroon** that would include construction of two hydroelectric plants to power the 500,000 tonne per year plant.

Meanwhile countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are leading a global decline in new HIV infections, the UN has said.

**Central Africa: DR. Congo:** The eradication of smallpox is linked to an emerging related disease in the Democratic Republic of **Congo**. Scientists say the appearance of *monkeypox* could be a cause for concern. *Monkeypox* causes symptoms a lot like smallpox, but it's not nearly as fatal.

**Equatorial Guinea's** minister of health and social welfare has denied reports the government has failed to invest in the healthcare of its people despite the country's enormous oil wealth.

**South Africa: Zimbabwe:** Six church volunteers, who run two clinics for people with AIDS and AIDS orphans, arrested in Zimbabwe were charged with practicing without required medical licenses have been released on bail by a Harare court.

## POLITICAL ECONOMY

**West Africa: Nigeria:** The Federal Government blamed former Central Bank Governor Professor Charles Soludo for the present problems facing the nation's banking and financial sectors saying that he caused a lot of havoc to the sector before he left about two years ago.

**Ghana:** British firm Tullow said last week that it has found what could be among the largest recent oil discoveries in Africa off the coast of **Ghana**, with the field holding a potential 550 million barrels.

**Liberia:** In order to contribute to restore the debt sustainability of the Republic of **Liberia**, Paris Club decided to cancel U.S. \$1,260 million in nominal terms, which represents the Club's share of the effort in the framework of the enhanced HIPC Initiative.

**Cameroon:** African Development Bank (AfDB) Group approved USD 47.70 million for electricity supply to 423 localities in **Cameroon** to enhance the existing network's technical performance.

Also in **Burkina Faso** the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Burkina Faso have signed a CFAF 19.63-billion (UA 25.15 million) grant agreement to finance basic energy infrastructure projects in the country, including improving the provision of electricity.

The **Nigeria-China** Friendship Association (NICAF) has called on Federal Government of Nigeria to curb influx of sub-standard products into the nation's market.

Meanwhile **African** trade with *China* is growing at the expense of that with other major global markets which is either declining or stagnating, says the African Development Bank (AfDB) in a new report released last week. Trade volume between **China and Africa** hit 61.2 billion U.S. dollars in the first six months this year, marking a year-on-year increase of 65 percent.

**Central Africa:** In **Rwanda** new regulations are expected to stimulate fishing and restrict the use of fishing methods to boost fishermen's incomes through more profitable catches and high quality products.

**Southern Africa:** **Southern African** countries have some of the world's worst income distribution, but can often afford social transfers, which have proved an efficient means of reducing the number of poor, regional experts said at a two-day meeting in Pretoria, South Africa.



**South Africa's** government has offered new enticements to 1.3 million state workers to accept a wage offer and formally end a strike which they suspended last week, union officials said. §

*Events of the week in*

## Euro Americas zone

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

### WESTERN EUROPE

#### *Political Issues*

The Visegrad countries (the **Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland** and **Slovakia**) are one of the interest groupings within the EU who are urging the bloc to support their energy infrastructure projects for the next budget year.

**France's** expulsion of Roma is creating a crack within the EU as members are widely unhappy with the expulsion. The saga also brought forward certain forgotten episodes of Nazi's atrocity as regards the massacre of Roma, though only Jew persecutions have always been highlighted. The matter has escalated across the Atlantic, *U.S American* lawmakers also showing discontentment towards the **French** discriminatory policies.

**Swedish** elections last week ended in a hung parliament after the rise of a far-Right group narrowly prevented the conservative-liberal coalition government from winning an outright majority in **Sweden's** parliament.

#### *Economic Issues*

The new **EU** findings which state that senior lobbyists profit from expanding **EU's** projects and even earn much as more than **EU** senior officials will justify the clamour by certain angle of the **EU** that the bloc's expenditures should be cut. This can also bring back home similar argument in *Washington* that role of lobbyists should be reduced in politics.

As *Pakistan* gets enlisted into **EU** new strategic partners, it makes the protracted issue of Generalized System of Preferences Plus scheme, which offers a reduced-tariff regime in return for democratic reform commitments in 2014 and accessibility of *Pakistan* into **EU** market much easier. Protectionism is one factor for which *Pakistan's* name was previously objected.

The **EU** also reached a compromise on *South Korea* after overcoming reservations of **EU** car makers. The deal opens **EU** car market to Seoul, expected to enter into force on 1 July 2011.

The general cut on government spending across **Europe** is having a great impact on the entire economy. In the **UK**, defense spending is being critically examined amid fears that such a slash might endanger **British** military strength and influence.

**Greek** streets are witnessing another round of protests as government intensifies reform effort aim at stabilizing and opening up the receded economy. If *Athens* continues to play by IMF's rules, the financial borrower will not hesitate to approve more loan as part of the bail out package.

### Social/Humanitarian Issue

Leaked report from the **French** Interior ministry is reported to have contradicted the position of government that expulsion of Roma was not premeditated and purposeful. Despite the international condemnation, **French** rightists are supporting Sarkozy on the issue.

**French** Senate passed the bill banning veil in public with a heavy fine for violators of the law. Before the law will go into force, the Constitutional Council will need to examine its legality.

### Food, Environment and Energy Issue

The *UN Food and Agricultural Organization's* report records a drop in the number of hungry people in the world. The development owes to the fall in food prices, though the organization does not fence the reality that an estimated 925 million people are undernourished worldwide.

Investing in renewable resources and reducing emission of greenhouse gas are important energy issues on **EU** table. The coal resource countries want subsidies for their sector to be extended till 2018, a plea rejected by **EU** climate change countries.

### Geostrategic Issues

*Afghanistan* elections this time around will be conducted with the aid of EU sponsored women security forces in order to ensure adequate women participation and general election good conduct. The effort was part of **EU** €35 million election-support budget for *Afghanistan*.

The designation of six new developing countries as 'strategic partners' of **Europe** is an indication that the bloc is waking up to the growing influence these countries irrespective of their location. *Egypt, Israel, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ukraine* and *South Korea* are the new 'strategic partners' to join the EU's existing nine partners.

## EAST EUROPE

### Political Issues

The criminal and judiciary system of **Bulgaria** and **Romania** have again come under the **EU** radar. As **EU** members, their systems are still lagging behind and *Brussels* expects both countries to intensify reform effort in that regard.

The pressure of junior coalition partner has forced the major **Albanian** ruling party to agree to cabinet reshuffling and has been approved by the parliament. Meanwhile President Topi has urged the judiciary not to sit on the fence but to become active in resolving the conflict between ruling and opposition parties.

October 3<sup>rd</sup> elections will be a decisive date for voters in **Bosnia**, but the apathy of youth and women is a big concern for political parties, taking advantage of the internet to woo voters' participation.

The recent property law passed by **Serb** entity parliament will further make other ethnic **Bosnians** question the intentions of *Republika Srpska's (RS)*. *Republika Srpska's (RS)* parliament adopted a Law on State Property, which stipulates that the **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH) entity will manage, secure and protect all forms of property within its territory; the law is rejected by **Bosniaks** as contradictory to the Dayton Peace Accords.

Nine years after the last census, **Macedonia** will have another population count by April next year, a process to be monitored by *EUROSTAT*.



Ethnic politics continues to polarize **Macedonians**, while majority of **Macedonians** want to join the EU and NATO but not at the cost of their identity, ethnic **Macedonian Albanians** want the government to sacrifice whatever it takes to secure their membership of **EU**. The name dispute between **Macedonia** and **Greece** has been one of the deadlocks for *Macedonia-EU* talks.

**Serbian** opposition parties are gearing up for a bigger alliance that could force the government into going for an election. Politics in **Serbia** has always been around Serb identity, issue of **Kosovo** and **EU** integration.

#### **Economic Issues**

**Romanian** civil servants have planned to launch a large strike action against massive unemployment in the country and pension cut.

#### **Social/Humanitarian Issue**

War criminals are facing justice across the region as governments are pulling all strings to ensure that ills of the past do not go unaddressed. Meanwhile **Bulgarian** President Georgi Parvanov broke his silence as he referred to the expulsion of Roma from *France* as un-normal, violating European spirit.

#### **Food, Environment and Energy Issue**

*Athens* is taking seriously the murder of a **Greek** in **Albania**; *Greece* has warned Tirana to protect Greek minority otherwise its **EU** accession talks could see a roadblock as is the case with **Macedonia**. **Albanian** Prime Minister Sali Berisha urges *Athens* not to walk that path.

Prospective talks between **Kosovo** and **Serbia** has divided the country, although around 60% of a surveyed group wants the talk. *Pristina* believes it should be under the auspices of UN, U.S and **EU** and rejects discussing **Kosovo's** independence. Meanwhile NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen urged Alliance members not to be too fast with scaling down troops in **Kosovo**, because *Pristina's* ability to manage security is still in the making.

European Commission is preparing a report on **Serbia's** readiness for the **EU** amid all diplomatic crises surrounding *Belgrade*. Meanwhile, **Austrian** parliament has signaled to ratify the *Stabilisation and Association Agreement* (SAA) with **Serbia** by the end of the year.

## **RUSSIA**

#### **Political Issues**

*Moscow's* Mayor Yuri Luzhkov finds himself at a new political threshold, as the air is replete with the sensation that he might be replaced soon. Nonetheless, preparations for 2011 **Russian** parliamentary elections are underway, opposition parties are taking no chance to be left out from the public office.

#### **Economic Issues**

**Russian** leadership is pushing for a balanced macroeconomic policy aimed at boosting **Russian** economy, simultaneously appears not to be inward looking as it opens opportunities for competitive investors across the globe. The recent Arab investment in Sochi project is a testimony and tallies with **Russian** President Dmitry Medvedev's plan to make **Russia** a global financial hub.

As a growing industrial economy, the role of migrant workers cannot be understated, but **Russia** remains fearful of being overwhelmed by the debouching of the migrants

#### **Social/Humanitarian Issue**

Although it is a national interest matter for **Georgia** to adopt English as the language of development but in reality it is a blow to **Russia** because English will have to replace **Russian** and that could further exacerbate the tension between a pro-Western government and *Moscow*.



Yoga is increasingly becoming an acceptable pop culture for many **Russians** and that is also increasing **Russian** traveling to India to familiarize themselves with such an ancient tradition.

Communist **Russia** era was symbolic for its disrespect for religion, a trend that has somewhat changed after the collapse of that system and religion is increasingly taking a position in the public sphere. Thus, the permission to **Russia's** Orthodox Church priests serving as military chaplains and servicemen is part of that manifestation.

According to reports **Russian** women are occupying top jobs and have good public representation a trend is reported to have picked up since the fall of communism.

Could the life of centuries old bacteria helps to find a way for human to live longer than expected, this is an intriguing question yet unanswered but being pursued by Russian scientists at Tyumen State Oil and Gas University.

### ***Food, Environment and Energy Issue***

**Russia** and *Norway* ended decades of tussle over ownership of a part of the Arctic. The settlement allows **Russia** to commence energy exploration with the aim of strengthening energy-economic ties with the Nordic country. But that will be untrue for *Canada*, urging Moscow to allow scientific evidence to determine the ownership of Lomonosov Ridge under the Arctic Ocean.

Balancing the global oil production could now rest on **Russia**, whose production level will have to reach a congruent position with OPEC production. Russia is set to cooperate with China and Croatia on constructing nuclear power plant in the two latter countries.

### ***Geostrategic Issues***

*France's* defense minister defended the possible sale of *French* Mistral helicopter carriers to **Russia** and dismissed concerns that it could undermine the security of *Georgia*.

Meanwhile despite all concerns by the *Israeli* authority, **Russia** is bent to honor its military deal with **Syria** which allows the latter to have **Russian** made P-800 Yakhont missiles having a range of 300 kilometers, making it difficult to detect and intercept them.

## **US/CANADA**

### ***Political Issues***

In **America** the debate over tax extension has divided democrat Congressmen, White House is opposed to extending tax for rich **Americans**, doing that could be detrimental for most congressmen struggling to retain their seats in a hot congressional election. Senate republicans say they are prepared to give the White House all that it takes to keep the Bush era tax cut.

Meanwhile, report has it that republicans are leading democrats in election adverts and campaign spending is flooded by deep-pocketed donors. However polls suggest that **Americans** are not happy with Obama's administration handling of the economy, but are comfortable with democrats as compared to republicans.

**American** presidential election is far from being around the corner but prospective G.O.P presidential candidates have started testing their clout across the country through republican organized summits. *Sarah Palin*, a leading figure in the revolutionary Tea Party groups is receiving considerable spotlight.

### ***Food, Environment and Energy Issue***

A ruptured pipeline in *California* has spotlighted the security concern of energy pipeline across the nation. The rupture unveiled the need for proper mechanism for checking pipelines, with particular reference to private companies involved.



Final cementation of leak created by BP at the *Gulf of Mexico* is underway, the seal is expected to put an end to the spill that for months troubled the **United States** and raised eye brow between *London* and *Washington*.

### **Geostrategic Issues**

According to reports *Europeans'* judgment of Obama is much higher than **Americans**. President Obama has been able to receive considerable points for his handling of international affairs, though Europeans were not as optimistic as **Americans** on certain issues such as *Afghanistan* and *Iran*.

Obama administration wants a \$60 billion military deal with *Saudi Arabia* to give more leverage to Riyadh in the region amid growing tension over *Iran's* alleged nuclear weapons. But Congress is yet to decide if the deal will challenge *Israeli* military superiority.

Effort by the Obama administration to facilitate the *Yemeni* government in combating al-Qaeda's threat is dividing military officers in *Washington*. The military aid is expected to roll-back insurgency in the desert country but opponents believe **American** weapons could end up with al-Qaeda.

## **LATIN AMERICA**

### **Political Issues**

Political polls in **Brazil** maintains similar pattern, with the delineation of Ms. Rousseff leading other president aspirants. Mr. Serra, the runner-up is accusing Worker's Party of dirty trick as in character assassination.

**Colombian** President Santos has started challenging corruption, crimes and rebellion within and across **Colombia's** border. The government is picking on corrupt government officials and FARC rebel group, though his administration wanted a negotiation with FARC.

**Mexico** like many in the region celebrates its 200 years independence anniversary, amid the celebration was the total rejection of drawing a parallel between **Mexico** and **Colombia** as two violent countries. **Mexican** drug cartels and **Colombian's** FARC are two different entities, the latter is political and the former is business oriented, hence it is erroneous for Secretary of State Hilary Clinton referring to **Mexico** as new **Colombia**.

Amid a tight parliamentary election run-up, **Venezuela's** President Hugo Chavez is wooing voters to support his party for a majority in the parliament. Chavez might have to succumb to the Jewish community demand as part of election strategy, a community that complains of discrimination. Meanwhile, Chavez continues nationalization of foreign companies, also reducing the movement of FARC across the border in line with the understanding between **Venezuela** and **Colombia**.

### **Economic Issues**

The **Argentine** government is taking no chance to increase economic and trade ties within and across the region. Indo-Argentine trade ties reached a new height with huge investment worth \$billions between the two countries.

Inflation and weakness of **Venezuelan** economy is linked to low oil exploration, trade dispute with Colombia and attack on privatization, yet **Venezuelan** Central Bank is hopeful of having a stable economy in three years time.

ALBA countries are geared at creating a competitive aviation environment and increasing revenue through tourism, by having a common airline with cheaper rate than other commercial airline for ALBA countries.

### **Social/Humanitarian Issue**



**Brazil's** labor ministry has started effort to breakdown feudalistic actions between farmers and their laborers. The inhumane actions are becoming more noticeable to the public and government's duty is to redress the situation.

Former **Chilean** President Michelle Bachelet has been appointed as head of United Nations Women (UN Women). The post bears the responsibility of eradicating indifference and discrimination of women in the public sphere. Bachelet holds that discrimination of women is a global disease that requires global treatment.

There is a condemnation of U.S bases in **Colombia** and criticism of **Colombian** military's human right violation under the premise of fight against crimes. Notwithstanding, another \$30 million is issued by Washington for **Colombia** to fight drug and rebel groups.

It is a protracted fight that Mexican government must fight with prudence and tactics in order not to exacerbate the human right violation which the war on drug lords has caused the country. Amid kidnapping and killing of innocents and journalists, government agents are apprehending few of the drug barons.

### **Geostrategic Issues**

Developing and strengthening their military arsenal is a shared concern for **Argentina** and **Brazil**. The latter will be helping the former to developing and upgrading its defense plane system planes.

The leading **Brazilian** presidential aspirant Ms. Rousseff re-outlined **Brazil's** foreign policy aimed at global peace but never in consonance with global rogue actions. This stance was reiterated to explain **Brazil's** policy towards Iran.

**Colombian-Venezuelan** leaders have intensified restoration of damaged ties, but havoc caused by ten years skirmishes will make trust deficit haunt both countries.

## **AUSTRALASIA**

### **Political Issues**

In **Australia** Labour party is not ready to lose the support of its coalition partners (green and independent parties) therefore increasing tax for the powerful mining sector is out of the question. Attempt to increase tax for the sector was instrumental for the fall of ex-PM Kevin Rudd. Meanwhile, opposition party has vowed to shatter the newly formed coalition government.

### **Economic Issues**

A merger of Rio and BHP is a threat for Asian and *European* steelmakers. The two mining giants have been negotiating a joint venture; the possibility of such venture will be determined by The **Australian** Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) decision, which is still pending.

**Australia's** third largest export country is India and as trade surplus between the two records around \$14.5 billion US in 2009, the importance of *New Delhi* to *Canberra* cannot be downplayed. Reserve Bank of Australia notes that *China's* economy should not be allowed to over cloud the importance of India.

### **Social/Humanitarian Issue**

Victorian Supreme Court in *Melbourne* hosted five Muslim men charged with attempt to commit acts of terror. Meanwhile, the presiding judge stated that the court is only to prosecute the men for the charges and nothing to do with Islam.

Professor Ray Norris is making an attempt to increase the status of **Australian** aborigine as world's first astronomers through his profound study of the ancient recorded tradition of the neglected community of **Australia**. §

