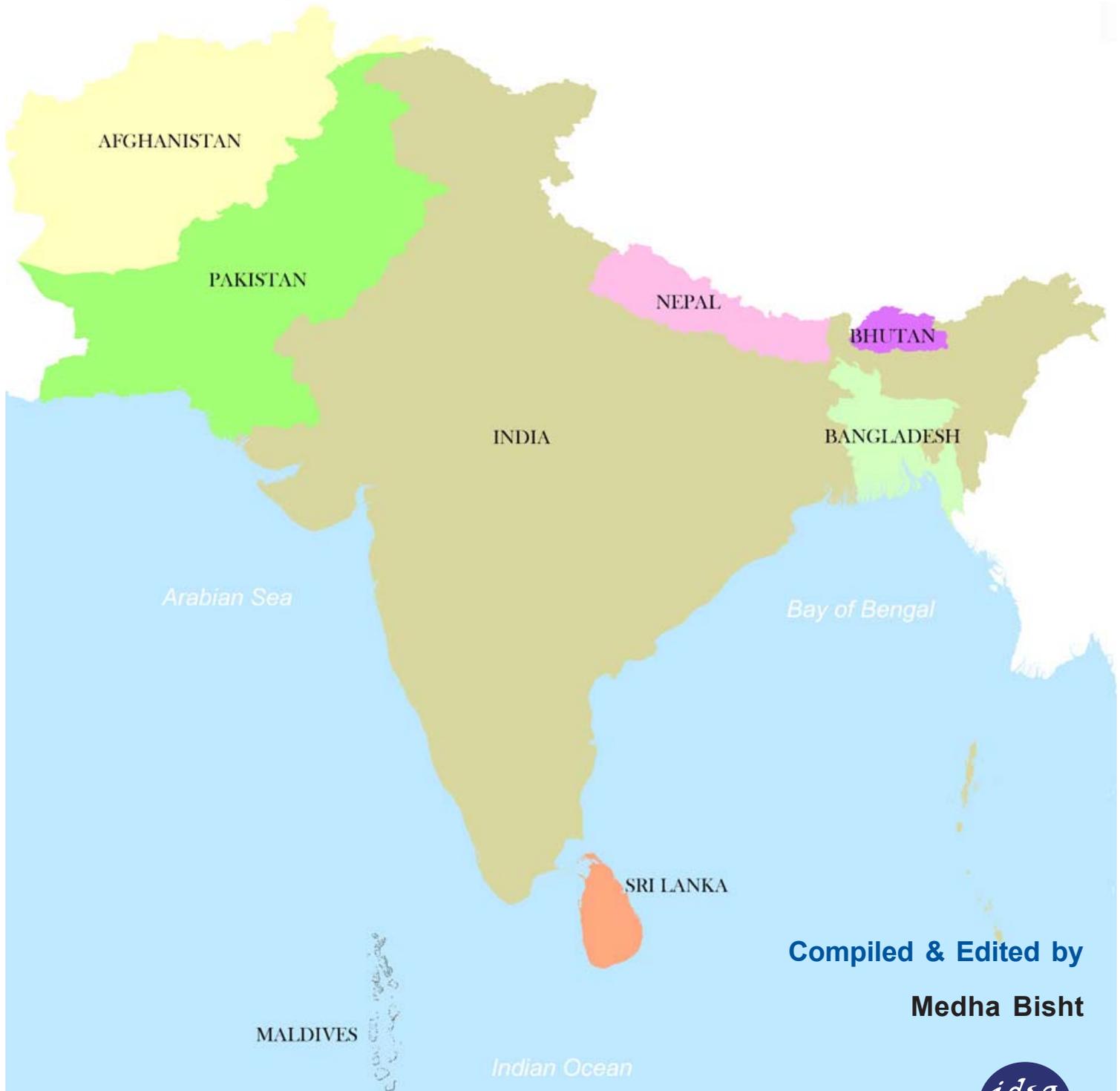


SOUTH ASIA TRENDS

Volume 1 Number 2 May 10-23, 2010

South Asia Trends is a fortnightly newsletter on South Asian affairs. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide a panoramic view of important events that shape and impact the politics of the subcontinent. The effort would be to inform our readers of the domestic, regional and international repercussions of the political debates and diplomatic engagements that take place in South Asia.



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Editor's Note

“Washington provides red carpet treatment to the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai” - these headlines which hogged much media limelight in the second week of May 2010, defined the Karzai-Obama meet as a visit meant to mend fences. While the visit was framed as strategic partnership; bridging trust deficit was cited as the main precondition by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. This goal adequately translated into Washington's Afghan policy, which softened postures toward Karzai, thus ending the oft repeated diatribe against the much talked about corrupt practices of Karzai. While the leaders of both countries renewed their focus and determination against the war on terror, thus setting aside the differences, which had cropped up in the past few months, Karzai's apprehensions over the U.S. pullout were visibly allayed by United States, as it reiterated its long term commitment to Afghanistan. A report in Washington Post brings out the fears of Karzai regarding the U.S. pullout linking it to Washington's intentions to decentralise power and money in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, a significant offer made by Karzai during the visit, as reported in the Los Angeles Times was to designate Afghanistan as a non NATO ally, a status enjoyed by Japan, Australia, South Korea, Pakistan Israel, amongst others. With these developments, it seems that Washington's diplomatic efforts are hinged on a two pronged approach. While the first aims to appease Karzai in order to get his cooperation as a reliable partner in the war against terrorism, the second points towards focussed effort to delegate responsibly to the Afghans themselves, so as to create the necessary ground for the U.S. pullout in July 2011.

Amongst other issues, the trilateral partnership between Pakistan-Afghanistan-United States, as part of larger regional agenda also received substantive attention during Karzai's four day visit to Washington. Meanwhile, the failed Times Square bombing in New York and the involvement of Faisal Shahzad, with the Tehrik-e-Taliban, created fissures in the Pakistan-United States relationship, so much so that Richard Holbrooke had to issue a statement clarifying that Pakistan's alleged involvement with the bombing had been blown dis-proportionately by the media. Pakistan on its part apparently made it clear that it would not succumb to US pressure and launch an offensive in North Waziristan.

In Bhutan the much awaited local government elections have been further delayed and would only start once the delimitation exercise takes place. Meanwhile Bhutan's national daily, The Kuensel pointed out that the impact of recession on Bhutan's tourism industry was felt sharply as the total income declined from 39 million dollars to 32 million-dollars in the 2008-09 financial year. The issue of financial debt owned by the political parties came to the fore as the Election Commission of Bhutan asked both the political parties to clear their financial dues by 2012 before the date of the general elections in 2013. While the financial debt for Druk Phuensum Tshogpa stands at Nu 20 million, People Democratic Party's total debt stands at 3.5 million.

In Nepal, the peace process seems to have reached a protracted impasse, even as Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) issued a

forty-eight hour ultimatum on May 13, 2010, to the three political parties to end the political deadlock. While the Maoists remained insistent on their demand regarding the resignation of Premier Madhav Kumar Nepal, a joint statement was issued by the ten political parties which stated explicitly that national sovereignty, federalism, republic, secularism, democracy, social justice, peace and constitution are common goals identified for joint action. Amidst rumours that Maoists were ready for a change in their leadership, replacement of Prachanda as the party leader was strongly refuted by Maoist leader Bahadur Bogati in a public statement. Though constitutionally possibilities of Presidential rule have been rejected in Nepal, it is quite probable that the writing of the new constitution could be delayed to a year. However resignation of Nepal as the prime minister could play a key role on forging consensus on the extension of the Constituent Assembly. Nepali Congress meanwhile has consented to form a national consensus government under its leadership.

Afghanistan

Taliban threatens new attacks in Afghanistan

Khaleej Times, May 8, 2010

The Taliban threatened to launch a fresh offensive across Afghanistan, as Karzai said international forces have yet to secure large parts of the country. The Taliban said the offensive starting May 10, 2010 will include assassinations of government officials, roadside bombs and suicide attacks against foreigners and those who support them. Defense Minister Gen. Abdul Rahim Wardak quickly dismissed the threat as insurgent propaganda. Moreover, he said, intelligence reports show many of the Taliban commanders currently are across the border in Pakistan.

(Source: http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/May/international_May458.xml§ion=international)

Can Karzai's Brother Help, Elise Jordan

The Daily Beast, May 10, 2010

As the Afghan president meets Obama, his scandal-tarred brother Ahmed tells Elise Jordan he's no warlord, how he can help bring peace, and why he's "the Nancy Pelosi of Kandahar. "The youngest brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai shouldn't be dismissed with shorthand. As the U.S. navigates critical alliances in Afghanistan, he could prove a helpful ally-something American officials should keep in mind as his brother heads to the White House this week for an official visit. Success in Kandahar, the spiritual home of the Taliban, is critical to break the insurgency, and Karzai believes he can play a crucial role there, by helping reconciliation with tribes and the Taliban.

(Source: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-05-09/nancy-pelosi-of-kandahar/?cid=bs:archive7>)

40 terror camps near Af-Pak border

Times of India, May 10, 2010

The latest authentication of Pakistan's reluctance to rein in terrorists operating out of its territory has come from Russian ambassador to India Alexander M Kadakin, who claimed around 40 terror camps are still active in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas and Islamabad is yet to dismantle them. Kadakin, in his second stint as ambassador to India, told TOI in an exclusive interview that this information was based on Russian satellite imagery and intelligence. It appears that of the 1,200 Afghans who Karzai says will be welcomed at the peace jirga, a mere 115 will be women - far less than even the 27% reservation for women in parliament

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/40-terror-camps-near-Af-Pak-border/articleshow/5910437.cms>)

Karzai to promote new peace plan in visit to Washington

The Independent, May 11, 2010

Afghan President Hamid Karzai will arrive in Washington on May 11, 2010 with a new peace plan. The US will hope to resolve some of the major disagreements that still dog the White House strategy in Afghanistan. Taliban leaders could be

offered exile overseas, and their organisations offered the chance of participating in the political process, if they cut ties with terrorist groups such as al-Qa'ida." The package for these levels may include: addressing the problem of sanctuaries, measures for outreach and removal from the UN sanction list, ensuring severance of links with al-Qa'ida ... and potential exile to a third country."

(Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/karzai-to-promote-new-peace-plan-in-visit-to-washington-1970009.html>)

James, Dobb, Talking to the Taliban (Editorial)

New York Times, May 11, 2010

President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan wants to talk to the Taliban, and that's going to be a thorny issue for President Obama when the two leaders meet. Some U.S. officials would prefer that Mr. Karzai and his government concentrate on detaching low-level fighters from the insurgent cause, but Mr. Karzai would prefer to go right to the top leadership. He has already offered to meet with Mullah Muhammad Omar to seek an end to the conflict. The U.S. has preferred reintegration. Each insurgent brought over weakens the enemy and strengthens the government forces. Reconciliation would require mutual accommodation between two competing Afghan leaderships, inevitably opening the prospect of substantive trade-offs that worry U.S. officials and many Afghans.

(Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/12/opinion/12iht-edobbins.html?hp&ex=&ei=&partner=>)

US backs Karzai, vows not to abandon Afghan cause

Gulf News, May 11, 2010

The United States courted Afghan President Hamid Karzai, pledging not to abandon Afghanistan as the two sides opened high-level talks aimed at showing a united front in the nine-year war. The discussions, which include diplomatic, defence, military and intelligence chiefs on both sides, follow weeks of hostility caused by Karzai's anti-Western comments, including blaming the West for corruption in Afghanistan. In the first public session in an elegant State Department reception room, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the US has a long-term commitment to Afghanistan and the two sides could have disagreements without rupturing ties.

(Source: <http://gulfnews.com/news/world/afghanistan/us-backs-karzai-vows-not-to-abandon-afghan-cause-1.625585>)

US 'committed to Afghan security'

Al Jazeera English, May 11, 2010

Clinton and Karzai both offered opening remarks, stressing the positive but also acknowledging that sharp differences have complicated efforts to stabilise Afghanistan and set the stage for an end to the war. The ability to disagree on issues of importance to our respective countries and peoples is not an obstacle to achieving our shared objectives," Clinton said. "Rather, it reflects a level of trust that is essen-

tial to any meaningful dialogue and enduring strategic partnership."

(Source: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/05/201051132016505714.html>)

US turns on the charm to secure Karzai's support for new offensive

The Independent, May 12, 2010

During a rare visit to Kandahar last month, President Karzai pointedly asked tribal elders at a public meeting whether they wanted similar military action in their area. The response from the vast majority was an unequivocal "no". He promised that no operation would take place without their consent. Western officials have subsequently insisted that President Karzai has authorised the Kandahar offensive, but this has been firmly denied by the Afghan leader's office. Following a meeting with Mr Karzai on May 11, 2010, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said that highly publicised differences between President Karzai and the Obama administration, showed: "A level of trust that is essential to any meaningful dialogue and enduring strategic partnership."

(Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/us-turns-on-the-charm-to-secure-karzais-support-for-new-offensive-1971358.html>)

Taliban "terror" campaign steps up a gear in Kandahar

IRIN News, May 12, 2010

Widespread assassinations, intimidation and bomb blasts have spread a sense of fear in the southern province of Kandahar as pro-government Afghan and foreign forces prepare to launch a summer offensive against the Taliban. "An atmosphere of terror is hanging over Kandahar," Ahmad Wali Karzai, head of the provincial council and President Hamid Karzai's younger brother, told IRIN. "People are breathing terror here," he said. In a statement in English, Pashto and Arabic on 8 May 2010, the insurgents vowed they would step up targeted killings of almost everyone working with or for the Afghan government and its foreign supporters.

(Source: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89099>)

Afghanistan wants to be designated a significant U.S. ally

Los Angeles Times, May 12, 2010

Afghan President Hamid Karzai and his advisors are pressing the Obama administration to designate Afghanistan as a significant U.S. ally and to draft a new security agreement, requests that have made this week's White House meetings particularly delicate. Afghan officials are particularly interested in the "major non-NATO ally" designation, a status enjoyed by Japan, Australia, South Korea, Israel and other strategically important countries outside Europe.

(Source: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/washingtondc/la-fg-afghan-karzai-20100512,0,4472561.story>)

Afghanistan's Karzai to urge caution as U.S. pushes to empower local leaders

Washington Post, May 12, 2010

The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is built around the belief that all good counterinsurgency is local. In recent months, American officials have focused their plans on pushing power and money down to district, tribal and village leaders. But those plans have not sat well with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who has argued that any weakening in his position could fracture the central government and undermine his ability to woo Taliban fighters away from the insurgency. Since Obama's pledge to begin withdrawing U.S. troops in mid-2011, some factional leaders inside the national and local governments and the insurgents themselves have begun maneuvering for a post-U.S. future. The maneuvering has only intensified Karzai's fears of American abandonment.

(Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/11/AR2010051105114_pf.html)

Avoiding Tensions, Obama Reassures Karzai

New York Times, May 13, 2010

President Obama promised President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan on May 12, 2010 that the United States would remain in Afghanistan for the long haul, even as he vowed to stick to his timetable to begin withdrawing troops by July 2011. Both men sought to play down the sharp differences between the governments over the past few months, as the White House pressed its new strategy of using carrots and kind words, instead of sticks and pressure, with Mr. Karzai. The two leaders painted a picture of an Afghan-American relationship that was cordial and full of shared goals. "We are reaffirming our shared goal to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies," Mr. Obama said.

(Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/13/world/asia/13karzai.html>)

Clinton pledges US will not abandon Afghan women as Karzai seeks reconciliation with Taliban

Star Tribune, May 14, 2010

Women's rights will not be sacrificed in any settlement between the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Taliban militants, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said May 13, 2010. Clinton ruled out U.S. support, or at least her own, for negotiations with anyone who would roll back advances for Afghan women achieved since a U.S.-led invasion ousted the militant Islamic Taliban movement from power in 2001.

(Source: <http://www.startribune.com/nation/93668769.html>)

Karzai and Cameron discuss peace

Gulf News, May 16, 2010

Karzai, the first foreign leader to make a formal visit to Britain since last week's election, came straight from a high-profile trip to Washington designed to restore

unity with US President Barack Obama. British Prime Minister David Cameron hosted Afghan President Hamid Karzai at his official country retreat in southeast England to discuss bilateral ties and progress in the Afghan conflict. Obama's administration has been critical of Karzai for failing to battle corruption that many say is hurting US-led efforts to fight the Taliban. "They discussed President Karzai's very successful visit to Washington and the prospects for the peace jirga in Afghanistan at the end of May," Cameron's spokesman said after the meeting at Chequers, the prime ministerial country home.

(Source: <http://gulfnews.com/news/world/afghanistan/karzai-and-cameron-discuss-peace-1.627301>)

India to give Afghans lessons in horticulture

DNA India, May 18, 2010

Call it Kashmir's contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Scientists at the prestigious Central Institute of Temperate Horticulture (CITH) have stepped in to train Afghan officials in developing the horticulture sector and improve crop productivity in the war-ravaged country. For the first time, a delegation of 15 officials from the Afghan ministry of agriculture, irrigation and livestock have arrived to learn horticulture techniques from the experts at CITH. From skill development to new farming techniques to exchanging technologies, the two-week programme is aimed at helping Afghanistan improve productivity and introduce new fruit and vegetable varieties to economically uplift farmers and the local government.

(Source: http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_india-to-give-afghans-lessons-in-horticulture_1384734)

Afghanistan president's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, under investigation

Christian Science Monitor, May 18, 2010

Afghan military investigators have accused Ahmed Wali Karzai, U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai's controversial half-brother, of intervening to protect powerful allies who are squatting illegally on government property in southern Afghanistan. In response, Ahmed Wali Karzai shut down the Kandahar legislature this week by refusing to lead the provincial council until he can clear his name. "The shura is not going to do anything until this thing is cleared up," he told McClatchy in a telephone interview Monday, referring to the 14-member council. The eight-page Defense Ministry report comes as American strategists are counting on the Kandahar kingpin to be a key ally in the evolving U.S.-led effort to drive the Taliban out of their spiritual capital and bolster a pro-Western government there. However, the latest dispute pits Ahmed Wali Karzai, a member of Afghanistan's dominant Pashtun ethnic group, against the local Afghan Army corps commander, who's considered an ally of a rival Pashtun leader, and against the defense ministry in Kabul, which is largely controlled by Tajiks from the northeast of the country.

(Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0518/Afghanistan-president-s-brother-Ahmed-Wali-Karzai-under-investigation>)

In Ambush, a Glimpse of a Long Afghan Summer

New York Times, May 20, 2010

A new fighting season has begun around Marja, a richly irrigated zone of farming villages in Helmand Province that was both the center of Afghanistan's opium production and a haven for its insurgency. Three months ago, thousands of Marines and Afghan soldiers swept into this area. The goal was to chase away the Taliban, disrupt the drug trade and usher in a government presence that might bring Marja under national control. After roughly a week of often intensive fighting, the Taliban were unable to prevent the Marines and the Afghan soldiers they brought with them from opening roads, building outposts, importing Afghan officials and starting outreach programs for villagers caught between the two sides. But with the opium crop now harvested, and temperatures rising with summer's approach, the Taliban have tried to exert influence anew. They do so not just with hidden bombs and a campaign of intimidation against civilians suspected of collaborating with outsiders, but with more direct clashes with Marine patrols.

(Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/20/world/asia/20marja.html?hp&ex=&ei=&partner=>)

Afghan opposition holds talks in Maldives

Google News, May 21, 2010

Afghan opposition figures held a final day of talks in the Maldives on May 21, 2010, organised by a relative of the warlord and former Afghan premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The meeting involved around 25 opposition representatives, an official Maldivian source told AFP. It was not immediately clear which groups were involved in the meeting, which was organised by Hekmatyar's son-in-law, Humayun Jarir. Hekmatyar heads the radical Islamist group Hizb-e-Islami, and is currently wanted by the United States for participating in terrorist actions with Al Qaeda and the Taliban. "What we understand is that they are trying to forge unity among themselves," the source said. Initial reports said Afghan government officials and Taliban figures were participating, but Kabul denied sending any representatives to the meeting.

(Source: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5isu2JjR6We76Mtvz3xo78fINF_gA)

Bangladesh

EU wants Burma to resolve refugee crisis in Bangladesh

Interconnection World, May 9, 2010

Myanmar should initiate a move to resolve the Rohingya refugee problem regionally because that country has created the crisis, the European Union said in Dhaka. "The (Rohingya) problem came from Myanmar. So any resolution should come from Myanmar," the European Union Head of the Delegation, Stefan Frowein, said in a press conference on May 8, 2010. He described Rohingya problem as a regional issue as several hundred thousand members of the community had fled their homes in Myanmar to take refuge in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. "It is a regional problem" and a holistic approach, involving

China and ASEAN, is essential to resolve it, he said.

(Source: <http://www.interconnectionworld.com/index/display/wire-news-display/144714096.html>)

Ready for talks, can make cadres surrender: Daimary to CBI

Hindustan Times, May 10, 2010

Ranjan Daimary, terror mastermind and leader of the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), has said he is ready for peace talks and would be able to make his commanders and cadres surrender if New Delhi was keen for negotiations. "Ranjan Daimary said he was interested in holding talks and even mentioned that he could make his followers surrender in the event of any political negotiations," Superintendent of Police (CBI) NS Kharayat told IANS in an exclusive interview. The NDFB leader talked of negotiations with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) official during three days of intense interrogation at the Assam Police Special Branch headquarters in Guwahati.

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/guwahati/NDFB-chief-ready-for-surrender/Article1-541623.aspx>)

Bangladesh weavers strike work, demand Indian yarn

Hindustan Times, May 13, 2010

Over 1.3 million handloom and powerloom units across Bangladesh have launched an indefinite strike demanding import of yarn from India through the Benapole land port to meet the current shortage and to arrest rising prices. The import via Benapole land port located on the western border with India was stopped after local yarn manufacturers opposed it, arguing that it would bring down domestic prices and eventually ruin Bangladesh's spinning industry.

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Bangladesh-weavers-strike-work-demand-Indian-yarn/Article1-542982.aspx>)

US firm to beef up Bangladesh army's strength in counter terrorism

Associated Press of Pakistan, May 13, 2010

The United States has provided highly sophisticated training to the Bangladesh Army on counter terrorism, marksmanship and urban operations during a joint exercise called 'Tiger Shark'. The joint Bangladesh-US military exercise took place in eastern Sylhet district. Speaking on the occasion, US Ambassador in Dhaka James F. Moriarty reaffirmed the US government's support to the Bangladesh government's efforts to establish a more capable military answerable to an elected democratic civilian government. He made the remark at the closing ceremony for exercise 'Tiger Shark 2' at Jalalabad Cantonment in Sylhet. Soldiers from the 1st Para Commando Battalion, Bangladesh Army, and the US Army participated in the 'Tiger Shark' exercise.

(Source: http://ftp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=102884&Itemid=2)

Bangladesh bans nighttime movement on Indian border to stop BSF killing

Xinhua News Agency, May 17, 2010

In a latest move to stop frequent killings of its citizens by Indian border guards, Bangladesh has decided to restrict nighttime movement of the people on the frontier. The Bangladeshi Home Ministry asked local administrations to announce the imposition of the restrictions over loudspeakers, website of leading English newspaper The Daily Star reported. Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder said most of the border killings are taking place at night as the Border Security Force (BSF) of India opens fire on those who move along the border at night.

(Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-05/17/c_13299049.htm)

Bangladesh Foreign Minister to Visit Tajikistan, Russia for Nuclear Deal

All Headlines, May 18, 2010

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni will visit Tajikistan for two days beginning May 18, 2010, to join a session of the council of the foreign ministers of the member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. She will depart Dushanbe for Moscow for a bilateral visit, a foreign ministry announcement said. In Moscow she will meet with the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

(Source: <http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7018719537?Bangladesh%20Foreign%20Minister%20To%20Visit%20Tajikistan,%20Russia%20For%20Nuclear%20Deal>)

Govt permits export of one lakh tonnes of rice to Bangladesh

Hindustan Times, May 18, 2010

The government today permitted the export of one lakh tonnes of non-basmati rice to Bangladesh on diplomatic grounds, even though there has been a ban on shipments since 2008. The export will be undertaken by state-owned trading firms -- STC, MMTC and PEC-- who have been asked to source the grain from the open market at a rate close to the minimum support price (MSP). Although there has been a ban on the export of non-basmati rice since April 2008, the government had permitted rice to be shipped to neighbouring countries and the African continent on several occasions in the past.

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Govt-permits-export-of-one-lakh-tonnes-of-rice-to-Bangladesh/Article1-545406.aspx>)

Indian goods trans-shipment via Bangladesh may start in July

Economic Times, May 20, 2010

The trans-shipment of Indian cargo through Bangladesh is likely to begin in July, authorities said. The customs department of the National Board of Revenue has drafted a circular regarding the trans-shipment and sent the proposal to the law and parliamentary affairs ministry for vetting, NBR sources told New Age newspaper. According to the proposal, Indian cargo can have a stopover at the Ashuganj land port before passing over to the northeastern states of India. Bangladesh and

India have designated land ports to facilitate faster goods movement along their 4,300 km border. The government is likely to issue a circular before July 10 to allow the trans-shipment of Indian cargo. An announcement in this regard is also expected in the annual budget next month.

(Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Indian-goods-trans-shipment-via-Bangladesh-may-start-in-July/articleshow/5953420.cms>)

Bangladesh may let Nepal use ports

The Himalayan Times, May 21, 2010

Similar to India, Bangladesh is considering to allow Nepal and Bhutan use its ports. Earlier in the morning, Indian high commissioner in Bangladesh Rajeev Mitter had a meeting with the state minister. About the south-western mangrove forest Sundarbans, the minister said that it fell within the territory of both Bangladesh and India. "Both governments will take up joint projects to save the world's largest mangrove forest." The Sundarbans Eco-System Forum, a joint initiative by Bangladesh and India, aims to protect and preserve the forest from the adverse impacts of climate change.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Bangladesh+may+let+Nepal+use+ports&NewsID=244696>)

Bhutan

Will FDI be a front for fronting?

Kuensel, May 10, 2010

Ever since the government on May 5 decided to throw open the doors of Bhutanese construction industry to foreign direct investment (FDI), many local contractors have been ruminating their own demise. They said this would lead to most Bhutanese contractors, which number over 3,000, to gradually lose their jobs.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=15394>)

East-west grid link by July 2011

Kuensel, May 10, 2010

The Bhutan Power Corporation (BPC) is laying Nu 1.2 billion worth of transmission towers and cable lines to link the eastern and western power grids by July 2011, so that eastern Bhutan does not face a power shortage. With the construction of the 720 MW Mangdechu hydrodam project to begin, and Dungsam cement plant scheduled to finish by 2011, electricity demand will far exceed generation in eastern Bhutan.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=15407>)

Delimitation ball in govt. court

Kuensel, May 11, 2010.

Bhutan's first local government elections in a democratic set up could be hit by

further delays. The election commission of Bhutan (ECB) in a press release said that ECB cannot proceed further with its work on the local government elections without a formal declaration of thromdes and revised boundaries of gewogs for delimitation, a pre-requisite to prepare voters' list. Although the cabinet approved the thromdes' list last week and His Majesty granted assent to the Local Government Act in April, a clearer picture on the local elections is unlikely to emerge until the delimitation exercise begins, according to election officials.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=15420>)

Japan approves proposals

Kuensel, May 13, 2010

The government of Japan will provide technical cooperation to Bhutan in farm road bridge design, strengthening local governance and developing a solid waste management programme, according to officials of the gross national happiness (GNH) commission. "We had put in five proposals in 2009 under technical cooperation and three have been approved," GNH secretary Karma Tshiteem said.

Reclusive Bhutan sees economic growth halve: World Bank

Kuensel, May 14, 2010.

Economic growth in Bhutan, a country that famously measures its wellbeing by Gross National Happiness, slowed sharply last year to six percent as tourist numbers fell, the World Bank says. It said the insular Himalayan kingdom, sandwiched between India, Nepal and China, saw a seven-million-dollar decline in tourism income in the 2008/2009 financial year from 39 million dollars the previous year.

(Source: <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/30586>)

Surviving on a shoestring budget

The Kuensel, May 18, 2010

Reeling under the pressure of defaulting bank loans and unable to raise fresh party funds, the country's two political parties, the People's Democratic Party and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, are working on strategies to stay afloat. PDP members and supporters recently met in Thimphu to re-register members, whose one-year membership had almost expired, for the new financial year. The election commission of Bhutan increased the individual contribution ceiling from Nu 100,000 to Nu 500,000 in 2009. The election commission of Bhutan (ECB), on the other hand, has asked both parties to clear their dues by 2012, a year before the next general elections.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=15495>)

Founding an IT future

The Kuensel, May 19, 2010

The construction of Bhutan's first IT Park, scheduled to open on June 2, 2011,

Nepal

began with the salang (groundbreaking) ceremony yesterday at the site identified for the Thimphu techpark (TTP) in Wangchutaba. Subrata Dutta of DG associates, an engineering firm carrying out the construction, said that the building will focus on two of the most important aspects - energy and water conservation. "We'll have solar panels to make maximum use of sunlight, auto lighting system and other material and equipment that minimise power consumption," he said. "We'll have rainwater harvesting technologies, as well as sewage treatment plant to re-use water."

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=15503>)

Maoist to 'form alliance'

Republica, May 10, 2010.

The Unified CPN (Maoist) decided to move forward by forming an alliance of those 'standing for the people's federal democratic republic, constitution writing, national independence and secularism'. A two-day long standing committee meeting that concluded also reiterated that they would only hold talks after Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigns from the post, according to party spokesperson Dina Nath Sharma. The meeting discussed the letter sent by PM Nepal asking them to come to the negotiation table. They have given May 24 deadline for PM Nepal to step down.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=18449)

10 parties ask PM Nepal to go

The Himalayan Times, May 11, 2010.

Ten political parties representing at the Constituent Assembly (CA) held a joint meeting insisted that the government stand down, thus paving the way for a national unity government. At a joint press conference held at the Maoists' party office in Peris Danda, the parties asked for resignation of the Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal that would be a major step towards formation of a national unity government. The group of the ten parties, issuing a joint press statement, said national sovereignty, federalism, republic, secularism, democracy, social justice, peace and constitution have remained their common agenda, on which the incumbent government failed to deliver.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=10+parties+ask+PM+Nepal+to+go&NewsID=243674>)

Maoists open about PM candidate

Republica, May 11, 2010.

The Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) has decided to be open about a party leader other than party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal becoming the next prime minister if the ruling parties agree to a national consensus government.

The two-day party standing committee meeting that concluded took a decision to this effect. "Our stance is that the party chairman should lead the national government. But we also decided to be open to appointing another party leader as prime minister if other parties agree," said a Maoist standing committee member requesting anonymity.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=18475)

No alternative to party chair Prachanda: Bogati

The Himalayan Times, May 11, 2010

Refuting the media reports on the Maoists' prime ministerial candidate, UCPN-Maoist leader post, Bahadur Bogati said there is no alternative in the party to its chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' as prime minister. The Maoist leader also reiterated that his party's unwillingness to sit for talks unless Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigns from his post.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=No+alternative+to+party+chair+Prachanda%3A+Bogati&NewsID=243799>)

Nepal disorder due to New Delhi sponsored 12 pt. accord: Kamal Thapa

Telegraph Nepal, May 12, 2010.

Kamal Thapa, Chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal, who returned home Tuesday May 11, 2010, participating in the three day 'World Hindutwa Conference' held in Mumbai, told journalists at Kathmandu's International Airport that the New Delhi structured and engineered 12-Points Agreement signed by Nepal's political parties was a faulty one. The current political deadlock in the country is the result of the flawed New Delhi agreement", he continued.

(Source: http://telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7671)

Nepal leader Thapa to visit New Delhi, Loaded with meaning

Telegraph Nepal, May 13, 2010

Thapa's New Delhi trip will perhaps set the course of future politics of Nepal after May 28, 2010. Nepal's maverick politician and chairman of Rastriya Jan Shakti Party, Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa is heading to New Delhi May 21, 2010. Thapa, as per the reports, will be meeting top Indian leaders and officials at the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs including Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna and Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee during his New Delhi sojourn. The visit thus becomes highly significant and is definitely loaded with meaning underneath. Thapa's New Delhi trip coincides with just a few days ahead of Nepal's interim constitution and the CA body tenure expires.

(Source: http://telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7672) FNCCI serves 48-hour ultimatum to big 3

FNCCI serves 48-hour ultimatum to big 3

The Himalayan Times, May 13, 2010

An emergency meeting of the entrepreneurs held at the United World Trade Center in Tripureshwor on May 13, 2010, issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the three major political parties to end the political deadlock. The meeting, which was coordinated by the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), asked the major parties - UCPN-Maoist, Nepali Congress and CPN-UML - to forge a consensus by May 15, 2010. The FNCCI also asked entrepreneurs not to pay tax to the government if the Constituent Assembly fails to promulgate new constitution on May 28. The entrepreneurs also warned that they would not provide donation to the political parties if the deadline is not met.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=FNCCI+serves+48-hour+ultimatum+to+big+3&NewsID=243986>)

PM Nepal ouster sticking point for CA term extension

The Himalayan Times, May 17, 2010

Maoist and non-Maoist Constituent Assembly (CA) members continued reiterating their stances on the issue of extending the CA's term, which expires on May 28.

Maoist CA members said there was no meaning in extending the term as long as the government continued, while CA members of Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and other parties said there was no meaning in writing the constitution as long as the Maoists were not ready to complete the peace process.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=PM+Nepal+ouster+sticking+point+for+CA+term+extension&NewsID=244323>)

6-month lease for CA, emergency possible: PM

The Himalayan Times, May 15, 2010

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, addressing the central committee meeting of the CPN-UML today, said the constitutional provision would be effected if the political parties in the Constituent Assembly failed to extend its tenure beyond May 28. "Tenure of the Constituent Assembly can be extended if all the parties reach a consensus to do so," central committee member Krishna Gopal Shrestha quoted the PM as telling the gathering, "Otherwise, the country will move ahead as per the provision set by the Interim Constitution."

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=6-month+lease+for+CA%2C+emergency+possible%3A+PM&NewsID=244345>)

Maoists to declare new statute on May 29

The Himalayan Times, May 16, 2010

The major opposition UCPN-Maoist announced that it would declare a people's constitution from street on May 29 if the Constituent Assembly, the tenure of which is due to expire the previous day, fails to draft the new constitution. The party's

politburo meeting, held at its headquarters in Danda today, took the decision to this effect.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Maoists+to+declare+new+statute+on+May+29&NewsID=244288>)

NC in bid to head new govt

The Himalayan Times, May 15, 2010

Nepali Congress Parliamentary gave its consent to the party's Central Committee to make attempts to extend the term of Constituent Assembly and form national consensus government under the NC's leadership. The NC's CC meeting to be held tomorrow is expected to draft a strategy in this regards. During the meeting, almost all CA members advised the NC leadership to take an initiative to extend CA's term by a year, press the Unified CPN-Maoist to implement past agreements and form national consensus government led by the NC. Peace and new constitution must be ensured before forming the consensus government, said a majority of speakers during the meeting that lasted for seven hours.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=NC+in+bid+to+head+new+govt&NewsID=244341>)

Dahal seeks foreign support for forming govt

Republica, May 17, 2010

Maoist Chairman Puspa Kamal Dahal has appealed to the international community for support for forming a national unity government and complained that the government has humiliated the Maoists. "It is time to renew the nation's promise of a democratic and an inclusive constitution and a peaceful future for all. Therefore we would like to appeal to you for your continued support for the formation of a national unity government, which can fulfill that pledge and bring hope and optimism back to this nation," Dahal said while meeting members of the diplomatic community on Monday.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=18756)

Mohan Baidya Kiran, Senior Vice Chairman Nepal Communist Party- Unified Maoist (Interview)

Telegraph Nepal, May 19, 2010

We have already made our position clear. Mainly, the question is to extend the tenure of Constituent Assembly, discussions have been held in this regard. If the current situation continues and if Madhav Nepal does not resign as per our demand and the parties do not express their interests in forging National Unity, we are also not in favor of extending tenure of constituent assembly. We have however, concluded that no matter even if we extend the CA tenure by six months or even by one year period, we are certain that this government will not fulfill its duties of constitution drafting and establishing permanent peace in the country which is what the population wants.

(Source: http://telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=7703)

Prez adviser rules out possibility of presidential rule

Asian Tribune, May 20, 2010

Amid speculation from various quarters that there would be presidential rule after the term of Constituent Assembly (CA) expires on May 28, a top official ruled out any possibility of presidential rule in the country. Addressing an interaction organized in western town of Ghorahi, Rajendra Dahal, press advisor to President Dr Ram Baran Yadav, said presidential rule cannot be imposed on both legal and constitutional methods as Interim Constitution 2007 does not give President an executive authority.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/05/20/prez-adviser-rules-out-possibility-presidential-rule>)

Maoists positive on ending deadlock: Small parties

Republica, May 20, 2010

Maoists are positive on ending the present political deadlock and extending the Constituent Assembly term, 12 fringe parties concluded. The fringe parties reached to this conclusion after holding a meeting with the leaders of big three parties-- Unified CPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress and UML at BICC hall in New Baneshwor on Thursday afternoon. "The Maoists' presentation on today's meeting showed that the differences among the parties have been narrowing," Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani, co-chairman of Rastriya Janashakti Party said after the meeting. The fringe parties have been piling pressure on the three major parties to reach consensus on extending the CA term at the earliest and prevent the country from political crisis.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=18851)

India to push for a workable solution by next week

Republica, May 20, 2010

The current impasse in Nepal is not a peace process with warring sides, but an effort to make a multi-party democracy functional. If the opposing parties cannot resolve the political impasse among themselves shortly, India will push all concerned political leaders to sit together and hammer out a workable solution by early next week.

Having reconciled itself to the reality that the constitution-writing process in Nepal will require some more time, the Indian government will not take sides, but will continue to support President Ram Baran Yadav and the government of Prime Minister Madhav Nepal as the "constitutional" and legitimate government of Nepal.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=India+to+push+for+a+workable+solution+by+next+week&NewsID=244757>)

Pakistan

MPs file resignations with Altaf over Hyderabad: MQM flashes coalition card, asks Zardari to intervene

Daily Times, May 10, 2010

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) members of the National Assembly and the Sindh Assembly filed their resignations with party chief Altaf Hussain over Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's statement on the reversal of Hyderabad's bifurcation into four districts, with a meeting of the party's coordination committee calling on President Asif Ali Zardari to intervene in the matter. Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah and Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik also contacted the coordination committee - which held its meeting simultaneously in Karachi and London to review the prime minister's statement - during the session, and sought to clarify the prime minister's statement. However, the MQM rejected all clarifications.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\10\story_10-5-2010_pg1_1)

US warns Pakistan over terror: report

Dawn, May 9, 2010.

The United States warned Pakistan after the failed Times Square bombing, that it must crack down on militants or face severe consequences, The New York Times reported on May 9, 2010. Citing unnamed US and Pakistani officials, the newspaper said US military commander in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal met with the Pakistani military commander General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani in Islamabad. He urged Pakistan to quickly begin a military offensive against the Pakistani Taliban and Al-Qaeda in North Waziristan.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/19-us-warns-pakistan-over-terror-report-hh-07>)

Kayani was not asked to launch new operation: US general

Dawn, May 11, 2010.

The top US commander in Afghanistan said that he never asked the Pakistani army chief to do more while the White House rejected an impression that the United States and Pakistan were on a collision course over how to deal with the Taliban. The two statements, given at a briefing on Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to Washington, negates claims that last week's botched attempt to bomb Times Square by a Pakistani-American may be the beginning of an end of the US-Pakistan partnership. Soon after the bombing attempt, the US media reported that Gen McChrystal met Gen Asfhfaq Parvez Kayani in Islamabad and asked him to launch a military operation in North Waziristan.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/kayani-was-never-asked-to-launch-new-operation-us-general-150>)

Clinton Accuses Pakistani Officials of Holding Back on Bin Laden Intelligence

Fox News, May 11, 2010

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accused members of the Pakistani government over the weekend of practically harboring Usama bin Laden, raising questions about whether the U.S. is pushing hard enough on its presumed ally to give up the world's most wanted terrorist. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accused members of the Pakistani government over the weekend of practically harboring Usama bin Laden, raising questions about whether the U.S. is pushing hard enough on its presumed ally to give up the world's most wanted terrorist. Clinton levelled the charge in an interview on CBS' "60 Minutes." She praised Pakistan for a "sea change" in its commitment in going after terrorists, but she added that she expects more cooperation.

(Source:<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/05/10/clinton-accuses-pakistani-officials-holding-bin-laden-intelligence/>)

US mulls putting Pakistan Taliban on terrorism list

Dawn, May 11, 2010

The US State Department said that it was looking into putting the Pakistani Taliban, the group tied to the failed car bombing in New York's Times Square, on the US list of "foreign terrorist" groups. Adding the Pakistani Taliban to the list would trigger punitive measures such as freezing assets tied to the group, barring foreign nationals with links to it from entering the United States and making it a crime to give any material help.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/12-us+senators+want+pakistani+taliban+on+terror+list--bi-03>)

Malik assures Altaf on Hyderabad status

Daily Times, May 12, 2010

Interior Minister Rehman Malik met Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain in London and forwarded President Asif Ali Zardari's message to him, a private TV channel reported. The MQM also protested Agha Siraj Durrani's appointment as the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) chairman, another channel reported. Following MQM's protest, the government cancelled the notification for the appointment of Durrani as the KWSB chairman. Earlier, Sindh Chief Secretary Fazalur Rehman had issued the notification to appoint Local Bodies Minister Durrani as the board's chairman. Sources said the core committees of the PPP and the MQM had earlier agreed that the next board chairman would be from the MQM, but Durrani belonged to the PPP, the channel said.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\12\story_12-5-2010_pg1_3)

Clinton's remarks misinterpreted: Holbrooke

Dawn, May 12, 2010

Richard Holbrooke, US special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, has clarified that the statement of Hillary Clinton on consequences of a Pakistan-linked terrorist attack on the US soil has been misrepresented in the media. Holbrooke emphasised that Clinton's remarks in no way indicated any impact on the flow of US economic or military aid for Pakistan.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/16-clintons+remarks+misinterpreted+holbrooke-hs-02>)

Pak not to wilt under US pressure to launch offensive in North Waziristan

One India, May 13, 2010

Pakistan has apparently made it clear that it would not succumb under intense US pressure to launch an offensive in North Waziristan, the stronghold of the Taliban. The decision was taken after President Asif Ali Zardari held separate meetings with Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani to discuss national and international issues. In the wake of the failed Times Square bombing plot, the Obama Administration has been piling up pressure on Pakistan to launch a military operation in North Waziristan, saying there are indications that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had played a major role in the terror plot.

Gates sees sustained improvement in US-Pakistan relationship

Daily Times, May 13, 2010

Defence Secretary Robert Gates said he expected sustained progress in ties between the US and Pakistan. Gates said the relationship between the two anti-terror allies had improved significantly over the last two years. Using a scale of one to ten, Gates told CNN he rated the relationship with Pakistan at a "six or a seven" now. The Pakistanis "are very sensitive to the size of the American footprint, the number of Americans on the ground in a training capacity or whatever", Gates said in an interview that aired on CNN. "They're also extremely sensitive about their sovereignty. And we have to respect those things," he said.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\13\story_13-5-2010_pg1_4)

Lake water submerges KKH

Pakistan Observer, May 13, 2010

The newly formed lake in Hunza's Attabad town severed the road links between Pakistan and China as rising water levels submerged part of the Karakoram Highway at Gulmit. Without a proper spill-way for the lake, water levels are expected to keep rising to a dangerous level that threatens to flood a vast region in Hunza. Sources informed that the lake is now at least 16 kilometres long and 1.5 kilometre wide.

(Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=30803>)

US spies still working in Pakistan

Dawn, May 17, 2010.

Despite official denials, a secret network of private spies set up by a US Defence Department official continues to operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, The New York Times reported. Its reports on Taliban activities, especially in Pakistan, were submitted almost daily to top US commanders in the region. The Times reported in March that Defence Department official Michael Furlong had set up a network of private contractors in Afghanistan and Pakistan to help track and kill suspected Taliban. He did this under the cover of a benign government information-gathering programme.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\17\story_17-5-2010_pg1_2_)

The terrorists' new ways of making money

Daily Times, May 17, 2010

Senior Punjab government officials have received death threats from terrorists, as target killings, kidnappings and extortion are being termed the "new ways" that terrorists have adopted to cater for their funds. SSP Special Investigative Unit (SIU) Karachi Raja Umar Khitab disclosed that terrorist groups, before focusing on Punjab, had "rattled" Karachi with their activities, as the provincial metropolis acted as a gateway for them, especially for foreign and local militants. He said that over a period of two decades, a large number of Mehsud tribes, with their bases in the tribal areas, had settled in Karachi.

Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\17\story_17-5-2010_pg7_11

Hillary is misinterpreted: U.S.

Siasat Daily, May 16, 2010.

For nearly a week now, the U.S. has been on a damage control exercise vis-à-vis Pakistan; clarifying time and again that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "do more" statement had been misinterpreted and reiterating Washington's appreciation of Islamabad's role in the war on terror.

(Source: <http://www.siasat.com/english/news/hillary-misinterpreted-us>)

Pakistan holds two over funding Times Square plot

The Star, May 15, 2010.

Pakistani authorities have taken into custody at least two men who may have helped provide funding for a botched car-bombing in New York's Times Square, U.S. officials said on Saturday. The men are believed to be associated with the Pakistani Taliban movement and to have helped provide an estimated \$15,000 to accused Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-American, to plan and execute the attack, one of the officials said.

(Source: http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/5/16/worldupdates/2010-05-15T211547Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-485154-1&sec=Worldupdates)

Water submerges Gulmit, hurts trade with China

Daily Times, May 18, 2010.

Panicked people took everything they could carry, even doors and windows, as a lake threatened to flood dozens of villages in northern Pakistan, officials and witnesses said on Monday. The lake emerged on January 4 as a result of a massive landslide that killed 20, left about 25,000 people stranded and blocked the Hunza River. Water from the lake has submerged parts of Gulmit, a tourist resort on the main Karakoram Highway linking Pakistan with China, resident Rehan Shah said.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\18\story_18-5-2010_pg7_25)

Pakistan wants to assist Afghanistan in reconstruction efforts: FM

Daily Times, May 18, 2010.

Pakistan wants to assist Afghanistan in capacity building and reconstruction efforts, through the involvement of Pakistan's private sector, Foreign Minister (FM) Shah Mahmood Qureshi said. In this regard, Pakistan is willing to continue working with the international community and remain engaged with Afghanistan, he said. Qureshi informed the ambassadors about several initiatives, including the "Friends of Democratic Pakistan (FoDP)," which had lent strategic support to Pakistan in its difficult times. Pakistan is looking forward to the next FoDP ministerial meeting in Brussels in August this year, which will be co-chaired by Pakistan and the EU Commission, he added.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\05\18\story_18-5-2010_pg7_32)

Hunza flood could affect 40,000 people: official

Dawn, May 19, 2010

Flooding from a lake in northern Pakistan risks affecting 40,000 people with residents from up to 34 villages already evacuated to safety, a top disaster management official warned. The artificial lake emerged on January 4 as a result of a massive landslide that killed 20, left about 25,000 people stranded and blocked the Hunza river in a remote Himalayan region about 750 kilometres (450 miles) north of Islamabad. "We are preparing for a caseload of 40,000 that could be affected by flooding," Nadeem Ahmed, chairman of national disaster management authority, told a press conference in the capital. Water in the 332-foot (101-metre) deep and 16-kilometre (10-mile) long lake was rising by one meter (yard) daily. "The water could start flowing downstream through spill ways in the next five to six days. Our aim is that there should be no loss of life, though many houses and buildings would be submerged," Ahmed said.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/03-hunza-flood-could-affect-40000-people-ss-07>)

NATO wants info sharing pact with Pak

The Nation, May 21, 2010.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the military alliance of the west-

ern countries, is seeking to sign an agreement with Islamabad on secret information sharing, which is the part of plans to broaden its relations with Pakistan.

for Pakistani officers, civilians, police and counterterrorism officials. Answering a question, Simmons said that it was entirely up to Pakistan to set its strategy and the timings for military operation in the North Wazirsitan Agency

(Source: <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/21-May-2010/NATO-wants-info-sharing-pact-with-Pak>)

Foreign hand poisoning Baloch against educationists

The Nation, May 21, 2010.

Security agencies have unearthed the involvement of foreign hand in spreading hatred in Balochistan province as well as to poison the minds of innocent Baloch youth against the non-Balochis, particularly the educationists. According to a classified document sent to the Interior Ministry, 'the hostile intelligence agencies are involved in destroying education system of Balochistan. After suicide bombing and terrorist attacks, they are targeting teachers and renowned educationists. Almost 80 per cent of the teaching staff in Balochistan belongs to Punjab, Sindh and Khyber PK provinces and hostile elements are threatening their lives to force them to relocate to other places'.

(Source: <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/21-May-2010/Foreign-hand-poisoning-Baloch-against-educationists>)

Sri Lanka

IDPs to be back home within six months : New Settlement Minister Milroy Fernando

Asian Tribune, May 10, 2010.

Sri Lanka Government says that it will resettle all the Internally Displaced Persons in the Vanni within a period of six months time. The Government is making all the necessary arrangements on a war footing to complete the de-mining process before the resettlement of the displaced persons.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/05/10/idps-be-back-home-within-six-months-new-settlement-minister-milroy-fernando>)

Australia Continues To Suspend Afghan And Sri Lanka Asylum Applications

Gov Monitor, May 10, 2010.

The Australian government announced on April 9, 2010 that processing of new asylum applications from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan would be suspended immediately. This suspension is a result of the evolving circumstances in these two countries. Applications from Sri Lanka will be suspended for three months and applications from Afghanistan will be suspended for six months.

(Source: http://www.thegovmonitor.com/civil_society_and_democratic_renewal/australia-continues-to-suspend-afghan-and-sri-lanka-asylum-applications-30454.html)

Sweden wishes to have strong bilateral relations with Lanka - Swedish Prime Minister

Asian Tribune, May 11, 2010

Sweden wishes to have a strong friendly bilateral relationship with Sri Lanka. Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt told this to Asian Tribune. The Prime Minister said he is looking forward to make a visit to Sri Lanka to establish a firm, friendly bilateral relationship with the two countries. He said he will be happy to visit Sri Lanka after the Swedish Parliamentary general election due to be held in September 2010.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/05/11/sweden-wishes-have-strong-bilateral-relations-lanka-swedish-prime-minister>)

Japanese assistance continues

Daily News, May 12, 2010

The Japanese Government had assisted the Sri Lanka's IDP resettlement effort during the last year in various fields and would continue to support in the future, Japanese Ambassador Kunio Takahashi said. Ambassador Takahashi met new Resettlement Minister Milroy Fernando at his Ministry and pledged support to resettlement of IDPs. The Japanese Government had provided financial assistance through international organizations and NGOs for food assistance, de-mining, water supply and drainage, agriculture, he said.

(Source: <http://www.dailynews.lk/2010/05/12/news36.asp>)

'Regaining Sri Lanka' as a solution for crisis? (Commentary)

Colombo Times, May 11, 2010.

A number of media institutions selected by the government have been instructed to carry out propaganda that a serious economic crisis exists in the country say reports. It is revealed that the government, to get a temporary relief from the impending economic crisis, will have to agree to economic conditions laid down by western countries and monetary institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF.

(Source: <http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/4112364>)

India should not dictate

Daily Mirror, May 13, 2010

Government Minister and National Freedom Front (NFF) leader Wimal Weerawansa says India should not dictate terms to Sri Lanka. He said this responding to a journalist at a media briefing in Colombo on May 13, 2010. He also said the constitution would be changed in three stages, the first being changes made to the Presidency. "The other stages include changes to the electoral system and the formation of a Senate," he added.

(Source: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/3722-india-should-not-dictate.html>)

Sri Lanka's Gen Sarath Fonseka denies incitement charge

BBC News, May 12, 2010.

Defeated Sri Lankan presidential candidate Gen Sarath Fonseka has for the first time appeared before a civilian court to deny inciting unrest. He is alleged to have said in a newspaper interview last year that the defence secretary ordered the killing of surrendering Tamil rebels. The general appeared before Colombo magistrates to protest his innocence. He said he had been misquoted by the newspaper and that the case was part of an attempt to silence him.

(Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8677831.stm)

MR writes to new UK PM

Daily Mirror, May 14, 2010

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a message to British Prime Minister David Cameron, has sought the strengthening of ties between the two countries. Rajapaksa also said he hopes the new British government will provide strong and stable direction to the UK. While congratulating the new British Premier on his appointment, President Rajapaksa noted that Sri Lanka has entered a post conflict phase of optimism that devotes priority to economic and social progress, reconstruction and reconciliation.

The President told the new British Premier that these priorities have been decisively endorsed through the strong mandate given to the Sri Lankan government at the recent Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

(Source: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/3727-mr-writes-to-new-uk-pm.html>)

Sri Lanka Opposition Leader returns from Indian tour

Colombo Page, May 13, 2010

Sri Lanka's Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe returned home from his India visit. The Opposition Leader was in India for four days and held talks with several Indian leaders including External Affairs Minister S M Krishna in New Delhi yesterday. The two leaders discussed several bilateral issues, including the issue of Sri Lankan Tamils. He is to face a storm in his party United National Party (UNP) as some of the leading party seniors want Wickremasinghe to be replaced by a vigorous, youth leadership that can proceed to form a new government.

(Source: http://www.colombopage.com/archive_10A/May13_1273760809JR.php)

Rajapaksha to make a three-day visit to India

Asian Tribune, May 17, 2010.

Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa is to make a three-day state visit to India on the invitation of Dr. Manmohan Singh, Indian Prime Minister. This meeting was agreed upon when both the premiers met last at Thimpu on the sidelines of SAARC summit. It is said this will be his first visit to the Indian capital after Mahinda Rajapaksa's re-election victory as President for the second term on 26 January.

Indian External Affairs Minister and his Sri Lankan counterpart are in Tehran to participate in the Group 15 Summit which is on at present in Tehran.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/05/17/rajapaksha-make-three-day-visit-india>)

Rajapaksa takes over as new Chairman of G15

Asian Tribune, May 18, 2010

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on May 17, 2010, took over as the new chairman of the Group of 15, even as he asked for a "realistic and fruitful" dialogue with the developed countries. "In taking over the Chair, I commit to continuing to further strengthen the voice of our Group on the international stage," he said in Tehran. "I have every confidence that in this task, Sri Lanka would receive the fullest co-operation and support of all Members of the Group," Rajapaksa said while taking over the coveted post from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2010/05/18/rajapaksa-takes-over-new-chairman-g15>)

US reacts to Tiger meet

Daily Mirror, May 18, 2010

While the controversial Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) held its inaugural sessions in the US city of Philadelphia from 17-19 May, 2010. The US Embassy in Colombo noted that the U.S. continues to investigate and prosecute individuals and entities that have provided material support to the LTTE. LTTE activist Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran who acts as its Coordinator said in a press statement emailed to Daily Mirror online that the TGTE meeting is being held in the US where the LTTE is listed as a terrorist outfit and comes in the wake of the Sri Lankan government urging foreign government not to give credence to moves by the LTTE to create a government in exile in support of an Eelam state

(Source: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/3809-tgte-meets-in-us-city.html>)

Sri Lanka-EU talks on trade deal positive: EU envoy

Lanka Business Online, May 19, 2010

The European Union is likely to remain a lucrative market for Sri Lankan exporters with talks to extend a trade deal giving duty free access to Europe being positive, the EU envoy said. The EU on February 15, 2010 decided to suspend the GSP Plus trade deal, citing denial of human rights to Sri Lankan citizens the state has agreed to grant in international covenants.

(Source: <http://www.lankabusinessonline.com/fullstory.php?nid=326619002>)

Lanka offers war advice

Daily Mirror, May 19, 2010

Sri Lanka has offered India its expertise in defeating the LTTE to help fight the

Naxals. Sri Lanka has said its armed forces could train Indian paramilitary personnel to successfully fight the Naxals. The offer was recently conveyed by Lankan High Commissioner Prasad Kariyavasam to National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon. Sources told Headlines Today that the assistance was offered only for the areas where Naxals have made their presence felt and covered all aspects of training. It is not clear how the Indian government responded to the offer.

(Source: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/3832-lanka-offers-war-advice.html>)

Malaysians to remain one of major foreign investors in Sri Lanka

People's Daily, May 21, 2010.

Malaysia is expected to remain one of the major foreign investors in Sri Lanka in five to ten years, a Sri Lankan official has said, according to local media. Several Malaysian companies have showed interest in investing in Sri Lanka and are now in talks with its Board of Investment, local newspaper the Star quoted Dr. Don Dandayanda Ranasinghe, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Malaysia, as saying.

The sectors they are interested include tourism, infrastructure, education and financial services, he said after a seminar on Business and Investment.

(Source: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/6994268.html>)

Lanka to set up solar plants with Japanese, Korean help

Business Line, May 21, 2010

The first two solar power plants in Sri Lanka with a total capacity of 1100 KW will be set up with \$13.5 million Japanese and South Korean assistance at Hambantota district in country's south eastern coast. According to Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA) Renewable Energy Director, Mr Athula Jayatunga, the capacity of proposed two plants are 600 kw and 500 kw respectively and will be assisted by Japan and South Korea. While Japan will provide \$9 million while South Korea will give \$4.5 million for the two plants built in an area of 50 acre. On the proposed solar power plants here, Mr Jayatunga told the state run Daily News that a power supply of 1, 237,500 kwh will be added to the national grid through the setting up of the two solar plants.

(Source: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blnus/10201510.htm>)