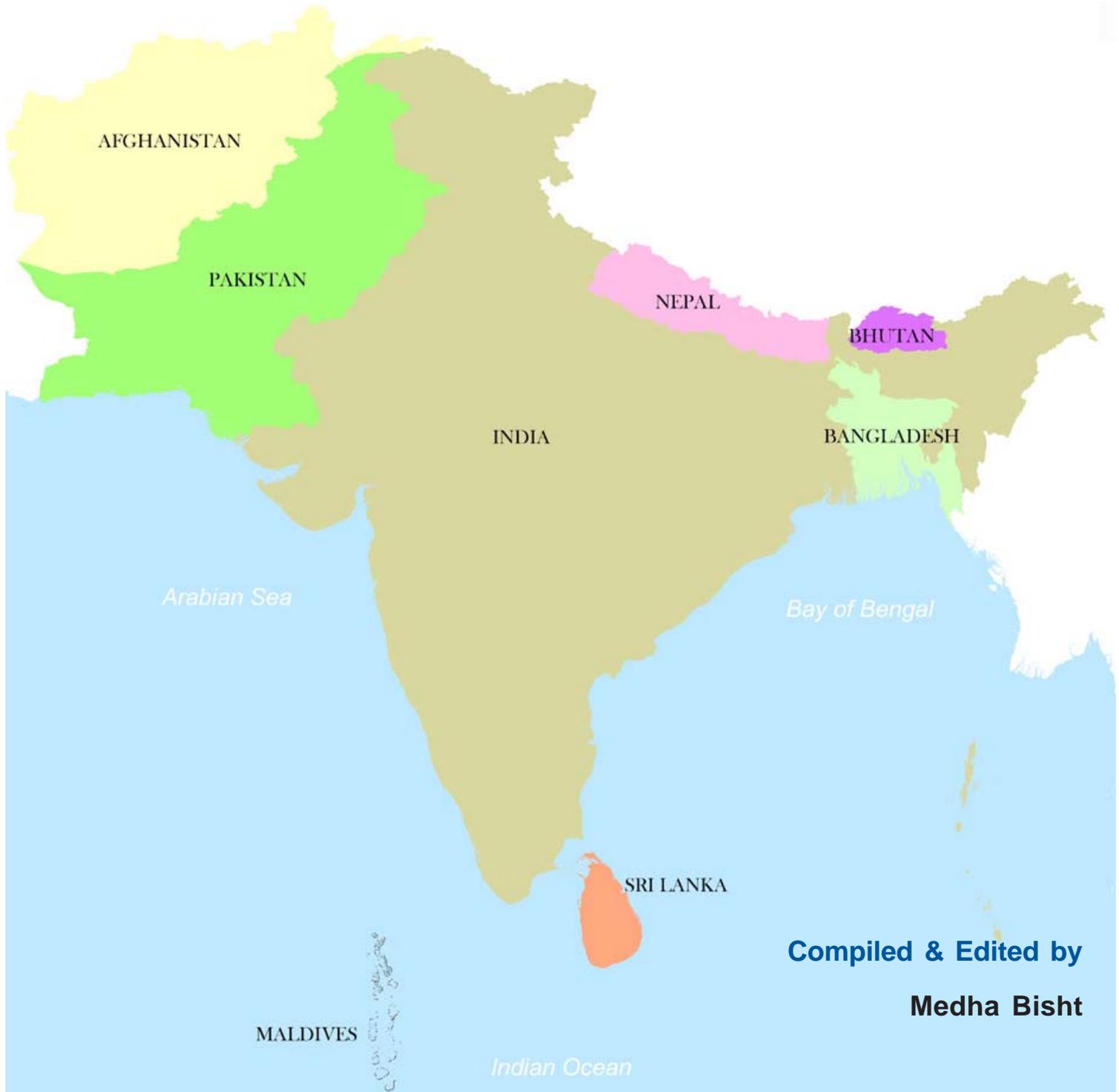


SOUTH ASIA TRENDS

Volume 1 Number 9 August 15-31, 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

Synchronising the “Washington Clock” with the July 2011 deadline of troop withdrawal is perhaps the most imminent task ahead for the Obama administration to cope with. The MNBC interview of August 15, 2010, the first with General Petraeus since he shouldered the responsibility in Afghanistan, brings out the nuances of the much talked about changed strategy of the General vis a vis his previous counterpart Stanley McChrystal. While contradictory signals continue to flood the public space about the July 2011 deadline from Biden, Gates and Petraeus, it has been seemingly made clear that troop withdrawal will be conditioned on the situation on ground and that the July deadline is symbolic of the urgency of the mounting pressures from the domestic front and from the US allies. According to one news report in this edition, emphasis in the coming months would be on shifting troops in order to train Afghan security forces so that the takeover phase by local Afghan soldiers and police officers can be smooth post the U.S. withdrawal. It has also been decided that foreign troops move into areas where militants remain active, particularly South Afghanistan. Meanwhile Hamid Karzai has ‘publicly’ communicated that United States and its NATO allies should shift their military focus to insurgent hideouts, particularly the sanctuaries on the Pakistani side of the border. Interestingly, United States for quite some time has been persuading Pakistan to take action in North Waziristan!!

Meanwhile a new momentum to challenge Bhutan's democratic efforts is gathering pace as the exiled refugee leaders have formed a joint front under the leadership of R.K. Dorji, the founder of Druk National Congress.. Major political parties -- Druk National Congress (DNC), Bhutan People's Party (BPP), Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) and Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee (BMSC) conducted a meeting on August 22,

2010, and decided to form a united front under DNC. Given the much publicly expressed disappointment from two refugee leaders Dr. Bhampa Rai and Thinley Penjore, questions have already been raised on the credibility of the front. It can be said that fractious tendencies and alienation has already set in, and this could well weaken the advocacy efforts of the recently formed united front.

Afghanistan

Meet the Press transcript for General David Petraeus

MSNBC.Com, August 15, 2010

Excerpts

MR. DAVID GREGORY: We have come to Kabul at a critical moment of this war. Nine years into the conflict, President Obama has doubled down, surging U.S. forces in order to root the insurgency and help the government of Hamid Karzai, a government ripe with corruption, stand up on its own. The man behind this new strategy is General David Petraeus, the commander behind the successful surge in Iraq. Petraeus has taken over command of U.S. and coalition forces here after General Stan McChrystal was fired by President Obama for publicly airing his grievances with the war effort. General Petraeus is speaking out for the first time, and exclusively to us, about all of the big issues in this conflict—the public's frustration with the war, the strength of the Taliban, the government of Hamid Karzai here in Afghanistan, the expected leaking of new secret war documents on the Internet, and whether President Obama's July of 2011 withdrawal timeline will hold. At the heart of his challenge is the question we will explore in this special hour: Is nation building possible in the badlands of Afghanistan?

GEN. PETRAEUS: At the end of the day, it's not about their embrace of us, it's not about us winning hearts and minds, it's about the Afghan government winning hearts and minds. This isn't to say that there is any kind of objective of turning Afghanistan into Switzerland in three to five years or less. Afghan good enough is good enough, and that means having traditional social organizing structures as part of the ultimate solution, if you will, where tribal shura councils and so forth—which are quite democratic, by the way—they then connect at the district or province level with what goes up to Kabul and, and, and comes out as well.

The detailed interview can be found at:

(Source: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38686033/ns/meet_the_press-transcripts)

Gates, Petraeus Differ on Flexibility of Afghan Exit

Voice of America, August 16, 2010.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has told a major U.S. newspaper, the July 2011 date to start withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan is set in stone, putting him at odds with his top Afghan war commander, General David Petraeus. While both men agree on the need for a gradual withdrawal, they do not agree on the flexibility of the start date given last year by President Barack Obama. Gates told the Los Angeles Times (August 16, 2010) edition "there is no question in anybody's mind that we are going to begin drawing down troops in July of 2011."

(Source: <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/Gates-Petraeus-Differ-on-Flexibility-of-Afghan-Exit-100750549.html>)

Osama probably hiding in mountainous regions of Pak: Petraeus

Zee News, August 16, 2010

Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, the world's most wanted terrorist, is probably

hiding in the remote mountainous regions of Pakistan, but no one knows where he actually is, a top US General has said. "I think he remains an iconic figure, and I think capturing or killing Osama bin Laden is still a very, very important task for all of those who are engaged in counter terrorism around the world," General David Petraeus Commander of US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan told NBC television's 'Meet the Press' when asked about the Osama's whereabouts. In the interview, that was recorded in Kabul on Friday and aired in the US on Sunday, Petraeus said that there is unlikely to be any possibility of peace talks with Mullah Omar - the Taliban leader. "But (there is) every possibility, that there can be low and mid-level reintegration and, indeed, some fracturing of the senior leadership that could be really defined as reconciliation," he said in response to a question.

(Source: <http://www.zeenews.com/news648571.html>)

Karzai to Replace 'Private Security Firms' with Local Security Forces

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, August 17, 2010

Afghan President Hamid Karzai wants to scrap private security firms, who work mainly for Western companies and are not accountable locally, and replace them with local security forces. "Dissolving the private security companies is a serious program that the government of Afghanistan will execute," the BBC quoted Waheed Omer, a spokesman for President Karzai, as saying. "Very soon, the president of Afghanistan will set a deadline," he added. Among those who use private security contractors in Afghanistan is the US government. Earlier, the Afghan government had tried unsuccessfully to register them and find out details of their weaponry and their earnings. Omer also informed that Karzai had discussed the issue with commanders of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and developed a plan for Afghan security forces to absorb the work done by the private security firms. Earlier, Karzai had said that the government "could no longer tolerate the existence of such parallel structures... whether they are owned by foreigners or Afghans". He added that people do not trust these companies and believe their existence is against Afghanistan's national interests.

(Source: <http://outlookafghanistan.net/index1.html#>)

Karzai Seeks German Investment in Mines

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, August 30, 2010.

President Hamid Karzai has called on the German government to further invest in the Afghan mines, the worth of which has been estimated at \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion. At a meeting with the speaker of German parliament, Norbert Lammert, at the Presidential Palace here on Sunday, Karzai asked the visiting dignitary to convince investors of his country for the investment on extraction of mines and other minerals in Afghanistan. Karzai's call comes as Afghanistan recently discovered an oilfield with an estimated 1.8 billion barrels in the north. The worth of mineral deposits in Afghanistan is estimated at \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion, with the government hoping to utilize it for building economy and development. The government has sought help from foreign countries to extract the mines. A statement issued from the presidential palace said Karzai reiterated his call for a review of

the Afghan war strategy during his meeting with Lammert, who along with German defense minister took part in ceremonies paying tribute to fallen German soldiers in northern Kunduz province. The defence minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg visited a combat zone in the province on Sunday. Karzai said the experience of last eight years showed the war in remote areas and villages was not effective, instead it resulted in civilian casualties.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news_Pages/main_news.html#01)

Karzai Sacks Deputy AG

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, August 30, 2010.

A top prosecutor in Afghanistan says that President Karzai fired him after he refused to stop corruption investigations of high profile government figures, New York Times reports. The former deputy attorney general, Fazel Ahmad Faqiryar, remarked that the prosecution of a number of Key Afghan officials including cabinet members, governors, and ambassadors were blocked by President Karzai, the Afghan attorney general and others. "We propose investigations, detentions and prosecution of high government officials, but we cannot resist him," the New York Times quotes Mr Faqiryar as saying. It has been years that fighting corruption is one of the top priorities of the Afghan government and the international community, but there has been no significant achievement gained by the government and even nowadays the leading officials are accused of thwarting graft inquiries against those who have the support of President Karzai. In the recent issues, the Chief administration of National Security Council was detained after he was wiretapped seeking money in bribe and in exchange impeding corruption investigation on a company accused of huge corruption. But, President Karzai reportedly intervened in the case and released him before the completion of investigations. Meanwhile, Afghan Attorney General Office rejected reports claiming Mr. Faqiryar resigned from his post and said he was retired.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news_Pages/main_news.html#01)

Karzai Wants Change in Afghan War Strategy

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, August 30, 2010.

President Hamid Karzai said Washington's war strategy for Afghanistan needed a rethink, as a Taliban-led insurgency gathers pace and foreign forces casualties surge. Karzai made the comments to the visiting Norbert Lammert, president of the German parliament, the Afghan president's office said in a statement. "Speaking about Afghanistan and regional security (Karzai) said that the strategy of the war on terrorism must be reassessed," the statement said. "The experience over the past eight years showed that fighting (Taliban) in Afghan villages has been ineffective and is not achieving anything but killing civilians." Rethinking counter-insurgency strategies in Afghanistan was the war-torn country's most pressing need, Karzai said. "This has become a serious need in the current situation," he was quoted saying. Earlier in the week, the Western-backed Karzai told American officials that Washington and its NATO allies must shift their military focus to insurgent hideouts on the Pakistani side of the border. Speaking to US congress-

men on August 26, 2010, Karzai said the US-led military campaign against Islamist insurgents in Afghanistan had not made progress, blaming the shortcomings on Washington's handling of post-Taliban Afghanistan. "The lack of progress in the war on terror has two factors: one the terror sanctuaries have not been addressed and second because civilians were killed during this war," he said. He also said that President Obama's plans to begin withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan next year had boosted Taliban spirits.

(Source: http://outlookafghanistan.net/news/Pages/main_news.html#01)

Petraeus Finishes Rules for Afghan Transition

New York Times, August 31, 2010.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top commander in Afghanistan, has completed work on new guidelines for turning some security duties over to Afghan forces in the months ahead, calling for American and allied troops to step back gradually from areas as they are pacified rather than handing off the task all at once to local units, according to senior NATO and Pentagon officials. The guidelines envision that while some troops would leave the country when their current areas were secured, others could be reassigned new missions within Afghanistan, giving General Petraeus flexibility in troop deployments as he confronts pressure from some allies and some Democrats in Washington to begin winding down the war next year. The emphasis in his plan would be on shifting troops to train Afghan security forces to accelerate the pace at which local police officers and soldiers could successfully take over, allowing even more of the alliance force to depart. But some remaining foreign troops could move into areas near their current operations where militants remain active.

(Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/31/world/asia/31military.html>.)

Campaign against Taliban to intensify: NATO

Khaleej Times, August 31, 2010.

NATO forces in Afghanistan are set to intensify the campaign against Taliban strongholds in the coming weeks, the head of the military alliance said on Monday. "I share the point of view of American military leaders on the intensification of fighting in the coming weeks and months," NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told Danish channel TV2 News in an interview broadcast on Monday. "We are in a very decisive phase at the moment. We have sent more soldiers to Afghanistan, where we are attacking Taliban strongholds, which results in more fighting, and unfortunately more losses," he said. The escalation in combat operations was part of the strategy by international forces to dislodge the Taliban from their strongholds in Helmand province and Kandahar, Rasmussen said. The escalation is "unfortunately necessary for us to be able to transfer responsibility for security to the Afghans," he said. Rasmussen said the number of troops on the ground – around 120,000 – was sufficient to eliminate pockets of Taliban resistance.

Source: http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/August/international_August1725.xml§ion=international

Bangladesh

HuJI militant held in Assam

One India, August 16, 2010.

The BSF in Dhubri district of Assam arrested a Harkat-ul-Jihad-Al Islami (HuJI) militant on, Aug 15, 2010, when he was trying to infiltrate into India from Bangladesh, officials said. One revolver, two mobile handsets and many SIM cards were also seized from him. BSF spokesman Ravi Gandhi said that the militant is identified as Abdual salam alias Sahidul, was caught at Golokganj in the wee hours.

(Source: <http://news.oneindia.in/2010/08/16/huji-militant-held-near-border.html>)

Pak-B'desh Rail Link

Des Pardes, August 16, 2010

Bangladesh and Pakistan may re-establish rail links through India, 39 years after their separation and by Indian standard, 63 years after the subcontinent was divided. "We would like to have transit and be connected to all South Asian nations, including Pakistan," Bangladesh foreign minister Dipu Moni told Kolkata-based newspaper The Telegraph. Islamabad has already said it wants the rail link revived, the paper added. Last month, while allowing Afghan trucks transit to India, Pakistan had refused to grant Indians passage to Kabul, saying this would have to wait till Delhi gave it transit to Dhaka, the paper reported. Top Indian railway officials have said they were willing to allow a Lahore-Delhi-Dhaka service – initially with goods trains and later, if politics allowed, with passenger trains.

(Source: <http://despardes.com/?p=17718>)

Bangladesh announces US\$ 2m in flood aid for Pakistan

Daily Star, August 18, 2010

Bangladesh government has decided to extend relief assistance and humanitarian aid to Pakistan for its flood victims. Bangladesh's relief assistance to Pakistan worth US\$ 2 million would include tent, blanket, water purification tablets, mineral water, life saving medicine, vaccine, oral saline, hygiene kit, biscuit, packed dry food etc. Bangladesh will also send a medical team, said a release. Bangladesh announces this commitment as an expression of solidarity with the people of Pakistan. The recent floods and torrential rains in some parts of Pakistan have claimed more than 1,600 people, marooned another million and caused huge devastation. Earlier, in a condolence message addressed to the Pakistani counterpart, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep sympathy to the government and the people of Pakistan on this human tragedy.

(Source: http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/latest_news.php?nid=25387)

Bangla ready to offer nationality to stranded Pakistanis

Hindu Business Line, August 28, 2010.

Bangladesh is ready to offer nationality status to thousands of Urdu-speaking people

mostly languishing in refugee camps, since its emergence as an independent nation in 1971. "Many of the post 1971 generation 'stranded Pakistanis' took Bangladeshi nationality and the Bangladesh's door is open in offering them the nationality," state-run BSS news agency quoted Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni as saying in London. Only those, Dr Moni said, who did not want Bangladesh's citizenship, were staying in the country with their 'stranded Pakistani or Bihari identities' for the past four decades since the country attained independence after nine months of Liberation War against Pakistan. The foreign minister made the comments after addressing a seminar on 'Bangladesh Foreign Policy' at UK Research Institute Policy Exchange.

(Source: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blnus/10281023.htm>)

Hasina government image dips over prices, graft

Sify News, August 29, 2010.

The popularity of the Bangladesh government led by Sheikh Hasina has taken a beating over price rise, power shortage and perceptions of graft, a survey conducted on completion of her 18 months in office said. The prime minister's popularity has dipped, although nearly a half (49 percent) of the 3,000 people surveyed preferred her than to her rival, former prime minister Khaleda Zia. The government 'looks to lose much of its shine with fewer people seeing the country moving in the right direction. Also, fewer people are satisfied with the government', The Daily Star newspaper that collaborated with Nielsen in an opinion poll said Sunday. This is the third survey and a comparison of the three shows that 'less people now think the government had well managed the issue of price inflation than they thought 18 months ago. But more think the issue was poorly managed'.

Source: <http://sify.com/news/hasina-government-image-dips-over-prices-graft-news-international-ki3rkCiagcb.html>

Bangladesh, China discuss road link

Sify News, August 30, 2010.

China is ready to sign a pact with Bangladesh on a road link via Myanmar, a visiting Chinese official has said. China had expressed its support to build a 111-km road covering the three nations in March this year. It will link the southern Yunnan province with Bangladesh via Myanmar. Qin Guangrong, governor of Yunnan province, told Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Sunday that China was ready to sign memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Bangladesh on road and rail communications. The official is on a two-day visit to the country following an invitation from the prime minister during her visit to China in March this year. She had discussed the project with Chinese officials during her visit. Hasina said the Chittagong-Myanmar-Kunming highway will play a vital role in increasing bilateral trade and commerce.

Source: <http://sify.com/news/bangladesh-china-discuss-road-link-news-international-ki4ludijfdi.html>

NTPC inks Rs 13,200 cr deal with Bangladesh

Times Of India, August 31, 2010.

State-run generation utility NTPC on Monday signed an MoU with Bangladesh Power Development Board to establish two thermal power projects in the neighbouring country at an estimated investment of Rs 13,200 crore, even as it has offered upto 49% stake in its gas-fired project in Kerala to Qatar Petroleum in return for assured fuel supply. The power plants in Bangladesh will have an aggregate capacity of 2,640 mw and will be set up at port cities of Chittagong and Khulna. The coal-fired plants are likely to be built as equal joint venture but operated by NTPC. The plants will use imported coal as fuel. NTPC will also train BPDB engineers and help improve efficiency of existing power stations. On the Kerala project, NTPC chairman R S Sharma said his company had offered Qatar Petroleum less than 50% stake in Kayamkulam gas-based power station in Kerala. The present capacity of the Kayamkulam plant is 350 mw, which is envisaged to be expanded to 1,050 mw in the next two years and further increased to 1,800 mw at a later stage.

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/NTPC-inks-Rs-13200-cr-deal-with-Bangladesh/articleshow/6462992.cms>)

Bhutan

RCCI exchanges views with BEA

Financial Express, August 19, 2010

A views exchange meeting was held between the members of Bhutanese Exporters' Association (BEA) and the importers and exporters of Rangpur at the Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) auditorium Monday. The meeting, presided over by RCCI President ATM Shahnewaj Bablu, discussed various issues relating to export and import between Bhutan and Bangladesh. The importers of Rangpur pointed out many problems about importing goods from Bhutan and urged the delegates to take necessary steps in this regard. BEA President Galem Neema and the First Secretary of Royal Embassy of Bhutan Mim Shering assured their Bangladeshi counterparts of informing the authorities concerned and expressed their eagerness of importing Bangladeshi goods.

(Source: http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=109569&date=2010-08-20)

Himalayan nations discuss climate change in Nepali capital

People Daily, August 19, 2010

Four eastern Himalayan countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal – officially commenced a three-day high-level technical consultative meeting Wednesday in the Nepali capital Kathmandu on the “Sacred Himalayas for Water, Livelihoods, and Bio-cultural Heritage”. According to THT Online report, the meeting is being organized by International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Royal Government of Bhutan and expected outcomes will create a roadmap leading to the proposed “Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas, Bhutan 2011”. Opening the meeting, Vice Chairman of the Nepali National Planning Commission Jagadish Chandra Pokharel congratulated the Royal Govern-

ment of Bhutan for taking this initiative to develop a regional framework and national adaptation plans to climate change, to reduce the vulnerability of local populations living in the region including the lowlands.

(Source: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7109086.html>)

Bhutanese refugee leaders announce unified move for democracy in Bhutan.

Relief Web, August 26, 2010.

Major political parties of Bhutan - Druk National Congress (DNC), Bhutan People's Party (BPP) and Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) - and Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee (BMSC) Thursday announced that they would move ahead under the leadership of DNC's chairman Rongthong Kunley Dorji to consolidate democratic struggle of Bhutan. Refugees' parties and BMSC leaders made the announcement as per the decision taken at their "crucial meeting" of August 22, according to a joint statement circulated.

(Source: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/KHII-88Q8J6?OpenDocument>)

MJF chief believes Nepal alone cannot solve Bhutanese refugee crisis

Nepal News, August 28, 2010.

Former foreign minister and chairman of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), Upendra Yadav, Saturday said India is the main obstacle to solution of the two-decade long Bhutanese refugee problem. Talking to a Bhutanese delegation this morning at his New Baneshwor residence, Yadav said India always chose to remain silent whenever the Government of Nepal sought its help in resolving the crisis.

"India is silent and Bhutan is not sincere," he said, "So, Nepal alone cannot do anything to repatriate the refugees." During the meeting, Yadav also told the Bhutanese team that Madhesi people, too have, undergone similar suppression from those in power, as Bhutanese refugees.

(Source: <http://www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/news-archive/19-general/8724-mjf-chief-believes-nepal-alone-cannot-solve-bhutanese-refugee-crisis.html>)

On the road to recovery

Kuensel, August 30, 2010-08-31

Domestic steel industries, two of which came into production just when the global financial crisis hit in October 2008, say that, although the steel market is firming up, they are still on the road to recovery. Going by their daily transactions and loan repayments, local financial institutions say that steel manufacturers are in a better position today compared with the same period last year. As of June, all the steel industries had made their quarterly payments in time, said bankers. The next repayment is due on September 30.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=16566>)

Public-private competition?

Kuensel, August 30, 2010.

The government is competing with the private sector in the construction sector by upgrading the construction development corporation ltd (CDCL) to a full construction company, according to contractors. Contractors raised the concern during the sixth engineering conference held last week in Thimphu. CDCL, known before as the 'mechanical cell,' was a division of the department of roads, where all construction equipment was maintained, handled or bought, but it will now bid for projects in the country. According to the works and human settlement minister, Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, CDCL will demonstrate the art and method of construction, and exhibit how it should be done, and to also bring in new innovation.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=16571>)

First private Dzongkha weekly launched

Kuensel, August 31, 2010.

At a time when the quality of Dzongkha is being questioned and discussed in every possible medium comes an opportune attempt to apprise Bhutanese of their national language. Beginners can take a plunge into the language, starting with the alphabets illustrated in elementary pictures and interpretations. In short, it is Dzongkha in its highest reader-friendly form, or so the first private Dzongkha newspaper, Druk Neytshuel, promises its readers.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=16572>)

Maldives

Adhaalath party urges assistance for flood victims in Pakistan

Minivan News, August 20, 2010

The Adhaalath Party continues to urge Maldivians to provide assistance for flood victims in Pakistan. In a statement issued today, the party said that Muslims "should provide humanitarian aid when an Islamic country is in trouble." "Due the heavy rain to Pakistan, more than 20 million people have become homeless, crops have been damaged, and apart from the starvation caused, diseases such as cholera and flus are now widespread," said the party. "The concerned authorities revealed that there are more than 3.5 million children among the victims."

(Source: <http://minivannews.com/society/adhaalath-party-urges-assistance-for-flood-victims-in-pakistan-10462>)

Nepal

India asks Nepal to use grants

Hydro World, August 15, 2010

The Embassy of India, sending a letter to the Ministry of Energy, said the delay and untimely works on some major hydro projects created a mess for providing further support. "We are dismayed that despite lapse of nearly three years from the agreement in Rahughat, the ministry is not able to use the money for the specific

purposes," mentioned the letter dated 9 August. Not only in Rahughat of Myagdi district, the amount provided to the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line is yet to be spent. The Rahughat hydro project in Myagdi district is of 30 MW installed capacity. The government of India from credit facility through Export Import (EXIM) Bank of India had committed to provide soft loan and grant amount for the project three years ago. The embassy also urged the government to make use of the money to ensure the electricity generation on time. The embassy also expressed its dissatisfaction with the ministry for not providing updated reports about the projects. As per the agreement reached in November 2009, Nepal has to buy 150 MW electricity for 25 years from India once the transmission line is built.

(Source: http://www.hydropworld.com/index/display/news_display.1242008694.html)

US reminds Nepal to allow free passage to Tibetan refugees

M&C, August 19, 2010

The United States has called on Nepal to honour its commitment to allow free passage for Tibetan refugees to travel to India, media reports said Thursday. US Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Atul Keshap expressed concern Wednesday over the 'violation of the gentlemen's agreement,' the Kathmandu Post reported. He reminded Nepalese Home Minister Bhim Rawal of a UN-brokered agreement to allow fleeing Tibetans free passage to India's Dharamshala through Nepal, government officials were quoted as saying. The 1989 deal took the form of a gentlemen's agreement and is not legally enforceable. During talks with the US envoy, Rawal reiterated Nepal's commitment to the one-China policy.

(Source: http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1578590.php/US-reminds-Nepal-to-allow-free-passage-to-Tibetan-refugees)

Chinese, Russian envoys meet PM

My Republica, August 30, 2010.

Chinese and Russian Ambassadors to Nepal separately met Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal Monday. During the meetings held at Prime Minister's office in Singha Durbar, talks were held on the extension of the UNMIN's tenure and support Kul Chandra Gautam, Nepal's candidate for the president of the United Nations General Assembly, said Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Advisor Rajan Bhattarai. Bhattarai said the Prime Minister urged Chinese envoy Qiu Guohong to support Gautam to elect him in the post. After the meeting, the Chinese envoy said that Nepal's political parties should make a decision on the UNMIN on the basis of political consensus.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=22726)

UN mission under fire as Nepal PM debates term extension

Indian Express, August 31, 2010.

Casting doubt on the process of verification of Maoist combatants by the United

Pakistan

Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), Defence Minister Bidhya Bhandari demanded a reverification at a time when the UN body is lobbying for an extended term in the country. "Even those who do not know how to use guns and weapons have been registered and verified as combatants," Bhandari told reporters on Monday while referring to the UN's verification process. Bhandari's comments come even as the UNMIN hopes for an extension of its term beyond the September 15 deadline. Bhandari's statement raises doubts over the role the UNMIN will play in the future even if its term is extended. The Maoist leadership fears a dilution in the UNMIN's capacity and have warned that such a step would mean the end of the Peace accord. This could entail a return to arms for the Maoists

(Source: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/UN-mission-under-fire-as-Nepal-PM-debates-term-extension/674729>)

Mass evacuation in Pakistan

Al Jazeera English, August 16, 2010

An evacuation effort on a massive scale is continuing in Pakistan as tens of thousands of people flee another wave of floodwater in the south of the country. The swollen Indus river has burst its banks in Pakistan's southern Sindh province on Monday, swamping hundreds of towns and villages. In the province's city of Jacobabad, the Pakistani army continued helicopter flights to rescue people stranded by the rising water. Many people had left the city and the surrounding areas before the encroaching waters cut off all the access roads. Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary general said the disaster was the worst he had ever seen. He urged the international community to speed up assistance.

(Source: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/08/20108163507302864.html>)

Floodwater enters grid station, 20 districts affected

Dawn, August 16, 2010

The 220 KVA grid station at Lodra tripped on Sunday, causing suspension of power supply to more than 20 districts in Sindh and Balochistan. The tripping occurred after water from a number of breaches in the Begari canal inundated the power station. The floodwater washed away paddy and other crops on thousands of acres but irrigation officials and local administration have managed to save Shikarpur city and gas transmission station after digging ducts under the Shikarpur-Jacobabad railway line near Lodra village. The station supplies power to 14 grid stations in Sindh and three in Balochistan. The water is now moving to Golodero forest area and villages in Garhi Yasin, Khanpur, Shikarpur and Lakhi talukas.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/19-floodwater-enters-grid-station%2C-power-supply-to-20-districts-affected-680-hh-07>)

11 including nine children die of waterborne diseases

Daily Times, August 19, 2010

Eleven people, including nine children died of cholera and gastroenteritis across

the country on Wednesday. Two women died while 18 others were affected after an outbreak of cholera and gastro diseases in Bajaur Agency. According to health officials in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, special teams have been sent to Qazi village of Tehsil Utmankhel on reports of cholera outbreak. The possibility of outbreak of cholera and other waterborne diseases. Three more children died in DI Khan as number of deaths due to gastroenteritis in the district reached 16. Official sources told Daily Times that cases of gastroenteritis have shot up in the past two and half weeks which have seen devastating floods.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\08\19\story_19-8-2010_pg1_4)

Eco crisis threatens Pakistani state: US report

Daily Times, August 19, 2010

Environmental woes as witnessed in Pakistan's devastating floods threaten the unity of the nation, exacerbating the threat of extremists, a US government report said. The study prepared for US lawmakers warned that Pakistan's ecological problems would likely get worse due to climate change, potentially inflaming tensions with nuclear-armed adversary India. The report said that Pakistan faced critical risks to food security in the coming decades due to a number of reasons including water scarcity, population growth and mismanagement. "The combination of these factors could contribute to Pakistan's decline as a fully functioning state, creating new, or expanding existing, largely ungoverned areas," the Congressional Research Service said. The growth of lawless areas of the type seen now in the Tribal Areas is "not in US strategic interests given the recent history of such areas being used by the Taliban, al Qaeda and other terrorist groups," it said.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\08\19\story_19-8-2010_pg1_8)

Floods to take half a month more to recede

Daily Times, August 19, 2010

As authorities evacuated more towns and villages, the Meteorological Department warned on Wednesday that floodwaters would not recede fully until the end of August. Senior meteorologist Arif Mahmood said existing river torrents were still heading to Hyderabad and Sukkur and could yet cause more floods. But he said there were no heavy rains forecast this week. "This is good news for aid agencies involved in the rescue and relief operations," he said. Meanwhile, authorities warned residents of Shehr Sultan in Muzaffargarh of imminent flooding, and ordered them to evacuate the area.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\08\19\story_19-8-2010_pg1_1)

U.S., others pledge more funds to UN Pakistan appeal

The Star, August 20, 2010

The United States led a stream of new aid pledges for flood-stricken Pakistan on

August 19, 2010, promising a further \$60 million to help the Asian country deal with the disaster that has crippled it. "With a new pledge that I am making today of \$60 million, the United States will be contributing more than \$150 million toward emergency flood relief." U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the U.N. General Assembly. About \$92 million of that total is in direct support of the U.N. relief plan, she added during a debate aimed at pressing for more contributions to the plan. Clinton urged other U.N. member nations to ensure that Pakistan got all the aid it needs. The United Nations has issued an appeal for \$459 million, of which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said about 60 percent had been pledged. "I realize that many countries, including my own, are facing tough economic conditions and very tight budgets," she said. "We've also endured an unrelenting stream of disasters this year, from the earthquake in Haiti to wildfires in Russia. But we must work to answer the Pakistani request for help." "I want the people of Pakistan to know," Clinton said. "The United States will be with you through this crisis."

(Source: http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/8/20/worldupdates/2010-08-20T031621Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-509521-2&sec=Worldupdates)

Pakistan accepts India's offer, appeals for more aid

Dawn, August 20, 2010

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi appealed to the international community to provide more and immediate aid to cope with the humanitarian crisis due to the floods. Moreover, Pakistan has decided to accept flood aid from its neighbour India, saying the offer was a "very welcome initiative" as both countries look to improve their tense relations. Foreign Minister Qureshi told India's NDTV television in an interview broadcast Friday that Islamabad would take India's offer of five million dollars which was made last Friday. "I can share with you that the government of Pakistan has agreed to accept the Indian offer," Qureshi said from New York, where he addressed a special session of the UN General Assembly called to boost aid for flood victims. "I think this initiative of India is a very welcome initiative."

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/03-pakistan-accepts-indias-offer-of-flood-aid-ss-04>)

Banned outfits not allowed to visit flood-hit area: Malik

Dawn, August 20, 2010

Pakistan said it will clamp down on charities linked to militants trying to exploit anger among flood victims, amid fears their involvement in the relief effort would undermine the fight against groups like the Taliban. While Pakistan's government overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster has struggled to reach aid to millions of people, Islamic charities with much smaller resources have moved in swiftly to fill the vacuum. It would not be the first time the government has announced restrictions against charities tied to militant groups. Critics say any banned organisations often re-emerge under new names, with authorities uninterested in stopping their operations. "The banned organisations are not allowed to visit flood-hit areas,"

Interior Minister Rehman Malik told Reuters.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/03-banned-outfits-not-allowed-to-visit-flood-hit+area-malik-ss-05>)

US Senator warns of instability if Pakistan unaided

Dawn, August 30, 2010.

Flood-stricken Pakistan urgently needs more international aid to combat potential instability and extremism, a US official said, as hunger and disease threaten millions of victims. In a commentary published in International Herald Tribune, US Senator John Kerry wrote that the international community is not meeting its responsibilities towards the South Asian nation, where floods have killed more than 1,600 people and left at least six million homeless. "The danger of the floods extends beyond a very real humanitarian crisis," Kerry wrote. "A stable and secure Pakistan, based on democracy and the rule of law, is in all of our interests. Pakistan has made enormous strides in combating extremism and terrorism - at great sacrifice. But its ability to keep up the fight requires an effective response to this crisis."

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/03-us-senator-warns-of-instability-if-pakistan-unaided-ss-02>)

Absence of local govt felt in coping with crisis

Dawn, August 31, 2010.

When about 2.5 million people were displaced by a massive quake which hit Pakistan's northern region in 2005, most of the relief and rehabilitation work was shouldered by local governments through a concept of 'host families'.

According to a Peshawar-based journalist, only 125,000 people were accommodated in government-run relief camps which, according to the affected people, provided inadequate facilities. The rest of the displaced people were provided shelter by families in cities which had not been affected by the quake. Proponents of the local government system argue that if the system had not been dismantled, local representatives could have efficiently carried out rescue and relief operations in their areas during the current flood crisis.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/06-absence-of-local-govt-felt-in-coping-with-crisis-180-rs-09>)

Sri Lanka

US military in Sri Lanka on training mission

Sify News, August 15, 2010

More than 40 US service members are here on a six-day medical and engineering training mission with the Sri Lankan government and medical representatives from the Maldives and Mongolia. The mission, called Pacific Angel-Sri Lanka, will be conducted at various sites near Anuradhapura and Puttalam, an American embassy statement Monday said. The military personnel arrived in Sri Lanka Saturday. It will offer free medical and dental care and also feature repairs and construction to support local schools. This week's mission allows participating na-

tions to hone their ability to work together and to practice their trades in non-clinical settings, while helping Sri Lankans in need of services. 'It is a pleasure and an honour for me and my team of professional airmen and soldiers to be here as guests of the Sri Lankan government,' said US Air Force Reserves Col. Wes Cockman, the Pacific Angel-Sri Lanka mission commander.

(Source: <http://sify.com/news/us-military-in-sri-lanka-on-training-mission-news-international-kiquabjagbg.html>)

Sri Lanka's Hambanthota Port eyed by India's Mahindra Group

Asian Tribune, August 19, 2010

India's leading business house- the US \$ 7.1 billion Mahindra & Mahindra Group, is eyeing lucrative investment opportunities in Sri Lanka's Hambanthota International Harbour, a senior Mahindra official told the *Asian Tribune*. "We are very much interested in the Hambanthota Port project and exploring opportunities we have there, including developing a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Hambanthota. However no concrete decisions were taken as subsequent team has to visit Sri Lanka for that," Pravin Shah, Executive Vice President of International Operations (Automotive and Farm Sector) told the *Asian Tribune*. A Mahindra delegation was in Colombo for two days of discussions with top government officials, including President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning Dr. Sarath Amunugama, to explore opportunities in the island nation.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/>)

Sri Lanka to ratify SAARC Environment Cooperation Convention

Island, 20 August 2010

The SAARC Environment Cooperation Convention is to be ratified by Sri Lanka, Cabinet Spokesman and Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella said yesterday. He told the weekly Cabinet press briefing in Colombo, that a Memorandum seeking permission to ratify the 'Cooperation on Environment Convention,' submitted by Environment Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, was approved by the Cabinet. It had been signed by SAARC Foreign Ministers during the 16th Summit held in Thimpu from April 28-29, 2010 in the presence of SAARC Heads of States including the Sri Lankan President. The Cabinet of Ministers, he said' also approved a proposal by Water Supply and Drainage Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, to implement the rehabilitation of the water supply distribution system in Pettah, Hultsdrop and parts of Kotahena and Maradana, at a cost of Rs. 1,098 million.

(Source: http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=4883)

India to open Consulate-General offices in Jaffna, Hambantota

Hindu, 21 August 2010

Sri Lanka and India on exchanged notes to establish Indian Consulate-General offices in Jaffna and Hambantota. Sri Lanka is to add a fourth Consulate-General office in an Indian city. It already has the High Commission in New Delhi, the

Deputy High Commissioner's office in Chennai and a Consulate in Mumbai. The proposed office in Jaffna will cover the five districts of the war-ravaged northern province – Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mullaithivu, Vavuniya and Mannar. Pending the formal opening, India has already established a visa office in Jaffna town.

(Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article584447.ece>)

US enhances Lanka's Maritime Security

Island, August 24, 2010

The United States has donated equipment worth Rs. 674 million (6 million USD) to the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) to enhance the island's maritime security, states the US Embassy in Colombo. At a ceremony at Ratmalana Air Base, Valerie Fowler, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy and Major General Darryll Wong, Chief of Staff and Commander of the Hawaii Air National Guard announced the donation to Air Chief Marshal Roshan Goonetilleke, Chief of Defence Staff from the Sri Lanka Air Force. This hardware, including data links for two Beechcraft 200 aircraft, enables real time imagery that has assisted Sri Lanka in providing humanitarian assistance and responding to natural disasters such as floods. The equipment also assists the Sri Lanka military in ensuring the safety and security of Sri Lanka's territorial waters.

(Source: http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=5144)

Indo-Lanka talks

Daily Mirror, 27 August 2010

Sri Lanka and India concluded a new round of talks in New Delhi yesterday with both sides looking at normalizing defence ties once again with the end of the war in Sri Lanka, the Hindu newspaper reported. At the talks yesterday, India was represented by National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon, Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao and Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar, while the Sri Lankan side included Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunga, and Senior Advisor to the President Basil Rajapaksa, who is also in charge of rehabilitation efforts in the war-affected parts of Sri Lanka.

(Source: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/index.php/news/6115-indo-lanka-talks.html>)

India to normalise defence ties with Sri Lanka

Island, 28 August 2010

With the end of ethnic conflict, India and Sri Lanka will revert to a more normal defence relationship. Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar will visit Colombo soon to get an idea of the issues to be taken up at the first annual defence dialogue between the two countries. The institutional mechanism of a yearly defence dialogue was decided by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa during their summit meeting here in June. "It is time to look at greater comprehensive cooperation. In this context, we broadly discussed the areas which would be important to focus on in the annual defence dialogue. An

earlier visit by the Defence Secretary would help tounderstand the issues. In the aftermath of the conflict, there is a need for a different defence relationship,” sources said after the high-level India-Sri Lanka talks on August 26, 2010.

(Source: http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=5372)