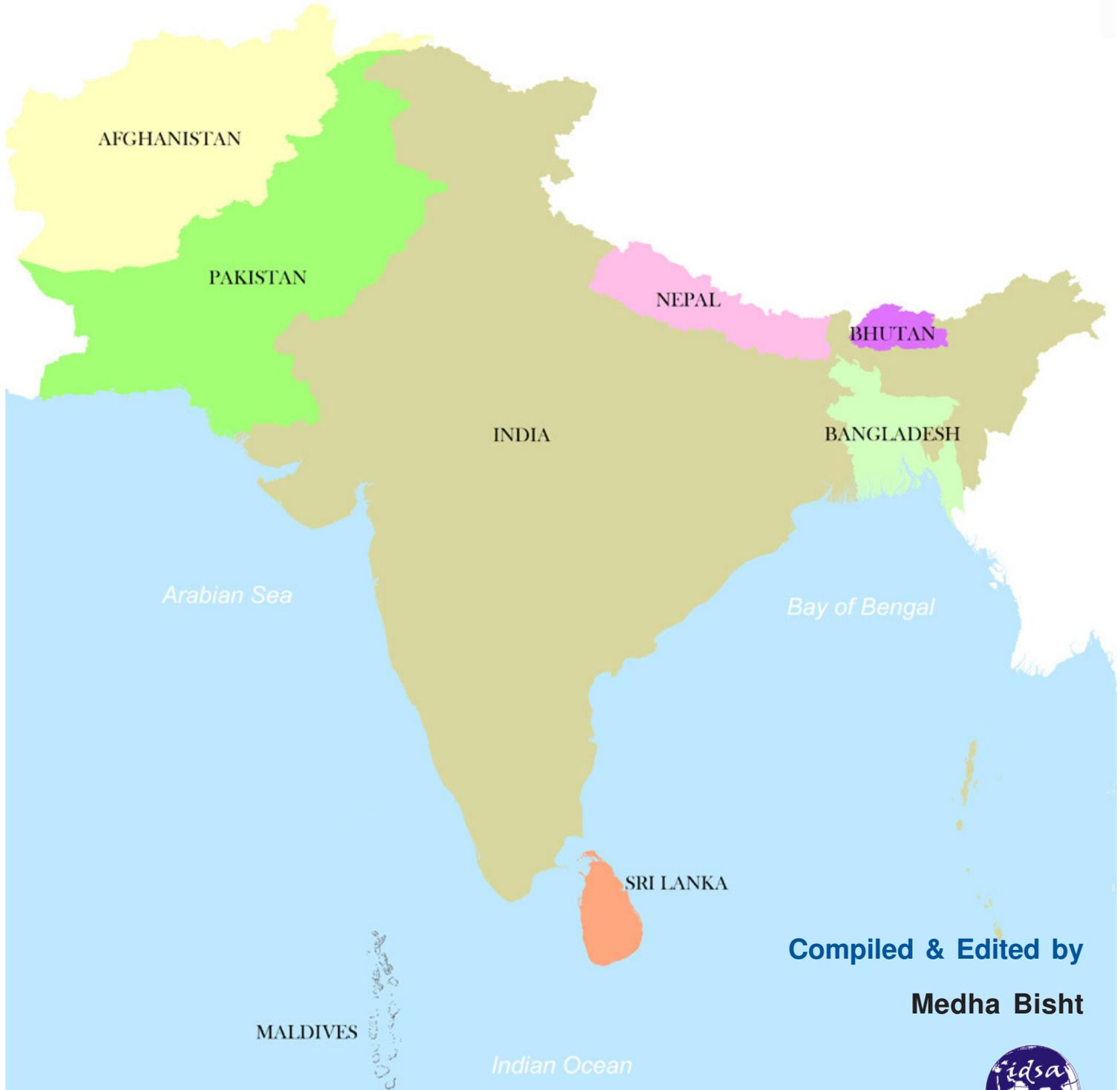


SOUTH ASIA TRENDS

Volume 2 Number 3 March 15-31, 2011

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.



Compiled & Edited by

Medha Bisht



Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

Editor's Note

Reconciliation and reintegration would be the two elements of the 'transition strategy' envisioned by the United States in the years to come. While the Afghan government has paced up "Operation Omid" to facilitate and manage transition on ground, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has formed elite "Counterterrorist Pursuit Teams" made up of highly-trained Afghan troops. These "Counterterrorist Pursuit Teams" have been specifically designed to hunt down and kill Taliban and other militant commanders.

Prime Minister Thinley of Bhutan was on a diplomatic tour to some of the South Asian countries. In the last two weeks, Thinley visited Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives. Addressing a press conference in Pakistan on March 21, 2011, Thinley emphasised the need to promote inter-regional trade and tourism. He also emphasised the need to combat terrorism in South Asia, the biggest regional challenge confronting the South Asian countries in the twenty-first century. In Bangladesh Thinley flagged off the issue of water sharing and water management on transboundary rivers. Jointed collaboration on hydel projects between Bhutan-India-Bangladesh was also discussed between both the countries.

Meanwhile, the visit of the Chinese Army Chief General Chen Bingde was the spotlight in the Nepali media. China expressed the willingness to assist in developing infrastructure for the Nepal Army. Termed as the 'good-will' visit, General Bingde announced Rs 1.42 billion aid to Nepal. Given the political uncertainty in Nepal, the visit can be seen as a significant diplomatic move by China in engaging the various stakeholders in Nepal. The visit also has high-symbolic value considering the ongoing face-off between the Maoists and the Nepali Army.

Afghanistan

Petraeus backs US troop drawdown in Afghanistan

The Guardian, March 16, 2011.

The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan insists the military can boost Afghan security forces to fight the Taliban, begin a troop drawdown this summer and fulfill President Barack Obama's goal of a long-term partnership with the Kabul government. Facing a skeptical Congress and a war-weary public, Army Gen. David Petraeus is seeking to build support for the continued and costly U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, telling lawmakers the conflict is turning around despite concerns about the viability of President Hamid Karzai's government and the dedication of neighboring Pakistan to root out terrorism.

(Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9548195>)

New rings set up in Afghanistan to upset regional stability - Tajik official

Asia -Plus Nes Agency, March 16, 2011.

New criminal groups are being formed on the territory of Afghanistan with the aim of destabilizing the situation in neighbouring countries. The secretary of the Security Council of Tajikistan, Amirqul Azimov, said this during a two-day session of the working group on Afghanistan under the council of the foreign ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states opened in Dushanbe today. Militants are currently undergoing special training at camps located in areas not controlled by Afghanistan's authorities, and on Pakistan's regions bordering Afghanistan, he said. "We have sufficient information [about this]," Azimov added.

(Source: Asia-Plus news agency website, Dushanbe, in Russian)

Reports say Pakistan, Iran fuelling insecurity

National Afghanistan, March 16, 2011.

Some reports have said Iran is involved in disrupting security in southern Kandahar Province. The Kandahar mayor says the neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and Iran, see their own interests in insecurity in Afghanistan, adding that they have always tried to disrupt peace and security in Afghanistan. Although the Iranian interior minister denies equipping and training of the Taleban by Iran, local Kandahar officials stress that the neighbouring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, train and equip the Taleban. The

(Source: National Afghanistan TV, Kabul, in Dari)

US, Afghan Officials Discuss New Strategic Partnership

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, March 18, 2011.

Senior US and Afghan officials deliberated upon a new strategic partnership between the two countries, with both sides expressing a strong conviction to build up Afghan institutions, the foreign ministry said. At a joint meeting that held in Kabul, officials from the two countries discussed the new strategic partnership, which will also contribute to improved economic and political relations between

Afghanistan neighbors, the ministry said in a statement. The participants pledged to continue discussions on the topic in April, and to consult with relevant domestic and international stakeholders as part of their deliberations. Both sides also agreed that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan would serve as an anchor for long-term regional stability and contribute to international security, the statement said

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

Vast majority of Americans want significant troop withdrawal from Afghan war

Examiner, March 19, 2011.

A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll found that 64% of Americans now think the war in Afghanistan has not been worth fighting; and an even more overwhelming 73% want a “substantial number of U.S. combat forces” to withdraw this summer..U.S. General David Petraeus reported on Tuesday and Wednesday to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, withdrawal of “some combat forces” may be included in a future set of policy recommendations for President Obama.

(Source: <http://www.examiner.com/progressive-in-national/vast-majority-of-americans-want-significant-troop-withdrawal-from-afghan-war>)

USGS: strong quake hits NE Afghanistan, no immediate reports of injures or damage

Washington Post, March 21, 2011.

The United States Geological Survey says a strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.6 has struck northeastern Afghanistan. Police in the region say there are no immediate reports of injuries or damage. The USGS said Monday that the quake struck in the Hindu Kush region about 69 kilometers (42 miles) southeast of Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan province. It hit at 2:19 p.m. (0949 GMT) and had its epicenter in a sparsely populated region 227 kilometers (172 miles) northeast of the capital. It was felt in Kabul and as far east as the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.

(Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/usgs-strong-quake-hits-ne-afghanistan-no-immediate-reports-of-injures-or-damage/2011/03/21/ABBXX04_story.html)

Govt. Embraces Two Big Challenges: Khalili

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, March 22, 2011.

First vice president Karim Khalili said the Afghan government was going to embrace two big challenges in the New Year: reconciliation with Taliban and gradual withdrawal of foreign troops. The main challenge would be for the government to make the peace process a success, he said, calling on individuals involved in the process to be sincere in their efforts at reintegrating Taliban members. Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor said they were supportive of the Burhanuddin Rabbani-led High Peace Council. Asked about permanent US military bases in

Afghanistan, Noor said what the country needed was economic development to enable it to stand on its feet.

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

Afghan official, MP welcome security transition process

Noor TV, March 22, 2011.

Speaking on private Noor TV's "Akher-e Khat" ("End of the Line") programme on 22 March, MP Abdolhafiz Mansur and the deputy head of Afghan government's Media and Information Centre, Sediq Seddiqi, both stressed that Afghan forces should take over responsibility for security because the international forces would not stay long and there was no option but for Afghan forces to ensure security of their country themselves.

(Source: Noor TV, Kabul)

U.S. welcomes Afghanistan's first transition arrangement

Xinhua Net, March 23, 2011.

The United States welcomed Afghan President Hamid Karzai's announcement of the first three provinces and four cities to begin the process of transition to Afghan-led security in the coming months. "We look forward to troop reductions starting in July and continuing based on conditions on the ground, with the transition to be completed by the end of 2014," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a statement. "As we have long said, the Afghans themselves must take responsibility for their own future – for providing security, for strengthening governance, and for reaching a political solution to the conflict," the top U.S. diplomat added.

(Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-03/23/c_13792990.htm)

Afghan Defence Ministry to launch major operation to ensure security

Tolo TV, March 24, 2011.

The Ministry of National Defence has tried to implement a massive programme, of which the transition process from foreign forces to Afghan forces is an important part. The operation, called "Omid", is to be put into practice in various aspects, as part of the programme. In the meantime, General David Petraeus is saying NATO wants to complete its role in Afghanistan by 2014. The Omid Operation prioritizes the mopping-up areas, separation of people [from insurgents], protection of people, winning people's support, inviting the people to cooperate, good governance, development and ensuring security of highways.

(Source: Tolo TV, Kabul)

Afghan daily questions purposes of president's trip to Iran

Hasht-e Sobh, March 27, 2011.

Mr Karzai's trip to Iran is ostensibly aimed at participating in the second international Nowruz celebrations but whether we like it or not, a number of

meetings and discussions on different issues will also be held during this trip. No official agreements are expected to be signed during this trip, but officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran are expected, as usual, to express their dissatisfaction with the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan and expect Afghan officials to remain meaningfully silent and thus support the views of their Iranian counterparts. By acting this way, Iran will put Afghan officials in a passive and defensive position as Afghans will say that Afghanistan's strategic relations with the United States will not pose any dangers to Iran.

(Source: Hasht-e Sobh, Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, Herat and Jalalabad in Dari)

Russia open for talks with Taleban, special envoy says

Interfax, March 28, 2011.

Russia is ready for dialogue with the Taleban, although there are no such contacts at the moment." We have no direct contacts with the Taleban. However, it is crucially important that Russia supports the process of national reconciliation in Afghanistan," Russian special presidential envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov told Interfax. Russia does not support the idea of settling the Afghan issue by force alone, Kabulov said. "Therefore, we believe the Taleban could return to peaceful life, reintegrate into society, but there are conditions that are stated in UN Security Council resolutions: those who are ready to make peace must stop their armed struggle against the authorities, recognize the Afghan constitution and sever ties with Al-Qa'idah and other extremist groups. If there are people among the Taleban that can make such a step - and there are some - we are open for discussion with them," he said.

(Source: Interfax news agency, Moscow, in Russian)

Taliban claims responsibility for Afghan suicide bombing

Washington Post, March 28, 2011.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in eastern Paktika province that killed at least 24 people. The attack appeared intended to show the insurgent group's strength as the springtime fighting season begins. The Taliban took responsibility a day earlier for kidnapping 50 men in Kunar province, also in the east. NATO commanders say they anticipate the Taliban will step up high-profile attacks this spring to show that an aggressive drive by foreign troops over the winter to clear insurgent strongholds didn't weaken the group. Three suicide bombers slammed a truck packed with explosives into a building that housed a construction company Sunday about 8 p.m. in the Barmal district of Paktika province, said Mokhlis Afghan, a spokesman for the governor.

(Source:http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/taliban-claims-responsibility-for-suicide-bombing-in-eastern-afghanistan/2011/03/28/AFa3aepB_story.html)

Problems Facing Counter-insurgency Operations

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, March 29, 2011.

The massive truck bomb that went off in front of the Zahir Road Construction Company in Barmal District of Paktika Province minutes after 7 p.m. on Sunday is the first in this year and the latest massive suicide bombing to specifically target civilians. The early count of casualties point to 23 dead and 60 injured while it is highly probable that the number of dead and wounded will be much higher than these numbers. Almost all the casualties of this attack have been civilians; engineers, employees and managers of the construction company plus a few security guards who protected their office premises. According to reports, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has formed elite "Counterterrorist Pursuit Teams" made up of highly-trained Afghan troops, numbering up to 3000, whose duties are to specifically hunt down and kill Taliban and other militant commanders. The operations undertaken by these "Counterterrorist Pursuit Teams", which are probably modeled on the lines of American military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) teams, have proved to be effective against high-value militant commanders.

(Source: <http://outlookafghanistan.net/2011/03/problems-facing-counter-insurgency-operations/>)

Former Taliban Reconcile with Afghan Government

Afghanistan Daily Outlook, March 31, 2011 .

When Gen. David Petraeus testified before Congress recently, the top American commander in Afghanistan gave a generally upbeat assessment – but he acknowledged that military successes won't win the war. Afghan-led reintegration "of reconcilable insurgents must also be an important element of the strategy – and it now is," he told lawmakers on March 15. Petraeus said some 700 former Taliban have already reconciled with the government.

(Source: http://epaper.outlookafghanistan.net/news_Pages/Local%20news.html#01)

Chinooks Return to the Afghan Skies

Afghanistan Daily Outlook, March 31, 2011.

The Australian Defence Force's air operations capability has returned to Afghanistan to support International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations for 2011. The Rotary Wing Group recently commenced full operational duties. Commanding Officer of the Rotary Wing Group, Lieutenant Colonel Neil Monaghan, said that this partnership had great impact in terms of strengthening the relationship with Coalition partners. "The Australian contribution, although small in comparison to the American aviation assets, is considered an integral part of ISAF and the mission is an important element in the Coalition effort in Afghanistan," Lieutenant Colonel Monaghan said. Since their first deployment in 2006, the Australian Chinooks have been highly valued on the battlefield and are well suited to operations in Afghanistan's traditionally harsh environment.

(Source: http://epaper.outlookafghanistan.net/news_Pages/Local%20news.html#01)

Bangladesh

BNP returns to JS, walks out

The Daily Star , March 16, 2011.

Returning to the House after a long time, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia launched an attack on the government and said it has “completely failed to meet people’s expectation”. The opposition lawmakers also returned but walked out afterwards and did not return.” The country is in a deep crisis. There is no rule of law, democracy, independence of the judiciary and the media. The government has no success...,” said Khaleda, the BNP chief. She demanded discussion on various important issues in the House, adjourning its other scheduled business. Opposition lawmakers already submitted notices to the Parliament Secretariat asking for discussions on different issues including share market crash, soaring food prices, and the sliding law and order.

(Source: <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=177894>)

Moriarty reiterates concern over Yunus’ removal

Daily Star, March 17, 2011.

United States Ambassador to Bangladesh in Dhaka James F Moriarty reiterated concern over Prof Yunus’ removal from the Grameen Bank but said the US has no role to play in the issue. The US had publicly expressed concerns over the incident. Prof Yunus is a widely respected person, he said adding: “We just expressed our concerns.” “We have no role in this matter,” Moriarty said when asked whether the US was interfering into Bangladesh’s internal matters. He also said Prof Yunus is a global figure and he has relations with many people at the international level and the Grameen Bank has a branch in the United States as well, Moriarty said, adding that this is why the US has expressed its concern on the issue. The US ambassador was addressing the inauguration of two-day Education USA fair organised by American Centre of the US Embassy in Dhaka at the Brac Centre Inn in the city in the morning.

(Source: http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/latest_news.php?nid=28942)

UAE signs MoU with Bangladesh

Sify News, March 17, 2011.

The United Arab Emirates has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh to develop cooperation in the field of air transport between both countries. The MoU was inked in Dhaka March 15 by Deputy Director General of General Civil Aviation Authority Omer Bin Ghalib and Chairman of Bangladesh Civil Aviation Authority Air Commodore Mahmud Hossain. Representatives of five national carriers in the UAE also attended the signing ceremony.

(Source: <http://www.sify.com/news/uae-signs-mou-with-bangladesh-news-international-ldsaOodfgac.html>)

Bangladesh PM says to go ahead with nuclear plants

Reuters, March 20, 2011.

Bangladesh will press ahead with its nuclear power programme and has already signed a framework agreement with Russia to set up a 1,000 megawatt (MW) nuclear plant, the country's prime minister said on Sunday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the plants which were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan were old and security systems had improved significantly since.

(Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/20/bangladesh-power-summit-idUSSGE72J00S20110320>)

AGP document vows to seal border, update NRC

Times of India, March 21, 2011.

Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in its election manifesto retained its old promises of sealing the Assam-Bangladesh border and implementing the Assam Accord. The regional party released the manifesto on Monday at its Ambari head office.

Emphasizing on inclusive growth of the state, the AGP manifesto targeted Assam's GenNext with the promise of creating a unique Youth Commission to deal with their problems.

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/AGP-document-vows-to-seal-border-update-NRC/articleshow/7757002.cms>)

Bangladesh opposes military action in Libya

Hindustan Times, March 22, 2011.

With thousands of Bangladeshi workers still inside Libya, Dhaka has urged international troops to show restraint and resort to force "only when absolutely essential and solely for neutralising military targets". "We reiterate, in line with the UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011), the need for a dialogue within Libya to find a peaceful solution to the current crisis in keeping with the aspirations of the Libyan people," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

(Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Bangladesh-opposes-military-action-in-Libya/Article1-676146.aspx>)

Bangladesh PM says constitution to be amended to prevent illegal power grabbing

Daily Star, March 25, 2011.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament yesterday said the constitution will be amended in such a way that none can grab power again through extra-constitutional ways. She said the constitution will be amended to better protect the people's rights and serve their needs. Hasina was speaking on the thanks-giving motion on the president's speech. In her hour-long speech, she also replied to dozens of allegations raised by the opposition bench against the government.

(Source: The Daily Star)

Bangladesh minister says Indian border force killed 136 nationals since Jan 09

Daily Star, March 25, 2011.

As many as 136 Bangladeshi citizens were killed and 170 others injured by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) since January 2009, Home Minister Sahara Khatun told parliament yesterday. Replying to lawmakers' queries, the home minister also said both the Bangladesh and Indian governments are now working to reduce number of border killing to zero. Giving the yearly statistics of killing of Bangladeshi nationals by the BSF, Sahara Khatun in a scripted reply informed the House that 67 Bangladeshis were killed and 80 other were injured in 2009 and 60 were killed and 87 others were injured in 2010.

(Source: The Daily Star)

Bangladesh ruling party starts campaign against Nobel laureate

Daily Star, March 26, 2011.

A section of the ruling Awami League leaders have started a campaign against Grameen Bank founder Prof Muhammad Yunus [Nobel laureate], who was removed by the government from the post of managing director of the bank on the grounds of being too aged. The anti-Yunus campaign is being conducted when a compromise between the government and the Nobel laureate is in progress, amid the US and few other western countries' call for an honourable solution to the vexed issue. The party has adopted a hush-hush policy to carry out the campaign against Prof Yunus through seminars, symposiums, round-table discussions, and political rallies across the country, party sources said.

(Source: The Daily Star)

Wild Islamism on rise in Bangladesh

Weekly Blitz, March 30, 2011.

Finally state minister for law, Advocate Qamrul Islam in Bangladesh made open statement expressing his government's realization that some Islamists and radical clergies are trying to turn Bangladesh into another 'Afghanistan'. He said, "Few 'fanatics' and 'religion-mongered' want to make the country 'an Afghanistan' by snatching away women rights". Since past couple of weeks, Islamists are on continuous protests in Bangladesh, which is led by pro-Taliban clergies like Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini and Moulana Rezaul Karim. Both the clergies are infamous for giving instigations to Jihad and anti-West as well as anti-Semitic activities.

(Source: <http://www.weeklyblitz.net/1352/wild-islamism-on-rise-in-bangladesh>)

Tripura-Bangladesh business recorded at Rs 300 Cr

Central Chronicle, March 30, 2011.

Business between Tripura and Bangladesh was recorded at Rs 300 Crore in the current fiscal as against Rs 163 Crore in 2009-10, while export of eight items

Bhutan

registered a five fold increase this year. According to Tripura Commerce Minister Jitendra Chowdhury, in 2007-08 the export business of Tripura with Bangladesh was recorded at Rs 1.51 Crore and next two years it reduced to only Rs 32 Lakh and Rs 42 Lakh respectively but in 2009-10 it increased five fold to Rs two Crore. The import business of seven items from Bangladesh has increased over the years, Mr Chowdhury said, adding that in 2010-11 Tripura imported goods of amounting Rs 294 Crore from Bangladesh, which was Rs 163 Crore in 2009-10, Rs 129 Crore in 2008-09 and Rs 84 Crore in 2007-08.

(Source: <http://www.centralchronicle.com/viewnews.asp?articleID=58539>)

The Government will stay on, PM

Bhutan Broadcasting Service, March 16, 2011.

There has been speculation that the government might dissolve following the Supreme Court's verdict on the first Constitutional case concerning the government's decision to revise the tax on the import of vehicles. Speaking to the media, the Prime Minister said that the speculations were true. The Prime Minister said that the government decided to stay on to live up to the expectations of His Majesty the King, to fulfill the mandates of the people and for the stability of the country.

(Source: <http://www.bbs.com.bt/bbs/?p=4305>)

To be completed, whatever it takes

Kuensel, March 17, 2011.

All projects under the present plan require rescheduling if it ought to be completed by December 2012, six months before the end of its period. This was what Prime Minister Jigmi Y Thinley had to share, as he began apprising some 1,200 senior civil servants, who crammed the convention centre at Thimphu yesterday, about the dzongkhags' mid term reviews that ended recently. "Donors are already saying they won't donate anymore," he said. "The usual practice of spilling over will not do, because many schemes are needed, and many services are needed to be delivered now." Should projects be delayed for lack of human and financial resources, natural calamities or other security reasons, he said, they should be completed within the next six months.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18732>)

Bhutanese PM due on March 18

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 17, 2011.

On the invitation extended by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley will visit Pakistan from March 18-20. A Foreign Office spokesperson said here on Thursday Pakistan deeply valued its cooperative relations with the Kingdom of Bhutan. She said the people of two countries enjoyed centuries old bonds of friendship and cultural affinity.

As Chairman of SAARC, Bhutan has played a commendable role in promoting regional cooperation, she said.

(Source: http://ftpapp.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=134031&Itemid=1)

Bhutan will become a member state

Kuensel, March 19, 2011.

Bhutan will now join the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as a member state. The cabinet has approved its accession, and has directed the ministries of labour and human resources and foreign affairs to complete the formalities. The labour and human resources ministry has invited the ILO sub-regional office for south Asia in New Delhi to Bhutan for consultation. Its director, along with the standards specialist, will be in the country from March 21 to 25, to discuss the pros and cons of Bhutan's accession to ILO.

(Source: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18770>)

Dangerous Dams in Bhutan - No one is concerned

Times of Assam, March 21, 2011.

After Arunachal Pradesh, dams and hydroelectric projects in Bhutan are what the people of Assam needs to be informed about and keep a close eye on. With no halt to the mega dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh in spite of multiple strong and angry protests by several public organizations in Assam, there is little chance that Government of India would take any proactive actions to ensure that dams and hydro projects under development in Bhutan does not create floods or other natural disasters in the Brahmaputra valley.

(Source: <http://www.timesofassam.com/exclusive/dangerous-dams-in-bhutan-no-one-is-concerned>)

Bhutanese PM calls for joint efforts for regional uplift

The News International, March 21, 2011.

Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Thinley on Sunday called for more concerted and collective efforts by the member states of the South Asian region to boost regional trade, tourism, protect environment and eradicate menace of terrorism. Addressing a press conference here on Sunday after his first visit to Pakistan, Lyonchhen Jigmi said Bhutan had firm belief in the collective future of South Asian countries which shared a common heritage.

(Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=4772&Cat=13&dt=3/21/2011>)

Blood in Brahmaputra

Deccan Chronicle, March 22, 2011.

With the recent killing of 24 "Indians" by militants of the separatist National

Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in the Bongaigaon and Darrang districts of Upper Assam, the organisation declared the entire north bank region of the Brahmaputra as the territory of a separate Bodoland. It asked all non-Bodos to vacate the area. The killings were a show of force in a proclaimed policy of "20 for one", i.e. kill 20 "Indians" regardless of age or gender in reprisal for any Bodo killed during internal security operations. The victims were mainly Hindi speakers from Bihar, besides some local Bengalis and Assamese. The neighbouring countries of Bhutan and Bangladesh are attempting to bar their gates and insulate their own territories from any backflow from north-eastern India. The Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) had earlier launched active offensive operations to purge the Indo-Bhutan border areas of the Ulfa and Bodo insurgent groups who had intruded into sovereign territory of the Dragon Kingdom, to establish camps and training bases.

(Source:<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/editorial/dc-comment/blood-brahmaputra-738>)

USD 29M budgetary support

Kuensel, March 22, 2011.

In a move that will help government strengthen and develop its institutions and rural infrastructure, among others, the finance ministry received Nu 1.3B from the World Bank yesterday. The fund is more of a concessional loan than commercial borrowing. Finance minister Wangdi Norbu said the concessional loan is not related to any specific project, but can be used for different types of expenditure, like the building of schools, hospitals and other capital assets.

(Source:<http://www.kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18791>)

Fire guts Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal

Monster and Critics, March 22, 2011.

A fire in a Bhutanese refugee camp in eastern Nepal on Tuesday destroyed 600 of its 750 huts, officials said. Twenty-five of the 4,000 refugees were injured in the fire that swept through the Goldhap refugee camp in Jhapa district, some 500 kilometres east of the capital Kathmandu, police said.

(Source: http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1627818.php/Fire-guts-Bhutanese-refugee-camp-in-Nepal)

World Bank Launches New Partnership Strategy with Bhutan

Financial Channel, March 25, 2011.

On the occasion of her second official visit to Bhutan as Vice President of the South Asia Region, Isabel Guerrero on March 24 launched the new joint World Bank -International Finance Corporation Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) along with the Chief Guest, Hon'ble Lyonpo Wangdi Norbu, Minister of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan. "The CPS, which was discussed by the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank on November 30, 2010, takes a medium- to long-term

vision of Bhutan as a middle-income country. It is aligned with Bhutan's unique development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and prioritizes Bhutan's development goals as described in its Poverty Reductions Strategy (PRSP), which is underpinned by the Royal Government of Bhutan's Tenth Five-Year Plan. The funding total from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessionary lending arm, over the term of the CPS (FY2011-14) is expected to be approximately US\$78 million," World Bank said.

(Source: http://finchannel.com/news_flash/Banks/83920_World_Bank_Launches_New_Partnership_Strategy_with_Bhutan/)

Bhutan king praises Bangladesh's leadership

Daily Star, March 25, 2011.

Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on Friday appreciated Bangladesh's political leadership saying the debate and discussion at the Jatiya Sangsad are qualitative and rich. "I witnessed the activities and debate at the JS yesterday and it seemed rich and qualitative enough," the Bhutanese king said when Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Abdul Hamid called on him at a hotel in the city. During the meeting, they discussed matters related to bilateral interest of the two countries, said a JS release. Strengthening the existing Dhaka-Thimpu relations and increasing communications among the parliamentarians of the two countries also came up for discussion.

(Source: http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/latest_news.php?nid=29071)

Bangladesh PM, Bhutan king talk water sharing

Gulf Times, March 26, 2011.

The foreign minister was talking to the press after meeting a between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck yesterday.

"Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan can jointly manage water in the region, and proper sharing of the resources can reduce tension in the region," she said.

The two top leaders also discussed regional co-operation on power, she added.

"Bhutan has the potential to produce hydropower, and now it has arrangement with India to export electricity," Moni said, adding: "Bangladesh can also be a party to that, and India does not have any objection to it."

(Source: http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=424444&version=1&template_id=44&parent_id=24)

PM talks power, water issues with Bhutan King

Daily Sun, March 26, 2011.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk discussed regional cooperation in generation of electricity and water management of common rivers for mutual benefit. During the nearly one and a

half-hour meeting at Sonargaon Hotel in the evening, they discussed a new project for generating hydropower through joint collaboration between Bangladesh, Bhutan and India. On water management, Prime Minister Hasina and King Jigme Khesar stressed four-nation collaboration among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

(Source: http://www.daily-sun.com/?view=details&type=daily_sun_news&pub_no=168&cat_id=2&menu_id=1&news_type_id=1&index=3&archiev=yes&arch_date=26-03-2011)

Bhutan plans to sell hydro-power to Bangladesh

Times of Assam, March 27, 2011.

Bangladesh and Bhutan are planning to bring about a joint venture of proper sharing of water resources between the two countries. This was disclosed by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dipu Moni, after a high level meeting between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and king of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck took place on Friday, 24th of March in Dhaka. The meeting was part of Bhutanese King's five day official visit to Bangladesh to attend the 40th Independence Day celebration in the country. The meeting also centered around collaboration in the pharmaceutical sector as well as to hire Bangladeshi doctors to Bhutan.

(Source: <http://www.timesofassam.com/headlines/bhutan-plans-to-sell-hydro-power-to-bangladesh>)

Bhutan's third vernacular paper launched as weekly

Kuensel, March 28, 2011.

The third private Dzongkha newspaper was launched yesterday, taking the number of Bhutanese newspapers to nine and the third among national language newspaper. The 16-page weekly Druk Gyelyong newspaper promises to do what its predecessors have been striving to - promote the national language. The stories the newspaper carries are minus reporters' bylines and photo captions. Its target audience is the dratshang [monastery] officials, non-formal education literates and school students.

(Source: Kuensel website)

Refugees left homeless after fires

Catholic Sentinel, March 29, 2011.

Up to 6,000 refugees from Bhutan were left homeless after fire swept through two U.N. camps in eastern Nepal. At least 3,000 people were left without shelter and 20 were injured after a fire in Goldhap camp destroyed about 700 of 800 huts. Hours later, two children were injured and several thousand were made homeless in the fire at Sanichare camp. Officials said more than 500 huts were reduced to ashes in 90 minutes in Goldhap camp. The fire also burned two Jesuit-run youth centers and a health center. The second fire destroyed about 180 huts in 45 minutes. Aid organizations such as Caritas Nepal and the Red Cross were working to provide relief assistance to the victims. It was not clear how the blaze started. A local

government official said the federal government would give each victim 1,500 rupees (\$21). In 1990, Bhutan began a program of “Bhutanization,” enforcing northern Bhutan culture as the official national culture. Language, dress and land ownership codes discriminated against non-Bhutanese minority groups.

(Source: <http://www.catholicsentinel.org/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=34&ArticleID=14624>)

Maldives

Maldives urges UN Security Council: Support imposing no fly zone over Libya

The Asian Tribune, March 15, 2011.

The Maldives urged the United Nations Security Council to support imposing a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent Gaddafi using air force to attack rebels and civilians. The Maldives urged all permanent members of the UN Security Council to immediately support the imposition of a no-fly zone in Libya, as advocated by the Arab League, the President’s Office said. Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed called upon the UN Security Council to “fulfill its duty to protect the people of Libya and urgently agree on a robust course of action to prevent further deterioration of the situation in Libya.”

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/03/15/maldives-urges-un-security-council-support-imposing-no-fly-zone-over-libya>)

Nepal

Four envoys call on PM Khanal

The Himalayan Times, March 16, 2011.

Ambassadors of four countries separately met Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal at his official residence in Baluwatar. Envoys of Czech Republic, Italy, Cyprus and Peru met the Prime Minister and enquired about the ongoing peace process and constitution drafting. The Prime Minister told them that the government is committed to complete the peace process and constitution drafting, Prime Minister’s foreign affairs advisor Milan Tuladhar told reporters after the meeting.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Four+envoys+call+on+PM+Khanal&NewsID=280193>)

Madhesi leaders leave for India for consultation

The Himalayan Times, March 16, 2011.

The top brass of three Madhes parties—Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP), Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum-Loktantrik (MJF-L), and Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP)—embarked on a visit to India on Wednesday afternoon. TMLP Chairman Mahantha Thakur, MJF-L Chairman and former Deputy Prime Minister Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar and NSP Chairman Rajendra Mahato flew to New Delhi this afternoon to hold consultations with the Indian leaders on Nepal’s emerging political developments, it is said. The political consultation would dwell on finding ways to strengthen democratic unity in Nepal against what has been perceived as a massive leftist polarisation with two major leftist parties, CPN UML and UCPN-

Maoist teaming up for government, it is reported. All the three parties have already decided not to join the Khanal-led government.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Madhesi+leaders+leave+for+India+for+consultation&NewsID=280177&a=3>)

Nepal defence minister rules out “separate force” of Maoist ex-combatants

Nepal News, March 17, 2011.

Defence Minister Bishnu Poudel has ruled out a “separate force” of Maoist combatants when they are integrated. According to him, “integration and adjustment” would be done as per the interim constitution. Stating that the integration process would not be as per the deal signed by UML [Communist Party of Nepal-Unified (Marxist-Leninist)] chairman and Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal and Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Minister Poudel clarified that the government would develop an “integration model” acceptable to all parties very soon. He was speaking at an interaction programme in Kathmandu on Wednesday [16 March].

(Source: Nepalnews.com website, Kathmandu)

Govt will collapse if seven-point deal scrapped: Gurung

My Republica, March 20, 2011.

UCPN (Maoist) Standing Committee member Dev Gurung warned on Sunday that the current government would collapse if the seven-point deal reached between the CPN-UML and the Maoist was scrapped in order to bring Nepali Congress (NC) on board the government. Gurung, who is considered hardliner in the party, ruled out any possibility of a compromise on the controversial deal reached hours before the election of Jhala Nath Khanal as prime minister. His remark comes in the wake of some UML leaders’ comments that they would be willing to scrap the deal if the NC agrees to join the government.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=29429)

Hullabaloo over India’s unconfirmed fresh election stance in Nepal

Telegraph Nepal, March 21, 2011.

When asked by Nagarik National Daily March 21, 2011 to comment on fresh stance taken by Indian leadership for re-holding of elections if the present Constituent Assembly failed to draft the constitution said former Foreign Minister and Chairman Upendra Yadav of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Nepal that it was nothing but a conspiracy to push the country back. Chairman Bijaya Kumar Gacchedhar of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Lokatantrik after meeting leaders of various shades and colors in New Delhi in his four day trip said that India too was in favor of having fresh elections in Nepal.

(Source: <http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2011-03-21/hullabaloo-over-indias-unconfirmed-fresh-election-stance-in-nepal>)

Nepal observes World Water Day amid horrifying water scarcity

Xinhua, March 22, 2011.

Amid horrifying reality of water scarcity across the country, Nepal is observing "World Water Day" on Tuesday with various awareness creating programs and discussion. A decade onwards, water scarcity has become a major problem in the Himalayan Kingdom which is renowned for abundance source of water resources and hundreds of rivers in its land. Hence, the country began marking "World Water Day" as "Nepal National Water Week" since 2009. Meanwhile, experts have outlined severe condition of water supply in Nepali capital that would worsen in future. "More than three million people live in capital, plus 72 percent of industries are located in urban areas. This has increased water demand in capital exceeding water supply," said Dhiraj Pradhananga, president of The Small Earth Nepal. According to him, the total water demand exceeded water supply in capital since 1991. The water demand of the valley was estimated 170 million liters a day (MLD) and out of which only 120 was supplied in 2001. In recent years, population and industrial business in the capital has rapidly increased water demand.

(Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-03/22/c_13792501.htm)

Peace Process

The Republica, March 22, 2011.

Much concern has been expressed about the peace process but little work has been done to actually conclude it successfully. It's now time for action, not words. President Dr Ram Baran Yadav on Sunday expressed his worries to Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal and requested him to take initiative to move the stalled peace process forward. The Maoists must urgently propose at least three things: First, the number of their combatants they wish to see integrated into the security forces; secondly, the modality of integration; and thirdly, the norms for integration. Once they come up with their proposal people will have a chance to see how other parties respond. If the other parties make impractical demands, they will be seen as trying to obstruct the peace process. But so long as the Maoists do not place a proposal on the table the finger should remain pointed at them

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=29469)

Nepal disallows Tibetan voting

Times of India, March 22, 2011.

In what could be termed as very crucial election for the exiled Tibetans owing to the fact that the Dalai Lama sticking to his retirement proposal formally presented to the outgoing Tibetan parliament-in-exile last week, thousands of Tibetans voted on Sunday with great deal of enthusiasm to elect the new prime minister called as Kalon Tripa.

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Nepal-disallows-Tibetan-voting/articleshow/7759532.cms>)

Khanal, Dahal, MPRF signing deal Wednesday

My Republica, March 23, 2011.

Prime Minister Jhalaanath Khanal, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Chairman of Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) Upendra Yadav are all set to sign an agreement Wednesday morning to pave the way for MPRF to join the government. A source close to the prime minister said, "If every thing goes as planned, the three leaders are signing an agreement on Wednesday morning. The agreement has tried to address MPRF demands." Meantime, the prime minister has called a meeting of the Special Committee for Wednesday morning. The meeting is expected to finalize the pending recruitments at the secretariat under the Special Committee and discuss a time table for integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=29494)

Chinese army chief meets Nepal counterpart, announces 20m dollar aid

Nepal News, March 23, 2011.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), General Chen Bingde, arrived in Kathmandu Wednesday [23 March] afternoon leading a 15-member military delegation. He is on a three-day "goodwill visit" of Nepal at the invitation of Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Chhatraman Singh Gurung. On the occasion, General Bingde and CoAS Gurung signed an agreement of the Chinese government assistance worth 1.42bn rupees (RMB Yuan 130 million) (20m dollars) to the NA. As per the agreement, Chinese government will provide equipments for Birendra Army Hospital and rescue operations of the NA worth 100 Yan and engineering equipments worth 30 Yuan. General Gurung signed the aid agreement on behalf of the Defense Ministry of the Government of Nepal, according to the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) of the NA.

(Source: Nepalnews.com website)

Tight security for Chinese army chief's meeting with Nepal PM

Kantipur Daily, March 24, 2011.

Visiting Chinese army chief Gen Chen Bingde has said that China would like to provide more assistance for the Nepal Army (NA). The Chinese army chief general said so during a meeting with Defence Minister Bishnu Poudel on Thursday morning [24 March]. During a meeting with Defence Minister Poudel that lasted for some 45 minutes, Bingde said China is also willing to assist in developing infrastructure of the NA. In response, Poudel thanked Bingde for the financial assistance and added that Nepal is committed to "One China" policy.

(Source: eKantipur.com website, Kathmandu)

Blast injures six in Nepal

Nepal News, March 26, 2011.

At least six passengers were injured when a bomb went off inside a bus at Paparawa of Nepalgunj along the Kohalpur - Banke section [mid-western region] of the Mahendra Highway at 1:15 pm [local time] on Saturday [26 March]. According to Kohalpur police post, two of the injured passengers are in a critical condition. The injured people are being treated at the Nepalgunj Medical College. Police suspected that a passenger might have kept the bomb under the seat of the bus with number plate Na 4 Kha 1332. The suspected passenger is unconscious and yet to be named, police inspector Rubel Rawal informed.

(Source: Nepalnews.com website, Kathmandu)

Nepal army chief leaves for US on 15-day visit

Nepal News, March 26, 2011.

Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Chhatraman Singh Gurung left for the United States for a 15-day tour at the formal invitation of the US government on Saturday [26 March]. US Ambassador Scott H. Delisi was among those present at the Tribhuvan International Airport to see him off. During his visit, CoAS Gurung will meet US Army Chief General George W. Casey; jr [as published] chief of staff of the US Army, Lt-Gen Charles H. Jacoby; jr director, Strategic Plans and Policy, Robert Scher; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Southeast Asia Derek Mitchell, principle deputy assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific security affairs and Dr Alyssa Ayres, deputy assistant secretary for South and Central Asia, among others.

(Source: Nepalnews.com website, Kathmandu)

“Weak diplomacy” said behind Chinese withdrawal of Nepal envoy

The Himalayan Times, March 27, 2011.

The government of China has recalled its ambassador to Nepal, Qiu Guohong, a highly placed source said. Qiu, who had taken charge for two years and four months, pulled out from Nepal just eight months before the expiry of his normal three-year tenure. Ambassador Qiu on Friday [25 March] conveyed the news about his recall to Foreign Secretary of Nepal Dr Madan Kumar Bhattarai, according to the source. Sources said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China was dissatisfied with Qiu due to his weak diplomacy to neutralize any anti-Chinese activities in Nepal.

(Source: The Himalayan Times)

Taiwan, Nepal sign pact to jointly combat money laundering

Central News Agency, March 28, 2011.

Taiwan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Nepal Monday on cooperation in the fight against money laundering, terrorism funding and other financial crimes. The MOU was signed by Chang Chi-ping, director-general of the

Investigation Bureau (IB) under the Ministry of Justice, and Dharma Raj Sapkota, head of the Financial Information Unit of Nepal Rastra Bank which is Nepal's central bank. Under the MOU, the two countries will exchange information about suspected money laundering and other cross-border financial criminal activities, including terrorism financing, Chang said at the signing ceremony at the IB headquarters.

(Source: Central News Agency website, Taipei)

TMLP-N urges Madhes to revolt for rights

The Himalayan Times, March 31, 2011.

Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party Nepal (TMLP-N) chairman Mahendra Prasad Yadav has said that the Madhes parties who are fighting for the rights of the Terai people are not able to provide their rights. Speaking to the media in Nawalparasi on Thursday, Yadav said that the general public will not get their rights without revolt and added that his party would fight for their rights. Yadav said the TMLPN faction of Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) was the result of disputes within the party, and laid the blame for them on TMLP vice-chairman Hridayesh Tripathi and general secretary Sarbendra Nath Shukla's autocratic nature.

(Source: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=TMLP-N+urges+Madhes+to+revolt+for+rights&NewsID=282085&a=3>)

Pakistan

PPP and MQM 'bridge' differences

Daily Times, March 16, 2011.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has finally bridged reservations and differences with its coalition partner, the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), after series of detail meetings. Federal Interior Minister, Rehman Malik, while briefing media at the Governor's House, said that the delegation conveyed their reservations about the People's Amn Committee as most of their members were involved in criminal activities like kidnapping, killing and extortion from the general public as well as the business community.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\16\story_16-3-2011_pg1_6)

Court indicts Raymond Davis for double murder

Dawn, March 16, 2011.

A court on Wednesday formally charged Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor, on two counts of murder at a hearing held at a prison in Lahore, a police official said. Davis, 36, shot dead two Pakistanis in the eastern city on January 27 following what he described as an attempted armed robbery. He said he acted in self-defence and the United States says he has diplomatic immunity and should be repatriated. "He has been indicted," a police investigator assigned to the case told Reuters from inside Kot Lakhpat prison, where the trial is being held under tight security. If convicted, Davis could face the death penalty. A US embassy spokesman said he had no knowledge of any negotiations to settle the case. The principle of

diplomatic immunity was key to the case, the spokesman added.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/16/raymond-davis-indicted-in-double-murder.html>)

PPP won't destabilise Punjab government, says Zardari

Daily Times, March 17, 2011.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would not destabilise the Punjab government or undermine the broad based national reconciliation policy that the PPP adopted three years ago, President Asif Ali Zardari said. Presidential spokesperson, Farhatullah Babar, quoted statements made by the president during a telephonic address from Bilawal House to Punjab PPP MPs. The PPP would play the role of a responsible opposition in Punjab, Zardari told the PPP MPs, who had gathered in the Governor's House, Lahore, for the purpose. The president also advised the MPs to perform their duties "as a responsible and critical opposition, but not allow themselves to be provoked into saying or doing anything that militated against the spirit of democracy", Farhatullah said.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\17\story_17-3-2011_pg1_4)

Blood-money application signed by Davis received

Dawn, March 17, 2011.

DawnNews received a copy of Raymond Davis's signed application for settlement through blood-money (diyat) on Thursday. Davis also paid diyat for Faheem's wife Shumaila who had committed suicide, DawnNews reported. Shumaila's diyat was handed over to the Superintendent of Kot Lakhpat prison. However, her mother said no diyat was paid for Shumaila.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/17/dawnnews-receives-a-copy-of-bloody-money-paper-signed-by-davis.html>)

CII to review country's international treaties

Daily Times, March 17, 2011.

The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) informed the Senate Standing Committee on Religious Affairs that it was planning to review Pakistan's international treaties signed during the period of 1947-2007. The CII is a constitutional body, which follows the principles and concepts of Islam as enunciated in the holy Quran and Sunnah while proposing amendments in existing laws of the land. "Pakistan's agreements with international community are like laws and the council is planning to review the treaties in line with the holy Quran and Sunnah,"

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\17\story_17-3-2011_pg1_7)

Cameron Munter summoned to FO over drone attack

Dawn, March 18, 2011.

Pakistan on Friday summoned the US ambassador and lodged a strong protest over a drone strike in a tribal region which killed at least 40 people, the foreign

ministry said. US Ambassador Cameron Munter was told "that such strikes were not only unacceptable but also constituted a flagrant violation of humanitarian norms and law," the ministry said in a statement. Thursday's attack was the most lethal drone strike to hit the lawless region of North Waziristan since August 2008 when the covert campaign escalated in the areas bordering Afghanistan, and the seventh such attack in nine days.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/18/cameron-munter-summoned-to-fo-over-drone-attack.html>)

Davis' release decided by court not govt: Gilani

Dawn, March 18, 2011.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday said Pakistan's leadership as well as the political opposition had agreed that the court would decide upon the Raymond Davis case, DawnNews reported. In an official statement issued from the Prime Minister House, Gilani said the government and the opposition had agreed to respect the public sentiment and decide accordingly on the Davis issue. Gilani emphasised that the government only implemented the court's decision to release Davis. "Blaming the release of Davis on one institution would be inappropriate," Gilani said, adding, however, that this was "purely the decision of a court which was followed".

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/18/davis%E2%80%99-release-decided-by-court-not-govt-gilani.html>)

Punjab Assembly passes resolution against drone strikes

Dawn, March 18, 2011.

The Punjab Assembly on Friday unanimously passed a resolution condemning US drone attacks in Pakistan's northwestern tribal areas, DawnNews reported. The resolution, tabled by Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz's MPA Begum Khwaja Naseem, stated that US drone attacks in the tribal areas were a breach of national sovereignty. The resolution condemned the attack in North Waziristan in which at least 40 civilians were killed and demanded the government to adopt a clear stance on drone strikes. The House, subsequently, adopted the resolution unanimously. The covert campaign last year doubled missile attacks in the tribal area, where more than 100 drone strikes killed over 670 people in 2010, compared with 45 strikes that killed 420 in 2009, according to an AFP tally.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/18/punjab-assembly-passes-resolution-against-us-drone-strikes.html>)

Six killed in Karachi violence

Dawn, March 19, 2011.

Six people were killed and four others, including a child, were injured in firing and a grenade attack in different areas of the city on Saturday. Unknown armed men gunned down one political worker and severely injured another in Taj Colony. Four people, including a child, were injured when miscreants hurled a

hand grenade at the office of PPP leader Habib Jan in the area of Nanakwara of Liyari. Jan strongly condemned the incident and demanded the arrest of the culprits.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/19/explosion-at-ppp-office-in-karachi.html>)

Pakistan one of most 'water stressed' countries in world

Daily Times, March 21, 2011.

The World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have termed Pakistan as one of the most "water stressed" countries in the world, which is likely to face an acute water shortage over the next five years due to lack of water availability for irrigation, industry and human consumption. Water supply in Pakistan fell from 5,000 cubic metres per capita to 1,000 cubic metres in 2010, and is likely to further reduce to 800 cubic metres per capita by 2020, WB's reports stated.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\21\story_21-3-2011_pg7_12)

PM meets coalition leaders, calls opposition over Zardari's address

Dawn, March 21, 2011.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani met with parliamentary leaders of coalition parties in Islamabad, DawnNews reported. The meeting discussed the upcoming joint session of the parliament and the country's prevalent political situation. During the meeting, Prime Minister Gilani said he was hopeful that the opposition would not boycott the March 22 address of President Asif Ali Zardari to a joint sitting of both houses of parliament. Prime Minister Gilani said he believed in democratic values and would not side with undemocratic forces.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/21/pm-meets-coalition-leaders-calls-opposition-over-zardari%E2%80%99s-address.html>)

Petraeus Urges Pakistan to Take Action in N.W

Daily Outlook Afghanistan, March 22, 2011.

US Army Commander in Afghanistan General David Petraeus said that Pakistani forces must take action. Commander of the NATO-led force in the Afghanistan said that Al-Qaeda and Haqani group operatives were present in North Waziristan (NW). Addressing a press conference in Washington, Petraeus said that al-Qaeda was facing enormous pressure in North Waziristan. He said that Pakistan lost thousands of its soldiers and thousands of civilians in a very impressive counter insurgency campaign to clear Swat Valley and the other areas in Khyber and South Waziristan. Responding to a question, the American commander said that Pakistan wants to have reassurance that the country to its west is not a proxy for India, but it will not be just peaceful and stable but also will be a friend of Pakistan.

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

NDMA chief resigns

Dawn, March 22, 2011.

Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority, Lt-Gen (retd) Nadeem Ahmad, has resigned because of differences with the government over the working and mandate of the organisation. According to sources, Lt-Gen (retd) Ahmad, who earlier worked as the deputy chairman of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, sent his resignation to the prime minister after having failed to persuade the government to put Erra under the control of the NDMA. The sources said the resignation had been received at the prime minister's secretariat and now it was up to Mr Gilani to accept or reject it.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/22/ndma-chief-resigns.html>)

PPP-MQM relations calm but tense

The News International, March 22, 2011.

Relations between the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement remain calm but tense despite the fact that both the parties have been holding hectic dialogues and telling the media that their issues stand resolved.

Rehman Malik parried a lot of questions and left the rostrum after addressing a press conference at the Governor House the other day.

Malik said that the president had directed that no party should issue statements against each other; however, that directive is being openly defied.

(Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=37377&Cat=4&dt=3/22/2011>)

Islamist party chief says people to bring Islamic revolution in Pakistan

The Nation, March 23, 2011.

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) chief Munawar Hassan on Wednesday [23 March] said that the people will bring an Islamic revolution in Pakistan. Speaking at a gathering organized on account of 'Pakistan Day,' Hassan said that JI had started a 'public contact' campaign in which 2.5 million people will take part. He said that [name of US national omitted] release was the connivance of Punjab government, in which the central role was played by Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah. Hassan claimed, President Zardari had 114bn dollars and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif had 104bn dollars worth assets outside the country while the people of Pakistan were being deprived of food.

(Source: The Nation website, Islamabad)

Braving protests, Zardari calls for new consensus

Dawn, March 23, 2011.

Braving what turned out to be only restrained protests by a divided opposition in parliament on Tuesday, President Asif Ali Zardari invited all political parties to a

national dialogue to achieve a five-point economic consensus to match one they had on constitutional reforms last year. And the president had a solemn advice to the protesters from three parties who walked out of a joint sitting of the National Assembly and the Senate in two groups after he began his address to open the fourth parliamentary year of the present PPP-led government: "Let us strive to keep our egos aside."

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/23/braving-protests-zardari-calls-for-new-consensus.html>)

PML-N, JUI-F and PML-Q forward bloc stage walkout

Daily Times, March 23, 2011.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Forward Bloc on Tuesday staged a walkout from the presidential address to the joint sitting of parliament. It was decided during a meeting of the PML-N held at the Parliament House before the joint session, that the PML-N would walkout during the presidential address whether or not the Leader of Opposition in National Assembly, Chaudhry Nisar, would be allowed to speak in the House before the presidential address, a parliamentarian of the PML-N told journalists.

(Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\03\23\story_23-3-2011_pg1_3)

Pakistan PM leaves for Uzbekistan on two-day visit

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 24, 2011.

Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on Thursday [24 March] left here for Uzbekistan on a two-day official visit to strengthen ties in trade and energy sectors. The prime minister was accompanied by Minister for Privatization Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar and Minister for Food and Agriculture Israrullah Zehri. Talking to reporters prior to his departure for the Uzbek capital Tashkent, the prime minister said the objective of his visit was to revive the centuries' old relationship between the two countries. He said during his visit, Pakistan and Uzbekistan will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the fields of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences and the renewal of cultural programme. He said the two governments would also ratify an Agreement on exchange of instrument on transport and transit of goods. Gilani said his talks with Uzbek leadership would also focus on Afghanistan situation and the role of Central Asian states in checking militancy and drug trafficking in the region.

(Source: Associated Press of Pakistan news! agency, Islamabad)

Pakistan Islamist party to establish mosques, seminaries throughout country

Jang, March 24, 2011.

The Jamaat-e-Islami [JI] has decided to establish religious seminaries and mosques throughout the country. In this regard, JI Chief Syed Munawar Hasan has

established mosques and seminaries wing in the JI central office. This was disclosed in a letter signed by Liaqat Baloch, secretary general of the JI, which he has sent to the office bearers at district and provincial level. Hafiz Sajjad Anwar, vice administrator of the JI, will supervise the new wing and Maulana Ghayasuddin will be in charge of this wing. Masjid-Maktab [mosque school] setup has also been included. According to the letter, the need for establishing model seminaries in all the districts was being felt at the central and provincial level meetings of the JI. Therefore, it should be initiated with setting up at least one seminary, the letter stated.

(Source: Jang, Rawalpindi, in Urdu)

Pakistan, Turkey presidents discuss urging UN to take notice of Koran burning

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 25, 2011.

President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday [25 March] telephoned Turkey's President Abdullah Gul and talked about the recent incident of the deliberate desecration of the Holy Quran by a lunatic in Florida. President Zardari stressed the need for collectively urging the United Nations to take note of it and evolve plans for promoting cultural and religious harmony in the world, said a President House statement. The two Presidents agreed that the deliberate desecration of the Holy Quran was the most despicable act and steps needed to be taken to prevent the recurrence of such irrational acts. The two leaders also discussed bilateral ties and the regional situation.

(Source: Associated Press of Pakistan news! agency, Islamabad)

Saudi Arabia's security chief calls on Pakistan president

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 26, 2011.

Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Secretary General National Security Council of Saudi Arabia, called on President Asif Ali Zardari here at the Aiwan-i-Sadr [president's house] on Friday [25 March]. Secretary General to the president M. Salman Faruqi and Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir were also present during the meeting. Recent incident of the deliberate desecration of the Holy Koran by a fanatic in Florida and Pak-Saudi bilateral relations dominated the discussion. While discussing Pak-Saudi relations, the president said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its cordial and friendly equation with the brotherly Muslim country Saudi Arabia and urged for enhanced political, economic, trade and commercial ties between the two countries besides further increasing defence and security cooperation.

(Source: Associated Press of Pakistan news! agency, Islamabad)

Pakistan foreign secretary says talks to lead to strategic dialogue with US

Dawn, March 26, 2011.

Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir is expected to arrive in Washington in a few days for talks aimed at ironing out the differences that have adversely affected US-

Pakistan ties, diplomatic sources told Dawn. The talks will precede the next round of the US-Pakistan strategic dialogue in Islamabad that will be attended by a high-level US delegation headed possibly by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. "Both sides felt the need to have preparatory talks before next month's dialogue," said a diplomatic source.

(Source: Dawn website, Karachi)

China request Nepal to block Tibetans' movement

My Republica, March 27, 2011.

Chinese officials have requested Nepal to ensure blockage in the movement of Tibetans through the border. Chinese officials put forward the request during a security meeting at Khasa, Tibet between the security officials of adjoining regions on Saturday. Stressing that the Tibetans are running anti-Chinese activities after entering Nepal, the Chinese officials requested Nepal to beef up security at border. They also indirectly requested Nepali officials to extradite arrested Tibetans to China.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=29663)

Pakistan: Sindh-based party lays down conditions for rejoining federal coalition

Dawn, March 27, 2011.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement [MQM] is not ready to join the federal cabinet without getting its conditions met in Sindh, according to sources in the party. The MQM, they said on Saturday [26 March], was anxiously waiting for a reshuffle in the provincial cabinet that had been discussed with the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] leadership and settlement of issues relating to the local government and law and order. The Pakistan People's Party, the sources said, had told the MQM that Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani had delayed the planned expansion of his cabinet in the hope that its Sindh-based coalition partner would rejoin it. The MQM, which previously had only two [federal] portfolios, now has been offered three ministries - that of housing and works, petroleum and natural resources, and ports and shipping. But it has not shown any desire to rejoin the federal cabinet and decided to wait for an appropriate time. According to the sources, the MQM particularly eyes the key [provincial] ministries of home and local bodies in Sindh. These portfolios are held by men closely associated with President Zardari.

(Source: Dawn website, Karachi)

Envoy says China-Pakistan cooperation to aid regional development

Associated Press of Pakistan, March 28, 2011.

Chinese ambassador in Pakistan, Liu Jian, while appreciating recent multi-sectoral agreements between Pakistan and China, said these would augur well for the development in this region. He was addressing an MoU [Memorandum of Understanding] signing ceremony of hybrid seeds at a local hotel on Monday [28

March]. The MoU was signed between Auriga group and Hubei seed company of China, while speaker, Punjab Assembly, Rana Muhammad Iqbal was also present on the occasion. The Chinese ambassador observed it was sign of a deep friendship that many agreements were reached by the two countries during the past few years. He said such cooperation in various sectors and walks of life would further strengthen the all-season Pakistan-China friendship. He called upon Pakistani agricultural scientist to undertake research and benefit from Chinese advancements in this field so that the country's food-related exports could be increased further. "In the past, we had to import wheat but now we are self sufficient in this regard," he elaborated.

(Source: Associated Press of Pakistan news agency, Islamabad)

Kashmir not on Gilani's visit agenda

Dawn, March 29, 2011.

The government tried on Monday to contain the diplomatic scoop of upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh on the eve of the World Cup semi-final on Wednesday. Briefing newsmen after a cabinet meeting, Information Minister Firdous Ashiq Awan said that primarily the prime minister was going to watch the Pakistan-India cricket match, and 'not to discuss the Kashmir issue', but she hastened to add that the two prime ministers could discuss anything on the occasion.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/29/kashmir-not-on-gilanis-visit-agenda.html>)

India, Pakistan repair relations

Xinhua, March 29, 2011.

India and Pakistan began two-day talks of their Interior Secretaries in New Delhi on Monday. The two countries agreed to resume formal peace talks, which are expected to start in July. The officials met to firm up the agenda for the upcoming dialogue. Issues like cross-border terrorism, drug smuggling, fake Indian currency notes and the issuing of visas are likely to be discussed during the two-day talks. India's Interior Secretary says there was positive development in the first day of talks.

(Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/video/2011-03/29/c_13803158.htm)

Pakistani inmate gives police the slip

The Himalayan Times, March 29, 2011.

Already red-faced in the wake of its failure to curb crimes, police department faced yet another humiliating blow after a prisoner escaped from a hospital, where he was undergoing treatment, on Sunday night.

Pakistan's Mohammad Jamil, an inmate in Capital's Central Jail on the charge of smuggling fake Indian currency notes, on Sunday night hoodwinked police personnel guarding him and ran away from Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre. A five-member team of police led by an ASI was entrusted with the task of

guarding the convict. Sunday's incident comes hot on the heels of a shooting in Teku on Friday, in which one person was killed, and another incident of shooting inside the Central Jail on March 10.

(Source: <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Pakistani+inmate+gives+police+the+slip&NewsID=281750>)

No real progress in dispute resolution

My Republica, March 29, 2011.

The subcommittee formed to settle the contentious issues in constitution writing has failed to make substantive progress in recent days even as its extended deadline is expiring Tuesday. The Constitutional Committee (CC) of the Constituent Assembly (CA) formed the subcommittee, which is headed by UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, on February 25 with a view to expedite dispute settlement. Former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal from CPN-UML and Nepali Congress parliamentary party leader Ram Chandra Paudel, among other lawmakers, are its members. While the body was originally given a 17-day deadline to accomplish the tasks its deadline was extended for 15 more days on March 15. At the time of its formation of the subcommittee, there were altogether 75 contentious issues in the preliminary drafts. So far the subcommittee has resolved around 40 disputes.

(Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=29712)

Gilani briefs Zardari on 'cricket diplomacy'

Dawn, March 31, 2011.

The President welcomed the meeting of the two leaders as a positive development for the region and hoped that it would provide further impetus to the efforts for meaningful dialogue between the two countries on all outstanding issues. The President also appreciated Indian prime minister's invitation to the Pakistani leadership to visit India. Regular interactions at all levels, he noted, would not only provide a solid platform to resolve our mutual issues but would also help to obviate and reduce misperceptions and mistrusts.

(Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/31/gilani-briefs-zardari-on-%E2%80%98cricket-diplomacy%E2%80%99.html>)

Samjhauta probe on track: Home Ministry

Indian Express, March 31, 2011.

A day after the Home Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan in New Delhi, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday said the National Investigation Agency's probe into the Samjhauta Express blasts had gathered momentum. Sixty-eight people were killed, 43 of them Pakistani nationals, in the blast that took place in February 2007. The NIA took over the probe from Haryana Police in 2010. During the talks, Pakistan raised the issue and wanted to know the progress in the investigation.

(Source: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Samjhauta-probe-on-track—Home-Ministry/769606/>)

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Defense Secretary rejects calls for reducing the Security Forces

Asian Tribune, March 15, 2011.

Sri Lanka's Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa said that a number of measures have been taken in international arena to prevent the LTTE raising its head again. He has disclosed that legal actions have already been taken against some pro-LTTE groups in foreign countries. Participating in a Private TV discussion programme the Defense Secretary pointed out that it is the responsibility of all Sri Lankans to leave no room for terrorism to re-emerge. He further said defence strategies in the country have not changed despite defeat of terrorism and the death of Prabhakaran.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/03/15/sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-defense-secretary-rejects-calls-reducing-security-forces>)

Japan likely to review Development Assistance

The Island, March 16, 2011.

Massive losses suffered by the economy, due to Friday's earthquake, tsunami and the ongoing nuclear crisis, will force the Japanese government to review its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). As one of the major recipients of ODA, Sri Lanka will be among the countries affected by the decision, official and diplomatic sources say. A senior spokesperson for the Economic Cooperation Section, Embassy of Japan yesterday told *The Island* the ODA wouldn't be affected at this moment.

(Source: http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=20845)

An unprecedented landslide victory for President Mahinda Rajapakse in yesterday's LG Elections

Asian Tribune, March 18, 2011.

The United Peoples Freedom Alliance led by President Mahinda Rajapaksa has secured a historic landslide victory in the Local Government elections held yesterday taking control of 205 local bodies of the 234 Local Government Institutions for which elections were held. The UPFA have uprooted the opposition parties from the strongholds they held for years. The Opposition United National Party has been wiped out in many areas and they have been pushed to the third place by the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi which has secured control of 12 Councils in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The United National Party which had control of 32 councils previously has been able to get control only of 9 councils.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/03/18/unprecedented-landslide-victory-president-mahinda-rajapakse-yesterday%E2%80%99s-lg-elections>)

UPFA made inroads into the Vanni - a traditionally Tamil region

Asian Tribune, March 21, 2011.

After the recently held elections for the local government bodies, it has become very clear that Sri Lanka's ruling party has made inroads into the traditional Tamil

areas into the North; especially in the Vanni region, which was up to 19 May 2009 – for quite a long period, for nearly three decades, under the control of the defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The failed policies of the LTTE, which believed in the armed conflict and separation, brought about misery, death and destruction. But after defeating the LTTE, the government is bent on bringing about reconciliation and national integration in the country.

(Source: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/03/20/upfa-made-inroads-vanni-traditionally-tamil-region>)

Sri Lanka's UNP to elect office bearers by consensus

Zee News, March 22, 2011.

The working committee of Sri Lanka's main opposition United National Party (UNP) has agreed to elect its all office bearers by consensus, party officials said on Monday.

"After long deliberations and expression of views by the working committee members it was decided to appoint all office bearers by consensus," said party general secretary Tissa Attanayake. Further deliberations on the decision would be carried out in continuation of the working committee sessions tomorrow, Attanayake added.

(Source: <http://www.zeenews.com/news694755.html>)

Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order

March 24, 2011.

External Affairs Minister Prof G.L. Peiris said yesterday in parliament that the air strikes on the Libyan people cannot be accepted as the strikes have increased together their suffering. He was responding to an adjournment motion moved by UPFA [United People's Freedom Alliance] National list MP [Member of Parliament] A.H.M. Azwer. Minister Peiris said ties between Libya and Sri Lanka were very strong. "We feel empathy for the people of Libya. The action today has been taken in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution.

(Source: Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order)

Sri Lanka minister says emergency law needed as Tamil Tiger remnants active

Daily Mirror, March 26, 2011.

While claiming that it intends to relax or totally remove the 'Emergency Regulations' (ER) at the appropriate time, the government said that it was needed at this time for the smooth enforcement of the law. The government intends to relax or totally remove the 'Emergency Regulations' (ER) at the appropriate time, when it considers the ER is not necessary to protect the law and order, cabinet spokesman Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said. "It is true that the country is enjoying the dividends of peace following the crushing of terrorism. But do not forget there are remnants of

the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] are still active and the issue of terrorism has not been fully addressed,' Minister Yapa stressed.

(Source: Daily Mirror website, Colombo)

BBC reporter denied permission to attend event in north Sri Lanka - website

Tamil Net, March 26, 2011.

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence has refused permission to BBC Colombo correspondent Charles Haviland from attending cultural festival in Jaffna, sources in Colombo said. The "Jaffna Music Festival" organized to celebrate the diverse traditional folk arts for three days from 25-27 March 2011, is being organized by the Norwegian embassy, USAID [US Agency for International Development] and implemented by Sevalanka Foundation, according to reports from Jaffna. The reason for the refusal was not communicated to the BBC correspondent, according to reports.

Lankan fishermen affected by further encroachment

Daily Mirror, March 31, 2011.

Alleging that the South Indian fishermen have begun encroaching Sri Lanka's North Western seas, the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement yesterday said both the Sri Lankan and Indian government should not hide the issue behind the Tamil Nadu state elections. National Fisheries Solidarity movement convener Herman Kumara said the Indian Fishermen had begun to encroach the seas off Kalpitiya and Battalangunduwa areas as well. The Lankan fishermen earlier revealed that the coming of Indian fishermen into Lankan waters had resulted in 50 per cent revenue and production losses.

(Source: <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/39844.html>)