

THE WEEK IN REVIEW  
OCTOBER 6-12, 9(6), 2008

CONTENTS

I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. SOUTH ASIA 2-5

SRI LANKA  
BANGLADESH  
BHUTAN  
MALDIVES

B. EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA 5-8

CHINA  
JAPAN  
MYANMAR

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR  
NORTHEAST  
MAOIST INSURGENCY

8-12

## 1. COUNTRY REVIEW

### A. SOUTH ASIA

#### SRI LANKA

- **Karunanidhi: Stop genocide of Sri Lankan Tamils; V. Muralitharan: War brought misery to Easterners**

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president, M. Karunanidhi on October 5 called upon people to send telegrams to Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh urging him to intervene immediately and stop the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka. In a statement, the DMK president urged the Indian government “to treat the appeal as a distress call and of national importance.”<sup>1</sup> He further stated that the time had come for every Indian to demand a ceasefire in the island nation to end the ethnic conflict and safeguard the lives of Tamils there. He wanted the Indian government to act immediately and stop the ongoing military attack on Tamils so that peace could return to the troubled regions.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, welcoming Karunanidhi’s proposal on sending telegrams to Dr. Singh, Ramadoss wanted the DMK president to make use of his good offices with the External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and if possible lead an all-party delegation to New Delhi. Separately, AIADMK General Secretary Jayalalithaa too criticized Indian government on Sri Lankan issue. She said the Indian government was not just “a passive spectator” in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue but an active collaborator supplying arms, radars and training to the Sri Lankan armed forces.<sup>3</sup>

*Post-Courier* (newspaper) reported that Hong Kong-based agents are charging US\$11,800 to smuggle Sri Lankan refugees to Papua New Guinea. The report quoting unnamed PNG intelligence service officers, says the human smuggling operators are charging \$31,600 for refugees who want to go on to Australia. These smuggling groups are reportedly using agents in PNG. “But it still looks like they came into PNG to have easy access somehow to Australia because they would not have had an easy way out if they had gone straight to Australia from wherever they came from” the PNG intelligence officers said.<sup>4</sup>

Elsewhere, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) Leader V. Muralitharan popularly known as Karuna Amman in his maiden speech in Parliament after taking oath as the Member of Parliament on October 7 stated that he warmly welcomes the responsibility entrusted upon him by President Mahinda Rajapaksa on behalf of the Tamil people. He said “this will be the beginning of the new era of the local political arena as

<sup>1</sup> “Stop genocide of Sri Lankan Tamils, says Karunanidhi”, *The Hindu*, October 06, 2008 at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/10/06/stories/2008100655410800.htm>

<sup>2</sup> “MK: send telegrams to PM on Lanka”, *The Indian Express*, October 06, 2008 at <http://demo.expressbuzz.com/edition/story.aspx?Title=MK:+send+telegrams+to+PM+on+Lanka&artid=6lnA0fpbv38=&SectionID=vBlkz7JCFvA=&MainSectionID=fyV9T2jIa4A=&SectionName=EL7znOtxBM3qzgMyXZKtxw==&SEO=>

<sup>3</sup> “Jayalalithaa slams PM on Lanka”, *The Hindu*, October 05, 2008 at <http://demo.expressbuzz.com/edition/story.aspx?Title=Jayalalithaa+slams+PM+on+Lanka&artid=QgxIOqlRIpc=&SectionID=vBlkz7JCFvA=&MainSectionID=fyV9T2jIa4A=&SectionName=EL7znOtxBM3qzgMyXZKtxw==&SEO=>

<sup>4</sup> “Sri Lankan refugees duped by HK traffickers”, *Daily News*, October 08, 2008 at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/10/08/news13.asp>

well as of the Tamil speaking people.” Karuna said Tamils never endorsed the war. “This is the time to forget the past and get together for the development of the country,” he said<sup>5</sup>.

## BANGLADESH

- **Chief Adviser: Emergency to stay until elections**

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has stated that the caretaker government wants to continue with the state of emergency until the general elections to ‘retain control’ over the old problems of money and muscle power during the polls. “One of the problems with the election process has been that money and muscle power were used in the past; in order to control that, I think emergency rules will help”, he said in an interview with the Time magazine in New York during his recent participation to the 63<sup>rd</sup> UNGA session.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury stated that the United Nations may send election observation mission to Bangladesh during the forthcoming parliamentary elections even if the polls take place under the state of emergency.<sup>7</sup> Replying to a question whether Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina would be allowed to stand for the election, he said “Well, that will depend on the Election Commission. The law under which elections will be held stipulates certain conditions for anyone to submit a nomination. Anyone who satisfies these conditions is eligible.”

- **BNP-led four-party alliance put forward a five-point demand**

On September 29, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led four-party alliance placed before the government and the Election Commission, a five-point demand that included withdrawal of state of emergency and scrapping of the Representation of the People Order (Amendment) 2008, as conditions for participating in the upcoming parliamentary election. The other demands are holding of upazila elections after a reasonable interval of the national polls, withdrawal of the Gatco, Niko and Barapukuria corruption cases and other false cases against alliance leaders, and release of all political leaders, activists and general people detained without specific charges and withdrawal of the cases against them.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the BNP has decided to sit for a dialogue with the government on October 15 where it is expected to raise issues like registration with the Election Commission, lifting the state of emergency and ensuring a level playing field for all political parties for participation in parliamentary polls.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL) has also strongly opposed the Election Commission’s authority to cancel candidatures in parliamentary polls on grounds of violation of electoral laws.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Uditha Kumarasinghe, Irangika Range and Sandasen Marasinghe, “War brought misery to Easterners - TMVP Leader”, *Daily News*, October 08, 2008 at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/10/08/pol02.asp>

<sup>6</sup> “Emergency to stay until elections: CA tells Time magazine; his remark kicks up a political uproar,” *The Daily Star*, October 5, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57285>

<sup>7</sup> “UN may send poll observers: Says Iftekhar,” *The Daily Star*, October 7, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57613>

<sup>8</sup> “4-party tags RPO scrapping with poll participation: To hold countrywide rally Oct 12”, *The Daily Star*, September 29, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57035>

<sup>9</sup> “BNP not against registration: Sits with govt October 15”, *The Daily Star*, October 10, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=58052>

<sup>10</sup> “AL picks form, says no to scrapping candidature”, *The Daily Star*, October 9, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57869>

In another important development, the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh will have to make fundamental changes in its constitution in order to get registered with the Election Commission so that it qualifies for participating in the forthcoming parliamentary polls.<sup>11</sup> The Jamaat-e-Islami on October 9, said that it will get registered as a political party, and if necessary, amend its constitution for that.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, the Jatiya Party has also decided to bring amendments to its constitution in order to register with the Election Commission.<sup>13</sup>

On the military front, the Bangladesh Navy ship Khalid Bin Walid left Chittagong Port on October 2 for Qatar to join an international sea exercise 'Exercise Ferocious Falcon' scheduled to be held on October 11. A total of 49 countries, including the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Poland and NATO, are participating in the 12-day exercise.<sup>14</sup>

## BHUTAN

- **Japan to reconstruct six bridges in Bhutan; Bhutan and Bangladesh set to sign a Free Trade Agreement**

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in cooperation with the Department of Roads (DoR), Bhutan will reconstruct six bridges along the Wangduephodrang-Sarpang highway. A contract will be signed between the Japanese contractors and the DoR after the detailed design of the Lawakha, Basochu, Nyarachu, Burichu, Chanchey and Loring bridges between Wangdue and Sarpang is signed between JICA and DoR. Among the six, Loring will be the longest at 120 meters in length.<sup>15</sup> The time line for the whole project is 2012.

Meanwhile, the impact of the Wall Street financial meltdown is being felt in Bhutan too. The Bhutanese Ngultrum has hit the 48.05-mark against the US dollar, one of the highest in recent times. This is contrary to the expectations of many who were expecting a slide down. The plunge in the ngultrum value, according to Royal Monetary Authority officials, was because of the “volatile Indian stock market”, a knock-on effect of the Wall Street impact.<sup>16</sup>

As Bhutan is all set to attract Foreign Direct Investment, laws are being revised and reforms initiated. A new report of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) states that licensing procedures for trade, industries and commercial overtures is adding a burden of

---

<sup>11</sup> “Jamaat's charter in clash with country's constitution,” *The Daily Star*, September 29, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57037>

<sup>12</sup> “Jamaat to go for EC registration: Announces the party constitution to be amended,” *The Daily Star*, October 10, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=58050>

<sup>13</sup> “JP to amend its charter to register with EC,” *The Daily Star*, October 10, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=58056>

<sup>14</sup> “Exercise Ferocious Falcon: Naval ship Khalid Bin Walid leaves for Qatar,” *The Daily Star*, October 5, 2008 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=57311>

<sup>15</sup> “Japan commits to six bridges by 2012”, *Kuenselonline*, 9 October, 2008, At: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11277>

<sup>16</sup> “Meltdown heats up dollar-ngultrum exchange rate”, *Kuenselonline*, 9 October, 2008, At: <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11280>

NU 98.025 million every year. Friendly investment procedures which are economically and less time consuming are being therefore proposed<sup>17</sup>.

At the bilateral front, Bhutan and Bangladesh would be signing a Free Trade Agreement in November 2008. During July 2007- March 2008, Bhutan exported goods worth \$10.80 million to Bangladesh, with imports at US 4.78 million.<sup>18</sup> Also, Bhutan and the Assam government have agreed to strengthen security along the border to contain infiltration and improve information sharing process. The decision was taken at the sixth border district coordination meeting between the Assam government and Bhutan.<sup>19</sup>

## MALDIVES

- **Presidential election in Maldives**

With the first-ever multi party presidential elections setting up the tempo in Maldives, the Election Commission has announced that around 85.45 per cent Maldivians turned out for elections on October 8.<sup>20</sup> As no candidate has received more than 50 per cent of votes, a second round of election would be held on October 29.<sup>21</sup> President Mohammad Abdul Gayoom and Mohammad Nasheed have emerged as the two lead candidates. While Gayoom received a total of 71,731 votes, Nasheed is placed second with 44,293 votes.

Meanwhile, Nasheed has declared that the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) has secured the support of other opposition candidates in the Presidential race. Dr Hasan Saeed, who is an independent candidate and Ibrahim Ismail of the Social Liberal Party (SLP) have offered unconditional backing to MDP<sup>22</sup>.

## B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

### CHINA

- **Chinese peacekeepers in Darfur honored by UNAMID; Zhang Yesui is new Ambassador to the UN**

*Xinhua* reports that the UN-AU peacekeeping mission (UNAMID) in Nyala has awarded medal to the Chinese peacekeeping engineering contingent in Darfur. Importantly, this is the first time UNAMID conferred ‘Medal of Honor’ since its inception on January 1, 2008. China had sent its first group of peacekeeping force to Darfur on November 24, 2007. The second group was sent in July 17, 2008. It is reported that the UN Under-

---

<sup>17</sup> “Nu 98 million goes meaningless”, *Bhutan News Service*, 9 October, 2008, At: <http://www.apfanews.com/news/?id=31313830>.

<sup>18</sup> “Bhutan-Bangladesh to sign trade treaty”, *Bhutan News Service*, 11 October, 2008, At: <http://www.apfanews.com/news/?id=31313837>

<sup>19</sup> “Border security to be intensified”, *The Bhutan Observer*, 24 September, 2008, At: <http://www.bhutanobserver.bt/2008/bhutan-news/10/working-towards-2013-elections.html>

<sup>20</sup> “85 Per Cent Turnout Announced As Counting Ends”, *MinivianNews*, 9 October, 2008, at: [http://www.minivannews.com/news\\_detail.php?id=5124](http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5124)

<sup>21</sup> “Runoff On 29 October”, *Minivian News*, 9 October, 2008, at [http://www.minivannews.com/news\\_detail.php?id=5128](http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5128)

<sup>22</sup> “Anni Says Whole Opposition Is Behind Him”, *Minivian News*, 10 October, 2008, [http://www.minivannews.com/news\\_detail.php?id=5132](http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5132)

Secretary-General Alain Le Roy has praised highly the contribution of the Chinese team.<sup>23</sup>

In an important diplomatic move, the Chinese President has appointed Zhang Yesui as the new Ambassador to the United Nations. Zhang Yesui will replace Wang Guangya. This is a decision taken by the President of China in line with the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislative body.<sup>24</sup>

- **China to launch FY-4 weather satellite around 2013**

*Xinhua* reports that China is in the process of launching the first satellite of the Fengyuan-4 (FY-4) series, the country's second-generation geostationary meteorological satellites around 2013. As per the China Meteorological Administration (CMA), the FY-4 project has entered the proposal stage. Many Chinese scientists and engineers believed that the FY-4 satellite could be "paralleled to world's most advanced geostationary meteorological satellites". It is also reported that the country is planning to launch another 22 meteorological satellites by 2020, including four more from the FY-2 series, 12 from the FY-3 series and six from FY-4 series.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, China and Germany held their second round of strategic dialogue last week. This dialogue was jointly hosted by the Chinese Foreign Minister Assistant Wu Hongbo and Reinhard Silberberg, the State Secretary of German Foreign Ministry. Both the sides discussed many bilateral issues and issues related to China-EU ties. Both the sides also expressed satisfaction over the dialogue and termed it as "very fruitful". This strategic dialogue idea was initiated by the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in May 2006. The first round of this dialogue was held in November 2006.<sup>26</sup>

Elsewhere, the Foreign Ministry of China has expressed strong condemnation over the US proposed arms sale to Taiwan and has stopped the military contacts with the US. In his statement, the Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang has said that "the U.S. side's act has seriously blocked bilateral exchanges and contacts in various fields, including high-level visits between the two armed forces. The U.S. side should take full responsibilities for the current situation of damaged military-to-military ties". In a significant decision earlier, the US Congress had decided to sell arms to Taiwan, including Patriot-III anti-missile system, E-2T airborne early warning aircraft upgrade system, Apache helicopters, Javelin missiles, Harpoon submarine-launched missiles, and some airplane accessory

---

<sup>23</sup> "Chinese peacekeepers in Darfur honored by UNAMID", *People's Daily* (online), October 13, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6513625.html>

<sup>24</sup> "Chinese President appoints new ambassador to United Nations", *People's Daily* (online), October 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6513299.html>

<sup>25</sup> "China to launch FY-4 weather satellite around 2013", *People's Daily* (online), October 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90881/6513397.html>

<sup>26</sup> "China, Germany hold strategic dialogue in Berlin", *People's Daily* (online), October 10, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6513224.html>

parts.<sup>27</sup> From the Taiwan's perspective, many feel that the Arms sale from the US reassures the strong bond between Taiwan and the US.<sup>28</sup>

## JAPAN

- **Japan's opposition leader pledges tax cuts as election looms**

Japan's opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa, who is calling for an immediate election, pledged to finance a tax cut by slashing the government's spending over four years. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) would cut 2.6 trillion yen (\$24.5 billion) in taxes next year and find 20.5 trillion yen over four years through cutting unnecessary spending and utilizing money already sitting in government accounts, Ozawa said in Parliament on October 1. He, however, didn't provide details.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the DPJ has asserted that it would not cooperate with efforts to swiftly pass a supplementary budget for fiscal 2008 without an assurance that the House of Representatives would be dissolved immediately afterward.<sup>30</sup>

In another important development new Prime Minister Taro Aso, who is known for his slips of the tongue, faced Upper House lawmakers and apologized for his past verbal gaffes.<sup>31</sup> He has given indications that he may move to enable the Self-Defense Forces to exercise the right to collective self-defense, lifting decades-old legal restrictions.<sup>32</sup> In addition, he asserted that boosting Japan's economic growth takes priority over dissolving parliament and holding a general election.<sup>33</sup>

On the military front Japan's head admiral, Keiji Akahoshi, has said that the navy will cut exercises by two-thirds in the current fiscal year due to soaring fuel costs. Admiral Keiji Akahoshi announced the cuts, a month after the defence ministry asked for its first budget increase in seven years to ease the financial headache from surging oil costs.<sup>34</sup>

## MYANMAR

- **UN outlines steps to improve Myanmar's human rights**

---

<sup>27</sup> "Chinese FM: U.S. to blame for damage of bilateral relations", *People's Daily* (online), October 7, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6511157.html>

<sup>28</sup> "Arms sales sign of renewed trust between Taiwan, U.S.: scholar", *The Central News Agency* (Taipei), October 10, 2008, at <http://www.cna.com.tw/cnaeng/RealTimeNews/NewsDetail.aspx?strNewsDate=20081012&strNewsID=200810120014&strType=PD>

<sup>29</sup> "Japan's Opposition Leader Pledges Tax Cuts as Election Looms," *Bloomberg*, October 1, 2008 at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=aZYbjs9Jy.sA&refer=japan>

<sup>30</sup> "DPJ demands dissolution pledge," *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 3, 2008 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20081003TDY01303.htm>

<sup>31</sup> "Aso sorry for past gaffes, pushes budget passage," *The Japan Times*, October 3, 2008 at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20081003a2.html>

<sup>32</sup> "Aso raises collective defense: But lifting decades-old legal restrictions is unlikely to top political agenda" *The Japan Times*, October 2, 2008 at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20081002f1.html>

<sup>33</sup> "Aso Says Japan Economy Takes Priority Over Elections," *Bloomberg*, October 2, 2008 at [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=a1zG9Gy\\_D79M&refer=japan](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=a1zG9Gy_D79M&refer=japan)

<sup>34</sup> "Navy exercises hit by Japanese cost cutting," *Radio Australia*, September 30, 2008 at <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200809/s2378525.htm?tab=latest>

Tomás Ojea Quintana, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, outlined “core human rights elements” that should be put in place before the 2010 general election, in a statement released on October 9. The elements include: 1) Amend domestic laws that limit freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly; 2) Release of political prisoners; 3) Repeal discriminatory laws; and 4) Stop the recruitment of child soldiers. “Respect for international human rights standards is indispensable” for the regime's proposed “roadmap to democracy” to gain international acceptance, Quintana said. The transition to a multi-party democratic and civil government, as planned under the new constitution, will require “an intensive process of incorporating democratic values,” Quintana said. He suggested a number of changes in the country’s judiciary, which currently is not independent.<sup>35</sup>

The Myanmar tycoon Tay Za, head of the Htoo Trading Company (HTC), reportedly accompanied the junta’s number two, Vice Snr-Gen Maung Aye, on his recent three-day visit to Bangladesh. Tay Za led a business team, which had talks with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) on improving trade between the two countries, included launching direct shipping lines between Bangladesh and Myanmar. The delegation also discussed with their Bangladesh hosts the purchase of 100,000 tons of rice from Myanmar, besides energy cooperation, the construction of a trans-border road and the delimitation of maritime boundaries. The delegation agreed to supply natural gas to Bangladesh to help it produce fertilizer for use in both countries.<sup>36</sup>

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

### JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh: Too early to consider Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act withdrawal, PM commissions the 450 MW Baglihar Hydro Electric Project; PM flags off first train in Kashmir valley**

In a fresh attempt to reach out to separatists in J&K, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh offered to hold talks with all sections of people including those who have stayed out of the political process. “The Government will welcome dialogue with all sections of people. This also includes who have so far opted to stay out of the political process,” said Dr. Singh in Srinagar on October 10. Singh’s remarks assume significance as the dialogue channel between the Centre and separatists has run into rough weather for last four years. Asked about the demand of separatists for tripartite dialogue involving Kashmiris in the Indo-Pak peace process, Dr. Singh said “we are not opposed to a dialogue with any section in Kashmir’s public opinion ... If any separatist group wants to meet with the government, they are welcome ... Before I jump to the issue of tripartite negotiations, let us explore all bilateral options”. Singh further added that it was too early for withdrawal of Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act. “It is too early, frankly, to

<sup>35</sup> “UN Outlines Steps to Improve Burma’s Human Rights”, *Irrawaddy*, October 11, 2008, at [http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=14416](http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14416)

<sup>36</sup> “Tay Za Joined Maung Aye on Visit to Bangladesh”, *Irrawaddy*, October 11, 2008, at [http://irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art\\_id=14427](http://irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art_id=14427)

consider this. If the situation begins to normalise, we have to review it. The situation today is not that sort. I can't assure you," he said.<sup>37</sup>

Also on October 10, Dr Singh commissioned the 450 MW Baglihar Hydro Electric Project (BHEP). The Rs 5,500 crore project built over River Chenab, which is expected to help the state generate a revenue of Rs 900 crore, was dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister. Addressing a public meeting on the occasion, Dr Singh noted that in the implementation of project, special care has been taken to ensure that "genuine concerns" of Pakistan were taken care of so that it has no complaints in this regard. Pakistan had approached the World Bank in 2005 alleging that the power project was being built in violation of the Indus Water Treaty signed by the two countries in 1960 and apprehended it would divert water from its territory. He said that work on the second phase of the power plant with a capacity of 450 MW would be started very soon.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kashmir's first train service was inaugurated by Dr Singh on October 11, realizing a long-cherished dream of the people of the state. Dr Singh flagged off the first train from Srinagar Railway Station at Nowgam. In the first phase, the train will run from Rajwansher to Anantnag, covering a distance of 66 kilometers. However, connecting the Kashmir valley to the rest of the country through train still remained a distant dream though work on the Udhampur-Qazigund project was going on.<sup>39</sup>

- **People not interested in power, train; only self-determination: Geelani Musavirr Wani**

Chairman of Hurriyat Conference (G), Syed Ali Shah Geelani has stated that the people of Kashmir are least interested in the inauguration of power project or railway services. They are thirsty for self-determination only, he emphasised. While addressing media persons in Srinagar on October 10, Geelani said, "The visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is of no use or importance for the people of the state. Government of India can not help us by any economic package or by inaugurating power project or railway services but by providing us the right to self determination. The only solution for the betterment of this state is self determination".

- **Zardari calls J&K militants terrorists**

Declaring that India is not a threat to his country, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has described the militants operating in J&K as terrorists, the first such admission by any top Pakistani leader. "India has never been a threat to Pakistan. I, for one, and our democratic government is not scared of Indian influence abroad," Mr. Zardari told Wall Street Journal in an interview. He spoke of the militant groups operating in Kashmir as terrorists, the paper said, noting that former President Pervez Musharraf would more likely have called them freedom fighters. The latest positive signals from Mr. Zardari

---

<sup>37</sup> "Too early to consider Special Powers Act withdrawal: PM", *Daily Excelsior*, October 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct11/news.htm#1>

<sup>38</sup> "PM commissions Baglihar, says it will benefit State immensely", *Daily Excelsior*, October 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct11/news.htm#1>

<sup>39</sup> "PM flags off first train in Kashmir valley", *Daily Excelsior*, October 12, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct12/news.htm#1>

come days after his maiden meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting.<sup>40</sup> Rejecting the statement of Zardari, separatist leaders in the Kashmir valley said "he is ignorant about the sub-continent's history." Dismissing Zardari's statement, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti said, "He is unaware about the ground situation in Kashmir." Chairman of the breakaway Hurriyat Conference (HC) Syed Ali Shah Geelani, reacted sharply to Zardari's statement and stated "Kashmiris are not terrorists. They are freedom fighters". He ridiculed his statement that India was never a threat to Pakistan. Meanwhile, in Islamabad, the founder of one of Pakistan's most feared armed Islamist groups accused Zardari of being too dovish towards India, and criticised him for referring to militants in Kashmir as terrorists. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, founder of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) described Zardari's comments as "a clear violation and digression from the consistent policy of Pakistan".<sup>41</sup>

Even as the two national political parties, Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party which have a sizable base in Jammu, expressed their preparedness for contesting the Assembly elections in November-December, Kashmir-based National Conference as well as PDP on October 8 stressed on initiating certain confidence building measures before holding of the elections.<sup>42</sup>

Elsewhere, the police on October 7 claimed to have killed two militants who are the residents of Kerala in two different encounters in Kupwara district. They were trying to exfiltrate, police added. Police did not rule out the possibility of the slain being cadres of Indian Mujahideen.<sup>43</sup> While, in a major setback to Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), security forces on October 9 shot dead its self-styled militant commander along with his close associate during a five-hour gunbattle in Baramulla district.<sup>44</sup>

## NORTH EAST STATES

- **NDBF denies role in Bodoland clashes; CM smells NDFB's hand**

At least fifty-three people have died and about 100,000 people have taken shelter in relief camps after four days of violence in Assam's Bodo dominated areas. The group clashes began in Udalguri and Darrang on October 3. The state government put the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), which is currently under a ceasefire agreement, under the scanner for its alleged role in the ethnic riots. Meanwhile, on October 5, the Bodoland Territorial Council CEM Hagrama Mohilary said the NDFB was behind the

<sup>40</sup> "Zardari calls J&K militants terrorists", *Hindu*, October 6, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/10/06/stories/2008100656940100.htm>

<sup>41</sup> "Kashmir separatists, Lashkarfounder flay Zardari's remarks", *Daily Excelsior*, October 7, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct07/news.htm#3>

<sup>42</sup> "NC, PDP stress on pre-poll CBMs in Valley", *Daily Excelsior*, October 9, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct09/news.htm#1>

<sup>43</sup> "2 'militants' from Kerala killed in Valley", *Kashmir Times*, October 9, 2008, at <http://kashmirtimes.com/news7.htm>

<sup>44</sup> "Jaish commander Pasha shot dead", *Daily Excelsior*, October 10, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08oct10/news.htm#4>

riots. On the other hand, NDFB general secretary Gobinda Basumatary has denied its involvement in the ethnic clashes.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on October 6 termed the acts of violence in Udalguri and Darrang as organised attacks on the indigenous people of Assam by the forces of Bangladeshi migrants backed by fundamentalists and anti-India groups. Addressing a joint news conference, the leaders of the two students' unions said the state machinery had completely failed to stop attacks on the indigenous people. ABSU president Rwngrwa Narzary alleged that fundamentalist elements from Morigaon and Nagaon had been infiltrating into the two districts to help the Bangladeshis carry out attacks on the indigenous people. Commenting on the government's claim that the NDFB was behind these attacks, Narzary said it was a ploy of the government to hide the reality and "give protection to the Bangladeshis".<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, forty-six militants from various outfits, 26 of them from ULFA, surrendered before the general-officer-commanding of the 2 Mountain Division, Maj. Gen. Jatinder Singh, and other officials during a ceremony at the division's Dinjan headquarters at Dibrugarh on October 6. The militants deposited 31 pistols and revolvers, 12 grenades, one shotgun and some ammunition.<sup>47</sup>

#### MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Existence of Salwa Judum necessary, rules NHRC**

The Supreme Court-appointed National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) investigation into Salwa Judum (anti-Maoist civilian vigilante programme) in Chhattisgarh has justified the movement as a "spontaneous revolt of the tribals against years of atrocities and harassment suffered by them at the hands of Naxalites (left-wing extremists)". The NHRC report, submitted to the apex court also dismisses most of the allegations of human rights abuses made by the petitioners in the apex court, including widely reported use of minors by Salwa Judum. The report blames the Naxalites for human rights abuses and sees action by Salwa Judum activists from the prism of necessary retaliation<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, the Chhattisgarh government on October 11 suspended 13 policemen, including six inspectors and seven sub-inspectors, for refusing to accept transfers to the left-wing insurgency affected Bastar region. R K Vij, inspector-general (administration), said, "We had no option left but to crack the whip on 13 policemen who defied the

<sup>45</sup> "CM smells NDFB's hand", *Sentinel*, October 6, 2008, at [http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel\\_en/main%20news.htm](http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm)

<sup>46</sup> "AASU, Absu slam Dispur", *Telegraph*, October 7, 2008, at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1081007/jsp/frontpage/story\\_9937251.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1081007/jsp/frontpage/story_9937251.jsp)

<sup>47</sup> "46 militants surrender", *Telegraph*, October 7, 2008, at [http://telegraphindia.com/1081007/jsp/northeast/story\\_9934896.jsp](http://telegraphindia.com/1081007/jsp/northeast/story_9934896.jsp)

<sup>48</sup> "Existence of Salwa Judum necessary, rules National Human Rights Commission", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, October 7, 2008, at [http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed\\_news.asp?date1=10/7/2008#16](http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=10/7/2008#16)

government transfer order and refused to join duty in Bastar region, despite repeated reminders." The officers were transferred in July-August to the interior areas of Bastar.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> "Chhattisgarh government suspends 13 police officials for refusing to accept transfers to Maoist affected areas", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, October 12, 2008, at [http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed\\_news.asp?date1=10/12/2008#12](http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=10/12/2008#12)