

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEW

### SRI LANKA

- **Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa and External Affairs Minister Peiris visited India; Bilateral discussion held on passenger transportation by sea between India and Sri Lanka; Sri Lankan Minister of Economic Development visited South Korea; Eighth round of talks of US-Sri Lanka Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) held; Sri Lanka is placed at 16<sup>th</sup> position in the global gender equality ranking this year**

President Mahinda Rajapaksa and External Affairs Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris visited India for the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. During the visit, they held bilateral discussions with the Indian Prime Minister and several other senior Indian Government personalities. Minister Peiris met with his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna, Minister of Home Affairs Mr. P. Chidambaram, Minister of Human Resource Development Mr. Kapil Sibal and Minister of Commerce & Industry Mr. Anand Sharma.<sup>1</sup> During his meeting with HRD Minister Kapil Sibal, he sought help of the Indian government in implementing the policy of trilingualism comprising three languages -- Tamil, Sinhalese and English.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka sources, a delegation led by Indian Ministry of Shipping Secretary K. Mohandas held talks with a Sri Lankan delegation led by Secretary to the Ministry of Ports and Aviation K.V.P. Ranjith de Silva on October 14 and 15 on the proposed ferry service as well as on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on passenger transportation by sea between the two countries.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Lanka's Minister of Economic Development Basil Rajapaksa was on a four-day official visit to the South Korea. During his visit Mr Rajapaksa met the Korean Prime Minister Hon. Kim Hwang Sik, the Korean Acting Minister of Knowledge Economy, Korean Minister of Culture, Sports & Tourism and held discussions on strengthening bilateral cooperation between the two countries. He

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<sup>1</sup> "External Affairs Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris meets with several senior Indian Government personalities during his visit to New Delhi", October 16, 2010 at

[http://www.slmfa.gov.lk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2539&Itemid=75](http://www.slmfa.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2539&Itemid=75)

<sup>2</sup> "Sri Lanka wants India help to go trilingual", *Times of India*, October 16, 2010 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Sri-Lanka-wants-India-help-to-go-trilingual-/articleshow/6755356.cms>

<sup>3</sup> "Indo - Lanka ferry service soon", *Daily Mirror*, October 16, 2010 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/print/index.php/news/news/24455.html>

also met with officials of several key Korean blue-chip companies in the fields of constructions, energy, engineering, machinery etc in order to explore how best these companies could invest in the development efforts of Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> The eighth round of talks of the US-Sri Lanka Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Joint Council was held in Colombo on October 14.<sup>5</sup>

In other developments, according to the World Economic Forum study report, Sri Lanka ranks 16<sup>th</sup> among 134 countries in the world in the Global Gender Equality List this year. Sri Lanka was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in 2008, 15<sup>th</sup> in 2007 and 13<sup>th</sup> in 2006.<sup>6</sup>

## MALDIVES

- **Vice President Waheed holds meeting with the EU delegation; President Nasheed holds meetings with Commonwealth Secretary General, Chairperson of British- Maldives All Party Parliamentary Group, Delegation of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's UK Branch; Maldives placed at 99<sup>th</sup> position in the global gender equality ranking; Non-resident Ambassadors for Germany, Turkey, France and Finland appointed**

Maldives Vice President Dr Mohamed Waheed met with the European Union delegation, headed by the Head of Operations of EU Delegation to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Mr Willy Vandenberghe on October 11 and held in-depth discussions on two main areas of EU assistance to the Maldives i.e. the government's anti-drug mandate and change climate adaptation.<sup>7</sup>

However, Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed held meeting with Commonwealth Secretary General at his office. Vice President Dr Mohamed Waheed, Special Envoy of the President Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, Advisor on Political Affairs Hussain Afeef, Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed Shaheed, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom Dr Farahanaz Faizal and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Haula Ahmed Did also attended the meeting.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "South Korea to invest in Sri Lanka", *Daily Mirror*, October 16, 2010 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/print/index.php/news/news/24443.html>

<sup>5</sup> "US, SL agree on working towards comprehensive plan of action", *Daily Mirror*, October 16, 2010 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/print/index.php/business/127-local/24387.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Sri Lanka ranks sixteenth in gender equality", *Daily Mirror*, October 13, 2010 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/print/index.php/news/news/24102.html>

<sup>7</sup> "Vice President meets the EU Delegation", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, October 11, 2010 at <http://www.presidentymaldives.gov.mv/4/?ref=1,5,5450>

<sup>8</sup> "Commonwealth Secretary General Pays a Courtesy Call on the President", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.presidentymaldives.gov.mv/4/?ref=1,5,5514>

President Mohamed Nasheed held meeting with the Chairperson of British-Maldives All Party Parliamentary Group, Mr David Amess on October 17 and discussed the bilateral relations and the democratic process in the Maldives.<sup>9</sup> On the same day he also met with a delegation of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's UK Branch led by Labour MP Rt Hon. Paul Murphy. This delegation included MPs from the Conservative Party, Labour Party and the Liberal Democratic Party.<sup>10</sup>

President Mohamed Nasheed has appointed Iruthisham Adam as Non-Resident Ambassador for Germany and Turkey and Dr Farhanaz Faizal as the Non-Resident Ambassador for France and Finland.<sup>11</sup> In other developments, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) report the Maldives ranks 99<sup>th</sup> among 134 countries this year in the Global Gender Equality List.<sup>12</sup>

## B. EAST ASIA

### JAPAN

- **Japan to consider relaxing its long-standing ban on weapons exports; Japanese oil firm Inpex withdraws from Iran Azadegan oil field project; United States welcomes the decision; Kan and Wen Jiabo to meet on the sidelines of ASEAN summit**

Indicating at a policy change, Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara has said in an interview that Japan will consider relaxing its long-standing ban on weapons exports as the nation explores ways to bolster its military capabilities. This move has come after concerns showed by some Japanese leaders who viewed that Japan is falling behind in security and weapons technology, even amid potential threats from China and North Korea.<sup>13</sup>

The United States has welcomed the decision by Japanese oil firm Inpex Corp. to withdraw from Iran's Azadegan oil field project by stating that it showed the

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<sup>9</sup> "President Meets With Chairperson of British-Maldives All Party Parliamentary Group", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/4/?ref=1,5,5519>

<sup>10</sup> "President Meets with a CPA UK Branch Delegation", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/4/?ref=1,5,5520>

<sup>11</sup> "President Appoints Non-Resident Ambassadors", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, October 12, 2010 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/4/?ref=1,5,5463>

<sup>12</sup> "Women earn half as much as men in the Maldives, finds WEF report", *Minivan News*, October 14, 2010 at <http://minivannews.com/politics/women-earn-half-as-much-as-men-in-the-maldives-finds-wef-report-12339>

<sup>13</sup> "Japan considers lifting ban on arms exports" *The Washington Post*, October 15, 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/14/AR2010101406537.html>

risks of doing business with Tehran. "The United States welcomes the decision by the Japanese oil company Inpex to withdraw from its investments in Iran," US Department of State spokesperson Philip Crowley said.<sup>14</sup>

On the bi-lateral front, government sources noted that Japanese Prime Minister Kan and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will meet on the sidelines of this month's summit meetings of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan, China and South Korea. Reports noted that both sides have basically agreed that the talks will go ahead on the fringes of the ASEAN, ASEAN plus Three and other summit meetings that will take place during October 28-30 in Hanoi.<sup>15</sup>

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **Mekong River Commission (MRC) Report: Defer dams on Mekong; UN Chief Ban Ki-moon accuses the Burmese government of being "slow and incomplete" in meeting political commitments; North-Eastern Thailand badly affected by floods; Myanmar plans to construct railroad to link deep-sea port with China; Pakistani nationals arrested in Thailand on the charges of collecting fund for terrorist organizations**

A report released by the Mekong River Commission (MRC) has recommended that no dam be built on the main stream of the lower Mekong River in South-East Asia for 10 years. The commission links Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. It also included China, which has built or is building eight dams on the upper Mekong, and Myanmar as "dialogue partners". The 200-page report has been released just weeks after Laos formally notified its Mekong neighbours that it wants to go ahead with a major dam at Xayaboury near the Thailand border.<sup>16</sup>

Expressing grave concern at the Burmese junta's refusal to free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi before the November 7 elections, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has accused the Burmese government of being "slow and incomplete" in meeting political commitments and said its refusal to hold talks with the international community was "deeply frustrating". In a report on human rights in Burma, Mr Ban made repeated calls for the military government

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<sup>14</sup> "US welcomes pullout from Iran by Japan's Inpex" *Associate Foreign Press*, October 16, 2010 at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g0GhujTE4U8B0MoMvBWgJZJ7pUTA?docId=CN.G.d4436e9f04d08331279fb14066d6d028.281>

<sup>15</sup> "Kan, Wen talks set for Hanoi meet" *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 15, 2010 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T101014004196.htm>

<sup>16</sup> "Defer dams on the Mekong: report", *ABC News*, October 19, 2010 at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/19/3042427.htm?section=justin>

to free Ms Suu Kyi if it wanted the November 7 election to have any international credibility.<sup>17</sup>

Thailand's North-Eastern province of Nakhon Ratchasima was declared a disaster zone over the weekend after floods inundated hundreds of houses and cut off the highway leading to Bangkok. Reports noted that two days of heavy rains forced thousands to evacuate their at least 20 villages flooded by water 1 meter deep.<sup>18</sup>

Myanmar has planned to construct a railroad that will link a deep-sea port, Kyaukphyu, in western Rakhine state with Kunming, southwest of China. The Kyaukphyu-Kunming railroad, which is part of the Kyaukphyu- Ruili platform project and national railroad network, has been targeted to be finished in 2015.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, fifteen Pakistani nationals suspected of collecting funds for terrorist organizations have been arrested in Thailand, police sources noted on 13 October. According to Colonel Piyawat Chalerm Sri of the Thai police, police were tipped off to the activity by a bank in the Southern Yala province after the suspects tried to wire funds to a person in Pakistan whose name was on a list of people with "terrorist connections".<sup>20</sup>

#### D. USA

- **President Barack Obama hits the campaign trail for mid term elections; Reports: The Republican Party's morale remains high despite Obama's campaign**

With two weeks left for the mid term elections in the United States, President Barack Obama has hit the campaign trail to consolidate the position of the Democratic Party. Obama visited Columbus, Ohio to build support for the current governor of Ohio, Gov. Ted Strickland. Reports noted that these visits by President Obama are part of an intensive two weeks of campaign travel leading up to the Nov. 2 elections, which began with trips to Delaware on Friday and

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<sup>17</sup> "UN chief says Burma election lacks credibility", *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.smh.com.au/world/un-chief-says-burma-election-lacks-credibility-20101016-16oac.html>

<sup>18</sup> "North-eastern Thailand hard hit by floods", *The Hindu*, October 17, 2010, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article834366.ece>

<sup>19</sup> "Myanmar to construct railroad to link deep-sea port with China", *People's Daily Online*, October 17, 2010 at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7168288.html>

<sup>20</sup> Pakistanis held for collecting terror funds in Thailand, *Hindustan Times*, October 14, 2010, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Pakistanis-held-for-collecting-terror-funds-in-Thailand/Article1-612755.aspx>

Massachusetts on Saturday.<sup>21</sup> However, reported noted that despite the President Obama's campaign for the mid term elections, the Republican Party's morale remains rather high. Although, despite the high morale, Republicans continue to be uncertain about the prospects of capturing the Senate as many of the races for the Governor's position are extremely close.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "With Pressure on Democrats, Obamas Hit the Campaign Trail." *The New York Times*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/us/politics/18campaign.html?hp>

<sup>22</sup> "With Pressure on Democrats, Obamas Hit the Campaign Trail." *The New York Times*, October 17, 2010 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/us/politics/18campaign.html?hp>