

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

- **PM Sheikh Hasina visits Switzerland; Japanese government to provide \$600 million loan to Bangladesh; US asks Bangladesh to cut ties with Libya; Indian Chamber of Commerce organises trade fair 'India Investrade 2011' in Dhaka**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was on a four-day visit to Switzerland to attend two UN conferences i.e. the 16th World Meteorological Congress (WMC) and the 64th World Health Assembly.¹

Reportedly, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said on May 16 that the Japanese government has agreed to give Bangladesh \$600 million loans for the Padma bridge project, a safe drinking water supply project in Khulna, and for the development of the SME (small and medium enterprise) sector. Of the total amount, \$400 million will be given for Padma Bridge, \$160 million for the water supply programme and the rest for the SME sector.²

According to reports, the United States, in a letter, has recently asked Bangladesh to cut its relations with Gaddafi regime for violation of human rights and other international rules, said foreign ministry officials on condition of anonymity. However Bangladesh Government does not consider the letter as a pressure and has not changed its policy on relations with Libya.³

In other developments, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan inaugurated a three-day trade fair 'India Investrade 2011' in Dhaka on May 21, 2011. The Indian Chamber of Commerce organised the event with support from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka. During the inauguration Minister Khan urged Bangladesh entrepreneurs to form partnership with Indian business houses to explore potential areas for investment.⁴

Sri Lanka

- **Minister of External Affairs Peiris visits India; Sri Lanka congratulates Jayalalitha on her becoming Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu; Sri Lankan fishermen caught by Indian Coast**

¹ "Hasina in Geneva", *The Daily Star*, May 16, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=185881>

² "Japan to give \$600m", *The Daily Star*, May 17, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186074>

³ Karim, Rezaul, "No plan to cut ties with Libya", *The Daily Star*, May 17, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186076>

Guard; Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning visits Vietnam; Sri Lankan Minister of Industries and Commerce visits Iran and Saudi Arabia

Sri Lanka's Minister of External Affairs, Prof. G L Peiris visited India from May 15-17. During his visit, Peiris called on Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh. He also met with India's Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, India's External Affairs Minister S M Krishna, India's National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon and India's Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao.⁵ Later, Foreign Minister Prof G L Peiris sent a congratulatory letter to AIADMK chief J Jayalalithaa on her becoming the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister.⁶

Reports noted that a group of twenty Lankan fishermen with four trawlers in Indian custody was handed over to the Fisheries Ministry of Sri Lankan Government on May 16 in Thalaimannar by the Indian Coast Guard. The fishermen were arrested by the Indian authorities last month on April 3 and April 25 respectively.⁷ Again on May 19 Indian Coast Guard ship Sarang had apprehended two Sri Lankan boats with 10 fishermen on the charges of fishing in Indian waters illegally.⁸

In another development, Sri Lankan Minister of Industries and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen visited Iran and met Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, the Commerce Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Mehdi Ghazanfari and held discussions on commerce and trade between the two countries. Minister Bathiudeen said he expects more Iranian companies to take part in Sri Lanka's development projects in future.⁹ Minister Rishad Bathiudeen also visited Riyadh and Jeddah and urged Saudi businessmen to invest in upcoming projects in Sri Lanka. He also expressed his government's interest in exchanging experience with the Saudi Kingdom in desalination and water management programs.¹⁰

In other developments, Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning Gitanjana Gunawardena visited Vietnam.¹¹

⁴ "Minister urges businessmen to partner with Indian firms", *The Daily Star*, May 22, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=186686>

⁵ "External Affairs Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris called on the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, on 17 May 2011", <http://www.mea.gov.lk/>.

⁶ "Lanka congratulates Jayalalithaa", *The Daily Mirror*, May 19, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/front-page-news/44406.html>.

⁷ Dias, Supun, "20 Lankan fishermen to be released", *The Daily Mirror*, May 16, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/44103.html>.

⁸ "10 fishermen arrested by Indian Coast Guard", *The Daily Mirror*, May 21, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/44592.html>.

⁹ "Sri Lanka, Iran to enhance trade ties", *The Daily Mirror*, May 18, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/44282.html>.

¹⁰ "Saudi businessmen encouraged to invest in Sri Lanka" *Colombo Page*, May 18, 2011 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_11/May18_1305701619CH.php

¹¹ "Lanka-Vietnam strengthen ties", *The Daily Mirror*, May 21, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/44594.html>.

Maldives

- **The Maldives' Foreign Minister Ahmed Naseem visits Israel**

The Maldives' Foreign Minister Ahmed Naseem visited Israel from May 16-20, 2011. He is the first foreign minister of Maldives to visit Israel.¹² Speaking during his call on Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Minister Naseem welcomed the joint efforts by Hamas and Fathaha in working towards the establishment of a sovereign state of Palestine, and noted that the Maldives would work alongside Palestine and would actively lobby for a UNGA Resolution in the upcoming September session. During the meeting Minister Naseem also delivered a letter from President Mohamed Nasheed to Palestinian President Abbas. During his visit, Minister Naseem also signed an MoU on "Protocol on Political Consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine".¹³

B. East Asia

Japan

- **Japan, China and South Korea pledges to cooperate in preventing nuclear disaster; Tokyo and Washington decides against setting any deadline for implementing Futenma relocation plan**

In a trilateral meeting held recently in Tokyo on May 22, Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak pledged to strengthen the ties among the three countries in preventing nuclear disaster and ensuring safety of nuclear power generation in the future. In the joint declaration, Japan declared that it would share lessons learnt from the Fukushima nuclear crisis with the two neighbouring states as well as the international community. The document further stated that the three countries would construct a framework for early warning in times of emergencies. In the meantime, during a bilateral talk between Japan and China, Wen Jiabao informed that Beijing would partially relax the restrictions on food imports from Japan imposed after the Fukushima crisis and remove the food products of Yamanashi and Yamagata from those of the list of the twelve prefectures currently under the import ban. With a view to revitalizing tourism in Japan which was adversely affected after the Fukushima crisis, the Chinese Premier has also promised to dispatch inspection teams of about 100 people, including tourism administrators as well as members of companies, during May 30-June 4.¹⁴

¹² "Ahmed Naseem first Maldivian Foreign Minister to visit Israel", *Minivan News*, May 18, 2011 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>

¹³ "Maldives to support the establishment of a sovereign Palestine state, says Foreign Minister", *The Haama Daily*, May 19, 2011 at <http://www.haamadaily.com/englishdetails.php?news=22702>.

¹⁴ "Japan, China, South Korea agree to disaster pact", *Asahi Shimbun*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201105220118.html>

In another development, during the process of compiling a new policy guideline for the realignment of US forces in Japan recently, both Japan and the US decided not to set a specific deadline for the implementation of the 2006 roadmap. It is worth noting that under the 2006 roadmap, the relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa was to be completed by 2014. While pointing out that it would be difficult to carry out the relocation plan set by the 2006 roadmap, the new guideline, instead, would stipulate that the relocation should be in line with a previous bilateral agreement concluded in May 2010.¹⁵

North Korea

● North Korean leader Kim Jong-il visits China

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il reportedly paid a visit to the northeastern city of Harbin in China on May 20. After his visit to China in May and August, 2010, this was Kim's third visit in the last one year. Later this month, both Beijing and Seoul are expected to sign a joint development project on an island in the Yalu River.¹⁶

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

● President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov pays state visit to India; Turkmenistan President Berdymuk-hammedov in Romania; Kazakh agrees to send peacekeepers to Afghanistan; Kazakh state-owned oil and gas firm KazMunaiGas to join Karachaganak; South Korea to deepen investments within Central Asia; United States appoints its ambassador to Turkmenistan after five years

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov paid a state visit to India on May 17-18, to give new impetus to Uzbek-Indian interaction through materializing untapped opportunities, through enlarging the bilateral cooperation in political, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian spheres. The two countries inked as many as 34 pacts in a range of areas that included hydrocarbons, IT and pharmaceuticals. Karimov met with India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in a contracted format to deliberate on Uzbek-Indian cooperation, including resourceful interaction within international institutions like the United Nations and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Futenma deadline postponed indefinitely", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 21, 2011, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110520005218.htm>

¹⁶ "Kim's latest excursion underlines reliance on Beijing", *Asahi Shimbun*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201105210145.html>

¹⁷ "Strategic Partnership Built On Mutual Understanding", *Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, May 19, 2011 at http://www.press-service.uz/en/#en/news/show/main/dolgosrochnoe_strategicheskoe_partnerstv/

Uzbekistan has consistently supported India's aspiration for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The parties discussed the evolving situation in neighbouring Afghanistan and reaffirmed the necessity for the early establishment of peace and stability and on prospects emerging from setting up Central Asia-Persian Gulf land transport corridor as well as Trans-Afghan access strip.¹⁸

According to reports, the core issues conferred during the summit have been those concerning trade and economic collaboration, including investment partnership. Uzbekistan supports the efforts of Indian companies to enhance investment cooperation in sectors they wield technological edge. The two sides agreed that among the most promising areas of bilateral partnership are information technologies, and especially software production, telecommunications equipment, distance learning and other spheres where Indian specialists have duly taken up leading positions in the world. Top-level Uzbek and Indian officials signed an action plan on tourism cooperation in the Indian capital New Delhi to expand the sector in both countries.¹⁹

As highlighted in the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership, relations between Uzbekistan and India are elevated to a level of long-term strategic partnership built on equality and mutual understanding, a partnership that will help foster a prolific interaction covering a broad array of areas, including political, economic, anti-terrorism, as well as education, healthcare, human resource development, science and technologies, tourism and culture. In particular, in excess of 30 projects are designed for implementation, including those in joint prospecting, exploration and production of hydrocarbons with India's leading oil and gas company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, along with manufacturing fiber-optic cables in Navoi free industrial and economic zone, a number of projects on the production of substances and various medicines. The agreement between Uzbek oil and gas corporation Uzbekneftegaz, which oversees the world's tenth largest reserves of gas, and India's state-owned energy corporation Oil & Natural Gas Company (ONGC) Videsh was signed.²⁰ Meanwhile, National Bank of Uzbekistan for Foreign Economic Activity has signed agreement with Export-Import Bank of India to establish a credit line on long-term privileged terms. The overall worth of the economic package underwritten during the current visit of Uzbek President exceeds 2.2 billion U.S. dollars.²¹

Reports noted that the interest and outright support shown to Turkmenistan as a natural gas supplier for the Na-bucco and AGRI pipeline projects, both via Romania are regarded as an attempt to lessen European dependence on Russian gas. The AGRI pipeline will transport gas from

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ "Uzbekistan, India vow to boost bilateral tourism", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 16, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbekistan-India-vow-to-boost-bilateral-tourism/viewstory.aspx?id=4056>

²⁰ "Uzbekistan, India sign a raft of deals in New Delhi", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 18, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbekistan-India-sign-a-raft-of-deals-in-New-Delhi/viewstory.aspx?id=4072>

²¹ "Strategic Partnership Built On Mutual Understanding", *Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, May 19, 2011 at http://www.press-service.uz/en/#en/news/show/main/dolgosrochnoe_strategicheskoe_partnerstv/

Turkmenistan – the main gas supplier – through the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan over the Black Sea coast of Georgia to Romania. Turkmenistan is considered as one of the main suppliers apart from Azerbaijan and Iraq for the Nabucco project. 300-kilometer Trans-Caspian gas pipeline is considered as an integral part of the Nabucco project, designed to transport gas from the Caspian region and the Middle East to the EU. This pipeline will be laid from the Turkmen coast of the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan where it will join to the transportation routes of the Southern Energy Corridor. The un-resolved issue of the status of the Caspian Sea has rendered the construction difficult.²² These pipelines would enable Turkmenistan to gain access to the European markets. Apart from pipelines, talks on transportation, infrastructure, civil engineering, Central Asia's transnational waterways and education were held.

According to reports, Kazakhstan has agreed to send peacekeepers to Afghanistan, a measure which was approved by the Kazakh parliament. Though the number of troops was not specified, they will be sent for a period of six months to cooperate with NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the commitment can be extended if both parties agree. During the stationing the Kazakh government will be responsible for financing the troops' transportation, weapons and equipment. Kazakh military will be the first to be deployed in Afghanistan from Central Asia since the Soviet invasion in the 1980s. This adds to Kazakhstan's earlier contribution to ISAF in the form of allowing U.S. military planes to fly over Kazakh air space and allowing cargo en route to Afghanistan to be transported through Kazakh territory.²³ In the meanwhile Kazakhstan will enter the foreign-led development of the Karachaganak oil field, the Kazakh PM said on the sidelines of a meeting of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) held annually. The Kazakh government has been tussling with the foreign investors in the Karachaganak oil field – which include the BG Group, Italy's ENI, Chevron Corp. and Lukoil – to give the state-owned oil and gas firm KazMunaiGas (KMG) a 10 percent stake in the project.²⁴

In another development, South Korea's Finance Ministry is understood to have said that South Korea is looking to implement "country-specific" cooperation programs in Central Asia as part of a plan to fine-tune its investment strategy in the region. It aims at securing deals for the region's extensive natural resources while utilizing Korean expertise to help develop the rapidly emerging economies. South Korea can support sustainable growth in the ex-Soviet republics by establishing information technology industries, modernizing the agriculture and forestry sectors and laying a foundation for manufacturing business, the ministry said. Seoul aims to streamline legal and administrative rules to smooth bilateral cooperation, seek free trade pacts and launch programs on expert personnel exchanges as part of the strategy.²⁵

²² -ibid-

²³ "Kazakhstan to send peacekeepers to Afghanistan", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 18, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-to-send-peacekeepers-to-Afghanistan/viewstory.aspx?id=4071>

²⁴ "Kazakhstan to join Karachaganak, PM says", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 20, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-to-join-Karachaganak-PM-says/viewstory.aspx?id=4097>

²⁵ "South Korea focuses its Central Asian investment strategy", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 18, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Regional/South-Korea-focuses-its-Central-Asian-investment-strategy/viewstory.aspx?id=4077>

In other developments, the United States has appointed its first ambassador to Turkmenistan in five years. Robert Patterson is the first ambassador to take the post in Ashgabat, since Tracey Ann Jacobson left the position in 2006. The U.S. has been represented in Ashgabat since that time by a series of charge d'affaires. The relations between the U.S. and isolationist Turkmenistan have been improving in recent months. U.S. oil major ExxonMobil last year returned to Ashgabat to open an office in the Turkmen capital, after abruptly pulling out of Turkmenistan in 2002. U.S. oil companies ConocoPhillips, Chevron Corp and TXOil Ltd recently bid on blocks in the Caspian Sea. The U.S. State Department has also expressed its support for the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, a project which Turkmenistan has spearheaded.²⁶

Russia

- **Russia imposes strict conditions on a proposed US\$ 3 billion loan to Belarus; Russia's foreign minister set to have talks with Hamas and Fatah leaders in Moscow; Russia's foreign minister to meet with Libyan opposition representatives; Russia opposes proposed fresh sanctions against Belarus; Poland suggest that Russia and USA should have separate anti-missile systems; Reports: Russia has spent US\$ 472 million as foreign aid**

According to reports, Russia has offered Belarus a desperately needed \$3 billion loan, with significant conditions attached, amid talks between President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Russia's finance minister, Aleksei Kudrin, said that a major condition will be attached to a possible three-year, \$3 billion loan for Belarus in the form of Minsk selling off certain national assets. At a meeting of government of former Soviet nations in the Belarusian capital on May 19, Kudrin said that Russia will decide early next month whether to approve the credit based in part on Minsk's commitment to privatization. Belarus is in a deep economic crisis, stemming largely from lavish public spending before controversial presidential election in December that led to a brutal crackdown on the opposition and further soured relations with the West. Belarus's central bank has responded by lifting exchange-rate controls, which in turn sent the local currency plummeting. Officially, the Belarusian rouble's exchange rate remains at roughly 3,000 to the U.S. dollar. On the black market, however, the Belarusian rouble reached a record low on May 19, trading at a reported 8,000-9,000 roubles to the dollar at some exchange booths. A Russian-backed loan could help stem the rouble's devastating losses, but over the long term, it could also cost Belarus some of its most valuable assets.²⁷

Reports noted that Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will meet with the leaders of the Palestinian Fatah and Hamas movements on May 23 in Moscow to discuss plans for the recognition of a Palestinian state. Fatah and Hamas signed a peace deal in Cairo on May 4, ending a four-year split between the two factions that opened when Hamas ousted Fatah forces from Gaza in 2007.

²⁶ "US appoints first ambassador to Turkmenistan in five years", *Central Asia Newswire*, May 16, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/US-appoints-first-ambassador-to-Turkmenistan-in-five-years/viewstory.aspx?id=4060>

²⁷ "Russia attaches strings to \$3 billion loan offer to Belarus", *Radio Free Europe*, May 20, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia_belarus_loan_conditions/24180748.html

According to the agreement, Hamas and Fatah will form a technocratic government to unify national institutions on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and prepare for national elections within a year. Israeli authorities denounced the peace deal between Hamas and Fatah and threatened sanctions, calling on Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas to choose between peace with the “terrorist organization,” Hamas, or Israel²⁸. Also, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will meet with representatives of the Libyan opposition to discuss the current state of affairs in Libya. The meeting has been scheduled for in Moscow on May 23. The meeting will focus on preconditions for a ceasefire and negotiations between the government in Tripoli and rebel authorities in Benghazi.²⁹

According to reports, Russia which could buy more than \$7 billion worth of Belarussian assets to help Minsk tackle a currency crisis, expressed opposition to tougher European sanctions against Belarussian firms. The EU has already imposed a travel ban against President Alexander Lukashenko and about 150 of his close political associates following his crackdown on political opponents after a disputed presidential election last December. Foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland have said that the EU planned further sanctions targeting Lukashenko and companies that finance his government. They mentioned no names, but large state-owned firms are the likely targets. However, Russia’s Foreign Minister Lavrov has declared that such a move could be counterproductive and asserted that involvement rather than isolation will facilitate market and democratic reforms.³⁰

In another development, Polish Defense Minister Bogdan Klich has said that Russia and the United States should have separate, but cooperating missile defense systems. Russia’s President Medvedev had warned that Russia would have to build up its nuclear capability if NATO and the United States failed to reach an agreement with Moscow on European missile defense cooperation. Russia and NATO agreed to cooperate on the so-called European missile shield during the NATO-Russia Council summit in Lisbon in November 2010. NATO insists there should be two independent systems that exchange information, while Russia favors a joint system. Russia is opposed to the planned deployment of U.S. missile defense systems near its borders, claiming they would be a security threat. NATO and the United States insist that the shield would defend NATO members against missiles from North Korea and Iran and would not be directed at Russia.³¹

In other developments, according to a report by the Russian Finance Ministry, Russia spent more than \$80 million in 2010 to improve health care in developing countries. The report highlights how the country is meeting its G8 commitments ahead of the upcoming summit in Deauville, France. “Health has become for Russia quite a traditional area for contributing to international

²⁸ “Russia’s top diplomat set for talks with Hamas, Fatah leaders in Moscow”, *Ria Novosti*, May 23, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110523/164169127.html>

²⁹ “Russian FM Lavrov to meet with Libyan opposition representatives”, *Ria Novosti*, May 23, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110523/164170687.html>

³⁰ “Moscow opposes EU sanctions on Belarus”, *The Moscow Times*, May 23, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/moscow-opposes-eu-sanctions-on-belarus/437223.html>

³¹ “Russia, US should have separate anti-missile systems, Poland says”, *Ria Novosti*, May 21, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110521/164156258.html>

development,” said Andrei Bokarev, head of the Finance Ministry’s international financial relations department. Russia’s contributions to G8 initiatives have helped pay for vaccine research and subsidies, as well as upgrades to 10 anti-epidemic response teams that could be used in humanitarian emergencies. The G8 funnels its vaccine assistance through the Advance Market Commitment initiative, which claims “to stimulate industry investment in global health product development.” Russia pledged to pay \$80 million into the initiative by 2018 and has already disbursed \$16 million. The first Russia-subsidized vaccines were delivered to Nicaragua, Kenya, Yemen, Congo and Guyana at the beginning of 2011. The report also lists food security as a main priority. According to the report, Russia spent \$98.2 million last year to train farm specialists and supply technology and resistant seed cultures to Africa. This year’s spending on food security is expected to stay the same. G20 countries plan to approve a food security strategy in Cannes this November. Russia’s contribution to international assistance programs is growing faster than that of its G8 partners, said Ambassador-at-Large Mr. Vadim Lukov. The country funded roughly \$432 million per year between 2007 and 2010, compared with the \$101 million it had paid annually in the three years prior. Russia spent a total of \$472.32 million on international development assistance in 2010, nearly meeting its annual target rate of \$500 million. This is down from the \$785 million given in 2009 due to greater domestic needs during the global financial crisis.³²

D. West Asia

Iran

- **United States revises visa policy for Iranian students; Guardian Council: Iran’s president can not serve as care taker minister**

The United States state department has announced two years visa for Iranian Students. The step is the latest in a series by US President Barack Obama’s administration to reach out to the Iranian people and, in particular, to young Iranians despite the long enmity between the two countries. Students from Iran previously were eligible only for three-month, single-entry visas. The new guidelines apply to Iranians and their dependents applying to study in “nonsensitive, nontechnical fields” -those that would not contribute to Iran’s nuclear, missile or other weapons-related activities, a US official said. Under the revised policy, the visas could be valid for two years and allow Iranian students to come and go as often as they wished in that period without applying for a new visa. In a video address, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made clear the US gesture aimed to reach out to young Iranians. She also added that “we want more dialogue and more exchange with those of you who are shaping Iran’s future.” She stated that “because as long as the Iranian government continues to stifle your potential, we will stand with you.” She said “we will continue to look for new ways to fuel more opportunities for real change in Iran.”³³

³² “\$472 m spent on foreign aid in 2010”, The Moscow Times, May 23, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/472m-spent-on-foreign-aid-in-2010/437216.html>

³³ “US revises visa policy in gesture to Iranians,” *Khaleej Times*, May 21, 2011, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/May/middleeast_May562.xml§ion=middleeast

In another development, the Guardian Council has announced that the president cannot serve as the caretaker oil minister according to article 135 of the Constitution. The ruling was issued after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that he would serve as the caretaker oil minister after he dismissed Oil Minister Masoud Mirkazemi, whose ministry is to be merged with the Energy Ministry as part of the administration's plan to downsize the government. In addition, he reportedly plans to personally chair the upcoming OPEC meeting, which is scheduled to be held in Vienna in June 2011, since Iran holds the rotating presidency of the 12-member oil cartel. However, it is still not clear who will represent Iran in the OPEC meeting.³⁴

Iraq

- **16 people killed and wounded many in series of bomb blasts in Baghdad area**

Reports noted that sixteen people have been killed 16 and injured dozens a series of bomb blasts in the Baghdad area. The deadliest attack took place in Taji, north of Baghdad, when a suicide bomber killed 10 people. Police said there were at least 14 bombs of one sort or another, with five of them apparently aimed at a police station in southern Baghdad while others had no apparent target. According to reports, the violence appears to have increased since the death of Osama Bin Laden in early May.³⁵

Syria

- **Ecuador stresses its support for Syria; Syrian President discusses status of Arab investments in Syria; Syrian forces open fire at protesters' funeral**

In a letter from Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ricardo Patino, Ecuador stressed its standing by Syria and its rejection of all forms of interference in the country's internal affairs. The letter was conveyed by Advisor to the Ecuadorian President for Middle East Affairs, and, Envoy of the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Qabalan Abi Sa'ab and received by Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Walid al-Moallem.³⁶ Both officials also discussed the close relations between the two countries and prospects of enhancing them, in addition to the latest developments in the region.

In another development, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met a delegation of Arab businessmen and discussed the status of the Arab investments in Syria and their future in light of the comprehensive reforms witnessed in Syria. The role of the investments in supporting the national economy and their contribution to the process of reform and stability were also discussed.³⁷ The

³⁴ "GC says president cannot serve as caretaker oil minister," *Tehran Times*, May 21, 2011, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=241074

³⁵ "Iraq: Blasts kill at least 16 in Baghdad area," *BBC News*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13491112>

³⁶ "Ecuador Stresses its Standing by Syria", *Syrian Arab News Agency*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.sana.sy/eng/337/2011/05/22/348211.htm>

³⁷ "President al-Assad Discusses with Delegation of Arab Businessmen Status of Arab Investments in Syria", *Syrian Arab News Agency*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://www.sana.sy/eng/21/2011/05/22/348019.htm>

investors also expressed satisfaction with regard to the package of reforms taking place in Syria. Mansour Amer, Chairman of the Board of Egypt's Amer Group, said that the meeting discussed the obstacles hindering the work of investors and implementing mechanisms to facilitate and speed up permits to help achieve better growth rates and provide more job opportunities for youths. Earlier, President al-Assad met a delegation from the Kuwaiti Investors Council and discussed with them the state of investments in Syria and prospects for expanding them in Syria in all fields.

In other developments, according to a human rights activist, Syrian security forces killed at least three people after opening fire on a massive funeral procession carried out for eight anti-government protesters killed earlier. It was mentioned that this security response came despite calls from US President Barack Obama that Assad should lead his country to democracy or "get out of the way". By this killing, total death toll raised to 44 - most in the northern province of Idlib and the central region of Homs - making it "one of the deadliest days" since an uprising against President Bashar Assad's regime began two months ago. Meanwhile, the government put the toll at 17.³⁸

Libya

- **NATO expands strikes in Libya amid questions raised; NATO strikes destroy eight Libyan warships; EU expresses support for NTC; Opens mission in Benghazi; African Union to convene special summit on Libya**

Reports noted that NATO widened its campaign to weaken Muammar Gaddafi's regime with air strikes on desert command centres and sea patrols to intercept ships, amid signs of growing public anger over fuel shortages in government-held territory. Earlier, in the coastal town of Zawiya, crowds apparently outraged by declining fuel supplies attacked a minibus carrying journalists on a state-supervised trip to Tunisian border.³⁹ At the same time, NATO came under increasing criticism that it is overstepping the UN Security Council's mandate, which provides for the protection of civilians but not for wider attacks.

The Deputy Commander of the NATO mission in Libya, Rear Admiral Russell Harding said that in its bid to increase pressure with the purpose of weakening the Libyan regime of Muammar Al Qathafi, NATO fighter jets attacked and sank eight warships belonging to the Libyan forces loyal to the Libyan leader. At the same time, NATO continued its air strikes against the Libyan government troops with a coordinated strike against Al Qathafi's forces in the ports of Tripoli, Al Khums and Sirte, NATO said in a statement.⁴⁰

³⁸ "Syrian forces kill 3 at protesters' funeral", *The Jordan Times*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=37696>

³⁹ "NATO widens Libya pressure amid questions on goal", *The Jordan Times*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=37699>

⁴⁰ "NATO Strikes Destroy Eight Libyan Warships", *The Tripoli Post*, May 20, 2011, available at <http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=6028>

In another development, European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton has pledged support for Libya's rebels. She is the highest-ranking foreign diplomat to visit the Libyan rebels' stronghold Benghazi since the start of the revolt against Muammar Al Qathafi. Ashton also opened an EU diplomatic mission in Benghazi. Further, Ashton met Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the chairman of the opposition National Transitional Council (NTC), who said that her visit "showed the increased support of the European Union in supporting us to have a democratic and free state".⁴¹ During the meeting with the National Transitional Council, Ashton discussed support for health, education, civil society, border management and security reform.

In other developments, the African Union announced that members of the African Union will meet next week at an extraordinary two-day summit meeting in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa to discuss the Libyan conflict. The AU said that the proposed meeting would be devoted to the consideration of peace and security in Africa in light of the challenges and crises facing the continent," the AU said in a statement announcing the meeting.⁴²

Palestine

● Palestine to seek recognition as UN member-state in September; Palestine condemn Israel's plan to build new settlements

A senior Palestinian official Nabil Shaath declared that Palestinians would seek recognition as a UN member-state in September given the deadlock in US-brokered peacemaking with Israel. He also urged President Obama to join countries that have already endorsed a Palestinian state encompassing West Bank and East Jerusalem. Another Palestinian official, Nabil Abu Rudeina, said the drive to win statehood status unilaterally could be forestalled provided Israel accept the demand to extend a freeze on its settlement on occupied land so that negotiations can resume.⁴³

In another development, Palestinian officials condemned the authorisation granted for the construction of 1550 new housing units in Israeli settlements around Jerusalem, despite US President Barack Obama's comments that a future Palestinian state must be established in pre-1967 borders. Earlier, an Israeli Interior Ministry spokeswoman said the planning committee had approved two building projects in Pisgat Zeev and Har Homa. Saeb Erekat, a senior aide to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said the Israeli move further hampered U.S. efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks that collapsed in 2010 shortly after they began because of settlement building.⁴⁴

⁴¹ "High EU Official Opens Mission in Benghazi and Expresses Support for NTC", *The Tripoli Post*, May 23, 2011, available at <http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=6044>

⁴² "African Union to Hold Two-Day Special Summit on Libya", *The Tripoli Post*, May 21, 2011, available at <http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=6036>

⁴³ "Palestinians set on UN statehood bid in September", *The Jordan Times*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=37698>

⁴⁴ "Palestinians Condemn Israel Plan to Build New Settlements", *The Tripoli Post*, May 20, 2011, available at <http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=6031>

Jordan

- **Jordan King highlights favourable business environment in Jordan; OPIC to direct more aid to Jordan**

Inaugurating the first Jordan-US Business Forum, Jordan King Abdullah convinced that commitment to economic reforms, the country's geo-strategic location and positive relationships make Jordan a logical hub for regional and global trade that businesses can look to with confidence. The King also referred to the Jordan's free trade agreements with the US, Canada, Europe, Turkey, Singapore and all Arab countries, as well as the decision by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to welcome Jordan's bid to join the six-nation bloc.⁴⁵ The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit, officials and several private sector representatives.

In another development, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) Vice President for Small and Medium Enterprise Finance, James Polan, announced that the US OPIC will direct additional financial aid to Jordan, especially for the transportation and agriculture sectors. His announcement came with reference to the \$250 million in economic assistance through OPIC to the Kingdom announced by US President Barack Obama.⁴⁶ He also mentioned that OPIC will help finance the Amman-Zarqa light railway project.

D. USA

- **Obama speaks on the Israel Palestine Issue**

President Obama in his address to a pro Israel lobby, clarified his stand that he would like to see a Palestine state emerge and Israel must honor the boundaries as they existed before the 1967 war, suggesting the Israel must give up the land it has obtained in and after the 1967 war. According to reports, President Obama while speaking before a conference of the influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee offered familiar assurances that the United States' commitment to Israel's long-term security was "ironclad." But citing the rising political upheaval near Israel's borders, he presented his peace plan as the best chance Israel has to avoid growing isolation."⁴⁷ President Obama asked Israeli leadership to adopt a more flexible approach in negotiating and settling the

⁴⁵ Obeidat, Omar (2011), "Businesses can look to Jordan with confidence", *The Jordan Times*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=37693>

⁴⁶ Obeidat, Omar (2011), "OPIC to direct more aid to Jordan", *The Jordan Times*, May 22, 2011, available at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=37694>

⁴⁷ "Obama Presses Israel to Make 'Hard Choices'", *The New York Times*, May 22, 2011 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/world/middleeast/23aipac.html>

Israel – Palestine conflict and help bring closure to the seemingly intractable conflict.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the Palestinians seemed to find it difficult to accept Obama's proposition to accept or recognize Israel as the Jewish homeland.⁴⁹

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Defence Minister calls for increasing defence capacity amid deepening China-Pak strategic nexus; Second phase of Project Seabird to give Indian Navy strategic depth**

Amid China's latest decision to equip Pakistan with 50 new JF-17 Thunder combat jets under a co-production agreement, India's Defence Minister A. K Antony has called for increasing India's own capability to counter the coming threat. Defence Minister noted that growing defence ties between Islamabad and Beijing is a matter of serious concern for India and it is now time to increase the country's defence capacity.⁵⁰ Responding to questions after addressing the unified commanders' conference in New Delhi, he stated, "It's a matter of serious concern for us. The main thing is that we too will have to increase our (military) capabilities. That is the only answer,"⁵¹ With the US keen to get out from the region or maintain a minimum deterrent force, India is expecting realignment in the region and is closely watching Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Geelani's visit to China.⁵²

In another development, reports noted that the large-scale expansion of India's Sea Bird Naval base will turn the Karwar base into the largest defence zone, not only in India, but in Asia. Work for the second phase of the base has already begun. The cost of completion of the second phase will be over Rs 1, 25,000 crore, which is five times the amount spent in the first phase. The first phase of Project Seabird, completed in 2005 involved the construction of a large new naval base (INS Kadamba) at Karwar in Karnataka, for exclusive use by the Indian Navy. The primary motivation for building a new base on the western coast is the overcrowding at the major harbours

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ "Obama's 'Jewish State' reference jars Palestinians", Associated Press, May 23, 2011 at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5i6djWauswJ4SDz6iCqQ4eqbFE2Ow?docId=c4e860766dd24d3389352a68e79f3192>

⁵⁰ "Defence Minister Calls For Increasing Defence Capacity", *Defence News*, May, 21 2011, at <http://www.defencenews.in/defence-news-internal.asp?get=new&id=477>

⁵¹ "Antony expresses concern over deepening China-Pak strategic nexus", *The Times of India*, May 21, 2011 at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-05-21/india/29568390_1_nuclear-arsenal-antony-safe-havens

⁵² "Defence Minister Calls For Increasing Defence Capacity", *Defence News*, May, 21 2011, at <http://www.defencenews.in/defence-news-internal.asp?get=new&id=477>

of Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam, as well as at the smaller ports of Kochi and Goa, which the Indian Navy has to share with commercial vessels, often resulting in delay in docking of the naval vessels. The Karwar Sea Bird Naval base is one of the most strategic naval bases in the world and in the second phase will get additional jetties, dockyards, airports, and transit system which will turn India's maritime power into a force the enemy will think twice to reckon with. The construction of the Karwar Naval base is part of an initiative of the Indian Navy to develop a blue water navy and to acquire strategic depth. The project was first envisioned by the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Oscar Stanley Dawson during the 1980s. However, the initiative was not adopted until 1999, under the tenure of Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who spearheaded a new drive to realise the project under the name Project Seabird.⁵³

International

● **Russia softens its stand on US-backed missile defense shield for Europe; China to construct the strategic Gwadar port in Pakistan**

Russia has said it may be ready to drop its objections to the US-backed missile defence shield for Europe if it receives a formal security pledge from the United States in writing. The comments by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggest an easing of Moscow's position and precede a meeting between US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart on the sidelines of G8 summit in France next week. "We are proposing, and asking for it to be put in writing, that the missile defence system for Europe is not directed against any of the participating states – not NATO, Russia or other European states," Lavrov said. However, written commitment has not been forthcoming from the United States and NATO. President Dmitry Medvedev used a closely watched pre-election television appearance this week to warn the United States of a return to the Cold War should the shield be constructed despite Russia's objections.⁵⁴

In another development, marking growing proximity between China and Pakistan, China has accepted Pakistan's request to take over operations at the strategic Gwadar port after an existing agreement with the Singapore Port Authority expires, Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmad Mukhtar said Saturday. The request was made during Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's visit to China that ended Friday. Mukhtar was part of the delegation that accompanied Gilani. "We are grateful to the Chinese government for constructing the Gwadar port. However, we will be more grateful to the Chinese government if a naval base is constructed at the site of Gwadar for Pakistan," Mukhtar said adding that he discussed some "important strategic and economic issues" during the Pakistani side's meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.⁵⁵

⁵³ "Karwar Naval Base Set To Be Largest in Asia", *Defence News*, May 22, at <http://www.defencenews.in/defence-news-internal.asp?get=new&id=480>

⁵⁴ "Russia plays down missile differences with US", *Missile Defence*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.brahmand.com/news/Russia-plays-down-missile-differences-with-US/7111/1/13.html>

⁵⁵ "China to take over operations at Pakistan's Gwadar port", *Brahmand*, May 22, 2011, at <http://www.brahmand.com/news/China-to-take-over-operations-at-Pakistans-Gwadar-port/7110/1/14.html>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Valley intruded by 40 militants; Sopore struck twice by gunmen; Gunfight left a militant dead; JKLF leader held and 2 under house arrest; Violence hits Panchayat polls again**

Notwithstanding repeated denials by the Army, security agencies in Jammu and Kashmir have reported that nearly 35 to 40 militants have entered the Kashmir Valley but were holed up in higher reaches only “due to extra layer of security by police and para-military forces.” Official reports comprising HUMINT (human intelligence) and TECHINT (technical intelligence) suggest that small groups of six to seven militants mainly belonging to Pakistan-based Lashker-e-Taiba entered the Valley through Kupwara and Gurez sectors and have entrenched themselves in Lolab and Rajwar forests in extreme north Kashmir. While An Army spokesman said the reports of infiltration were “incorrect” and the cordon and search operations in Lolab, Rajwar and Bandipore were sustained operations carried out throughout the winter.⁵⁶

In another development, a policeman was killed and a Panchayat election candidate injured when gunmen struck twice in north Kashmir’s Sopore town. The gunmen shot dead the constable who was shot at from point blank range.⁵⁷ However, a Lashker-e-Taiba militant was killed in an encounter with forces in north Kashmir’s Baramulla district. A joint party of police and forces cordoned off Zaloora village, 60 kms from Baramulla and launched searches. Militants present there opened fire on the search party which was retaliated triggering an encounter in which a militant was killed according to a police official.⁵⁸

Reports noted that Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik was arrested in north Kashmir’s Ganderbal district along with his associates when he was on way to address a public rally in Kangan. The arrest was condemned by the group and termed it as undemocratic and dictatorial step by the Government. Two more separatist leaders Shabir Ahmed Shah and Zaffar Akbar Bhat have been placed under house detention.⁵⁹

In other developments, according to reports, violence again hit the Panchayat elections in Jammu

⁵⁶ “40 militants have entered Valley”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 22, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/May/23/-40-militants-have-entered-valley-65.asp>

⁵⁷ “Gunmen strike twice in Sopore”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 17, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/May18/gunmen-strike-twice-in-sopore-58.asp>

⁵⁸ “Militant killed in gunfight”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 16, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/May/17/militant-killed-in-gunfight-58.asp>

⁵⁹ “Malik held, Shah under house arrest”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 20, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/May/21/malik-held-shah-under-house-arrest-38.asp>

region with 28 people, including five policemen, injured in the 10th phase of multi-phased polls. These polls witnessed overall 77.14 percent polling in eleven blocks of the state.⁶⁰

North East India

- **Clash between students resulting in strike by Congress in Tripura; BRU militants managed to escape; UNLF Chairman claims to welcome any means to Indo-Manipur solution; One NSCN-IM official's home raided; Migrants threatened by ultras; Anti-talk ULFA cadres entered from Myanmar; Trafficked girls detained at Guwahati railway station; Terrorist fled their camps in Bangladesh and surrendered before Indian security forces in Tripura**

Reports noted that Tripura's main opposition Congress has called a dawn-to-dusk strike after members of its student wing, NSUI, clashed with Students' Federation of India (SFI) activists. "The Congress and its student wing NSUI (National Students Union of India) have called a 12-hour shutdown across Tripura following a clash between its supporters and those of the SFI," according to Tripura Pradesh Congress president Surajit Datta. According to a CPI spokesman the unrest occurred after Congress tried to create trouble after West Bengal election results.⁶¹

According to reports, three Bru militants have escaped from police custody in Kolasib district of Mizoram, according to police reports. The militants who escaped from Bairabi police station on Wednesday last were arrested with arms at South Chhimluang village in the district bordering Assam. The militants escaped from the police station at around 3 am by damaging the bars of the old and ramshackle lock-up. Massive search operations have been launched to trace them.⁶²

Meanwhile, the UNLF will welcome any proposal or means formulated by any organization of Manipur to bring an end to the India-Manipur conflict other than plebiscite. This was stated by RK Meghen, chairman of the UNLF who is currently under custody of NIA. Meghen when he was produced before a special NIA court. The UNLF consider plebiscite as the most favoured means to bring an end to the conflict in Manipur but the outfit does not fix plebiscite as the only means to bring solution to the India-Manipur conflict.⁶³

In another development, the Assam Rifles conducted a surprise raid in the private residence of an NSCN-IM official and seized a huge cache of ammunition, cash and incriminating documents. According to police, the Assam Rifles personnel seized Rs 4.73 lakh in cash, huge cache of live

⁶⁰ "Panchayat polls: Violence hits 10th phase", *Greater Kashmir*, May 21, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/May/22/panchayat-polls-violence-hits-10th-phase-35.asp>

⁶¹ "Students clash, Congress calls strike in Tripura", *The Sentinel*, May 22, 2011 at <http://www.sentinelassam.com/northeast/story.php?sec=2&subsec=9&id=75498&dtP=2011-05-23&ppr=1#75498>

⁶² "Bru militants escape from police custody", *The Sentinel*, May 22, 2011 at <http://www.sentinelassam.com/northeast/story.php?sec=2&subsec=9&id=75503&dtP=2011-05-23&ppr=1#75503>

⁶³ "UNLF welcomes any means to Indo-Manipur solution: RK Meghen", *The Sentinel*, May 21, 2011 at <http://www.sentinelassam.com/northeast/story.php?sec=2&subsec=9&id=75379&dtP=2011-05-22&ppr=1#75379>

ammunition and caught two youths during the raid. It has also asked the Assam Rifles to desist from involving in such provocative act, which will lead to hampering of the peaceful situation. Moreover, it stating that the two youth arrested by the Assam Rifles are innocent villagers and not members of NSCN/GPRN, it demanded that they be released immediately.⁶⁴

Militant outfit Kangleipak Communist Party-Military Council (KCP-MC) had asked migrant workers to leave the State as their number was swelling and was much more than even the tribal communities in the State. Police said KCP-MC under their 'operation clear cut' had decided to drive out the migrant workers and police would do everything possible to prevent any untoward incident.⁶⁵

According to reports, at least 30 hardcore cadres of ULFA's anti-talk faction led by Paresh Baruah, under the leadership of self-styled 2nd lieutenants Pradip Gogoi alias Aaka and Tibrajyoti Baruah and sergeant major Muhim Baruah entered Sivasagar district from Myanmar through Waksing Basti of Nagaland along Assam Nagaland border of Charaideo sub-division recently. The cadres possess rifles of AK series, rocket launchers, and sophisticated arms like '81' and E-66-informed sources. The group has already started their organisational activities in upper Assam at the direction of Paresh Baruah.⁶⁶

Seven girls including four minors were detained by the Government Railway Police (GRP) today on suspicion of them being trafficked to Chennai and Delhi. Two other persons, who were leading the group, have also been detained from the Guwahati Railway Station. The GRP sources informed that all the detained persons hail from Sonitpur district. The detained individuals told police that they were going to Chennai and Delhi in search of livelihood. They were detained when they were buying railway tickets for the respective destinations.⁶⁷

In other developments, nine guerrillas of a separatist outfit have fled their camps in Bangladesh and surrendered before Indian security forces in Tripura. The NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura) guerrillas, led by their self-styled captain Patanjoy Tripura alias Prabhash, 30, crossed over to India last week and surrendered to the Assam Rifles officers at Chawmanu (in north Tripura) according to a police spokesperson.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ "NSCN-IM's official's home raided", *The Assam Tribune*, May 21, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2211/oth06>

⁶⁵ "Fresh ultra threat to migrants", *The Assam Tribune*, May 21, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2211/oth07>

⁶⁶ "30 anti-talk ULFA cadres sneak in from Myanmar", *The Assam Tribune*, May 20, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2111/state05>

⁶⁷ "7 girls detained at Guwahati Railway Station", *The Assam Tribune*, May 18, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1911/city05>

⁶⁸ "9 Tripura terrorists flee Bangladesh, surrender", *The Assam Tribune*, May 17, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1711/at023>

IV. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **India elected to UNHRC; UN Security Council urges Haiti government to focus on rebuilding the country; UNSC calls for urgent measures to strengthen institutions in Democratic Republic of Congo**

India was elected as one among the 15 countries to the Human Rights Council by the General Assembly. India, Kuwait, Indonesia and the Philippines were elected as the Asian group of nations to fill seats in the Council. All 15 elected members will serve a three year term.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the Security Council urged Haiti's new government to focus on the critical tasks of rebuilding the country and ensuring stability and rule of law. The Council also encouraged all Haitian politicians to resolve any remaining poll disputes through "transparent and efficient" means, ensuring that the elections reflected the will of the people. The Council also appreciated the efforts of the personnel of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for providing critical logistical and security support to the Haitian authorities throughout the electoral process.⁷⁰

In other developments, the Security Council called for urgent steps to strengthen institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and also called on the government to ensure that general elections slated for this year are inclusive, transparent and peaceful. The 15-member Council also urged the UN Peacekeeping mission in DRC (MONUSCO) and other international partners to support the government to restore basic services, including access to justice, roads, health care and education services as well as security throughout the country. The Council also expressed concern over persistent high levels of violence, especially sexual assaults, and other human rights abuses against civilians, including women and children.⁷¹

⁶⁹ "15 countries elected to UN Human Rights Council", *The Asian Age*, May 21, 2011 at <http://www.asianage.com/international/15-countries-elected-un-human-rights-council-882>

⁷⁰ "Security Council urges Haiti's new Government to ensure stability and rule of law", *UN News Centre*, May 17, 2011 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38418&Cr=Haiti&Cr1=>

⁷¹ "DR Congo: Security Council discusses key challenges and risks in an election year", *UN News Centre*, May 18, 2011 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38427&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo>