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Voice of South Asia

Friday March 14 '08

Weekly Edition From Washington DC area

Year 1 Issue 4

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## President Bush Attends NRB Convention In Nashville TN



President George W. Bush addresses his remarks at the National Religious Broadcasters convention Tuesday, March 11, 2008 in Nashville, Tenn. White House photo by Chris Greenberg.

## Bush Pays Tribute To Prominent Women

By Paula Wolfson, White House March 10 VOA

President Bush presided at a White House ceremony Monday honoring women around the world who are fighting for freedom. VOA's Paula Wolfson has details.

President Bush signs a proclamation for Women's History Month in the East Room of the White House, 10 Mar 2008

March is women's history month in the United States. And the president recognized not only those who have made a difference in the past, but those who are changing lives today.

"We take pride in the progress women have made here at home and we know that millions of women abroad are still working to secure their basic rights," said President Bush.

He made specific mention of women who are playing a key role in emerging democracies, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. And he pointed to Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as an example of just how much an empowered woman can do to bring a country on the brink of collapse to a hopeful future.

"Liberians call President Johnson 'the iron lady' and 'Ma', said Mr. Bush. "I am proud to call her 'friend.'"

Mr. Bush also spoke of the women who take on tyrants in an effort to bring freedom to their countries. He told the stories of activists in Cuba and Belarus. And he pledged America's

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## US Releases Annual Human Rights Report

The U.S. State Department has released its annual report on human rights, shining the spotlight on governments around the world it says are repressing their people while attacking champions of democracy and the rule of law. VOA correspondent Meredith Buel reports from the State Department.

The 2007 report says countries where power is concentrated in the hands of unaccountable rulers remain the world's most systematic violators of human rights.

In that category the report lists North Korea, Burma, Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Eritrea and Sudan.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says in those nations and others, aspirations of freedom and human rights common to all people are being denied.

"In too many countries champions of human rights are denounced and persecuted, vilified as traitors or targeted for repression just

.....contd to pg 4

## Pakistan's Parliament Meets Next Week to Form New Government

The president of Pakistan has called the National Assembly to meet next week, summoning the parties that beat his allies in last month's parliamentary elections.

President Pervez Musharraf's call to convene parliament on March 17 will put him face-to-face with members of the country's future coalition government.

The Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) announced a deal to govern the country together on Sunday.

Pakistan People's Party leader, Asif Ali Zardari, and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of the

Pakistan Muslim League say they plan to reinstate senior judges whom Mr. Musharraf fired last year. The politicians say they will soon pass legislation to reinstate the judges who challenged the legality of Mr. Musharraf's re-election as president while he was still army chief.

The Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League do not hold a majority in parliament, which will limit their ability to impeach the president. However, a smaller party, the Awami Nationalist Party, has decided to join their coalition, which could boost the opposition's voting power in parliament. (VOA 3/11)

## Russia, India Sign Billion Dollar Deal to Upgrade Indian Fighter Jets

Russian news reports say Moscow has signed a \$1 billion deal with India to upgrade more than 60 MIG-29 jet fighters it had previously sold to New Delhi.

The reports Tuesday quote sources in Russia's defense manufacturing sector as saying a five-year contract calls for Russia to install new radars, weapons control systems and improved engines.

The reports say the upgrade will extend the operational service of the planes by 15 years.

Russia has aggressively sought to expand arms sales on the world market, and is currently refurbishing a Soviet-era aircraft carrier set for sale to India in 2011. A cost dispute for the refurbishment was reported settled last month.

Under the deal, the 45,000 ton Admiral Gorshkov is undergoing a more than \$1 billion dollar upgrade before delivery to New Delhi.

## Rights Groups, Religious Leaders Call on Islamic Body to Tackle Darfur

By Nancy Palus, Saly, Senegal, March 10 VOA

Human rights groups are calling on the Organization of the Islamic Conference, meeting in Dakar this week, to push for an end to violence in Sudan's Darfur region. Activists and religious leaders say the world Islamic body has a responsibility to stop attacks on civilians. Nancy Palus reports from Saly, Senegal, where rights activists and Islamic scholars gathered on Sunday.

Human rights activists say this is the first time civil society groups are formally taking their

concerns about Darfur to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, or OIC.

The OIC is holding its 11th summit in Dakar this week.

Amir Osman, the international advocacy director for the Washington-based group called Save Darfur, says he believes the Islamic group can have influence.

"It is unique and important because this is the first civil society and scholars' initiative around the OIC," said

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Editorial

## About us: Indus Times

With the third edition in our market we've been getting very positive and encouraging responses from readers and institutions. In the process we encountered several questions from readers and businesses about the nature and objective of our publication. Even though we expressed our intention and objective we aim to achieve through this publication's editorial in the first edition, I'm sure not all readers had a chance to look at it.

Especially when we get calls wandering about our targeted audience, I tell our readers that we would like to be a forum for the south Asian community in the DC metro area. Through this medium we aim to bring together the diversified and culturally rich south Asian community and develop a healthy interaction among them. It also gives other communities and the main stream American society to understand our rich culture and practices, our activities and an opportunity to interact face to face with one another.

Question was also asked as to what prompted us to use 'Indus' Times, and why not anything else. Question was little challenging to answer over the phone; yet the objective was the same - to connect all the expatriates from south Asian countries and develop interacting relations among them.

Indus River also flows in the Indian subcontinent, and impacts so many lives in one way or the other in that region. Indus valley civilization is one of the oldest civilizations and this is one of the bonding factors in the Indian sub-continent.

Besides there are several factors that bind us together in that region, and therefore, we were exploring the same bonding factor here as well. Through this bond we can share so many things to help us develop our inner self and the society we live in. It would help us share the knowledge that we acquire during our learning process, and share with those back home that are in a little disadvantage position.

The bonding process can mean different to all, but each idea can be floated for all to understand and make the decision. But we should always find some time to think in this matter.

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## Pakistan: Domestic Violence Endemic, But Awareness Slowly Rising

Lahore March 11 (IRIN): Shahina Imran, 30, describes her marriage as "happy". She said she "remains busy" all day with household chores, cooking for her husband and two children and doing other domestic tasks at her home in Shahdra, on the outskirts of Lahore. She does not see herself as a victim of domestic abuse.

Like so many other women in a society in which few are aware of their rights, she accepts the regular slaps, kicks and severe verbal abuse meted out to her by her husband, Javed Imran, a plumber, as "what can be expected in married life".

This attitude is not surprising, given that Shahina's two elder sisters, and many of the other women she meets at the grocery store or near her house, face a similar fate.

Domestic violence is endemic in Pakistan. The New York-based Human Rights Watch, in one of the most detailed reports on domestic violence in the country published in 1999, found that up to 90 percent of women in

Pakistan were subject to verbal, sexual, emotional or physical abuse, within their own homes.

Sadly, there is little evidence that the situation has improved dramatically eight years on. Asma Jahangir, a leading lawyer and rights activist, said: "Domestic violence is very widespread. It is tied in to the lack of empowerment of women in our society."

Women's rights activists have long argued that the issue is linked to the "second class" status of women in society.

This is a reality reinforced by laws that discriminate against them in terms of the right to inherit property, the amount of blood money given as compensation for physical hurt, and by the failure to eradicate traditions such as 'vani', under which a woman is handed over in marriage to an aggrieved party to settle a dispute, usually after a murder.

### Awareness rising

Over the past decade, however, awareness of the issue has risen. Since

.....contd to pg 5

## NEPAL: Rural Poor Pin Hopes For Better Life On 10 April Elections

Kathmandu March 10 (IRIN) - After witnessing so much violence over the past 11 years in Nepal, Laxmi Motari, aged 60, was beginning to lose hope of ever improving her impoverished life. "But now I am quite hopeful that things will change for the better," she said, explaining that the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on 10 April could restore lasting peace.

Motari and her 70-year old husband, both of whom were displaced from their village in Mahottari District of eastern Nepal, are now planning to return home - to vote.

"We would like to have a member of parliament from our area who will share our problems of food shortages and extreme poverty in my village," said Motari.

Millions of impoverished and food-insecure Nepalese like Motari are pinning their hopes on the elections.

The decade-long armed conflict (1996-2006) between the former Maoist rebels and the Nepalese government ended with the signing of a peace agreement in November 2006 but new political conflicts surfaced with protests by pro-Madhese political groups in the Terai region, Nepal's most fertile and industrialised region.

We would like to have a member of parliament from our area who will share our problems of food shortages and extreme poverty in my village.

Pro-Madhese parties have led a year-long campaign demanding the government give the region greater autonomy and local people more political rights. According to human rights groups, the protests and strikes have almost crippled the nation's economy.

### Accord

However, an agreement between the Nepalese government and the main Madhese parties signed on 29 February has gradually restored peace and security for civilians in the Terai, according to

rights groups. They said the elections were key to lasting peace and greater prosperity.

"This is a major breakthrough for all Nepalese and now we should all focus on making the elections a great success," said senior political leader Madhav Nepal, leader of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), one of the main parties, which played a key role in reaching an accord with the Madhese groups.

### Hopes high in Bajura village

"I have been counting the days to cast my vote," said Shanti Nepali, a low caste woman who was displaced from her remote village of Bajura District, nearly 600km northwest of Kathmandu. Nepali is also preparing to return home to vote.

Bajura is one of the most food-insecure areas: Most people live on less than US\$1 a day, according to government Village Development Committee (VDC) officials.

The villagers are hoping that currently defunct government initiatives might be revived, and that officials might bring in money for agricultural projects, better storage of farm products and better market facilities.

"For villagers, the election is a symbol of the country returning to normalcy and better livelihoods," said Kausi Giri, a Bajura teacher who works to educate local people on elections.

She said all the villagers wanted to take part in the election in the hope of bringing about such things as road construction, improved electricity distribution and better farming technologies.

"I think now that the political war is over we can finally breathe an air of peace," said a 70-year-old farmer, Shiva Yogi.

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# ANWA Celebrates 'International Women's Day 2008'



Photo: G G Prerana

The 'America Nepal Women's Association of Greater Washington DC (ANWA)' organized a program on Saturday March 8 in Falls Church, VA to celebrate the 'International Women's Day'. The program was attended by people from the DC metro area. Among other speakers, the Nepalese Ambassador to USA Dr. Suresh C Chalise (2<sup>nd</sup> from Left) was the chief guest in the program and Aditya Baral (4<sup>th</sup> from Left)-foreign advisor to the Prime Minister of Nepal, also spoke on the occasion. Madhavi Karki (1<sup>st</sup> from left) is the current coordinator of ANWA.

## 'Survive to Five' Campaign Aims to Reduce Infant Deaths in Africa, South Asia

By Peter Heinlein Addis Ababa March 9 VOA

The charity Save the Children USA is starting a campaign to dramatically decrease the number of children who die before the age of five. VOA's Peter Heinlein in Addis Ababa reports the campaign will focus on seven countries, four in Africa and three in South Asia.

The program is called Survive to Five.

The idea behind it is simple. Despite great strides in preventing child mortality in the 1990s, 10 million children under five die every year. Every fifth death in the world is a child under five. Something must be done.

Facing statistics like these, the staff of Save the Children USA set about to design a counter strategy. It involves increasing access to community health care workers; persuading governments, both donors and developing nations, to give higher priority to spending on maternal and child health; and mobilizing citizens to speak up on behalf of children.

Save the Children USA President Charlie MacCormack told an Addis Ababa news conference the organization came up with a two-pronged approach. One is to focus efforts on seven countries where infant mortality is the highest. The second is to persuade a dozen or so wealthy countries to double, triple, or in some cases quadruple their financial commitments for infant and child health care.

"The key on the donor side is the G-8 plus Scandinavians who need to increase by \$7 billion that the rich countries are helping," said MacCormack. "Then we need to join with people and governments of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo where almost two-thirds of under-five mortality is located."

MacCoormack says the solution is not rocket science; all the ...contd on pg 6

## India's West Bengal State Reports Fresh Bird Flu Cases

Authorities in eastern India say bird flu is spreading through poultry flocks in the same area of West Bengal state where the virus was thought to have been brought under control a month ago.

Nearly four million chickens were slaughtered in last month's attempt to suppress avian influenza, and sales or transport of poultry were banned throughout West Bengal state. The area borders Bangladesh, which also has been battling the deadly poultry disease.

Sunday, government officials in West Bengal said laboratory tests have confirmed the infection is present

in two villages about 300 kilometers from Calcutta, the state capital. The deadly H5N1 variety of bird flu has killed nearly 1,000 birds in the area in the past week.

No human cases of bird-flu infection have been reported in India.

However, West Bengal officials say they will continue testing blood from people with flu-like symptoms, to make sure the virus has not spread to people.

The World Health Organization says bird flu has killed 224 people around the world since 2003. (VOA 3/9)

## Bangladesh: Poultry Industry Losses Mount As Bird Flu Spreads

Dhaka March 11 (IRIN) - Despite stepped up bio-security at farms and markets, as well as an awareness-raising campaign on TV, radio and in the newspapers, bird flu continues to spread in Bangladesh.

Forty-seven of the country's 64 districts are now affected. In the past 10 days the number of affected sub-districts and farms has increased from 107 to 124 and 196 to 220 respectively.

Bird flu, or avian influenza, has caused an estimated US\$746 million in losses to the country's poultry sector. Each month the sector is losing \$120 million, said Moshir Rahman, president of the Bangladesh chapter of the World Poultry Science Association (WPSA) at a media conference earlier this month.

Monthly consumption of poultry meat has declined from 26,600 metric tonnes (mt) in October 2007 to 12,000 mt in March 2008 - a fall of nearly 55 percent in four months, said Muhammad Abdus Saleque, general secretary of WPSA's Bangladesh chapter.

About 50 percent of poultry farms have been closed and 2.5 million people out of the six million involved in the industry have been made jobless. In fact, many people have removed chicken and eggs from their menus altogether.

Rahman said the government had been enforcing strict bio-security measures at poultry farms, but this alone would not solve the present crisis.

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# "Ragavi Ragum": A Kaleidoscope Of Exotic Professionalism

*Professional dance group Sigiri Lalanavo lives up to its name: By a Special Correspondent*



*Sigiri Lalanavo*. The name conjures images of beautiful and alluring maidens, with grace and charm.

Seated in the darkness of the auditorium at the Rockville Civic Center in Maryland, on March 1, 2008, basking in a program of Kandyan and Bharatanatyam dancing titled "Ragavi Ragum" by a talented group of professional Sri Lankan dancers, *Sigiri Lalanavo*, one could truly appreciate the images evoked by the name. Tall, shapely females in brilliant, colorful, tantalizing attire, mesmerized the audience with their lithe movements and professional stance. The supple movement of arms and legs to the hypnotic drumbeat and music, the joy emanating from the sparkling gaze and captivating smile, all added up to one thing – professional dance performed with deep passion and an almost tangible nostalgia for Sri Lanka.

"Ragavi Ragum" was indeed a feast for the eye, an exotic

kaleidoscope of color on stage and in costume. The dancers made a graceful entrance, walking up the aisle with the lighted lamps and smiles of welcome for the audience. Following the welcome dance, the Chief Guest, Sri Lanka's Ambassador in the U.S., Bernard Goonetilleke, addressed the gathering. Said the Ambassador, "In these modern times, where generations of young Sri Lankans are growing up away from their motherland, it is heartening to see the creativity and enthusiasm of the likes of *Sigiri Lalanavo*, valiantly trying to nourish and preserve the Sri Lankan dance and to share its richness and beauty, with other cultures."

True enough, dance after dance followed in smooth succession, with captivating costumes enhanced by stage lighting. The audience was literally spellbound by the Sri Lankan classical dance styles, some blended with Bharathanatyam dancing that

infused an aura of originality and freshness to the program, especially the blending of Sri Lankan and Irish backpacker dancing styles.

*Sigiri Lalanavo*, once known as the Sri Lanka Youth Dance Group in Washington DC, have come a long way since their initiation into promoting Sri Lanka's cultural heritage in the U.S. Devika Wimalkantha Maduwantha, and her sisters Manoja and Nadika Wimalkantha, also Tharani Amarawardana, Eshani Weeramunda, Shakila Balasooriya, Achala Malalasekera, Dilini de Silva and Chanika Dampagedon, comprise this group of professional dancers who grew up with a feel for cultural heritage, under the astute guidance of Mr. Dias Amarawardana, former President of the Sri Lanka Ranga Kala Kavaya in Washington DC. Director and Choreographer of *Sigiri Lalanavo*, Devika, says, "The *Sigiri*

*Lalanavo* group was trained and nurtured into precision under my guidance, for the sole purpose of uplifting our rich culture and the flamboyant style in Sri Lanka's performing arts." Their Bharathanatyam guru, Ms. Rani David, who also spoke at the event, described her enjoyment of the evening's performance as akin to rejoicing at grandchildren's achievements.

An Honored Guest at the performance, one of Sri Lanka's most popular film stars of yesteryear, Ms. Malini Fonseka, graced the occasion with her quiet, yet arresting presence, and gave away awards presented to various individuals, by the group.

What the audience was left with, at the end of the evening, was a glowing feeling of pride in the young adults on stage, and the perception that this was but the first step in a thrilling journey of professional dancing for *Sigiri Lalanavo*.

## Poultry Industry...

contd from pg 3...

Rahman and Saleque stressed the need for immediate implementation of short- and long-term strategic plans focusing on bio-security, surveillance, rescheduling of bank loans for small farmers and further involvement of the government to offset losses.

According to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, there are about 150,000 poultry farms in Bangladesh which produce 320,000 mt of meat and over five million eggs annually. Investment in the sector is estimated at close to \$2 billion, while 89 percent of people living in rural areas rear chickens at home.

### Culling

According to the government, over one million birds have been culled at 426 farms -

384 commercial and 42 backyard farms - so far. The H5N1 virus has been confirmed in 201 poultry farms -159 commercial and 42 backyard farms.

"Price hikes in poultry feed, lower prices of chicken and eggs, and dwindling demand has shaken the foundations of the poultry industry that had been growing at an astounding 20 percent [per year] since 1994," said Prof Habibur Rahman of Bangladesh Agricultural University.

He told the media there was nothing to panic about if people ate chicken meat cooked properly at 70 degrees centigrade. "Hard-boiled or deep fried eggs are also 100 percent safe. Only the unprotected poultry handlers and workers of an infected farm could be at risk, no one else," he said.

## US Releases Annual...

contd from pg 1...

for insisting upon the freedoms enshrined in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights," he said.

The report names China, the host of this year's Olympic Games, as an authoritarian country undergoing economic reform, but still denying citizens basic human rights.

Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Jonathan Farrar, says the Chinese government continues to deny fundamental freedoms.

"The reports highlight that the human rights record remained poor," he said. "There were efforts to tighten controls in some areas including on religious freedom and on the Internet.

The increasing difficulties of some human rights dissidents in China and in general the human rights record remained poor."

The report highlights Iraq and Afghanistan as countries where deadly insurgencies and weak governments have resulted in severe abuses of human rights.

In Russia the report says the centralization of power in the executive branch, corruption and other problems are eroding the government's accountability to its citizens.

The report singled out Pakistan as a country where human rights deteriorated.

"Indeed in 2007 the countries that captured the headlines were those that regressed in human rights and

.....contd to pg 7

# Domestic Violence Endemic...

contd from pg 2...

2006 the Pakistan Ministry of Women's Development has been running at least 10 crisis centres in major cities, where victims of domestic abuse or other violence receive legal, financial and psychological support, and counselling regarding their options.

Domestic violence has also been discussed in both Pakistan's provincial and national assemblies. A draft Protection Against Domestic Violence of Women and Children Act was drawn up by the Federal Law Ministry early in 2007, but has not yet been passed.

These efforts also appear to have had some positive impact on police efforts to curb domestic violence. In a high profile case in January 2007, Karachi police arrested a national sporting hero, Moin Khan, a former captain of Pakistan's cricket team, after his wife complained of being beaten by him.

He was later released on bail, but the case focused public attention on the issue and underscored that assault on wives was a crime under Pakistani law. Yet despite these developments, violence remains widespread.

### Study

A study published in June 2006 in the Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association, based on interviews with 300 women admitted to hospital for childbirth, said 80 percent reported being subjected to some kind of abuse within marriage.

At times, the violence inflicted on women takes on truly horrendous forms. The Islamabad-based Progressive Women's Association (PWA), headed by Shahnaz Bukhari, believes up to 4,000 women are burnt each year, almost always by husbands or in-laws, often as "punishment" for minor



Photo: IRIN

This woman's nose was cut off by her husband.

"offences" or for failure to bring in a sufficient dowry.

The PWA said it had collected details of nearly 8,000 such victims from March 1994 to March 2007, from three hospitals in the Rawalpindi-Islamabad area alone.

### Acid attack

Just recently in Karachi, Ameena Ali, 22, addressed a press conference at which she said her husband, Muhammad Ali, had splashed acid on her face, causing severe disfigurement and damage to her eye-sight.

Ameena, a mother of two small girls, who sought help from Madadgar, a non-governmental organisation dedicated in assisting abused women and children in Pakistan, said her husband suspected her of having extra-marital relations.

"He threw acid on her face and fled," wept Ameena's distraught mother, Kaneez Fatima. Her husband is currently in police custody, but Ameena is concerned he may attack her and his two daughters if he is released.

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Indus Times is available on all major south Asian stores & restaurants in DC, MD & VA.

# Calendar of Events

**March 16:** The Durga Temple's **monthly health clinic** is scheduled for Sunday March 16 from 10am to noon. The service include free medical consultation by doctors, blood pressure and sugar check, Indian nutrition guidelines and cholesterol check. For details 703 690 9355.

**Mar 19:** The World Affairs Council of Washington DC presents Author Series Event 'India: The Emerging Giant' on Wednesday Mar 19 from 6:30pm-8pm at 1800 K Street NW, Washington DC. The author is Dr. Arvind Panagariya – the Jagdish Bhagwati Professor of Indian Political Economy and Professor of Economics at Columbia University NY. Registration required. Details at worldaffairsdc.org.

**Mar 22:** Sandakadapahana Sunil Edirisinghe **Musical Evening** with Kalani Perera, Mahinda Bandara, Suresh Maliyadde & Hemapala Gallage on Saturday March 22 from 6:30pm at F Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, Rockville Civic Center Park, 603 Edmonston Dr Rockville MD 20851. For details slmbassyusa.org/community & Events

**March 22:** The Durga Temple at Fairfax Station, VA celebrates **Rango Ka Tyohar - Holi Mela** on Saturday March 22 from 3pm to 7pm, followed by from 7:30pm Holika Dahan, and from 8pm to 10pm Kavi Samelan. For details call 703 690 9355

**March 22-23:** The 'Yaadein Bridal Expo 2008' is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday of March 22-23 from 11am to 4pm at Fox Chase Manor 8310 Chatsworth Dr Manassas VA 20109. For details visit yaadeinweddings.com

**March 23:** The Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center is celebrating 25th anniversary on Sunday Mar 23 from 6pm to 10pm at Fairview Park Marriot 3111 Fairview Park Dr, Falls Church VA. For details visit DarAlHijrah.net or call 703 536 1030

**March 23:** The Hindu Temple of Metropolitan Washington celebrates **HOLI** in a cultural program on March 23 from 4pm to 6pm at the Auditorium - 10001 Riggs Road Adelphi MD 20783. The program includes Bhajans, Kirtan, Children's program of music & dances, arati followed by Priti Bhoj. For more info call 301 445 2165 / 301 434 1000.

**March 29:** The 'Bangladesh Association of America Inc. (BAII) cordially invites all to all community members to observe Shaheed Dibosh and celebrate Shadhinota Dibosh on Saturday March 29 from 4pm to 8pm at Potomac Community Center 11315 Falls Road, Potomac MD 20854. For details visit baaidc.com

**May 25-25:** The Bangladesh Association of America Inc.(BAAI) will be hosting the **11th North America Nazrul Confernece** in the Washington DC Metro area on the Memorial Day weekend of May 24-25 '08 at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) 9630 Gudelsky Dr, Rockville MD. For details contact the members of BAAI

**April 4:** The Durga Temple at 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA has scheduled the celebration of **Maa Gayatri Devi Murli Sthapana** from Friday April 4 to Sunday April 6 with several activities throughout the weekend, and invites all to join on this special occasion. For details call 703 690 9355.

**April 6:** The Sikh Human Development Foundation cordially invites all to a delightful **Fund-Raising Dinner** to support higher education of bright and needy students on Sunday April 6 from 6pm at Sheraton Hotel 8661 Leesburg Pike Vienna VA 22182. For details visit: sikhhumandevlopment.org/

**April 6:** The Durga Temple at 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA is organizing **Navratri Program** from Sunday April 6 to Monday April 14 with several activities on the evenings during this time. To know more call 703 690 9355

**Thursdays:** The Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi Bhajan / Kirtan is conducted at Durga Temple 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA every Thursdays from 7pm to 8pm.

**Saturdays:** The Durga Temple & Chinmaya Mission welcomes everyone to **Bhagavad Gita Satsangh** every Saturday at the Durga Temple 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA from 10:30am to noon. For further information contact coordinators at 703 793 8855 / 703 646 5924.

To list the events about your community in the DC Metro area: call 202 683 4109

## Bush Pays Tribute ...

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ongoing commitment to the Democracy movement in Burma led by Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Aung San Suu Kyi has never wavered," he said. "Her courage and her writings have inspired millions. And in so doing, they have put fear into the

hearts of the leaders of the Burmese junta."

Among those attending the event at the White House were women who hold key posts in the president's cabinet, serve in Congress, and represent their countries as ambassadors in Washington.

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## 'Survive to Five' Campaign...

contd from pg 3...

tools needed to save the lives of millions of infants and young children each year are already in place.

"We are not inventing new science, new technologies, we do not need new vaccines," he said. "Everything we need to achieve this is there and affordable. And the governments of Bangladesh and India and Pakistan and Ethiopia and Nigeria have to take the lead, but the donors have to fill in the gaps."

As for raising public awareness, acclaimed actress and two-time Academy Award winner Jessica Lange came to Addis Ababa for the launch of the Survive to Five campaign. Lange says her interest in the campaign is as a mother of three children.

"What I would wish is for every mother and every father to experience the joy of watching your children grow up," said

Jessica Lange. "I know from the work that Save the Children is doing is that this is not a reality for millions of parents around the globe. Today alone, 1,000 children under five will die here in Ethiopia. They will die of preventable causes, and no mother or father regardless of where they live or where the child is born should have to bear the grief of losing a child from a death that could have been prevented."

Save the Children USA estimates that of the 10 million children under five who die each year, 376,000 are in Ethiopia. Of those, 120,000 die at birth.

The United States, through its Agency for International Development, is the largest bilateral aid donor to most of the countries with the highest child mortality rates.

Overall, USAID will contribute more than \$500 million in aid to Ethiopia this year.

## Domestic ...

contd from pg 5...

"Such cases are not unusual in our society," I.A. Rehman, director of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, told IRIN.

A lack of safe shelters for women victims of domestic violence, limited awareness of the issue and the absence of specific legislation all compound the problem.

The result is that thousands of women are victims of severe violence within their homes, with most cases going unreported and the culprits consequently escaping any punishment for their crime.

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Guest Column:

## Fashion for Men

Being fashionable is not limited to women's world but, it extends to the men's world too. Today more and more men are happy to experiment with the new trends thus, fashion is becoming an indispensable part of their lives.

Now that the spring is around the corner soon will be time to put back the heavy winter clothes and say hello to the light weight jackets and sweaters. There has been a sea change in sweater styles this year. Simple polo neck sweater are the 'in thing' along with the classic V-Necks. There are still more choices like Pull Over, Zippers etc. There is hardly any need for men to limit themselves to dull shades when Bright colors are available as they make them feel and look younger!

These days short coats and Jackets are extremely in fashion, when teamed up with a light color shirt, a Khaki or jeans make an excellent casual look. You can pep it up with a smart matching muffler. Only suggestion here is to stay away from loud patterns as they tend to be distracting.

Next important thing are the shoes! Shoes and other accessories are

just as important in defining the kind of man you are as are your clothes. Choose something classic instead of heavy, chunky shoes which are now a thing of past. Make sure your socks match with your trousers. Refrain from wearing bright colored socks.

And please do not carry a backpack to work! Backpacks do not go with office attire at all instead carry a messenger bag for papers, cell phone etc. A nice Gym bag would be ideal to carry gym clothes if you like to hit the gym after work.

The fashion mantra for men is that they should experiment with colors and styles which have not been generally followed by men. Make your choice with respect to what suits you. Invest in clothes that make you feel good, smart, attractive, confident and comfortable because clothes even if they are in fashion and do not equip you with this are of no use. (ruchigupta829@gmail.com)



Ruchi K. VA

Word of Wisdom:

## What is Emotional Pain? And how should one see it?

It's true that each one of us go through emotional pain at some part of our life.

But how one sees and solves his pain varies from person to person.

If a person is successful in solving all his road blocks and emerge victorious, we call him a 'Hero'.

On the other hand, if a person succumbs to his obstacles and accepts failure as part of his life/fortune, we call him a 'coward'.

In a situation of emotional distress, you usually have two options: To face the problem or not. Processing a problem means you are facing it. Suppressing the problem means you are not. There's a big difference between the two.

Processing is to the mind what digesting is to the stomach. If your digestive system can't handle

certain foods, you have to stop eating them, otherwise you become sick.

Similarly, if you find yourself in a situation where you can't cope, don't just sit there taking it all in. It's better to say something right there and then. To hold things inside will not allow you to have a healthy mind.

What you take in will be indigestible and it will be obvious to others that you are having a problem.

Our ability to cope is hampered by thinking too much about other people. This causes problems in the mental digestive system. The best mental 'Antacid' is in-depth spiritual study. This, plus a regular practice of self-awareness, penetrates the mind very deeply, dislodging emotional pain at its roots. Only then can emotion be purified, refined, and ultimately transformed.

(Contributed by Lakshmi Chegu, VA. She can be reached at: rch\_amy@yahoo.com)

## US Releases Annual...

contd from pg 4...

Secretary Rice says the human rights report was written with the confidence that no corner of the Earth is permanently condemned to tyranny. "Pakistan, under the state of emergency, suspended the constitution and approximately 6,000 opposition political party workers, human rights advocates, lawyers and judges were arrested. By the end of the year the state of emergency was rescinded and most detainees released."

Secretary Rice says the human rights report was written with the confidence that no corner of the Earth is permanently condemned to tyranny.

"Change may, indeed, change will take time, but change will come," she said. "As long as citizens around the world champion the universal values of human rights there is hope and we in the United States continue to believe that it is our duty

## Is the World Running...

Continued from pg 8...

### When the End is Near

If oil begins to run out, most analysts agree that the consequences would be dire for the world's economy and its political stability. But Rice University's Kenneth Medlock reasons that the consequences depend on the rate of depletion.

"So if there's a very slow, gradual decline, then that's not as bad as if we sort of fall off a cliff. If we sort of run out of oil very quickly, then there are pretty large adjustment costs in the sense that countries like China, India, the U.S. — which is the world's largest

oil consumer — really have to adjust very rapidly to maintain even the status quo," says Medlock. "And that is probably not likely to happen. What's more likely to happen, if we run out of oil quickly, is a pretty deep global recession."

Other experts say soaring oil prices and a diminishing supply will likely encourage exploration and a shift to cheaper alternative fuels such as coal and natural gas. What will run out, says geologist Eric Cheney, is cheap oil. He says oil will never go back to ten dollars-a-barrel, but it will be there - - for those who can afford it.

## Rights Groups, Religious...

contd from pg 1...

Osman. "And we know the importance of this institute and the member states are all the Muslim countries around the world." Osman says pressure must be applied from the summit in the direction of the Sudanese government.

"They have a voice and they can clearly speak to the government of Sudan and advise them to stop killing their own citizens," he said. "They have influence over the government of Sudan and if they are willing to use this influence we will see an end to the conflict."

Activists blame the government for backing Arab militias that have rampaged across Darfur, killing tens of thousands of people, and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee. Sudanese government officials deny they target civilians.

The participants in Sunday's talks signed a declaration stating all sides to the Darfur conflict bear responsibility for the widespread abuses of humanitarian and human rights law.

A religious leader in Darfur, Allami Mahmoud Ousmane, says the people of Darfur feel the Muslim world is neglecting them.

He says he is here not only to remind the leaders of the OIC but also ordinary individuals in the Islamic community, what he calls the umma, that they are not sufficiently addressing the human suffering in Darfur, to a point that victims can feel they are concerned.

The president of an African human rights group called RADDHO, Alioun Tine, says the umma must act on the problem of Darfur.

"We cannot understand in a country like Sudan, when there is a conflict between Muslims, and we see

to support these courageous men and women."

The U.S. Congress requires the State Department to submit the annual report so lawmakers can evaluate the human rights record of any country being considered for financial aid. (VOA/3/11)

the indifference of the umma, the Islamic umma," said Tine. "I think that it is not acceptable. I think the time is up to end this kind of indifference."

But another human rights activist was not optimistic. He says he doubts that the leaders gathering in Dakar will seriously take up the question of Darfur.

Habott Sid Ahmed, head of a human rights group in Mauritania, says he does not believe that what he calls "this club" gathering in Dakar in the name of Islam will take serious decisions on Darfur.

But, he concludes, activists must continue to call on them to ensure protection of human rights around the world.

### Exchange Rate In South Asia

| Currency / US\$1   | Buying / Selling |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Taka (Bangladesh)  | 68.57 68.58      |
| Ngultrum (Bhutan)  | 39.65 40.75      |
| Rupee (India)      | 40.47 00.00      |
| Rufiyaa (Maldives) | 63.35 63.35      |
| Rupee (Nepal)      | 64.75 65.35      |
| Rupee (Pakistan)   | 62.65 62.85      |
| Rupee (Sri Lanka)  | 103.91 107.98    |

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### Embassy Holidays

#### Bangladesh:

March 21: Eid-I-Miladunnabi

March 26: Independence &

National Day

#### India:

March 06: Maha Shivaratri

March 21: Milad-Un-Nabi

#### Nepal:

March 21: Falgun Poornima (Holi)

#### Pakistan:

March 21: Eid Milad-un-Nabi

March 23: Pakistan Day

#### Sri Lanka:

May 19: Vesak Full Moon Poya Day

Please verify with the respective Embassies for further confirmation.

# Is the World Running Out of Oil?

By Aida F. Akl, Washington, D.C. March 5

Soaring global oil prices, and increased demand and production have some analysts worrying that the availability of oil could begin to diminish in a few decades. Others say the rate of depletion is so gradual that oil could be a source of energy for centuries to come.

The idea that oil reserves are finite was broached by U.S. geologist M. King Hubbert, who in 1956 theorized that oil production peaks before falling sharply as the amount of oil in a particular field declines.

Industry experts building on Hubbert's work predict that global oil production will begin to fall by three or four percent within a few decades. One of them is journalist David Strahan, a trustee for the London-based Oil Depletion Analysis Center, a non-profit organization that raises awareness about the issue.

"Peak oil is not about running out of the last barrel of oil on the planet. 'Peak oil' is so-called because the expected profile of global oil production on a graph looks like a fairly symmetrical mountain, so therefore it has a peak in the middle. But what it really means is that we are accustomed at the moment for oil production to keep on growing every year, but that growth will hit a peak and then go into decline so that, in the coming years, we are going to have a steadily shrinking

oil supply," says Strahan. "It's almost certain that peak oil will happen before 2020. There are people who believe it's happening right now. I am not sure about that, but I cannot see any set of circumstances in which the world does not hit peak oil before 2020."

## Tight Supplies

Some analysts accuse oil-producing countries of keeping supplies tight despite rising demand to maximize their profits as record prices surge past \$100 per barrel. Others say a weaker U.S. dollar against other currencies has contributed to the price surge, particularly in the United States. Kenneth Medlock, an economist and energy expert at Rice University in Texas, says that, and supply and demand, are shaping today's oil market.

"Production and consumption are basically the same because the market has to balance. But global crude oil production, the last number I saw was on the order of 84-and-a-half-million barrels a day. In the past decade, demand has risen faster than it has at any point in time in the previous 30, 40 years," says Medlock. "So it's been rising very rapidly and supply was rising with it. But in the past three years, when we've seen this very rapid run-up in prices, we've also seen supply not continue to increase. And so

basically what's been happening is the pressure is there for demand to continue to rise, but because the supply is ever more difficult to get to, we've seen the price go up with it."

Some analysts maintain that after large oil fields are explored, it becomes harder and more expensive to drill deeper for increasingly smaller amounts of oil. But chemical and biomolecular engineer Michael Economides of the University of Houston says oil will not run out anytime soon.

"The first time that people said we were running out of oil was in 1866, four years after the first purposeful well was drilled in Pennsylvania. The whole concept that we are running out of oil has been repeated on at least six major occasions in the last 150-some years. Peak will happen," says Economides. "But my calculations suggest that peak oil may happen around 2040, perhaps 2050. And then after that, it will linger on for decades — perhaps two, three centuries. We are still going to be producing commercial quantities of oil."

## Technology to the Rescue?

Economides says technology and new drilling techniques have extended the world's known oil reserves. As a result, many experts say estimates for oil reserves have been rising, with this

year's global reserves estimated at one-and-a-third trillion barrels.

"The introduction of modern geo-sciences has probably added 20 percent [more oil] to the United States' reserves. Fifteen years ago, it was a good strike if we drilled ten wells and one well was good. Today, seven out of ten drilled wells are commercial successes. All of that is because of technology," says Economides. "We have gone below 10-thousand feet of water, which would have been unthinkable 15 years ago. So all of these things extend reserves and world production capacity."

Even if the world reaches a point when it can no longer extend the life of proven oil reserves, Economides says necessity will lead to the development of energy alternatives. Geologist Eric Cheney of the University of Washington in Seattle agrees. He says the global economy will cope with shortages before oil runs out.

"Science, technology and economics are going to provide more oil. And we're going to start manufacturing oil from non-conventional sources like the tar sands of Alberta [in Canada], possibly even the shale of the western United States. And with increased money, we can afford to produce oil that we could not pump out of the ground before," says Cheney.

....contd to pg 7

## Sri Lanka: Tough Times Continue For Jaffna Residents

Colombo March 10 (IRIN): The evening of 11 August 2006 is etched in the minds of those who live in the northern Jaffna peninsula. At around 5.30pm, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the front lines that separated government-controlled Jaffna and areas under Tiger control farther south. The onslaught prompted the closure of the A-9 highway, the only land link between the peninsula and the rest of the island.

About 100km of the A-9 runs through LTTE-controlled areas and it has not opened for civilian traffic since, leaving Jaffna residents isolated.

"The A-9 closure has been the key date that changed life in Jaffna," Mirak Raheem, a human rights researcher from the Colombo-based Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), told IRIN. "Everything else that followed stemmed from the closure."

Jaffna's 632,000 civilian population now depends on the limited number of ships and aircraft for commodities and other essentials such as medicine, according to the Jaffna Food Security Bulletin, January 2008, released by the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Children's Fund

(UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on 18 February.

However, compared with 2006, the situation on the peninsula has improved. "The very good cooperation between local authorities and international agencies working in the peninsula has meant there is a wide availability of food and shelter material," Neil Buhne, the UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka, who recently toured Jaffna, told IRIN.

## Price fluctuations

"Almost all essential food items are available in Jaffna; however, open market commodity prices fluctuate depending on supply and other considerations," the Jaffna Food Security Bulletin stated, adding that despite prices being slightly higher than in the rest of the country, they had dropped compared with August 2007.

"Most food stocks in the peninsula are sufficient for three months," the report stated. Eight cargo ships were transporting supplies to Jaffna and "in total 30,000MTs per month can be transported by these cargo vessels, more than the total monthly full requirement for food and other essential items of 25,000MTs per month". The report also stated that

326,000 people in Jaffna benefited from government and WFP relief programmes.

However, Raheem remains concerned that the security situation could deteriorate again very swiftly. "Things are very tense, especially after 16 January [when the Sri Lankan government ended the 2002 ceasefire agreement with the Tamil Tigers], and there is an overwhelming military presence," Raheem told IRIN.

## Economic challenges

"There are still significant challenges to overcome," Buhne said. "As long as Jaffna remains this isolated, there is a very limited chance of its economy recovering."

"All road movement by civilians is subjected to the military convoys and there are parts of the peninsula where civilians are not allowed called high security zones; these two combined are definitely impacting on the mobility of agencies," Jeevan Theeyagaraja, executive director of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, an umbrella group of local and international relief organisations working in Sri Lanka, told IRIN.

"The high security zones, curfews and road closures all have restricted movement one way or the

other," Gordon Weiss, chief of communications at UNICEF in Sri Lanka, told IRIN.

Other agencies said they had worked their routines around the movement of the convoys and other restrictions, in order to minimize delays.

"Work is not affected if you plan your own movements not to clash with the convoys and curfews," Menaca Calyneratne, spokeswoman for Save the Children UK, told IRIN. "We take alternate routes and pre-plan the work so that they don't clash with any restrictions."

The Sri Lankan military said the restrictions were in place for the safety of the civilians and that extra care was taken not to cause undue delays. "When Claymore mines and other attacks targeted the military in Jaffna, ordinary civilians also got caught and killed," military spokesperson Brig Udaya Nanayakkara told IRIN.

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