

### **Defence ministry taken to court**

**Minivan News, 3 February 2009**

3 February 2009 Ahmed NaishThe mother of 19-year-old Evan Naseem, who was beaten to death in 2003 by prison guards, has successfully filed a lawsuit to sue the defence ministry for damages. The case, which was accepted by civil court today, will be the first of its kind in the history of the Maldives, according to the family lawyer, Abdullah Haseen

### **President asks clergy to return**

**Daily News, 3 February 2009**

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday requested members of the clergy in the conflict areas in the North to return to Government controlled areas along with the trapped civilians as the Government has taken all measures to cater to their welfare. The President made this appeal when the Papal Pro Nuncio in Sri Lanka Monsignor Mario Zenari called on him at Temple Trees yesterday. The President who requested Monsignor Mario Zenari to convey this message to members of the clergy in the conflict areas said that if they heeded this request and returned to the Government controlled areas it would greatly help the Government to succeed in its efforts to liberate the people in the North from the clutches of terrorism

### **Trade Imbalance with India; Govt works on trade boost plan**

**Daily Star, 3 February 2009**

The new government is set to renew trade relations with India to bring down huge trade imbalance of \$2 billion between the two neighbouring countries. Government sources said a comprehensive study is underway to draw up a joint trade and investment agreement to allow businessmen from the two countries to invest in businesses on both sides of the border. The government is also working out a strategy on the issue of giving transit to India upholding country's interests. "We shall have to discuss the issue with India thoroughly before making any decision in this regard," a senior cabinet minister told The Daily Star wishing anonymity

### **Talks decide to Strengthen Security**

**Kuensel, 3 February 2009**

2 February, 2009 - The government of West Bengal state, India and Bhutan will identify vulnerable entry and exit points and provide extra vigilance in view of the infiltration by the Indian insurgent groups and the Communist Party of Bhutan. This was decided during the 19th border districts coordination meeting held in Thimphu earlier this week. The officer in charge along the Indo-Bhutan border towns would strictly access these points and strengthen the security. Officials from Bhutan lead by the head of the Law and Order Bureau under the home ministry, Karma T Namgyal, and seven high level officials from India lead by Jalpaiguri Division Commissioner B.L Meena attended the two-day meeting at hotel Druk

### **Cross-border nexus confirmed**

**Kuensel, 4 February 2009**

Bhutan and India have agreed to further strengthen and enhance security arrangements. This comes after the Indian delegation for the recent Bhutan-India border meeting said that they had information on links between the Communist

Party of Bhutan and Indian insurgent groups like ULFA and NDFB. The delegation has also said that there were links as well between the Gorkha Jan Mukti party of Darjeeling and the Communist Party of Bhutan. The Communist Party of Bhutan has claimed responsibility for the recent bombings and terrorist activities in Bhutan. "During the process of discussion, the inspector general of police for north Bengal, Kundan Lal Tamta, personally cautioned us in regard to the linkages and the corroborations that the Communist Party of Bhutan are having with insurgent groups of India, especially ULFA, NDFB and others," said Karma T Namgyal, director of the bureau of law and order (home ministry) and leader of the Bhutanese delegation to the border meeting

### **Terror funding falls, militants paid less**

**Asian Age, 4 February 2009**

Feb. 3: There is a sharp decline in the amounts paid by terror outfits Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba to their "mujahids" for carrying out fidayeen (suicide) attacks in India and other parts of the world. According to the latest intelligence inputs, the LeT is not paying more than Rs 2 lakhs as a one-time payment to its militants, especially Pakistani nationals, for fidayeen attacks in India. Earlier, the LeT used to pay Rs 2.5 lakhs to Rs 3 lakhs for a fidayeen attack. Indian nationals trained at LeT terror camps located in Pakistan are now paid Rs 1 lakh. They used to get Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakhs, said a high-ranking Intelligence Bureau official

### **Chinese govt. waives duty on Maldivian exports**

**Minivan News, 5 February 2009**

5 February 2009 Ibrahim MohamedThe Chinese government will cut tariffs on all Maldivian exports, the ministry of economic development revealed on Thursday. The two governments signed an agreement to waive duty for Maldivian exports in April 2006 but the agreement did not come into effect until Sunday, according to Ahmed Wafir, director of the ministry. Wafir said China had agreed not to levy duty on 267 items, mainly fish products and spices

### **Fear is the key for UNMIN discards**

**Himalayan Times, 5 February 2009**

Fear is the key for a section of Maoist-affiliated People's Liberation Army (PLA) combatants, who have been disqualified by the United Nations' Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). The hapless lot is battling twin fears. First, the ignominy of being denied berth in the integration process. Second, whether the PLA fighters' loved ones will be happy to accept them back into family fold. "We waged a decade-long People's War. All these years, we have been away from our families. We don't know whether the society will accept us after this long gap," said a woman PLA combatant. Life has come a full circle for many of the 5,000 PLA fighters of the Seventh Division, who are housed in several camps in Kailali. At a conservative estimate, the home away from home has seen the birth of around 400 bundles of joy in the past few years. Five babies were born yesterday alone

### **Cabinet meet put off till today:UML seeks more time to discuss ordinance issue; GPK snubs PM**

**Himalayan Times, 5 February 2009**

The scheduled cabinet meeting could not be held today amid growing differences

within the ruling coalition's ranks over the introduction of ordinances. Ruling ally CPN-UML pleaded for putting off the meeting till tomorrow, seeking more time for another round of intra-party consultations over the thorny issue. Earlier, three meetings had come a cropper over lack of consensus

### **Taliban torch 10 NATO supply trucks**

**Daily Times, 5 February 2009**

JAMRUD/LANDIKOTAL: Army engineers on Wednesday built a temporary alternate route for traffic, including NATO trucks bound for Afghanistan – a day after the Taliban blew up a key bridge in Khyber Agency – as suspected Taliban torched 10 containers they thought were loaded with NATO supplies near Landikotal. According to an ISPR statement, the army engineers also continued repairing the bridge destroyed by the Taliban in Khyber Agency's Ali Masjid area

### **Give up hostilities, India to LTTE, SL Govt**

**Indian Express, 5 February 2009**

New Delhi: Voicing concern over the loss of lives in embattled Sri Lanka, India on Wednesday asked the LTTE to lay down arms and come to the negotiating table while urging Colombo to suspend hostilities. "We are deeply anguished at the loss of lives. We are not happy that the Sri Lankan Government has resumed hostilities. It is for both sides to cease hostilities," Union Home Minister P Chidambaram said

### **52 dead, 80 injured in Sri Lanka**

**Hindu, 5 February 2009**

COLOMBO: Amid confirmation by a United Nations representative here that at least 52 people were killed and 80 wounded in continued fighting between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE and a cluster bomb targeted the only functional hospital in the fast shrinking area under the control of the Tigers, Sri Lanka Co-Chairs on Wednesday appealed to the government and the LTTE to declare a 'temporary no-fire period.'

### **Cooperate with India in probe, Ban tells Pakistan**

**Hindu, 5 February 2009**

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who arrived here on Wednesday on a day's visit, called on Pakistan to cooperate "fully" with India in the investigation of the Mumbai attacks, and urged both countries to resolve the Kashmir issue and other differences through dialogue. Addressing a joint press conference with Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, the top U.N. official said he had "urged that the Pakistan government should have a full investigation into the [Mumbai attacks], and fully co-operate with the Indian government" in the matter

### **India shifting to urban centres**

**Hindu, 5 February 2009**

NEW DELHI: Fifty per cent of India's population is expected to be urban-based by 2030. This projection takes into account an expected 8 and 9 per cent growth rate of the population over the next decade and anticipated shifts from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations and from rural to non-rural employment, according to a report, India: Urban Poverty Report 2009. The report was released on Tuesday by

Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Minister Kumari Selja

**JSC "punished" judge: Suood**  
**Minivan News, 7 February 2009**

5 February 2009 Ahmed NaishThe transfer of a civil court judge to a lower court by the judicial services commission has been described by a prominent human rights lawyer "as a punishment". At a press briefing today, Husnu Suood alleged the commission transferred Judge Shuaib Hussein Zakariya to juvenile court to penalise him for comments made at a meeting with the commission. A member of the commission had "personally" confirmed this, said Suood, adding he could not specify the nature of Shuaib's comments

**Base of Tiger chief's bodyguards captured**  
**Island, 7 February 2009**

Army's 57 Division yesterday afternoon captured a building complex in Visvadamu East from where the Radha Regiment, which provides LTTE leader Prabhakaran with personal security, had operated. The LTTE leader's bodyguards had left the place a long time ago. Army sources said there were over one hundred weapons of all types used for training Prabhakaran's bodyguards

**Suicide attack on trailer in Jamrud**  
**Dawn, 7 February 2009**

LANDI KOTAL, Feb 6: Seven people, three of them children, were injured when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into a trailer on the main Peshawar-Torkham highway on Friday. Officials said the bomber struck near Teddi Bazaar in Jamrud at about 8:15am when the Khasadar personnel signalled his speeding jeep to stop. The driver rammed his jeep into an empty trailer returning from Afghanistan. The resulting blast destroyed the jeep while the trailer overturned and fell off the road. The blast also created a crater in the road. A Khasadar man, three children and three passers-by were injured

**Zardari says victory against militants only option**  
**Dawn, 7 February 2009**

PESHAWAR, Feb 6: President Asif Ali Zardari said on Friday that parts of the NWFP were not facing a simple law and order situation but an insurgency by some trained elements. He was addressing a meeting held at the Governor's House to brief him on law and order situation and development activities in Fata and the NWFP. This was Mr Zardari's first visit to Peshawar after his election as president

**Prabhakaran feasted, others ate crumbs**  
**Asian Age, 7 February 2009**

Feb. 6: A "menu card" seized by the Sri Lankan Army from LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran's hideout offered a rare glimpse into the Tiger chief's dietary preferences. It revealed, the Army said, that while the regular Tiger cadres were poorly fed, Prabhakaran and his confidants enjoyed sumptuous meals. The Sri Lankan Army recovered the menu card from a palatial mansion reportedly frequented by Prabhakaran at Visvadamu, in the jungles of Mullaittivu

### **US offers to assist in manning sea borders**

**Daily Star, 9 February 2009**

The US will assist Bangladesh in protecting its mineral-rich sea areas in the Bay of Bengal, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard A Boucher said yesterday. But Boucher said the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (Tifa) provides some basics and principles for further discussions to see what further steps could be taken to improve bilateral trade and investment. "Truly, it is not an issue for us right now; surely not an issue for Bangladesh," he said at a news briefing at the Zia International Airport, wrapping up his two-day official visit to Bangladesh

### **'Energy Ring' to embrace SAARC**

**Kuensel, 9 February 2009**

If SAARC's 'Energy Ring' plan sees the light of day, Bhutan will, in the not too distant future, export electricity to all SAARC countries, have gas pipelines, set up its own compressed natural gas technology and wind farms. This came up during the recent meet of SAARC energy ministers in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on January 29. The ministers had agreed to enhance and strengthen the security, availability and reliability of energy in south Asia through the concept of an 'Energy Ring'. Energy Ring refers to the exchange of renewable as well as non-renewable energy and technology among the SAARC countries. "However, specific decisions are yet to be worked out," Lyonpo Khandu told Kuensel

### **Obama puts brake on troops surge in Afghanistan**

**News, 9 February 2009**

WASHINGTON: United States President Barack Obama has demanded that the US defence chiefs review their strategy in Afghanistan before going ahead with a troop surge. There is concern among senior Democrats that the US military is preparing to send up to 30,000 extra troops without a coherent plan or exit strategy. The Pentagon was set to announce the deployment of 17,000 extra soldiers and marines last week but Robert Gates, the US defence secretary, postponed the decision after questions from Obama. The US president was concerned by a lack of strategy at his first meeting with Gates and the US joint chiefs of staff last month in "the tank", the secure conference room in the Pentagon. He said: "What's the endgame?" and did not receive a convincing answer

### **Afghanistan will be 'much tougher' than Iraq: Holbrooke**

**News, 9 February 2009**

MUNICH: The United States warned its allies on Sunday that fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan could prove tougher than in Iraq and appealed, along with Britain, for more troops and equipment. US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke insisted that a new approach was required to turn the strife-torn country around, involving all of Afghanistan's neighbours and in particular Pakistan. "It is like no other problem we have confronted, and in my view it's going to be much tougher than Iraq," he said at an international security conference in Germany. "It is going to be a long, difficult struggle."

### **Do not "politicise" judiciary: JSC**

### **Minivan News, 10 February 2009**

9 February 2009 Ahmed NaishThe judicial services commission (JSC) has strongly condemned those who have "spread misinformation" about the commission, undermining the independence of the courts while "the judiciary was in its infancy". A press release issued yesterday accused unnamed parties of "quite clearly" trying to gain control of the judiciary for political purposes. The title of the press release said it intended to "reveal the truth" behind various allegations recently reported in the press

### **18 parties urge PM to summon House** **Kathmandu Post, 10 February 2009**

KATHMANDU, Feb 9 - Accusing the ruling United CPN (Maoist) of not being serious about its commitment to democratic ideals, 18 political parties on Monday urged Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal to summon the fifth session of the Legislature-Parliament immediately and table the recently promulgated ordinances for discussion. At an all-party meeting called by Nepali Congress (NC) to discuss current political affairs and government ordinances, political leaders univocally flayed the government decision saying its "style" and "tendency" to govern through ordinances would weaken democracy

### **Bomber kills 28 in Lanka** **Asian Age, 10 February 2009**

Feb. 9: An LTTE woman suicide bomber posing as a civilian blew herself up at a checkpoint for refugees fleeing Sri Lanka's war zone, killing at least 20 Army personnel and eight civilians. About 24 soldiers and 40 civilians sustained injuries. The suicide bomber had mingled with the civilians to arrive at a refugee camp at Surantharapuram, north of Visvamadu in Mullaittivu, on Monday morning. The soldiers were to screen the civilians before sending them to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) further south

### **Kidnapped Indian in Afghanistan dead** **Hindu, 10 February 2009**

NEW DELHI: Simon Paranthaman (39), kidnapped in Afghanistan for ransom, is dead, according to official sources here. "We have lost him," they said. Paranthaman, who hails from a village near Kallakurichi in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu, was abducted along with two Afghans in October last from the Herat province in western Afghanistan. He is survived by wife Vasanthi, daughter Nirmala (10) and son Ajit (8).

### **PM urges PLA to be patient; Says integration a few months away** **Kathmandu Post, 13 February 2009**

NAWALPARASI, Feb 12 - Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Thursday appealed to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to support the peace process and decisions made by the Army Integration Special Committee (AISC). He said PLA integration would be completed "in a few months." Dahal said PLA would no longer be under the Maoists as per the interim constitution and would be directly under the aegis of AISC. Inaugurating the 14th anniversary of the Maoist armed rebellion and the 8th anniversary of PLA formation, Dahal said AISC has already speeded up the process to rehabilitate and integrate PLA. "I believe the PLA will not make any excuse and will accept AISC's decisions without any conditions." He added: "It is just a matter of

a few months now," said Dahal. "The last meeting (of AISC) has already decided to draft concrete working guidelines for PLA integration."

### **Blame game begins over minister's enclave delay**

**Kuensel, 13 February 2009**

12 February, 2009-The Nu 455 million minister's quarters in Motithang were supposed to be completed by 2008 end, but signs are that it may take yet another year. Officials want to penalise the contractors. National housing and development corporation (NHDC) officials say that a penalty will be imposed according to the contract clause for the delay. Contractors, however, blame project officials for delaying the hand-over of ready-made doors and windows ordered from Malaysia. "The doors and windows were to be handed over to the contractors on October 2007, but was done instead in September 2008," said the contractors

### **Dhaka says no to IMF support offer**

**Daily Star, 13 February 2009**

IMF offers Bangladesh support in its efforts to offset any negative impact the country may face due to the global financial crisis, but Bangladesh says it does not need such assistance right now. IMF Director of the Asia and Pacific region Anoop Singh at a press briefing yesterday said IMF has increased its assistance globally and is ready to help Bangladesh. A close dialogue will be maintained over the coming months, he added. Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed told journalists: "IMF has proposed to give assistance if there is any pressure on balance of payment. However, we have said our overall economic situation is still strong. So we don't need assistance at the moment." The central bank governor added the IMF proposal might be considered if any negative impact is found after getting the statistics of January and February

### **Govt. promises 'province of opportunity' in North**

**Island, 13 February 2009**

With major ground battles on the eastern flank in the final stages the government yesterday expressed confidence that re-settlement of civilians in the war ravaged areas could start as early next month. Senior presidential advisor Basil Rajapaksa said 20 per cent of the displaced would be moved back to their villages before end of April. In an interview with The Island, the MP said that the government had launched "a cohesive four-stage plan" to restore normalcy in the Northern Province

### **Dramatic reduction in Maldives' infant mortality**

**Minivan News, 13 February 2009**

11 February 2009 Ahmed NaishEvery hour of every day in South Asia, 22 mothers die in child birth, according to an editorial by a UNICEF regional director for South Asia. The opening statement of Dan Toole's editorial makes for grim reading as he notes that nothing can be as "brutal as when a birth brings death, instead of life". The high rate of maternal mortality, he further writes, leads to orphaned babies who are themselves at higher risk of death

**Corrupt unionism starts to creep up; AL MP, pro-BNP union backing opportunist group in Titas**

**Daily Star, 14 February 2009**

Unruly trade unionism that systematically drained out thousands of crore taka in the past few decades and protected plunderers of national resources is creeping back into Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (TGTDC) as the new government took office last month. Awami League lawmaker Israfil Alam, who once used to be a meter reader, is allegedly patronising a group of 30-40 people who are staging showdowns at Titas Bhaban in Karwan Bazar every day since last month, sending a wave of chill among TGTDC officials and employees.

**LTTE fired at bus, says Colombo**

**Hindu, 15 February 2009**

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan military on Saturday accused the LTTE of attacking a bus carrying civilians with a hand grenade and small arms fire killing one and injuring over 13 at Pulliyankualam in Wannai. The Defence Ministry said the bus was transporting a group of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) — who had recently fled from the LTTE clutches in Wannai — from Kilinochchi to Vavuniya. A 60-year-old mother of two was killed while 4 children and 9 elderly people were among the injured

**Suspects not produced in Pakistan court**

**Hindu, 15 February 2009**

ISLAMABAD: Contrary to expectation, Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency has failed to produce in court the suspects in the Mumbai attacks two days after the government announced the registering of a first information report against them and declared six of them to be in its custody. The case was registered on Thursday. It was widely anticipated that the six would be produced in an anti-terrorist court in Rawalpindi on Friday, in keeping with the rule that suspects must be produced 24 hours after their arrest. But that did not happen, and they were not produced on Saturday either

**Christians in Bhutan**

**Kuensel, 15 February 2009**

14 February, 2009 - A Christian Rights group, Open Doors, ranked Bhutan 11 on a list of top 50 persecuting countries of Christians released on February 5, 2009. On February 6, unaware of such a ranking, Bhutanese Christians, mostly adolescents and young adults, of the various churches in Thimphu, congregated for a meeting on drug abuse at a building located in the heart of the capital, Hong Kong market. The meeting of about 80 Christians began with the singing of a few Christian hymns, followed by a sermon by a Bhutanese pastor, then a talk on the causes and solutions of drug abuse by youth, both practical and religious, and finally ending with a prayer for those affected by drug abuse. The congregation then had some tea and gradually dispersed, returning to their private lives. Seemingly absent was any indication that this particular group of people was being subjected to the sort of ill treatment reported by the Christian Rights group. There is no reason to fear. Bhutan's

Constitution guarantees freedom of religion

**Recruitment row UNMIN's doing: Deuba**  
**Kathmandu Post, 15 February 2009**

POKHARA, Feb 14 - Senior leader of the Nepali Congress Sher Bahadur Deuba has accused the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) of making an issue out of the Nepal Army's recruitment process. Speaking at a programme organised by the Kaski chapter of the Press Union in Pokhara, the NC leader also blamed Defence Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa for dragging the Nepal Army (NA) into controversy. "The UNMIN made uncalled-for remarks over the recruitment process, which blew the recruitment issue out of proportion," he said

**Orders party activists to stand ready PM: Another revolution not far**  
**Kathmandu Post, 15 February 2009**

KATHMANDU, Feb 14 - Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has directed cadres of the Unified CPN (Maoist) to stand ready for another revolution. "The constitution-making process will not last forever. We have to be ready for a different situation," Dahal said at a function held by the Unified (Maoist)-aligned All Nepal Trade Union Federation in the capital on Saturday. The revolution in Nepal is at a critical phase as we are taking the revolution forward by institutionalising past achievements, the chairman of the Maoist party said, appealing to cadres of his party to be ready for future challenges

**Time runs out fast for ratification**  
**Daily Star, 15 February 2009**

The House might have to race against time to ratify the ordinances placed on January 25 as two-thirds of the constitution-stipulated 30 days have already passed without a single one tabled as bill. As many as 122 ordinances promulgated during the immediate past caretaker government's tenure will cease to have effect on February 24 if not ratified by the legislature. Till yesterday, Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat did not receive notice from any minister of plans to introduce an ordinance as bill. Even if a minister moves today, he will not be able to pilot his bill before February 22 unless the speaker suspends the rules of procedure provision that requires a seven days' notice before introducing a government bill

**Government rejects British special envoy**  
**Daily News, 15 February 2009**

Conveying the Cabinet's decision on Wednesday to reject the appointment of former Defence Secretary Des Brown as a special envoy to Sri Lanka, the Government yesterday informed Britain their unilateral decision was in breach of the accepted principles governing international relations. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said the Cabinet in unison endorsed his application to reject the appointment of Des Brown MP as a special envoy to Sri Lanka, on the grounds that the Lankan side has not been properly consulted beforehand, given the sensitivity of the issue. He said: "I believe this is an unhelpful initiative in the counter terrorism activities and also amounts to the intrusion into Sri Lanka's internal affairs."

**Wayamba, Central polls today**

### **Daily News, 15 February 2009**

Polling will take place from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm today, at 2,579 centres, covering all 40 polling divisions in the five districts, comprising the Central and North-Western Provincial Councils. A total of 2,247 candidates are in the fray from 16 political parties and 43 independent groups. In the Central Province 1,310 candidates are in the contest, from 14 political parties and 26 independent groups. In Northwestern province 937 candidates are in the fray from 12 political parties and 17 independent groups

### **Ideological haze**

#### **Minivan News, 15 February 2009**

15 February 2009 Ahmed Naish Political parties are usually bound together by core beliefs and shared ideals. To win a mandate from the people, they offer competing ideologies and policy objectives for how society be organised. Clear distinctions among party ideologies and principles have not always been evident in Maldives' short history of multi-party democracy. Existing political parties do not seem to have major differences on important issues. All parties call for economic development, good governance and wealth redistribution. All parties want to provide universal healthcare, housing and education. All of them promise to tackle drug trafficking and abuse

### **Jets destroy Tiger suicide boats**

#### **Asian Age, 15 February 2009**

Feb. 14: Sri Lanka Air Force fighter jets destroyed "several" LTTE suicide boats on the beach north of Mullaittivu on Saturday morning, Air Force spokesperson Janaka Nanayakkara said here.

The military has alleged that a woman was killed and 13 others sustained injuries when the LTTE attacked a bus full of fleeing civilians with hand grenades and small arms past midnight Friday at Pulliyankualam, in Vanni. A woman died in the incident and the wounded included four children, the defence spokesperson, Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara, said. The military has been accusing the Tigers of holding civilians as human shields and firing at those trying to escape to government-held territory

### **Big win for ruling alliance in Sri Lanka**

#### **Hindu, 16 February 2009**

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's ruling combine on Sunday secured an impressive victory in the election to two of the provincial councils. In the run-up to the campaign, President Mahinda Rajapaksa had projected the election as a referendum on the war against the LTTE. The results announced by the Election Commission showed that the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), led by Mr. Rajapaksa, secured over 59 per cent of the votes polled in the Central Province and 55 per cent in the North Western Province

### **"Prabakaran still holed up in Wanni"**

#### **Hindu, 16 February 2009**

COLOMBO: LTTE chief Velupillai Prabakaran is still holed up in Wanni and is holding an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 civilians as human shield in 140 sq km area still under the control of the Tigers, according to confessions made by two Black Tiger (suicide squad) cadre who surrendered to the military over a fortnight ago. The

state-owned English weekly, Sunday Observer, in an interview with the Tiger cadre quoted them as saying Prabakaran's elder son, Charles Anthony, is among the top leaders leading the cadre in their last-ditch attempt to halt the military advance

### **Afghanistan will take part in US strategic review**

**Daily Times, 16 February 2009**

KABUL: The Afghan government will take part in a US strategic review of the war in Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai said on Sunday in a sign of increased cooperation at a time of strained relations. Karzai recently sent President Barack Obama a letter with a proposal that Afghanistan join the war review currently underway. The US special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, said at a joint news conference that Obama had "welcomed the suggestion". Karzai and Holbrooke held talks on Saturday. Karzai said his foreign minister, Dadfar Rangin Spanta, would head the Afghan delegation scheduled to leave for Washington next month. agencies.

### **All three top guns set to claim Chair**

**Kathmandu Post, 16 February 2009**

BUTWAL, Feb 15 - Preparations for CPN-UML's eighth national convention, which kicks off here on Monday, have been completed. A total of 1,811 delegates will cast their votes to elect new office bearers including the central committee. All three likely candidates for the chairmanship - General Secretary Jhala Nath Khanal, former General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, and K. P. Oli -- have already arrived

### **54 ordinances to be made law**

**Daily Star, 16 February 2009**

The special committee of parliament yesterday made its final recommendation for ratifying 54 ordinances out of 122 promulgated just before and during the immediate past caretaker government. After an exhaustive meeting in Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the committee last night came up with the final list. The much talked about Right to Information Ordinance, Human Rights Commission Ordinance, and Consumers Rights Protection Ordinance are on the final list

### **Education to be privatised**

**Minivan News, 16 February 2009**

The ministry of education has announced plans to move the education sector away from "micro-management" and towards public-private partnerships. According to an official statement, the ministry has said it no longer needs to control the means by which education is delivered. Speaking about school privatisation at a press conference today, education minister Dr Musthafa Lutfi said international parties will be invited to take over management of new and existing schools and form higher education institutions

### **Child soldiers in peril: UNICEF**

**Hindu, 18 February 2009**

COLOMBO: The UNICEF has raised serious concern over the growing number of children recruited by the LTTE being killed or injured. It said on Tuesday it had clear indications that the LTTE had intensified forcible recruitment of civilians and children as young as 14 were being targeted. It had recorded more than 6,000 cases of children recruited by the LTTE between 2003 and 2008. It also said it was alarmed at the high number of children being injured in the fighting

**Pranab upsets allies, says can't force sovereign Lanka**  
**Indian Express, 18 February 2009**

New Delhi: Government virtually turned down demands of two Tamil parties, including UPA constituent PMK, for India's intervention to stop military offensive in Sri Lanka, saying it cannot force a sovereign Government of another country to take a particular line. The assertion by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee came after PMK and MDMK members expressed unhappiness over his statement in Lok Sabha on the situation in Sri Lanka and demanded its withdrawal. Mukherjee expressed readiness to make "corrections" in his statement if there were any "discrepancies".

**Sufi wants Islamic rule worldwide**  
**Daily Times, 18 February 2009**

LAHORE: Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Sufi Muhammad, who signed a controversial peace deal with the NWFP government on Monday, said he hated democracy and wanted supremacy of Islam over the entire world. "From the very beginning, I have viewed democracy as a system imposed on us by the infidels. Islam does not allow democracy or elections," he told Deutsche Presse-Agentur in an interview held a few days before the government accepted his demand of enforcing sharia in the region. "Had the government accepted our demands in 1994, we would have not seen the violence we are seeing today," he added. Sufi Muhammad's son-in-law, Mullah Fazlullah, has fostered the violence in the name of Islam