

Commonwealth Update

DEREK INGRAM

ABSTRACT Indo-US relations moved closer when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Washington and addressed Congress. The assassination of the Sri Lankan foreign minister set back the peace process with the rebel Tigers. A UN report condemned Zimbabwe's slum clearance campaign that made thousands homeless. South Africa's deputy president was sacked after being implicated in a corruption scandal. Uganda voted for multi-partyism. Suicide bombers struck in the London underground. In Ulster the IRA ordered an end to its armed campaign. A general election for the autonomous Bougainville government went smoothly. Canada elected its first black governor-general. And in Australia the spot where Ned Kelly made his last stand against the police became a national heritage site.

India

In talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George Bush in Washington (17 July 2005) the USA acknowledged for the first time India's status as a nuclear weapons power. In return India agreed not to explode fresh devices and to put its civilian reactors, but not its military programme, under international inspection. The USA offered "full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade"—a decision reversing three decades of American policies designed to deter nations from developing nuclear weapons. Bush would have to ask Congress to adjust US laws and policies.

In a speech to a joint session of Congress Singh appealed for sanctions against nuclear cooperation with India to be lifted. He said his country had "never been and will never be a source of proliferation of sensitive technologies" and that India's track record was impeccable. It had adhered scrupulously to every rule and canon in this area. Singh also called on Congress to support India's efforts to secure a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Singh's trip signalled a notably warmer relationship between India and the USA. A state dinner was only the fifth such occasion of the Bush presidency. During the visit India signed more than a dozen bilateral agreements on matters ranging from disaster relief to saving the Bengal tiger. Three weeks earlier Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld signed a 10-year

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agreement that included joint weapons production, technology transfer, patrols of Asian sea lanes and missile defence collaboration.

After 12 months of secret talks held by the USA, India was named a member of a six-nation pact launched in Laos (28 July) to develop clean energy technologies and fight global warming. The other four were China, Australia, Japan and South Korea. China said the new pact complemented the Kyoto treaty and did not replace it, but the European Union and its chair Tony Blair had not been informed of the plan, although a month earlier climate change was a main item for the G8 meeting. Of the six, which together generate 50% of greenhouse gas emissions, the USA and Australia had rejected Kyoto.

At the end of one year in power Singh assessed (21 May) his government's performance: "Six out of ten . . . I do sincerely believe we can do better". After talks with leaders of the Communist parties, on whose support the coalition government depends, Prakash Karat of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), said the left was dissatisfied. A month later the Communist parties said they would boycott the coalition's main coordinating body because the government had violated the agreed Common Minimum Programme by privatising a 10% stake in Bhel, the state-controlled electrical equipment group. The Communist parties complained directly to Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi, and the cabinet decision on Bhel was shelved.

Another controversial matter was the proposed entry into the Indian market of multinational retailers like Wal Mart. The retail market in India is still dominated by small family-owned businesses. Large retailers control only 2%–3% of the market. The government's position was further complicated when, on the eve of the visit to Washington by the Prime Minister, a report it had commissioned called for the immediate opening up of the retail industry to foreign direct investment. Groups such as Wal Mart, it said, should be allowed to own 49% of their retailing operations under a phased liberalization that would lift all capital restrictions within three to five years.

The economy grew by 7% in the three months to March. Annual industrial output rose to 10.8% in May—the fastest expansion in 10 years.

Riots broke out in Manipur in July over a demand by the people of neighbouring Nagaland to swallow the northeastern state. Naga supporters in Manipur want a greater Nagaland, which would mean taking in parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Both have Naga tribal populations. Peace talks on Nagaland have continued ever since a ceasefire there was agreed in 1997. Twenty rounds of talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in New Delhi since December 2004 were still without result.

Bombs exploded in two cinemas in New Delhi showing a controversial film condemned by Sikh leaders as offensive (22 May). There were 50 casualties. The Cabinet held an emergency meeting and tightened security in Punjab.

Lal Krishna Advani, hawkish president of the opposition BJP, visited Pakistan in early June and during a tour of Ali Jinnah's mausoleum in Karachi praised him as a great man—one of the "very few who actually create history"—and for his "forceful espousal of a secular state in which every citizen would be free to practice his own religion". On Advani's return to India angry party officials presented him with a written retraction of his remarks. He refused to endorse it and resigned as party president, remaining leader of the opposition. Fundamentalist groups accused Advani of turning traitor, but he said his visit had done much to advance the peace

process with Pakistan which had been started by the BJP when in office. Former prime minister and party leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee said he supported Advani's comments on Jinnah.

A suicide bomber and five men with machine-guns, grenades and a rocket-launcher attacked the temple at Ayodhya, Madhya Pradesh (5 July). In a two-hour gunfight with security forces all five died. A jeep loaded with explosives was used to blow up a wall so that a car could break into the heavily guarded complex. In 1992 Hindu fanatics demolished a mosque built in 1528 and tried to build a temple to mark the supposed birthplace of the god Ram. In communal riots 2000 died. The latest attack set off riots in several parts of India and charges that the attackers were backed by Pakistan.

A day later the high court in Allahabad ruled that BJP leader Advani must face trial for inciting a mob to demolish the mosque 13 years ago. The decision overturned a local court ruling two years earlier that all charges against Advani be dropped. Advani aides said he would appeal to the Supreme Court. On his visit to Pakistan Advani had said that the destruction of the mosque had been "the saddest day of my life".

As part of its campaign against 'tainted ministers' and to end the career of Railways Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, the BJP boycotted parliament until the end of the budget session on 13 May.

The cabinet decided (16 June) to let foreign newspapers print in India, thus lifting a ban imposed by Nehru in 1955. The *International Herald Tribune* had challenged the restriction, claiming it had no basis in law, and had begun printing in Hyderabad in 2004. Local publisher M. J. Akbar argued that the constitution guaranteed freedom of expression. The decision opened the way for papers like the *Financial Times* and *Asian Wall Street Journal* to print in India. Newcomers must print the same edition as in other countries and not produce Indian versions that would compete with local papers for advertising and readers.

The rules on foreign ownership of the India media had already been relaxed. The latest to move in was Irish publisher Independent News and Media, which won government approval to take a 26% stake (the maximum allowed) in the publishers of the Hindi-language *Dainik Jagran*, said to be the world's second most widely read newspaper.

A new all-colour broadsheet English-language daily newspaper called *DNA* was launched in Mumbai in July—the first for a decade. It was a £100 million venture in a booming market. In 2004 142 million newspapers were sold in India against 55 million in the USA.

The heaviest rainfall ever recorded in India killed 960 people in Maharashtra state—400 of them in Mumbai (27 July). Stock markets, schools, airports, cellular networks, railways and businesses were closed. Much of the city was under three feet of water. Slums were devastated. Up to 37.2 inches of rain fell in 24 hours. Prime Minister Singh took the first flight into the flooded airport and announced a £90 million aid package. He said Mumbai needed to update its forecasting technology. Officials had predicted no more than "a heavy rainfall".

When the tsunami struck the coast of Tamil Nadu it unearthed ancient ruins. At Mahabalipuram it laid bare forgotten ruins of a 7th century temple, a gigantic rock covered in carvings of tigers, elephants and horses, and a little brass figure now

identified as a Buddhist sage, Jalagupta, which emanated from Burma, 1000 miles away.

The Bofors arms scandal case that contributed to the election defeat of Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 and dragged on for 14 years ended in the Delhi High Court (31 May). The three Hinduja brothers, Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash, based in London, were acquitted of conspiring to cheat the Indian government. The Bofors company was also cleared.

The Supreme Court banned throughout India the honking of horns, playing of loud music and bursting of firecrackers in residential areas between 10.0 p.m. and 6.0 a.m. Doubts were raised as to how the law could be enforced.

Pakistan

President Pervez Musharraf said (15 May 2005) that al-Qaeda's back had been broken, adding: "They cease to exist as a cohesive, homogenous body under good command". This had come about as a result of the arrest of Abu Faraj al-Liby, said to be al-Qaeda's No. 3. However, the event had produced no clues to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.

In the wake of the London bomb attacks Musharraf promised to help the British investigations and more than 25 Islamist militants were arrested across the country, but Musharraf repeated (25 July) that al-Qaeda's sanctuaries had been destroyed and 700 members captured. He rejected any idea that it had any command structure in Pakistan.

Munir Akram, Pakistan's ambassador to the UN, spoke against trying to shift responsibility for the British bombings to his country (17 July). He blamed Tony Blair's Middle East policies. He said: "It is important not to pin blame on somebody else when the problem lies internally. Your policies in the Middle East, your policies in the Islamic world, that is the problem with your society."

His remarks were supported by Musharraf a few days later. He said Britain had a lot of work to do and Pakistan should not be singled out because of its links to three of the suicide bombers. Extremists were operating in Britain "with impunity".

Under an agreement signed in Islamabad (20 May) by Defence Ministry official Sir Kevin Tebbit and his counterpart Lieutenant General Ali Muhammad Jan, Britain and Pakistan agreed to boost intelligence and defence collaboration. There would be joint exercises, training cooperation, technology transfer and increased sales of arms.

In the first budget for a decade not subject to IMF constraints infrastructure spending would rise by 35% and defence spending by 16%. Minister of state for finance Omar Ayub Khan said (6 June) the economy was set to grow by 6%–8%. In the current year it was at 8.35%—the highest for 20 years.

President Musharraf visited Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia in June. On arrival in Auckland his bodyguards were asked to turn over their weapons. A Maori group required him to pick up a small carved stick as a sign that he came in peace. Talks with Prime Minister Helen Clark focused on expanding trade, on terrorism, nuclear arms, and building relations with India.

Three trains collided at a remote railway station near Ghotki, 370 miles northeast of Karachi. A driver misread a signal and the Karachi express crashed into the Quetta express. Nineteen carriages were derailed and 128 people killed (13 July).

India and Pakistan

After a three-day visit to Kashmir Manmohan Singh became the first Indian prime minister to visit troops on the 6300-metre Siachen glacier, the world's highest battlefield (12 June 2005). India occupied the glacier in 1984 to stop Pakistan getting control of an undelineated area of Jammu and Kashmir. The presence has cost India an estimated £5 billion in 20 years. Singh said the time had come to make it a peace mountain, but "there could be no redrawing of boundaries".

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said (5 June) that whether India agreed or not Pakistan would go ahead with a proposed gas pipeline from Iran that would cross Pakistan and head into India. The USA could oppose a project that would put revenue into Iran's economy, but India's and Pakistan's need for energy was increasing.

Bangladesh

The security situation and failure to tackle it were causing concern among foreign diplomats. When EU ambassadors visited Awami League opposition leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed (1 February) they talked about two recent attacks on Awami rallies, the delay in investigations and failure to bring the culprits to justice. The US FBI had been asked to investigate the assassination of former minister Shah Kibria at a rally in January, but it doubted it would be allowed to see all the evidence and Scotland Yard, also invited, had declined to take part. A stalemate in defining terms of reference was reported. A meeting of donors in Washington (25 February) had expressed concern at the deterioration of the governance situation. In March eight suspects charged with the January attack were said to belong to the ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP).

More than 400 almost simultaneous small bomb explosions hit cities and towns across the country (17 August). Two people were killed and 125 injured. Press clubs, court buildings, bus and train stations and markets were affected. Leaflets from a banned Islamic group were found near the explosion sites. Fifty arrests were made. The opposition called a general strike.

A Dhaka court sentenced 22 people to death (16 April) for murdering Awami MP Ahsanullah Master in May 2004. Six others were sentenced to life. Fifteen were convicted in absentia. Most were member of the BNP. A crackdown on Islamist militants was said to be straining the ruling coalition.

In a populist budget (9 June) Finance Minister Saifur Rahman proposed to double farm subsidies to £100 million. Forecasting 6% growth in 2006, he announced allowances for the disabled, more student grants and help for unemployed farmers.

Anti-smoking laws took effect on 26 March, banning smoking on public transport and in public buildings, schools, cinemas and shopping areas. Advertising and sponsorship were also banned. Hotels and restaurants were exempt.

An independent study published in July blamed government weakness in enforcing laws as a major cause for the 500 river ferry accidents that had claimed 4000 lives in 34 years. Ferries are overcrowded, of faulty design and have poor navigation facilities. In May 2005 another three disasters caused 148 deaths with many more missing.

Sri Lanka

Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was assassinated by snipers (12 August 2005) as he climbed out of his swimming pool in Colombo. The attackers shot through a ventilation hole in a nearby building. President Chandrika Kumaratunga declared a country-wide state of emergency. The army blamed the rebel Tamil Tigers, but they denied involvement.

Lawyer Kadirgamar was 73, a Tamil Christian. He never contested an election in his political career and never addressed a rally. He had at one time led efforts to ban the Tigers but later backed the peace efforts. In 2003 Sri Lanka put him forward to challenge Don McKinnon, who was standing for his second term as Commonwealth Secretary-General. Heads of government in Abuja re-elected McKinnon.

At the time of the shooting the ceasefire was holding, but violence had increased. Factional fighting was escalating into a lower-level shadow war. Hårup Haukland, head of the 60 Nordic monitors, said (6 August) he was confident the ceasefire would hold but described the assassination as “a big, big blow”.

A key party in the ruling coalition, the Sinhala nationalist People’s Liberation Front (JVP), quit the government (16 June 2005) because of a deal with the Tamil Tigers over tsunami aid. The JVP had 39 seats in the 225-member parliament. The government now had no working majority, although general elections were not due until 2010. President Chandrika Kumaratunga’s troubles increased in early July when 100 000 people angry at the rising cost of living and an impasse in the peace process with the Tigers began a 10-day march from Dondra in the south on Colombo.

The tsunami deal—a joint mechanism involving the government, Tigers and the Muslim community—was to ensure equal distribution of £1.75 billion aid to all parts of the country hit by the December disaster. Tens of thousands of Sri Lankans had yet to receive aid. After the government signed the memorandum of understanding, Norwegian peace brokers took it to the Tigers, who also signed it. Ministers said the deal would boost the peace efforts but it split the government. JVP MPs prevented a parliamentary debate.

In June Kumaratunga discussed the aid programme with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Delhi. He said India had a vital stake in the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

A £282 million project, the Sethusamudram ship canal, got under way (1 July) when work began to dredge a channel in the seabed between India and Sri Lanka. It involves digging a 60-mile long, 12-metre deep, 300-metre wide groove through the shallow Palk Strait. The canal will remove the need for ships to detour around Sri Lanka and reduce cargo journeys by a day. It was first conceived by a British naval officer in 1860. Sri Lanka was not consulted by India about it and is concerned that it might disadvantage its port in Colombo. Local fishermen and environmentalists also opposed the scheme.

Maldives

Parliament voted unanimously (2 June 2005) to put in place multiparty democracy for the first time since independence in 1982. President Maumoon Gayoom launched

proposals to let parties, including the underground Maldivian Democratic Party based in Sri Lanka, to seek recognition before elections.

Mohammed Nasheed, chairman of the Maldivian Democratic Party (NDP) and former political prisoner, returned home from exile in the UK (30 April) to build the party in line with Gayoom's stated intention to introduce multiparty democracy by January 2006. Pro-NDP candidates won 19 seats in elections in January compared with 20 won by pro-government candidates.

The IMF approved help to cope with the aftermath of the tsunami. Damage to the infrastructure and tourist and fishing industries have been extensive and the cost of rebuilding was estimated at 50% of GDP. The UNDP launched an adopt-an-island initiative, inviting wealthy individuals or organizations to sponsor rebuilding one or more of the 22 worst-hit islands.

Malaysia

The disciplinary committee of the ruling party (UMNO) suspended Federal Territories Minister Isa Samad from the party for six years for vote buying (25 June 2005). Several more ministers and officials were under investigation. Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi pledged before his election victory in 2004 to eradicate graft.

Former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim won an apology read out in court and damages from a police chief who beat him up in 1998. Anwar was in jail for five years after a rift with then prime minister Mahathir Mohamad. In an out-of-court settlement Anwar received unspecified damages and would not seek a public apology from Mahathir or the government.

Singapore

A meeting of the International Olympic Committee (6 July) elected London to host the 2012 Olympic Games. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Mayor of London Ken Livingstone flew to Singapore to lobby. Paris, Madrid, New York and Moscow were the other contenders. In a fourth round run-off with Paris, London won by 54 to 50. London last hosted the Games in 1948.

Brunei

In what was seen as the most sweeping change since independence in 1984, the Sultan sacked four cabinet ministers. They included the education minister of 20 years, Abdul Aziz (24 May 2005), who had been pushing increased use of Jawi, an obscure Malay dialect, and stepping up religious education. Parents wanted more emphasis on science and technology. The new cabinet brought in younger faces, and the Sultan appointed the first non-Muslim minister. He also named his elder son as senior minister in the prime minister's office.

Hong Kong

Donald Tsang, former financial secretary and a civil servant for 38 years, was named Chief Executive of Hong Kong by the 796-seat Beijing selection committee (16 June),

without a contest. Two potential rivals failed to secure enough nominations to make a challenge. Opinion polls showed Tsang had 70% support, unlike his predecessor Tung Chee-hwa.

Papua New Guinea

Former separatist rebel Joseph Kabu, now leader of the People's Congress Party, beat former governor John Momis by 14 000 votes in the first general election held for the autonomous Bougainville government (20 May–2 June 2005). Some people had to walk for days or travel by canoe to vote. The poll ended a 10-year separatist campaign. A team organized by the Commonwealth and the South Pacific Forum formed part of a wider international observer mission led by Fiji Islands Speaker Ratu Epeli Nalaitikau. Other members came from Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu. Their report said the election was held competently and transparently in all key respects. Momis questioned the result and talked about a legal challenge. The new administration will run the island, with Papua New Guinea controlling defence and the economy.

Soon after the election Francis Ona, the man who led the war for independence, died in his early fifties. He had wanted full immediate self-determination and lived in mountain seclusion, refusing to support the UN-brokered deal that led to the elections. He was given a state funeral.

A proposal by Papua New Guinea that rainforest protection should be added to measures to prevent global warming was put to a UN seminar of climate experts from 150 countries in Bonn, Germany (16 May). So far other developing countries have rejected any spreading of responsibilities beyond the industrialized countries already signed up to the Kyoto Protocol. But now Papua New Guinea welcomed the chance to be held accountable for greenhouse gas emissions attributable to destruction of its rainforest. After Amazonia and Congo, Papua New Guinea has the world's largest rainforest.

Tonga

Elections were held for 18 seats of the 30-member Legislative Assembly (16–17 March 2005). Polling is in two parts. Of the nine noble representatives chosen by their peers the King's nephew, the reformist Prince Tu'ipelehake, was not re-elected. In the election for the nine commoner members Human Rights and Democracy Movement (HRDM) leader Akilisi Pohiva won most support—11 225 votes. After the election a commoner, Feleti Sevele, who advocated the direct popular election of the whole legislature, was appointed to the cabinet. When the Defence Minister died suddenly (16 April) and the prime minister was overseas, Sevele became acting prime minister. A breakaway from the HRDM, the People's Democratic Party, was formed with Teisina Fuko as leader.

Solomon Islands

Australian Shane Castles replaced William Morrell of the UK as police commissioner (12 April 2005). Morrell had reformed the police force, which had

been compromised in the years of ethnic conflict. The Solomons government wanted to keep him in place, but neither the UK nor the EU would provide funding.

Finance Minister Francis Zama, who had been dismissed in February for ‘adverse conduct’ was charged with corruption (18 April). He said he thought he had been dismissed for calling the Australian mission to the Solomons “overkill and a liability”.

Niue

In elections for the 20-seat Fono, Finance Minister Toke Tilagi tied with a businesswoman candidate after a recount. Then Tilagi’s name was drawn from a hat and he was declared winner. Tilagi was expected to be the principal challenger to Young Vivian, Prime Minister since 2002.

Vanuatu

After 18-month talks Australia and Vanuatu agreed a Joint Development Cooperation Strategy to guide an Australian plan for a five-year assistance programme. The agriculture and tourism sectors would be emphasized.

Fiji Islands

Four chiefs, including Lands and Mineral Resources Minister Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, were jailed for eight months (4 April 2005) for unlawful assembly at a barracks during the 2000 armed coup by George Speight. Sam Speight, brother of the rebel leader, succeeded as Lands Minister. Sam Speight was a member of a party formed by supporters of the coup.

Australia

The political stage was set on 1 July 2005 for a major showdown over industrial reform. It was on that date, as a result of the last election, that the federal government assumed control of the Senate for the first time for a quarter-century—albeit by just one vote. Prime Minister John Howard saw his opportunity to embark on a controversial deregulation package that he called “one of the great pieces of unfinished business in the structural transformation of the Australian economy”. The states, all Labor-run, opposed the reforms, which include changes in unfair dismissal laws and many other measures which the Senate had rejected more than 40 times over the years. The package would create a national industrial relations system to replace state-operated regimes. Howard now also wanted to make another move the Senate has long rejected—privatization of the remaining 51.8% government stake in the telecoms monopoly Telstra. As the government was embarking on this programme Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, Transport Minister and leader of the government coalition partner National Party, resigned for health reasons (23 June) and was succeeded by Mark Vaile. National Party members object to the Telstra sale.

Bob Carr, 57, resigned unexpectedly as Labor Premier of New South Wales (27 July). He had led the state party for 17 years and been premier for 10. He ruled out moving to federal politics.

Australia signed (27 July) a declaration of intent to join the Amity and Cooperation Group of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), thus securing a seat for its December summit in Kuala Lumpur. The non-aggression pact bars the use of force to resolve disputes. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said it was an enormous step forward in terms of Australia's engagement with East Asia. Malaysian former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad had opposed Australia's admittance, calling it the USA's 'deputy sheriff' in Asia.

Australian peacekeeping troops handed over an army base in Moleana (13 June), marking the end of their mission to East Timor. A handful would remain to train Timorese soldiers. About 5000 troops were deployed in 1999 when the country voted for independence.

Howard reached a compromise with rebel government MPs over the mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia so that families could be released from detention centres while applications were being processed. The last 42 children were released from the centres as policy against illegal arrivals was softened. Australia excluded 4000 outlying islands from its migration zone, so that would-be migrants landing on them would not be able to claim asylum.

Bill Farmer, head of the Immigration Department, resigned after a scathing police report on cases of wrongful detention and deportation. Howard said mistakes had been made and Farmer had apologized for his department's failings. He was now to become ambassador to Indonesia.

The Australian Institute of Health said new figures showed Australia had the lowest smoking rate of any industrialized country and maybe the lowest in the world. From 70% 60 years ago it had fallen to 17.4%. Tough bans on advertising and smoking in public were leading to predictions that by 2030 the habit would be extinct.

Science Minister Brendon Nelson said government agencies planned from 2011 to dump their radioactive waste in the remote desert. One site would be 310 miles from Ayers Rock. The six states would have to dump their own waste. Plans for a national dump were scrapped when they could not agree on a location.

The worst drought in 100 years was drying up drinking water across the country. Goulburn, southwest of Sydney, faced running out in six months. In June its biggest dam held only 10 per cent of its capacity. Global warming was said to be changing rainfall patterns.

A group from 20 countries set up by the UN met in Perth in August to work out a tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean. An array of hi-tech wave, tide and pressure sensors already in place would be linked to alert systems in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

One of the towers of the limestone Twelve Apostles formation off the tourist site of Great Ocean Road, Victoria, suddenly crumbled into rubble. In seconds a 230ft monolith that nature had taken millions of years to create just collapsed. Scientists said waves would have been chipping away at it by a few millimetres a year.

The spot in Glenrowan, Victoria, where legendary bank robber outlaw Ned Kelly made his last stand against police in 1880 was listed as a national heritage site. Kelly killed three policemen and was hanged.

New Zealand

In a 109 to 9 vote parliament rejected an attempt to lift the 20-year-old ban on nuclear-powered ships visiting New Zealand ports (27 July 2005). Right wing MP Ken Shirley proposed a bill lifting the ban because it was harming ties with other nations and all but ruled out the prospect of a free trade agreement with the USA. Since 1986 no US navy ship had docked in New Zealand. Two days before the vote Prime Minister Helen Clark, who opposed the US decision to go to war in Iraq, announced that a general election would be held on 17 September. She did so a week before she was constitutionally obliged to seek a three-year third term for her Labour-led administration. The non-nuclear policy would be a campaign issue. Opinion polls showed Labour and the opposition National Party neck and neck.

Another issue was a new Labour party pledge to set a time limit for indigenous Maori to lodge land claims. All would need to be lodged by 2008 so they could be settled by 2020. National Party leader Don Brash said he would settle the claims by 2010. Clarke called that unrealistic.

A report by the head of French foreign intelligence published by *Le Monde* (10 July 2005) said President François Mitterrand ordered the sinking of the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour in 1985. The ship was preparing to sail to observe French nuclear testing at Mururoa atoll in the Pacific. Admiral Pierre Lacoste said the defence minister produced £300 000 from secret funds for the mission and the chief of defence staff approved it. At the time a French inquiry cleared the cabinet and Mitterrand, the then prime minister Laurent Fabius and defence minister Charles Hernu all denied knowledge of the sinking. Mitterrand sacked Hernu and Lacoste. The scandal still has lingering effects on New Zealand's relations with France.

Israel apologized for the activities in New Zealand of two alleged spies. In 2004 the men had been jailed for trying to obtain a New Zealand passport illegally. After two months they were freed and deported. New Zealand stopped the approval of a new Israeli ambassador, but in a letter released on 26 June the Israeli foreign minister apologized and full diplomatic relations were restored.

An 84-year old trade dispute with Australia spilled over when 700 angry apple growers from all over New Zealand marched on parliament and the Australian High Commission in Wellington (26 June). In a game of cricket outside the High Commission apples, not balls, were lobbed inside the High Commission grounds. Australia banned New Zealand apple imports in 1921 because of an outbreak of fireblight. Growers have been trying to overturn the ban ever since. Australians eat nine kilos of apples per person a year. New Zealanders eat twice as many, still leaving plenty to spare.

Canada

Prime Minister Paul Martin named the country's 27th governor-general (4 August 2005) and its first black one. Michaëlle Jean, a 48-year-old Haitian-born TV journalist based in Quebec, took over in September from Adrienne Clarkson, who is of Chinese origin. Jean fled the regime of François (Papa Doc) Duvalier in 1968. Her ancestors were slaves. She is also the third television journalist in a row to fill the post.

By 153 to 13 MPs approved same-sex marriages across the country (28 June). Liberal MP Pat O'Brien objected to the policy and decided before the vote to sit as an independent. Most Canadian provinces already allow same-sex marriages. After O'Brien defected Martin's Liberal Party controlled only 133 of the 308 seats in the House of Commons. The New Democratic Party, with 19 MPs, and four independents was keeping the government in office.

Bernard Landry resigned unexpectedly as leader of the separatist Parti Québécois (5 June) in Quebec. He had failed to win the support of almost a quarter of the delegates at a party convention.

A visit by Defence Minister Bill Graham to tiny (1.6 sq km), barren Hans Island between Greenland and the northeast of Canada in the summer of 2005 reopened problems of sovereignty in the Arctic. Canada and Denmark both claim the island, a dispute left unresolved by a 1973 treaty. Denmark complained about the visit and sent an icebreaker. Big issues are at stake: the commercial potential of a northwest passage as global warming melts the ice and an old US claim that it is an international waterway. Canada sees the passage as national waters. Also, petroleum abounds in the area. After Graham's trip Denmark and Canada agreed to meet to discuss the status of Hans Island.

An Air France Airbus 340 burst into flames as it landed in a thunderstorm at Pearson airport, Toronto. All 297 passengers and 12 crew escaped without injury.

Caribbean

The Commonwealth Caribbean was shocked by a European Union proposal made in June 2005 to cut guaranteed sugar prices by 39%. Consultation with the six Commonwealth countries in the ACP had been minimal and the proposed two-year transition gave less time than expected to diversify. Jamaica and Guyana were upset by the low priority given to the problem by the UK. President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana said: "No one cares and they are not listening". Prime Minister P. J. Patterson of Jamaica protested to Tony Blair that ACP leaders had heard about the cut through the media and leaked documents. The EU plan was expected to cost Guyana six times the amount it would get under the new G8-led debt relief initiative.

Dominica

The ruling Labour Party was narrowly returned to power in May 2005 elections. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, 32, won 11 of the 21 seats. He campaigned on an IMF programme planned to create growth, which would raise taxes and cut jobs. Opponent Edison James, of the United Workers Party, rejected the programme and objected to a government decision to switch diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China.

Nigeria

In a deal with the Paris Club (30 June) international creditors agreed to write off £9 billion debts. Nigeria agreed to pay back in 2005 to rich countries the rest of its £17 billion bilateral debts from soaring oil revenues. The deal freed Nigeria from its

onerous debt burden for the first time in years and relieved it of £500 million a year in debt service payments. Finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the extra resources would help reduce poverty and raise the number of school places by 3.5 million. International lenders had been impressed by recent economic reforms, but Nigeria still had to get approval from the IMF board for its reforms and would continue to be monitored.

A national conference aimed at major political and constitutional reforms collapsed (11 July) after a row over distribution of oil revenues. Delegates from the Niger Delta walked out over a proposal to allocate Delta states 25% of revenues.

A group of 15 white farmers dispossessed by the land redistribution in Zimbabwe were welcomed in Nigeria in early 2005. They were leasing 38 000 acres in Kwara State. The scheme was the idea of the Governor Bukola Saraki, former economic adviser to President Obasanjo. He said the Zimbabweans would be able to show Nigerians how to improve yields. They were committed to training 10 Nigerian farmers a year and 1% of turnover would be spent on education projects. Tractors were flown in from Brazil and South Africa. One farmer who lost land and equipment worth £2 million in Zimbabwe was already employing 320 local people. Saraki said he wanted more farmers to come.

Sierra Leone

The special court set up in 2002 to judge war crimes elected Raja Fernanco of Sri Lanka in May as its new president. He succeeded Emmanuel Ayoola.

The Gambia

President Yahya Jammeh dismissed three ministers and several civil servants as part of an anti-corruption drive. Ministers on relatively small salaries were found to own several houses and cars each. After only three months in office Margaret Keita was dismissed as Finance Minister and replaced by Alieu Ngum, head of the civil service (14 June).

Uganda

After 19 years of President Yoweri Museveni's non-party politics Ugandans voted in a referendum for a return to multi-partyism (28 July). Only 42.6% of the 8.5 million registered voters turned out. Five years earlier people had voted against change, but this time Museveni supported the Yes vote. Under the no-party system all Ugandans were regarded as members of Museveni's National Resistance Movement and parliamentary candidates were elected on merit not party affiliation.

Just before the referendum MPs overwhelmingly backed (28 June) the removal of the two-term limit on the presidency.

The death in a helicopter crash of the newly appointed Vice-President of the Sudan, former guerrilla leader John Garang, followed a meeting with Museveni on his ranch 200 miles from Kampala (30 July). Museveni offered him one of his helicopters to return home. It crashed near the Uganda border. Six of Garang's bodyguards and the helicopter crew also died.

The Uganda army claimed (20 May) to have killed Major-General Owor Lakati, chief of staff of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army, and the eldest son of its leader, Joseph Kony.

Kenya

Parliament approved by 102 to 61 the long-promised draft constitution—the first new constitution since independence in 1963. President Mwai Kibaki was elected in 2002 on promises to reform government within 100 days and reduce the wide presidential powers. Before the vote three days of rioting took place in Nairobi by people accusing parliament of ignoring demands for reduction of those powers. The draft still leaves the president with considerable power and prospects for its adoption were rated low. A national referendum had to be held. Four ministers defected to vote against the bill, weakening the coalition.

The Kenya branch of the African Peer Review Mechanism said it had stopped work in July because the government had barred it from its offices. The review was set up by the African Union to ensure that Africa improved its governance. Kenya is one of 23 countries that have agreed to be reviewed. Grace Akumu, Kenyan head of the review, said the government was not supposed to interfere with the independent review which operates under the Kenyan Ministry of Planning and National Development.

A diplomatic row blew up when Britain banned Transport Minister Chris Murunguru, one of President Mwai Kibaki's closest allies, from entering the country. It cited laws blocking the entry of people accused of corruption. Murunguru lost his internal security portfolio after allegations of corruption. A Home Office letter revoked his visa. Foreign Minister Chirau Makwere said the action "stinks of colonialism . . . we will not accept such rudeness" (5 August). Murunguru instructed his lawyers to take legal action against the UK authorities.

Finance Minister David Mwiraria said in his budget speech (8 June) that the economy was "back on the right track" with 4.3% growth in 2004–05.

Speaker Francis ole Kaparo said MPs were mostly dishonest, insincere and tribalistic. He reprimanded them for not turning up, which meant laws could not be passed. A survey showed that in 2004 parliament was open for only 57 days.

More than 50 people, including 22 children, were hacked and shot to death in remote Turbi, 62 miles from the Ethiopian border (12 July). Hundreds of raiders attacked two hut compounds and a primary school. More people died in a revenge attack, bringing the total to 76. Locals said the attack had been carried out by the Borana clan against rival Gabra people. It was a long-running dispute over land, water and pasture. Kenyan police, soldiers and helicopters chased the raiders near the border. Such clashes were increasing in an underdeveloped and neglected area of the country. In a separate incident a day later veteran Italian missionary Bishop Luigi Locati was shot dead in Isolo, 200 miles north of Nairobi.

In two trials seven men charged with conspiracy in connection with the 2002 bombing of a hotel in Mombasa were freed in June because of lack of evidence. One was rearrested. The trials—first of their kind in Kenya—were seen as test cases in the fight against terrorism. They raised for Kenya the same sort of problems Britain and other countries were facing in putting in place effective counter-terrorism mechanisms.

A team of 30 geologists, chemists and technicians was in mid-2005 engaged in exploring the Lake Bogora region of western Kenya to assess whether the volcano activity that created the hot springs in the Rift Valley can be used to light the homes of millions across East Africa. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) experts believe there may be enough geothermal energy under the Valley to satisfy the entire power demand of the region. So far only Kenya has started tapping the resource. At Naivasha, 50 miles from Nairobi, the escaping steam powers turbines that supply about 10% of the country's electricity.

Tanzania

Finance Minister Basil Mramba reported in his budget (15 June) that economic growth was expected to climb from 6.7% in 2004–05 to 7.2% in 2005–06 and 7.6% in 2006–07.

A bomb exploded at the offices of the national ruling party Chama Cha Mapindzu (24 April). No one was hurt, but it marked a rise in tension as October elections loomed.

Mozambique

Five-year tourism marketing and human resources development plans were launched in Pemba (28 June 2005) with the help of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The country's tourism is largely undeveloped and has huge potential. At the launch George Saibel, director of the Secretariat's Advisory Services Division, pointed out the need for tourism education and training systems to be put in place.

Malawi

Angry exchanges in parliament followed a ruling by the Speaker that a motion to impeach President Bingu wa Mutharika should not be heard. Moments later he collapsed. He was flown to a South African hospital and died four days later. Rodwell Munyenemba was 69. The motion had been lodged by the United Democratic Party, which accused the president of violating the constitution and misusing government funds. Parliament went into indefinite recess. A crucial budget vote allowing aid money to flow was held up.

Zambia

The International Development Association agreed (8 April) that Zambia had reached completion under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC)—the 17th country to do so. Debts totalling £22 billion would be paid off. President Levy Mwanawasa said the debt relief had come about because of his stand against corruption which was “worse than drug trafficking”.

In a major reshuffle Mwanawasa brought back Vernon Mwaanga as Information and Broadcasting Minister (3 August). Mwaanga served in several cabinets under Presidents Kaunda and Chiluba. He fell out with Mwanawasa in 2003.

Zambia filed a lawsuit in London demanding the return of £13 million alleged to have been plundered by former president Frederick Chiluba and put in London bank

accounts. Britain was under increasing criticism for not recovering looted money from the City of London. Although it is a signatory of the international Anti-Bribery Convention no one had been prosecuted under its provisions.

Plans to raise copper production from 190 000 tonnes a year to 500 000 tonnes were set out by the chief executive officer of Konkola Copper Mines, C. V. Kirishnan, who said this would help Zambia return to “its glory days”. But setbacks came in July when strike action, part of an international pattern in the industry, was followed by attempts at Chilabombwe to destroy equipment with explosives.

Yorkshire-born Haroon Rashid Aswat was detained in Livingstone and extradited to Britain on suspicion of involvement in al-Qaeda and the London bombings. He had been on the run since 1999 and had spent some time in South Africa and Zimbabwe. He was picked up on the Zambian border in July.

Zimbabwe

A slum clearance campaign called Operation Murambatsvina—translated as Drive out Rubbish—was launched in Harare on 19 May. In the first week thousands of street vendors and flea market traders were arrested. Many were fined. Bulldozers destroyed homes as riot police looked on. Two children were crushed to death. Entire areas were burned to the ground, leaving people with no homes in midwinter. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) said the action, which was later extended to Bulawayo and elsewhere, was to punish urban voters for not supporting the government in the March elections.

President Robert Mugabe said at the state opening of parliament (9 June), boycotted by the 41 MDC MPs, that the operation was “a vigorous clean-up campaign to restore sanity” in the cities. Roman Catholic bishops called the slum action “a grave crime”. The MDC called a two-day national strike, but it fizzled. Police had said they would deal “ruthlessly” with anyone taking part.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan sent Anna Tibaijuka of Tanzania as his special envoy to Zimbabwe. She met Mugabe and spent several days visiting the scenes of the clearance operation. Her 98-page report (22 July) said 2.4 million people had been affected and 700 000 had lost their homes or livelihoods or both. It called the clearance “a catastrophic injustice” that violated international law and urged an immediate halt to any further demolitions. Zimbabwe should allow unhindered access to the international community to give assistance. Annan said the report was “profoundly distressing”.

Foreign Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi rejected the findings as hostile and biased and homes continued to be bulldozed, even as the UN Security Council held a special session at Britain’s behest (27 July). China, Russia and three African countries voted against the hearing, but no other members voted in favour.

By now Mugabe was on a six-day state visit to China where he was warmly welcomed for his “great achievements” and named an honorary professor. President Hu Jintao said China was always willing to embrace leaders shunned in the West. Trade and grain deals were signed, but South African newspapers said Mugabe returned almost empty-handed.

Meantime, Zimbabwean officials had talked with South Africa about a £570 million loan package, but such help was expected to come with political conditions

attached. Mbeki confirmed (24 July) that his officials were considering how they could help Zimbabwe pay off £172 million it owes to the IMF. He said: "We engage them because we don't want Zimbabwe collapsing next door. South Africa would inherit all the consequences." The South African Council of Churches sent trucks of food and blankets with the support of Mbeki and the government.

In August the African Union appointed former president Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique to try to set up talks between the government and the opposition, although Mugabe had repeatedly said he would not meet the MDC.

In a public debate in Harare former information minister Jonathan Moyo, once Mugabe's close aide and now an independent MP, said the demolition of shantytowns was barbaric.

One aim of the clearance operation was said to be to stamp out foreign trade in illegal currency. The Zimbabwe dollar was twice devalued within two months—by 32% to Z\$9000 to the US dollar (19 May) and then by 39% to Z\$17 500 to the dollar (21 July). On the black market £1 fetched Z\$54 000. Consumer inflation reached a record monthly high of 47%. In a supplementary budget in August Finance Minister Herbert Murerwa revealed that the deficit for the first six months of 2005 had already surpassed the total for the whole of 2004.

Only weeks earlier bank governor Gideon Gono had said the economy was on the turnaround path and, surprisingly, in a three-hour TV broadcast invited white farmers to go back to their land. But Security Minister Didymus Mutasa said later: "The land here is for the black people and we are not going to give it back to anybody". Only 300 of 4500 whites remain on their farms.

A new stage in the land reform programme emerged in August when Mugabe said on Defence Forces Day that some soldiers had been given farmland and that "I understand close to 6000 members of the defence forces are still to benefit".

The last outstanding treason charge against opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai was withdrawn (2 August) without reason being given. His lawyer said "he never committed a crime and obviously someone has seen sense". Earlier charges alleged a plot to overthrow Mugabe.

British property magnate Nicholas van Hoogstraten, who owns a 600 000-acre ranch in Zimbabwe and a controlling stake in Wankie coalmine, announced at the annual meeting of NMB Bank in July that he had become the bank's largest shareholder. Van Hoogstraten was released from Britain's Belmarsh jail in 2003 after a manslaughter conviction was quashed.

After the banned newspaper *Daily News* had waged a two-year battle to resume publication the Media and Information Commission refused (18 July) to give it a licence, despite a Supreme Court ruling in March quashing a ban.

Zimbabwe won re-election for three more years to the UN Human Rights Commission (29 April). Other members include China, Russia, Nepal and Libya. Secretary-General Kofi Annan had recently criticized the commission's "declining credibility and professionalism".

South Africa

President Thabo Mbeki dismissed his deputy president, Jacob Zuma, (14 June 2005) after he was implicated in a corruption scandal. Zuma had not been charged or

convicted of any crime, but his reputation was tarnished when his friend and financial adviser Schabir Shaik was found guilty in Durban of two counts of corruption and one of fraud (2 June). Shaik was sentenced to 15 years jail. Judge Hillary Squire found “overwhelming” evidence of a corrupt relationship between Shaik, who was banker for the African National Congress in apartheid days, and Zuma. The court found Shaik paid Zuma £97 000 to fund a lavish lifestyle. One bribe related to a multi-billion dollar arms deal from a French group. Mbeki told parliament the judge’s ruling required him to act.

Zuma remained deputy president of the ANC and was still a popular figure, having spent 10 years imprisoned on Robben Island in apartheid days. He complained that he had been tried by the media and found guilty by a court in absentia. At the annual Youth Day rallies crowds protested at the dismissal and sang anti-Mbeki songs. Nelson Mandela said he was saddened by what had happened but agreed with Mbeki’s decision. It was announced that Zuma would stand trial for corruption (20 June). One fallout from the sacking was a statement by the ANC Youth League, saying Mbeki should not be allowed to remain party leader after he steps down as national president in 2009. Cosatu, the trade union federation and the ANC’s partner in government, called on Mbeki to reinstate Zuma as his deputy and prevent a “political trial”.

The Mineral and Energy Affairs Minister, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was sworn in to succeed Zuma (23 June)—the country’s first woman deputy president. She is aged 49, a former schoolteacher and won praise for transforming the mining industry by giving black businessmen a greater share in it. Soon after she took office and just before the critical UN report on Zimbabwe was released she led a government delegation to Harare that included the deputy finance minister. Later she ran into criticism by saying South Africa should “learn lessons” on fast land reform from Zimbabwe. Since 1994 the South African government has acquired for redistribution only 4% of land from private owners. She said: “There needs to be a bit of oomph. That’s why we may need the skills of Zimbabwe to help us.”

The *Mail and Guardian* newspaper was banned by a court injunction from publishing a report on allegations that an oil company poured taxpayers’ money into ANC election funds—the first time a newspaper had received a gagging order since the mid-1980s under apartheid rule. Police were stationed at the printing plant, original editions were pulped and a new front page banner read “Gagged”.

A strike for a 12% pay rise called by the National Union of Mineworkers stopped gold production across the country in August—the first of its kind for 18 years. But after four days the workers accepted 6%–7% and went back.

Government plans to outlaw virginity tests for young women were opposed by Zulu leader King Goodwill Zwelithini. His supporters said the practice was a cultural tradition in KwaZulu Natal and a valuable weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Supporters of the bill claimed virginity testing violates human rights.

South Africa planned to embark in 2006 on a five-year plan to remove 10 000 dangerous minibus taxis from the roads and replace them with 18- to 25-seater buses. The private taxi industry uses 100 000 vehicles to transport 70% of the country’s commuters. Many are described as ‘mobile deathtraps’.

Botswana

A deportation order was served in February 2005 on Kenneth Good, 72, Australian lecturer at the University of Botswana for 15 years, as he was about to deliver a lecture criticizing the country's democratic standards under President Festus Mogae. He said Botswana was run by a secretive elite. A court allowed him to stay in the country while he appealed, but the appeal was turned down and he was put on a plane to South Africa (1 June). In 1973 Good was expelled from what was then white-ruled Rhodesia.

President Mogae said before the G8 meeting he resented the fact that, although Botswana prides itself on good housekeeping, it was not on the list of countries thought to deserve debt relief. Botswana's debt is £1.1 billion. Mogae pointed to the successful HIV/AIDS programme, adding: "The fact that we are not in arrears doesn't mean we don't need assistance".

Swaziland

As well as hitting Caribbean and Pacific countries the European Union decision to cut its sugar prices by 39% over a two-year period seriously threatened Swaziland's biggest industry. Sugar employs 93 000 Swazis and accounts for 24% of Swaziland GDP.

Lesotho

A Commonwealth expert team with members from Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Nigeria was present for the first local government elections to be held in Lesotho since independence in 1966 (30 April 2005). The team's report suggested improvements in such matters as delimitation of constituencies, voter registration and voter education.

Namibia

In the government formed (21 March 2005) following the November elections the new President, Hifikepunye Pohamba, appointed Nahas Angula as prime minister. Foreign Minister was Marco Hausiku and former prime minister Theo-Ben Gurirab became Speaker of the National Assembly.

Cyprus

Within 48 hours President Tassos Papadopolous held separate meetings in London (26–27 July 2005) with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, but they raised little hope of a reopening of talks on reuniting the island. Ankara still refused to recognize the Greek Cypriot government and Nicosia still did not want a return to negotiations on the UN peace plan. Talks on Turkish membership of the EU due to start on 3 October would only go ahead if Turkey recognized all 25 EU countries. Blair, as current EU President, said he told Erdogan signing up with the EU did not amount to recognizing Cyprus. French

Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin said it was inconceivable that EU membership talks could open with a country that does not recognize all 25 member states. Turkey signed a protocol (29 July) extending its customs union with the EU to the 10 new member states, including Cyprus, as had been stipulated by the EU at its December 2004 summit.

The House of Representatives voted by 30 to 19 (30 June) to ratify the treaty providing for an EU constitution, despite the rejection of the treaty in the Netherlands and French referenda.

For the first time in 30 years Turkish Cypriot exhibitors took part in the Cyprus International Fair held in Nicosia over nine days in May. At the opening Papadopoulos assured Turkish Cypriots that the Greek Cypriots “remain firmly committed to a bizonal, bicomunal federation” which would ensure that “no community can impose its will on the other”.

A football match between a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish team that took place in Nicosia (26 July) was the first since Turkey’s invasion in 1974. There had been no official sporting contact between Turkey and Cyprus for 30 years.

Gibraltar

Spain accused the UK of acting illegally in making Gibraltar a part of southwest England for the elections to the European Parliament. In July 2005 it took the case to the European Court of Justice. The UK said Gibraltar’s 20 000 voters were added to a larger region to ensure its residents had the right to vote, despite its being too small to have its own Euro MP. In 1999 the European Human Rights Court ruled that residents of Gibraltar must have a vote in the European Parliament elections. Spain also argues that UK election law breaks EU rules by allowing Commonwealth citizens living in the UK to vote in European elections.

Malta

A crisis built up during the summer over thousands of illegal immigrants arriving in the island, mainly from Libya. Malta lacked resources to cope and was receiving no help from the EU, which it had joined two years earlier. Interior Minister Tonio Borg said Malta might have to suspend its international obligations.

Falkland Islands

The three-volume official history of the 1982 conflict by Sir Lawrence Freedman (published 28 June 2005) showed that the Thatcher government offered to hand over sovereignty of the Falklands at a clandestine meeting in Switzerland with a senior Argentinian official less than two years before the invasion. The plan was for Britain to lease back the islands for 99 years. The British and Argentinian flags would fly side by side on public buildings. The plan was driven along by Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister Nicholas Ridley. The history shows that Britain’s claim to the islands is not as strong as made out. When it recognized Argentinian independence in 1825 it did so without any claim to the Falklands, which were then under an Argentinian governor. Britain seized the islands by force in 1833.

The history also says that Thatcher was incensed by a message sent by President Reagan to Latin American leaders expressing “understanding” of Argentina’s commitment to recover the Falklands. She told him so.

Falkland islanders backed a plan by the charity Landmine Action by which, instead of clearing the Falklands, Britain would remove mines from the equivalent land area in Angola, Cambodia or Afghanistan where they present a daily risk to life. In the Falklands 117 minefields cover eight square miles, but islanders argue that with the mines fenced off lifting them could be delayed while other more pressing clearances were made.

UK

When Prime Minister Tony Blair chaired the 2005 meeting of G8 leaders in Gleneagles, Scotland (6 July 2005) they were joined by those of five other countries—China, Brazil, India, Mexico and South Africa. This meant four leaders from the Commonwealth were there—Prime Ministers Paul Martin of Canada, Manmohan Singh of India, Blair and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) issued a declaration (28 July) formally ordering an end to the armed campaign. It ordered all units to dump arms. They were told “to assist the development of purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means”. In engagement with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning the IRA was to verifiably put its arms beyond use. It was the end of decades of struggle over Northern Ireland and was followed by promises by the Blair government to reduce the British army presence. The main political party in Ulster, the Unionists, led by the Rev. Ian Paisley, however, was not satisfied. Their main complaint was that the IRA had still not agreed to their key demand for inspection of the destruction of IRA arms.

Dr John Sentamu, 56, who fled Uganda in the days of Idi Amin and trained for the priesthood at Cambridge became Archbishop of York (17 June). In Uganda he trained as a lawyer and sat as a magistrate. When the chief justice and Anglican archbishop were murdered in quick succession Dr Sentamu and his wife left the country.

The plight of asylum seekers from Zimbabwe became a controversial issue in parliament and the media in mid-2005 and led to court hearings against deportations. Nearly 40 detainees went on hunger strike. It was claimed that people sent back could be ill-treated on their return. Some reports said some of those already returned had been tortured. Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw defended a refusal by Home Secretary Charles Clarke to suspend deportations (28 June). But the Home Office suspended deportations (14 July) following court interventions. Mr Justice Collins told a High Court hearing (4 August) that conditions in the country had deteriorated as a result of the slum clearances. He adjourned test cases on the legality of returned failed asylum seekers until the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal looked at evidence of conditions in Zimbabwe.

Following the May general election, Labour MP Mike Gapes was elected chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons (9 July). He replaced Donald Anderson, now a peer, who had held the post since Labour came to power in 1997.

In a major and controversial offshore contracting deal a database containing details of every birth, marriage and death in England and Wales since 1837 was to be transferred to India. The digitization of the registers was seen by the government as a huge step in meeting rocketing public demand for instant access to ancestors' records. The work would be done in Chennai and would create 1000 jobs. British MPs questioned whether the move was lawful.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Several events in London in mid-2005 marked the 40th birthday of the Secretariat, which was set up at the meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers chaired by British prime minister Harold Wilson in June 1965. At that meeting Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith was elected the first secretary-general. It had been 58 years since the idea of a Secretariat had first been mooted. The suggestion came from Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin at the Imperial Conference of 1907.

A 40th anniversary symposium on 'The Commonwealth Institutions in a Globalised World' was held at the Royal Commonwealth Society in London (24 June). The conference report is available on the website at www.rcsint.org/events.

Commonwealth Institute

The British Government rejected (20 July) an application by the trustees to delist the Institute's building in London's Kensington High Street. The trustees had wanted to free it for redevelopment so as to proceed with the Institute's new Centre for Commonwealth Education at Cambridge University. The decision to maintain a preservation order on the building angered Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon, who denounced it as "perfidious" and "selfish imperialism". However, defenders of the decision said this was one of the two most important postwar buildings in London and Commonwealth NGOs were ready with plans for its use appropriate to its Commonwealth origins.

Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

After year-long consultations in New York and London the CPSU produced a report in July 2005 on UN reform entitled *Improving the UN Development System: Is there a Commonwealth Consensus?* (for details, see www.cpsu.org.uk). It was the latest of several inquiries into the state of the Commonwealth by the CPSU, which was founded by Richard Bourne. He retired as Director after a valedictory lecture at the Royal Commonwealth Society (14 July), of which he is vice-chairman. In June he took over from Stephen Cox as chairman of *The Round Table*.

Around the Commonwealth

Fifty government and opposition Caribbean leaders attended a workshop in Port of Spain, Trinidad (25–27 July 2005) and talked about their roles, rights and responsibilities, and how to strengthen democracy in the region. Prime Minister Patrick Manning opened the meeting. Afterwards, Deputy Prime Minister

Mia Mottley said “most of our countries . . . kept the structures that were reasonably close to what existed before independence. The time has now come for us to do a serious review given the changes and developmental pressures that we now face.” The meeting was organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and a local NGO. A similar meeting was held in Mozambique in 2004 and others are planned for the Pacific and other regions of the Commonwealth.

Teenage students Carolyn Jong from Canada and Kang Min Li from Singapore, both 17, shared the top prize in the 2005 Commonwealth Essay Competition run by the Royal Commonwealth Society. Both essays dealt with issues of light and darkness in life—one on Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel’s book *Night* and the other on a boy dying of leukaemia.

Edward Glover, former British high commissioner in Guyana, was appointed chair of the board of trustees of the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Programme. Among many successes of the 10-year-old Commonwealth project designed to protect tropical rainforest has been the development of an ecologically and economically sound timber harvesting business that is socially responsible.

An inter-agency consultation on the formulation of a youth development index was held in the Secretariat (11–12 July). The index would be used as a mechanism to measure, evaluate and help shape the direction of youth development programmes run by governments and development agencies.

Fifteen delegates from seven Commonwealth countries held a training workshop in Birmingham, UK (9–13 May) to focus on ways of improving the delivery of public service. They came from cabinet offices, reform units and training/consultancy institutions.

Government officials from 17 Commonwealth countries examined Singapore’s public service reform programme as a development model at a meeting there (20 June–1 July). The aim was to build knowledge and skills for the design and development of human resource management systems on recruitment, retention and performance management. Another Commonwealth event in Singapore (13–24 June) brought together 26 senior officials from 21 countries to tackle ways of improving governance by managing corruption.

A meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers in Geneva (15 May) focused on strategies to halt the rise of maternal deaths as well as reducing child mortality.

Effective leadership and governance was at the centre of a meeting of African heads of public services held in Arusha, Tanzania (19–20 July), which sought to assess the efforts of government to promote reform and efficiency.

Remittances by nationals working abroad that are invested in their homeland may replace a sizeable proportion of direct investments if the funds are transferred through official channels such as banks, said Finance minister Kwadwo Baah-Wiredu of Ghana when he opened a workshop on ‘Managing Migration, Remittances and Development Challenges for Africa’ in Accra (18 July). Central bank governors from six countries were there.

More than 30 police trainers from the five Commonwealth West African countries met in Abuja (12–14 July) at a workshop to enhance their knowledge and skill in incorporating a human-rights approach to policing into their training programmes. The event was organized by the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth

Secretariat, which plans similar workshops for police instructors in other parts of the Commonwealth.

A workshop on media balance in election coverage organized by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and the Secretariat was held in Bhourban, Pakistan (26–27 July). Participants were from radio networks, political parties, human rights organizations and the Pakistan election commission.

A regional workshop on good governance and gender equality in the public sector in Lilongwe, Malawi (27–30 June) was attended by 45 participants from 15 African countries.

A three-week programme held in June and July at the Commonwealth Secretariat, with officials from Guyana, Jamaica, Malawi, Maldives, Pakistan and Swaziland, aimed to develop an action plan that would enhance efficiency in bilateral and multilateral cooperation for development in their countries.

A Caribbean–Canada mid-term review meeting of the 2003 Commonwealth education ministers meeting was held in Nassau, The Bahamas (28–30 July). Earlier an Asia–Pacific review took place in Fiji Islands and an Africa one was scheduled for Sierra Leone. The next education ministers meeting will be held in South Africa in 2006.

Tony Coghlan of Australia took up his post as the new director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme in the South Pacific, which is now located back in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

In 2007 India is to host the first Commonwealth Youth and Sports Congress in Gurgaon. As well as sporting and cultural activities, the Congress will feature lectures on HIV/AIDS awareness, gender equality, leadership, and environmental issues, as well as talent shows by young people across the Commonwealth.

New Commonwealth Secretariat Publications

Gender Equality—a Decade of Commonwealth Action. Describes advances made by Commonwealth member countries in promoting gender equality from 1995 to 2005 and identifies emerging issues the Commonwealth needs to address in the next decade. 244 pp.

The Prosecution of International Crimes: A Practical Guide to Prosecuting ICC Crime in Commonwealth States. Examines the role of the International Criminal Court and the doctrines of international criminal law. Part I describes the ICC structure, jurisdiction issues, an outline of the crimes. Part II looks at national legislation adopted to date. 234 pp.

Small States: Economic Review and Basic Statistics, Vol. 9. Recent economic performance of Commonwealth small states, growth trends, inflation, employment, balance of payments. Developments affecting small states. 158 pp.

Titles available online at: www.publications.thecommonwealth.org/.