

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

PAKISTAN

- **Zardari condemns Mumbai terror attacks as “detestable”; Attacks overshadow Foreign Minister Qureshi’s visit to India; Both countries sign accord to fight terror and liberalize visa regime; PM Gilani: US missile strikes affecting Pak Army strategy against insurgents; 25 militants killed in security operations in Michini area; IMF loan worth \$7.6 billion approved**

The deadly terrorist strikes on Mumbai during the week which led to the death of over 180 people increased tensions between the two sub-continental rivals. President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the attacks as ‘detestable’. He also called on both countries to jointly cooperate to fight terrorism.¹ In the face of charges that the attackers had Pakistani links, Islamabad agreed to send its ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha to India, an offer which was later withdrawn. Reports indicated that the initial decision to send the ISI chief was probably taken under US pressure.² With tensions mounting between the two countries, analysts believed that there was likelihood of heavy deployment of Pakistani troops on the border facing India in order to be prepared for any possible Indian moves.³

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who was on a visit to India during the week, also condemned the attack. During the Home Secretary-level talks which took place on November 25, the two countries agreed to fight jointly fight terror under the framework of the composite dialogue and not to indulge in a blame game.⁴

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile stated during a televised interview that US missile attacks inside Pakistani territory were adversely affecting the strategy of the Pakistan army to counter militancy in the tribal areas.⁵ The spokesman for NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Brig. Gen. Richard Blanchette on his part noted that co-operation with Pakistan was the “best ever.”⁶ At least 25 militants were killed and 40 arrested in security operations in Michini area on November 24.

¹ Syed Irfan Raza, “Zardari calls it a detestable act,” *Dawn*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/28/top3.htm>

² Qudssia Akhlaque, “Rice call prompted hasty decision to send DG ISI,” *The News*, November 30, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

³ “Pak troops to move to Indian border if tensions escalate,” *The News*, November 30, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁴ Syed Irfan Raza, “Accord with India to fight terror together: FIA, CBI to work in concert; visa regime to be liberalized,” *Dawn*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/26/top2.htm>

⁵ “US strikes pave way for suicide attacks: Gilani,” *Daily Times*, November 24, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\11\24\story_24-11-2008_pg1_1

⁶ “NATO says co-operation with Pakistan ‘best ever,’” *Daily Times*, November 24, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\11\24\story_24-11-2008_pg1_5

In other developments, IMF executive board approved a loan worth \$7.6 billion loan on November 25 "to restore the confidence of domestic and foreign investors."⁷

NEPAL

- **EAM Mukherjee visits Nepal, discusses political issues, Kosi barrage, border issues, among others; Maoists to work for a 'people's federal democratic national republic'; Chinese Ambassador to Nepal shifted; Nepal, China agree to enhance economic cooperation; ID to Small Hydro projects; British Minister for International Development and Danish Foreign Minister visit Nepal; USAID launches 'Nepal Small Hydro Fund'**

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Nepal from November 25-27, during which he met President Ram Baran Yadav, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Foreign Minister Upendra Yadav. Among the issues both sides discussed included the ongoing political process in Nepal, aspects relating to the repair work of the Kosi barrage, details regarding the extradition treaty and developmental assistance. Mr. Mukherjee reiterated India's commitment to help Nepal in whatever manner possible and called on all political parties to be involved in the process of drafting of the constitution.⁸

Foreign Minister Yadav also noted that discussions were held on the problems in border areas like Kalapani and Susta, and the proposed construction of the Naumule hydropower project with Indian assistance.⁹ Nepal on its part pledged to take necessary measures to promote an investor-friendly environment, and to encourage Indian investments from both public and private sectors. Reports noted that the Joint Technical Committee on the boundary issue had almost completed the scientific strip mapping of the Nepal-India border.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the Maoists, at the national convention of the central committee (CC) on November 26, have decided to work for a 'people's federal democratic national republic' as an immediate priority. The new strategy, according to party leaders, is a 'synthesis' of separate policy documents presented by party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and organisation department chief Mohan Baidya. Party spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara stated that the new strategy seeks to institutionalize democratic republican order while keeping open the option of "gradual advancement towards people's republic."

⁷ Anwar Iqbal, "IMF terms package a strong signal to donors: \$3bn to be released initially, \$13bn needed for 'stabilisation'," *Dawn*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/26/top1.htm>

⁸ "Prachanda, Pranab discuss Kosi issue, Nepal political process," *Press Trust of India*, November 25, 2008, at <http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/A7D2F3BA40B568BC6525750C001DFBCA?OpenDocument>

⁹ "Mukherjee busy in high profile parleys; border issues, development assistance top agendas," *nepalnews*, November 25, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov25/news04.php>

¹⁰ "Bilateral nod to update extradition treaty," *The Himalayan Times*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0sa3qzpla4Sa0qa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20081127>

Over 1200 senior party workers, including People's Liberation Army commanders participated in the national conference.¹¹

China replaced its envoy to Nepal Zheng Xianglin, with Qiu Guohong, a former deputy-director general at the Asia department of the Chinese foreign affairs ministry. Reports noted that Zheng was transferred due to his poor management of the Tibetan issue.¹² The *Tibetan Review* also noted that China's border police have significantly beefed up their strength at the base of Mount Everest due to the rising number of visitors and the resultant increase in thefts and other crimes. Analysts also believed that this will help to better monitor and prevent the flow of Tibetans escaping from Tibet.¹³

China and Nepal meanwhile signed an agreement to increase cooperation in economic issues. This was done during the visit of the Minister of Industries Asta Laxmi Shakya to Beijing during the week Mrs. Shakya called on Chinese industrialists to invest in Nepal's economic zones.¹⁴

The British Minister for International Development, Mike Foster, was on a four-day official visit to Nepal from November 26-30. He announced that the UK will provide 20 million pound sterling in additional support to Nepal over the next two years to support the peace agreement and to help the government improve basic services. The DFID Nepal's 102 million pound sterling assistance over the next couple of years includes 500,000 pound sterling to support the work of the CA, 4.5 million for new bridges, 1.4 million for Koshi flood relief, and 660,000 to help the climate change national adaptation plan of action.¹⁵

A Danish delegation led by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Per Stig Møller also visited Nepal from November 27-December 1. Besides the political consultations, the Danish minister visited the Beldangi Bhutanese refugee camp in Jhapa on November 27. Denmark is one of the countries helping in the resettlement of refugees. Møller stated that his government was ready to extend all possible support for the success of Nepal's peace process. The Minister urged the authorities to undertake reforms of Nepal's security forces and emphasized the importance of UNMTN's role in this regard.¹⁶

In other developments, USAID launched a Rs. 300 million 'Nepal Small Hydro Fund' to support investments in the hydropower sector. The Fund is part of the USAID's South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/Energy) which

¹¹ "Maoist cadres' conference adopts 'new strategy'," *nepalnews*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov26/news10.php>

¹² "China replaces its Nepal envoy," *Press Trust of India*, November 24, at 2008, <http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/506A423F46C67F7D6525750A005C4782?OpenDocument>

¹³ "China strengthens Everest base camp police", *Tibetan review*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.tibetanreview.net/news.php?&id=1498>

¹⁴ "China to help establish economic zones in Nepal," *The Telegraph Nepal*, November 27, 2008, at http://www.telegraphnepal.com/news_det.php?news_id=4423

¹⁵ "Foster announces British support of 20 M GB pound," *The Gorkhapatra*, http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/rising.detail.php?article_id=10633&cat_id=4

¹⁶ "Denmark offers support for peace process," *nepalnews*, November 29, 2008, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov29/news05.php>

supports private sector financial institutions to invest in small and medium-sized hydropower projects.¹⁷

BANGLADESH

- **Parliamentary elections to be held on December 29; AL demands scrapping of Upazila polls; State of emergency to be lifted on December 12; UN polls assessment team: Preparations for elections on right track**

The Election Commission announced that parliamentary elections will now be held on December 29 and those for the upazilas on January 22, 2009.¹⁸ The Awami League, formally accepting the fresh poll schedule, has however demanded the scrapping of the upazila election schedule. It has also demanded that the caretaker government announce a specific date for withdrawal of the state of emergency.¹⁹

The BNP-led four-party alliance on its part announced that it would contest the December 29 national polls only if the state of emergency is withdrawn on or before December 11 and the EC's power to cancel candidature is scrapped or suspended.²⁰ Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain however stated that the EC would not scrap its power to cancel candidatures as per the powers vested in it under clause 91(E) of the Representation of the People Order.²¹ The caretaker government also agreed to the EC's proposal to lift the state of emergency on December 12.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina have also announced their intention to contest the December 29 elections, from three constituencies each.²²

In other developments, the European Union had earlier stated that it would be unhappy with the authorities if they held parliamentary elections under the state of emergency.²³ Meanwhile, a polls assessment team from the UN asserted that preparations for holding the ninth parliamentary election were on the right track and noted that it would be better if the state of emergency was

¹⁷ "USAID supports investment in hydropower", *nepalnews*, 25 November 2008, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov25/news01.php>

¹⁸ "JS elections on Dec 29, upazila on Jan 22: CEC announces fresh schedules after hectic 3-day parley with AL, BNP; downplays fear of misusing EC's power to cancel candidature," *The Daily Star*, November 24, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64700>

¹⁹ "Declare exact date for lifting emergency: AL asks govt," *The Daily Star*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65152>

²⁰ "4-party joins polls on 2 conditions: Demands full emergency withdrawal, scrapping or suspension of EC power to cancel candidature; nomination paper to be available from today," *The Daily Star*, November 25, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64876>

²¹ "EC won't scrap RPO provision on cancelling candidature," *The Daily Star*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65322>

²² "Khaleda, Hasina to vie for 3 seats each," *The Daily Star*, November 30, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65547>

²³ "EU seeks lifting of emergency," *The Daily Star*, November 24, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64715>

lifted.²⁴ The assessment team has also noted that the next polls would be held in a way that will be is credible, a possibility which was not viable two years ago.²⁵

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

MYANMAR

- **India and Myanmar hold another round of bilateral talks**

Myanmar and India concluded their ninth foreign office consultation on November 23 during which both sides agreed to cooperate on a wide range of bilateral issues. The meeting was held in Rangoon between delegations led by Myanmar's Deputy Foreign Minister Kyaw Thu and Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in areas of trade and economic cooperation, as well as to undertake cross-border developmental projects, and cooperative ventures in IT, energy, power, education and training. A press release noted that "both countries stressed the need for greater vigilance at the border and agreed to enhance security cooperation to combat insurgent groups and arms smuggling."

The consultations also welcomed the decisions taken during the Third Joint Trade Committee held in October. These decisions included the opening of a border trade point at Avakhung in Nagaland (India), and expanding the list of existing border trade items from 22 to 40. While India expressed an interest to enter into an arrangement for long-term purchase of pulses from Myanmar, it also announced the waiver of the ban on wheat export to Myanmar up to 950 tonnes. The consultation meeting also agreed to promptly implement the bilateral agreements signed during the visit of Vice Senior Gen. Maung Aye to India in April 2008.²⁶

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Iran successfully launches Kavosh-2 rocket; Iran takes steps to close border with Afghanistan to stem the flow of drugs; British envoy called to register protest over Miliband's remarks; Iran reacts strongly to NYT publishing 'secret' nuclear information of IAEA; AEOI: Iran to install 50,000 centrifuges within the next five years; Tehran threatens to close Hormuz Strait**

Reports noted that Iran successfully launched the 'Kavosh-2' (Explorer) rocket into space, carrying a space lab, a data monitoring and a processing unit. The

²⁴ "Poll preparations on right track, says UN team," *The Daily Star*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65150>

²⁵ "UN observers predict credible polls on Dec 29," *The Daily Star*, November 30, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=65548>

²⁶ "India-Burma holds another round of bilateral talks," *Mizzima*, November 25, 2008, at <http://mizzima.com/news/regional/1355-india-burma-holds-another-round-of-bilateral-talks.html>

launch was another indication of developments being made in Iran's strategic space program.²⁷

The country's police chief Brig. Gen. Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam stated that Iran was attempting to close all its borders to drug traffickers to tackle the rising problem of increased drug flow into the country from Afghanistan. Reports noted that the police seize about two tons of illicit drugs every day. Moghaddam called on Germany and countries of the Mini-Dublin Group (consisting of a number of European and other countries) to constructively cooperate in the campaign against illicit drugs.²⁸

In continuing controversy over its nuclear programme, British Ambassador to Tehran Geoffrey Adams was summoned to Iran's Foreign Ministry in protest against Foreign Secretary David Miliband's remarks over the status of Iran's nuclear programme. Miliband had urged the Arab Gulf states to step up pressure on Tehran over its nuclear plans by imposing financial restrictions and by tightening export controls.²⁹

Iran meanwhile objected to the IAEA over the leakage of confidential information from the entity. Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, in a letter to the IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei, voiced his country's serious concern about the attitude of the organization regarding safeguarding of the confidential information. The letter referred to the publication of materials by *The New York Times* about certain faked documents at the disposal of the IAEA and noted that the leakage of information from the agency will lead to member states' mistrust in the working of the UN body. Soltanieh urged ElBaradei to adopt strong and effective measures to prevent a repetition of such events.³⁰

The Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Gholamreza Aqazadeh on his part announced that Tehran plans to install 50,000 centrifuges within the next five years to produce 30,000 tons of nuclear fuel per year. Aqazadeh noted that Iran currently had more than 5,000 centrifuges processing uranium at the Natanz nuclear enrichment plant. Stating that Iran was cooperating with the IAEA based on its legal commitments, he warned the IAEA and the Western countries that they should not expect Tehran to sign the Additional Protocol while the country was under several rounds of economic sanctions.³¹

²⁷ "Kavosh-2 rocket fired," *IRNA*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-203/0811262190150611.htm>

²⁸ "Iran prepares to seal borders to drug traffickers," *Tehran Times*, November 26, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=183362

²⁹ "British envoy to Iran summoned over UK atom remarks," *Khaleej Times*, November 27, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/November/middleeast_November545.xml§ion=middleeast

³⁰ "Iran objects to IAEA over leakage of nuclear information," *IRNA*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-22/0811269954172030.htm>

³¹ "Iran to install 50,000 centrifuges in 5 years," *Tehran Times*, November 27, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=183451

IAEA Chief ElBaradei, at the opening meeting of the 35-member Board of Governors at the agency's headquarters in Vienna, underlined the need for adoption of transparent policies to tackle contentious issues. Reports noted that he was referring to the refusal of the US to submit a laptop which allegedly contains information proving that Iran has carried studies to produce a nuclear bomb. He added that it was the legitimate right of Iran to protect its classified documents and activities and IAEA can give required assurances to Iran to enjoy its right. ElBaradei once again called on Iran to continue with its confidence-building measures and expressed the hope that direct talks among countries would help build trust and restore stability to the region as soon as possible.³²

In other developments, the commander of Iran's Navy, Rear Adm. Habibollah Sayyari stated that the Navy was powerful enough to block the Hormuz Straits in the Persian Gulf in case of an attack against its nuclear installations.³³

IRAQ

- **BBC: Iraqi jails overcrowded; Government officials seek vote to pass Iraq's security pact**

The BBC reported that there was evidence of serious overcrowding and poor living conditions in one of Iraq's prisons - Baghdad's Rusafa facility, where about 150 prisoners were being held in a room about the size of a school classroom. The report noted that Iraq's judicial system was too overloaded to cope with the increase in the number of prisoners. It was the first time that foreign media personnel had access to an Iraqi jail since the US-led invasion in 2003. One of the inmates told the programme that conditions inside the complex were 'terrible', and that they were hardly ever let out because there was no proper exercise area.

The interior ministry officials, though admitting they had a problem, blamed the security situation in the country which led to the arrest of thousands of people over the past few years, including suspected insurgents accused of serious crimes. However, even after these many years, the arrested people were still yet to be charged. The report noted that conditions in jails like Rusafa could get even worse when more prisoners are transferred from the US to Iraqi control.³⁴

In other developments, intensive negotiations were under way to gather votes in the Iraqi Parliament for a security and strategic framework agreement that, if approved, would lay the road map for the complete withdrawal of American troops from Iraq in three years. Parliamentary approval is being seen

³² "ElBaradei criticizes US for non-delivery of evidence on Iran alleged studies," *IRNA*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-24/0811277502221434.htm>

³³ "Sayyari: Iran powerful enough to close Hormuz Strait," *Tehran Times*, November 30, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=183642

³⁴ "Iraq jails terribly overcrowded," *BBC News*, November 25, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7748795.stm

as critical to ending the unpopular war. The pact being discussed grants greater oversight powers to the Iraqis for American military maneuvers. It also has an array of restrictions on American operations to ensure that the Iraqi government has real control over troop activities, in addition to a timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops in the country. Despite these many restraints on American operations however, Iraqi lawmakers still expressed uneasiness with the pact.³⁵

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

TERROR STRIKES MUMBAI

- **ATS chief among 180 others killed; Prime Minister calls for the establishment of a federal agency to combat terror**

Suspected Pakistan-based terrorists armed with highly sophisticated weapons carried out a series of attacks across Mumbai on November 26. They took hostages in Nariman House, as well as at the city's top two luxury hotels - Trident, and the Taj. Other places that came under attack included the Cama hospital, GT hospital, VT station, Wadi Bunder, Metro Cinema, and Girgaum Chowpatty. An organisation calling itself the 'Deccan Mujahideen' claimed responsibility for the attacks. Initial reports indicated that the terrorists, numbering at least 25, armed with assault rifles and grenades, came from Karachi via the sea-route and fanned out across Mumbai on the night of November 26 to attack sites popular with tourists and businessmen.³⁶

The attacks were carefully coordinated, well-planned and involved a large number of attackers. Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare was killed in a shoot out at the Taj. Apart from Karkare, encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar and additional commissioner Ashok Kamte also lost their lives.

Expressing shock and outrage at the attacks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated on November 27 that the government would invoke the National Security Act, set up a Federal Investigation Agency and tighten laws to deal more effectively with terrorism. Addressing the nation, Dr. Singh charged that the terrorist group responsible for the carnage in Mumbai was based outside the country and promised to choke the infiltration lines and funds to ensure that such elements pay a heavy price for such cowardly and horrific acts. The Prime Minister reiterated that India will not tolerate the use of territories of its neighbours for launching attacks and stated that there would be a cost if suitable measures were not taken by these neighbours.³⁷ Dr. Singh also asked his

³⁵ Alissa J. Rubin and Campbell Robertson, "Backers of Iraq-U.S. Pact Seek Votes in Parliament," *The New York Times*, November 27, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/26/world/middleeast/26iraq.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

³⁶ "Mumbai under attack, 101 killed, 600 injured," *Indian Express*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mumbai-under-attack-101-killed-600-injured/390967/>

³⁷ "Group from outside behind Mumbai blasts: PM," *Indian Express*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/group-from-outside-behind-mumbai-blasts-pm/391451/>

Pakistani counterpart Yousuf Raza Gilani to send the ISI chief to Delhi to share information on the terror attacks. EAM Pranab Mukherjee also told reporters in Jodhpur on November 28 that "preliminary information" suggests that "some elements in Pakistan" are responsible for the attacks.³⁸

Intelligence agencies and terrorism experts around the world meanwhile have stated that the attacks bore the hallmarks of bin Laden's al-Qaeda network.³⁹

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Mehbooba Mufti escapes attack; Syed Ali Shah Geelani dismisses elections as "fauji drama"; India rejects US intervention on Kashmir**

People's Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti escaped unhurt when anti-election protesters stoned her motorcade at Pulwama on November 24.⁴⁰

The Congress party on November 24 termed the huge voter turn-out in the first two phases of the Assembly poll in Jammu and Kashmir as a clear indication of the people's rejection of the separatist mandate. About 65 per cent of the electorate voted in the first two phases of the seven-phase poll in the State.⁴¹

However, separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani lashed out on pro-India political parties like the NC and PDP for their participation in the electoral process and dismissed the elections as a "military exercise." Speaking at a press conference in Srinagar on November 26, Geelani charged that the elections were a "fauji drama" and claimed that Kashmir's "pro-freedom people" were not a part of this "farfical exercise."⁴²

Meanwhile, amid reports that the next US administration might appoint former President Bill Clinton as a mediator on Kashmir, India on November 26 rejected any third party intervention and asserted that the matter would have to be addressed bilaterally with Pakistan. This assertion was made by EAM Mukherjee after talks with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in New Delhi.⁴³

³⁸ "Mumbai attack: Gilani agrees to send ISI chief to India," *Indian Express*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mumbai-attack-gilani-agrees-to-send-isi-chief-to-india/391804/>

³⁹ "Mumbai attacks follow al-Qaeda blueprint," *The Hindu*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200811281280.htm>

⁴⁰ "Mehbooba Mufti escapes attack," *The Hindu*, November 25, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/25/stories/2008112557530100.htm>

⁴¹ "J&K voters rejected separatist, negative politics: Congress," *Daily Excelsior*, November 24, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08nov24/newsupdate.htm#6>

⁴² "Geelani castigates NC, PDP, dismisses election as 'fauji drama'," *Daily Excelsior*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08nov27/news.htm#4>

⁴³ "India rejects US intervention on Kashmir," *Daily Excelsior*, November 27, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08nov27/news.htm#2>

In other developments, security forces shot dead five militants in a fierce gun battle in Bandipora on November 27, and averted a major tragedy with the timely detection of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Pulwama district.⁴⁴

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Seven policemen killed in Chhattisgarh**

Seven policemen were killed on November 25 when suspected Maoists guerrillas blasted a bridge near Mardapal in Chhattisgarh. A contingent of over 150 policemen carrying electronic voting machines were on a trek back to Jagdalpur district headquarters when the rebels blasted a 30 metre-long bridge.⁴⁵

NORTHEAST INSURGENCY

- **Assam Special Investigation Team seeks Interpol help**

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) in Assam sought help from the Interpol to nab the perpetrators of the October 30 serial blasts in the State. According to sources, a list of 18 suspected persons reported to be camping in Bangladesh has also been handed over to the Army and the Border Security Force by the SIT.⁴⁶

In other developments, unidentified gunmen shot dead Konsam Rishikanta, a 25-year-old sub-editor of the English newspaper, *The Imphal Free Press*, in Manipur on November 17.⁴⁷ On November 22, gunmen shot dead the Kokrajhar district correspondent of a leading Assamese daily, *Amar Asom*, Jagajit Saikia, at Kokrajhar town. Reports noted that since 1991, 16 journalists have been killed in Assam.⁴⁸

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **Dr. Manmohan Singh: Check virus of communal violence**

PM Dr. Singh, addressing the annual conference of Directors and Inspectors General of Police in New Delhi on November 23, voiced concern over the “new danger” posed by the spread of fundamentalist and extremist ideas. Dr. Singh suggested the setting up of a task force to initiate a 100-day plan to address “emerging challenges” in the areas of terrorism, naxalism and insurgency. Describing communal violence as a virus that threatens the secular fabric of the

⁴⁴ “Five militants killed in encounter; IED detected,” *Daily Excelsior*, November 28, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08nov28/newsupdate.htm#5>

⁴⁵ “7 policemen killed in Chhattisgarh blast,” *The Hindu*, November 26, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/26/stories/2008112660111400.htm>

⁴⁶ “SIT seeks Interpol help,” *Sentinel*, November 24, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁴⁷ “North East scribes pay the ultimate price,” *The Hindu*, November 24, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/24/stories/2008112455241400.htm>

⁴⁸ “Unidentified gunmen shoot dead reporter in Assam,” *The Hindu*, November 23, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/23/stories/2008112354760900.htm>

country, he called for measures to check its influence in time so that the multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-caste society will not unravel.⁴⁹

III. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

RUSSIA AND CHINA INK CRUDE OIL SUPPLY DEAL

- **Beijing to provide loan amounting to \$25 billion, while Russia will supply 300 million metric tons of crude**

Russia's Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko stated that Russia may enter into a crude oil supply agreement with China by the end of the year, in return for a multi-billion dollar loan for Russian oil companies. The Beijing-based magazine *Caijing* noted that the two countries may sign final agreements on loans and oil supplies soon. The report noted that while China would agree to provide \$25 billion to Russian oil companies, it would receive 300 million metric tons of crude oil. A memoranda of understanding was signed to this effect on October 28.

In 2005, Moscow-based Rosneft committed to ship 48.4 million metric tons of crude to China National Petroleum Corp through 2010 to help repay \$6 billion in loans that part-financed the purchase of the now bankrupt OAO Yukos Oil Company's largest production unit.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin also noted that China may provide Russian oil companies with "considerable" loans as the countries continued to expand their energy cooperation.⁵⁰

CHINA TO INVEST IN MYANMAR

- **CNPC to team up with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise in a pipeline project valued at \$2.5 billion**

China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) will hold 50.9 per cent stake in the project, while Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise will own the remaining stake. The Chinese oil producer will also be responsible to manage the pipeline project.

The pipeline will transport crude oil from the Middle East and natural gas from two gas fields A-1 and A-3 in the Bay of Bengal, being developed by South Korean's Daewoo Group. The pipeline is expected to shorten the long detour through the congested Malacca Straits.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Check virus of communal violence: PM," *Sentinel*, November 24, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁵⁰ "Russia and China close to crude oil agreement," *Asia Energy*, November 26, 2008, at <http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2008/11/russia-and-china-close-to-crude-oil.html>

⁵¹ "CNPC to invest in Sino-Burma oil, gas pipeline," *Asia Energy*, November 25, 2008, at <http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2008/11/cnpc-to-invest-in-sino-burma-oil-gas.html>

INDIA, TURKEY, ISRAEL TO DISCUSS TRANSPORTATION OF OIL AND GAS FROM TURKEY

- **PM Erdogan in Bangalore: Proposal will allow India easier access to Central Asian energy resources**

Reports indicated that a plan to pipe oil and gas from Turkey to Israel and then ship it to India will be discussed when officials from the three countries meet in the near future. The Press Trust of India quoted Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan as stating in Bangalore on November 25 that the proposal would allow India easier access to energy supplies from Central Asia and the Caspian region. The proposal came in the backdrop of the stalled India-Iran-Pakistan pipeline, held up by disagreements over costs, Indian fears about the pipeline's security, and strong US opposition.

Turkey has positioned itself as a regional energy hub for routes bypassing Iran. The planned pipeline would run from the Caspian region to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. From there, a pipeline would run to Israel's Eilat port on the Red Sea. Shipping the crude and gas from Eilat would allow Indian tankers to avoid the Suez Canal. Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler on his part stated that Turkey had already conducted a feasibility study for the project and officials would likely meet in Turkey in the next month.⁵²

⁵² "Turkish, Israeli, and Indian ministers to meet for Med Stream Project," *Asia Energy*, November 24, 2008, at <http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2008/11/turkish-israeli-indian-ministers-to.html>