

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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	IN THIS ISSUE	PAGE
I. COUNTRY REVIEWS		
	A. SOUTH ASIA	3-5
	PAKISTAN	
	BANGLADESH	
	B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA	6-7
	MYANMAR	
	CHINA	
	C. WEST ASIA	7-8
	IRAN	
	IRAQ	
II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW	J & K	9-11
	MAOIST INSURGENCY	
	NORTHEAST	
	DEVELOPMENTS	
	OTHER DEVELOPMENTS	

1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

PAKISTAN

- **Government bans Jamatud Daawa; Defence Committee of Cabinet decides to cooperate with India in fighting terror; More than 200 NATO trucks burnt in Peshawar by militants**

The Pakistani government listed the Jammāt-ud Daawa, an off-shoot of Lashkar-e-Toiba, under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) after the UN Security Council added several organizations, including the LeT, to the list of terrorist organizations based in Pakistan.¹ Under the renewed international pressure, Islamabad asked the concerned authorities to keep a strict watch on the activities of these groups. Agencies raided offices of these organisations and seized assets held by them.²

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government turned down India's demand to extradite militants. This was in response to the second demarche sent by India for handing over three militants charged in the Mumbai attack.³ In a related development, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, met in Islamabad on December 8 and decided to extend cooperation to India in the wake of recent developments.⁴

In a daring operation, militants burnt down at least 160 trucks carrying NATO supplies in Peshawar on December 7.⁵ Armed militants were reported to have burnt another 53 NATO vehicles on the next day in a similar fashion when they barged into the Jamil Terminal in Peshawar.⁶

In other developments, the Bush Administration has reportedly prepared a strategic review of issues which will be confronted by the Obama administration on the Pak-Afghan border. The review notes that US aid to Pakistan shall be subject to the latter's success in fighting militants effectively.⁷

¹ "Noose tightens around Hafiz Saeed, LT and Jamaatud Daawa," *Daily Times*, December 12, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\12\12\story_12-12-2008_pg1_1

² "Agencies given go-ahead to raid Daawa hideouts," *The News*, December 13, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

³ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Extradition demand rejected in response to demarche," *Dawn*, December 9, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/12/09/top3.htm>

⁴ "Defence Committee of the Cabinet renews offer of full cooperation with India: 'Pakistan will not allow terrorism from its soil'," *Daily Times*, December 9, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\12\09\story_9-12-2008_pg1_1

⁵ "NATO trucks burnt in Peshawar," *Daily Times*, December 8, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\12\08\story_8-12-2008_pg1_1

⁶ Ali Hazrat Bacha, "New attack on Nato supplies; 53 trucks torched," *Dawn*, December 9, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/12/09/top5.htm>

⁷ "US report urges revamping of Pakistan aid," *The News*, December 8, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

BANGLADESH

- **EC facing a plethora of difficulties ahead of the parliamentary elections; Political parties announce their election manifestoes**

Even as the caretaker government announced that the state of emergency, imposed in the country on January 11, 2007, will be withdrawn on December 17, 2008, reports noted that the Election Commission (EC) was facing difficulties in resolving a plethora of problems regarding finalising the arrangements before the upcoming parliamentary elections on December 29. For instance, 865 candidates out of the 2,456 who have filed their nomination papers had not paid their income tax nor had any Tax Identification Number (TIN).⁸ The EC cleared the candidacy of 119 parliamentary aspirants, including seven each from the Awami League (AL) and the BNP, during hearings of appeals filed against cancellation of nomination papers by Returning Officers (ROs).

BNP on its part urged the authorities to ease campaigning rules in order to ensure smooth electioneering for the December 29 parliamentary polls.⁹ Following a seat-sharing deal between the BNP and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamaat would contest 34 seats under the banner of four-party alliance.¹⁰ BNP also stated that if the elections were held in a free and fair manner, the party would accept the results. Khaleda Zia unveiled the party's election manifesto on December 13, titled 'Save Country, Save People.' The party asserted that said it will reform the government system and scrap the special powers act if voted back to power.¹¹

The Awami League (AL) and the Jatiya Party (JP) have meanwhile reached an agreement to allow JP candidates to contest in 48 seats from the AL-led electoral grand alliance.¹² AL's Sheikh Hasina also unveiled her party's election manifesto 'Charter for Change' highlighting five promises. These included lowering of commodity prices and avoiding an economic depression, curbing corruption, raising production of power and energy, eradication of poverty and inequity, and establishment of good governance.¹³ The party also opened its Election Media Cell on December 13.¹⁴

⁸ "35pc aspirants pay no tax or lack TIN: NBR shocked at their claim of no taxable income," *The Daily Star*, December 8, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66662>

⁹ "BNP asks EC to ease polls campaign rules," *The Daily Star*, December 8, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66648>

¹⁰ "4-party completes seat sharing: Jamaat gets 34, IOJ 4, BJP 2; Khaleda starts campaign today," *The Daily Star*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66772>

¹¹ "BNP unveils charter for saving people, country: Pledges to amend caretaker system, scrap Special Powers Act," *The Daily Star*, December 14, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=67054>

¹² "Ershad's see-saw game gets JP 48 seats from AL," *The Daily Star*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66771>

¹³ "Hasina rolls out AL's charter for change: Highlights 5 poll pledges, vision up to 2021," *The Daily Star*, December 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66898>

¹⁴ "Hasina opens AL election media cell today," *The Daily Star*, December 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66939>

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led by Col (retd.) Oli Ahmed announced that it will contest the upcoming parliamentary election separately as its hope for becoming a component of Awami League's grand alliance faded.¹⁵ The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) launched its election campaign urging the electorate not to cast their vote for any war criminal or corrupt politician.¹⁶

In other developments, Bangladesh was nominated for the vice-chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), a body which implements all decisions of convention and protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹⁷

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

MYANMAR

- **Junta orders major Air Force base relocated; NLD contemplating contesting in the 2010 general elections; UN: Aid flow hampering relief efforts**

One of the major Air Force bases in Myanmar, Mingalardon Air Force Base, has been ordered to relocate to Seikpyingone in Meiktila Township in central Myanmar. Military sources in Rangoon said that since 2006, the ruling military council has also upgraded Air Force facilities and has created two new Air Force bases in Magwe, the capital of Magwe Division, and Bassein in Irrawaddy Division. Mingaladon Air Base, which was formed in 1950, houses among other aircraft, MiG-29 fighters, G-4 aircraft, and PC-9 and PC-7 squadrons. The government transferred squadrons of G-4 aircraft to Bassein Air Force Base in Irrawaddy Division and PC-9 and PC-7 squadrons to the Magwe Air Force Base in 2006 while eight MiG-29 fighter planes were transferred to the Flight Training Base in Shante in Meiktila Township in central Myanmar in late 2007. The maintenance air base in Mingaladon, and the Hmawbi Air Force Base in Hmawbi Township will remain in Rangoon. Myanmar has ten Air Force Base headquarters. These are the Bassein Air Base, Mingaladon Air Base, Myitkyina Air Base, Myike Air Base, Namsang Air Base, Taungoo Air Base, Meikhtila (Shante) Flying Training Base, Meikthila Grounding Training Base, Magwe Air Base and the Homemalin Air base.¹⁸

Reports noted that the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) was debating its possible participation in the forthcoming 2010 general elections.

¹⁵ "LDP to contest separately," *The Daily Star*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66784>

¹⁶ "CPB says no to war criminals, corrupts: Launches poll manifesto," *The Daily Star*, December 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66907>

¹⁷ "Bangladesh given major role in UN climate change measures," *The Daily Star*, December 8, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=66646>

¹⁸ "Junta Orders Major Air Force Base Relocated," *Irrawaddy*, December 1, 2008, at http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14722

Khin Maung Swe, an NLD executive member, told *The Irrawaddy* that the NLD has held executive meetings to discuss its strategy in the 2010 elections. NLD sources claimed that its participation was contingent on the authorities allowing a constitutional review and permitting all political parties to function freely.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Bishow Parajuli, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar stated that efforts to help Myanmar's cyclone victims were still being hampered due to a shortage of funds. He called for more concerted efforts to be made to address the issue, especially in the health sector. Addressing a donors meeting in Rangoon on December 9, Parajuli warned that investments and progress made so far was "at risk" unless concerted and coordinated efforts were made. He noted that Myanmar was still short of more than \$100 million, having received only \$303 million out of the \$483 million appealed so far.²⁰

CHINA

- **China, Japan, South Korea establish 'tripartite partnership'; US, China delegations meet to discuss bilateral and regional issues; China and India conduct anti-terror drill; CPC Vice-Minister says door open for negotiations with Dalai Lama**

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao attended a trilateral summit meeting in Fukuoka, Japan, along with his Japanese counterpart Taro Aso and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak. The three leaders discussed the global financial crisis, among other issues. Wen noted that cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea is "an organic component of larger cooperation in East Asia, and promotion of their cooperation is not only in the interests of the three nations but beneficial to other East Asian nations."²¹

Diplomats from the US and China also met in Beijing to discuss bilateral issues as well as issues concerning South and Central Asia. The meeting was held between US Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Richard Boucher and China's Vice-Foreign Minister Li Hui and Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhenghue. The meeting was part of a bilateral consultation process which was started in 2005 between the two sides.²²

China and India conducted an anti-terror military drill in Belgaum, India during the week. The thrust of this joint-military exercise was to counter terrorism. This was the third and last stage of the joint anti-terrorism military

¹⁹ "NLD Leaders Discuss Role in 2010 Election," *Irrawaddy*, December 2, 2008, at http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14734

²⁰ "Health care at risk in cyclone hit areas in Burma: UN," *Mizzima*, December 12, 2008, at <http://mizzima.com/nargis-impact/1430-health-care-at-risk-in-cyclone-hit-areas-in-burma-un.html>

²¹ "Chinese premier stresses co-op between China, Japan, S Korea," *People's Daily*, December 14, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6553004.html>

²² "China, U.S. meet on central, south Asia issues," *People's Daily*, December 13, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6552753.html>

training between India and China, being conducted as part of the "Hand-in-Hand 2008" initiatives between the two sides.²³

In other developments, the Vice-Minister of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee stated that "the door" remained open for negotiations with the Dalai Lama. He however asserted that "Tibetan independence" was not permissible, nor was "semi-independence for Tibet" or "Tibetan independence in disguise." The Vice-Minister also urged the Dalai Lama to denounce his agenda of "splitting the motherland" and return to a patriotic stance.²⁴

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Iran hopes Obama will follow a policy 'based on interaction'; Iran's Atomic Energy Agency deputy head: Iran 7th country to produce UF₆: Iran to ask OPEC to cut oil output**

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Ghashghavi asserted that Iran would not change its nuclear policy and urged President-elect Barack Obama to instead change America's 'carrot-and-stick policy.' He added that Tehran expected Obama to stick to his campaign promise of initiating a change in Washington's "confrontational" Iran policy to one "based on interaction." The comments came after Obama stated that he would continue to offer incentives to encourage Iran to cease enriching uranium but would seek to tighten economic sanctions on the country if it did not.²⁵

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) deputy head Mohammad Qannadi stated that Iran was the 7th countries in the world to successfully produce Uranium Hexafluoride (UF₆). UF₆ gas plays a significant role in the production cycle of nuclear fuel. Reiterating that nuclear energy is "the healthiest and cheapest energy in the world", Qannadi noted that Iran would produce 10 percent of its energy needs (about 20,000 MW) from nuclear power plants in the future. He added that the IAEO would strive to produce 5,000 MW of energy in the next five years.²⁶

In other developments, Iranian Oil Minister Gholam-Hossein Nozari stated that Iran will propose that OPEC cut its output by 1.5-2 million barrels per day at its upcoming meeting in Oran, Algeria on December 17. The minister

²³ "China, India start finale drill of joint anti-terror military training," *People's Daily*, December 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6551945.html>

²⁴ "Official: China still holds ample patience with the Dalai Lama," *People's Daily*, December 10, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6551065.html>

²⁵ NAZILA FATHI, "Iran Urges Obama to Change Approach," *New York Times*, December 9, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html?ref=todayspaper>

²⁶ "Iran, 7th in producing UF₆ - IAEO official," *IRNA*, December 14, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-17/0812143870142050.htm>

noted that the proposal was targeted to ensure a balance in the supply and demand of oil in the world market.²⁷

IRAQ

- **Britain to start withdrawing its remaining troops in March 2009; Suicide bomber kills 48 in Kirkuk**

Reports noted that Britain's remaining troops in Iraq will begin withdrawing from the country in March 2009 on a timetable that will aim to leave only a small training force of 300 to 400 by June of that year. The long-expected drawdown of the British force next year from its current level of 4,100 troops will effectively end Britain's role as the principal partner of the US in the occupation of Iraq. A British force of more than 46,000 troops took part in the effort that overthrew Saddam Hussein. Analysts believed that the British withdrawal plan appeared to have been influenced to some extent, by the victory of Barack Obama in the US presidential elections the previous month and his plans to draw up a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Other factors that mattered included the British general elections that should be held before June 2010. It was also not likely that the troops being withdrawn from Iraq would be automatically deployed to Afghanistan.²⁸

A British soldier meanwhile died at the Contingency Operating Base in Basra, bringing the number of British service personnel killed on military operations in Iraq since 2003 to 178. An investigation by the Royal Military Police Special Investigations Branch was under way to determine the cause of the incident. In the previous week, Lt. Corp. David Wilson of 9 Regiment Army Air Corps died in similar circumstances from a gunshot wound to the head.²⁹

A suicide bomber attacked a packed restaurant frequented by Sunni Arabs and Kurds in the northern city of Kirkuk killing at least 48 people and injuring over 100. The bombing was the deadliest in over six months. Reports noted that the target was symbolic as it was a meeting of Kurdish officials and Sunni Arab members of the Awakening, mostly former insurgents who were now working for the government. The American Embassy and the US military condemned the attack and blamed the Al Qaeda in Iraq for the incident. While sectarian tensions have quieted in much of the country, strong divisions remain in the north between Sunni Arabs and Kurds, who are competing for control of land and other resources.³⁰

²⁷ "Iran to propose OPEC to cut output by 1.5-2 million bpd," *IRNA*, December 14, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-18/0812141067133904.htm>

²⁸ JOHN F. BURNS, "Britain's Iraq Pullout Timeline Reported," *New York Times*, December 11, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/11/world/europe/11britain.html?ref=todayspaper>

²⁹ "UK soldier in Iraq shoots himself," *IRNA*, December 14, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-20/0812138191082822.htm>

³⁰ "Iraq Bomb Kills 48 in Volatile North," *New York Times*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/12/world/middleeast/12iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

- **United Jihad Council dissolved temporarily; Former Governor Lt. Gen. Sinha criticizes the government's "warped approach" on pension benefits to families of killed terrorists**

Reports noted that the United Jihad Council (UJC), a Pakistan-based conglomerate of militant groups active across the Kashmir Valley, has been 'temporarily' dissolved with its leaders going underground in the wake of the crackdown on Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and other banned terrorist outfits. The UJC comprises the Hizbul Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Ansar, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Al-Jihad, Al-Barq, Ikhwan-ul-Mussalmin and the Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen. An unnamed commander of one of the militant groups in the UJC told a leading daily that "following the Mumbai attacks and the subsequent tension between Pakistan and India, the United Jihad Council has decided to remain silent."

The Pakistan Government has launched a crackdown on leaders of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and arrested several militants, including Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks, after the UN Security Council declared JuD, the front organisation of LeT, a terrorist group on December 11.³¹ The UNSC also declared as terrorists its four top leaders, including JuD chief Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and the suspected Mumbai attacks mastermind Lakhvi. The UN Sanctions Committee has since 2005 considered LeT as a terrorist organisation affiliated with the al-Qaeda. The US and the European Union have already banned the LeT.³²

Meanwhile, former J and K Governor Lt. Gen.(Retd) S.K. Sinha slammed the pension benefits being given to the families of Kashmiri insurgents killed in encounters, calling it a "warped approach" of the government of India which helped project India's image as a soft state. In a hard hitting interview with *Gulf News* on November 1, Gen. Sinha called for "a healing touch for the victims of terrorism rather than the terrorists."³³

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Maoists gun down 5 policemen**

In a first-of-its-kind attack in Jharkhand, Maoist guerrillas stabbed five policemen before shooting them at Rahe on December 5. According to police, the policemen were stabbed with knives before being shot.³⁴

³¹ "UJC dissolved temporarily," *Daily Excelsior*, December 14, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec14/news.htm#4>

³² "UNSC imposes sanctions on JuD," *Daily Excelsior*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec12/news.htm#1>

³³ "Former J&K Guv slams Centre for pension to insurgents' families," *Daily Excelsior*, December 13, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec13/newsupdate.htm#2>

³⁴ "Maoists stab, gun down 5 jawans," *Telegraph*, December 6, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1081206/jsp/frontpage/story_10213322.jsp

NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENTS

- **Train blast kills 3 in Assam**

Three passengers were killed and 30 others wounded when unidentified extremists triggered a powerful blast inside a passenger train in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on December 2. The train had just reached the Diphu station in Karbi Anglong district when the explosion occurred. Police suspect it to be the handiwork of the extremist Karbi Longri N.C. Hills Liberation Front (KLNLFF) operating in the district.³⁵

Meanwhile, brushing aside demands for the lifting of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, the Manipur government extended the 'disturbed area' tag for another year in the whole of Manipur, barring the Imphal municipal area, on November 29 with effect from December 1. The Act was enforced in the Manipur hills for the first time in the early sixties to tackle Naga militancy and it was gradually extended in the whole of Manipur in 1980 as militancy spread to the Valley areas as well.³⁶

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **Parliament condemns Mumbai terror attacks with one voice; Pranab Mukherjee: Kashmir issue has no link to terror in India**

Parliament condemned the Mumbai terror attacks and expressed the country's resolve and willingness to forge new instruments and capabilities to defeat the terrorists' designs. A day-long debate on December 11 in the two Houses saw members articulating the nation's anger over the attacks, with calls made for strident "action" against terrorists and their sponsors. At the end of the debate, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh moved a resolution unequivocally condemned the attacks which sought to destroy the values that India stood for. Dr. Singh declared the government's resolve to review the circumstances leading to the attacks and to take further measures as may be necessary to safeguard the country's national security.³⁷

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee also slammed Pakistan for linking the Mumbai attacks to the non-resolution of the Kashmir issue and called on Pakistan to take "serious" action to completely dismantle terror infrastructure and end infiltration. Mr. Mukherjee raised doubts about Pakistan's sincerity in curbing activities of terror groups operating from its soil. Noting that India had repeatedly given Pakistan a list of 40 terrorists, including Dawood Ibrahim, with a demand that they be handed over, the EAM expressed the hope that Islamabad would respond positively. He asked Pakistan to come out of the "denial mode"

³⁵ "Train blast kills 3 in Assam," *Hindu*, December 3, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/12/03/stories/2008120360831300.htm>

³⁶ "Army act extended for 1 year," *Telegraph*, December 1, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1081201/jsp/northeast/story_10188061.jsp

³⁷ "Parliament condemns Mumbai terror attacks with one voice," *Hindu*, December 12, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/12/12/stories/2008121257240100.htm>

on existence of terrorists, including 'non-state actors', who operate from the confines of that country. Rubbishing efforts by Pakistan to link the terror strikes to the non-resolution of Kashmir issue, Mukherjee asserted that such a "straight jacket simple formula" will not help solve the problem as the series of attacks in India are part of global terrorism.³⁸

Earlier on December 2, India demanded the handing over of LeT chief Hafiz Mohammad and other fugitives in Pakistan. New Delhi also handed over a list of 20 terrorists, including Lashkar-e-Toiba chief Hafiz Mohammad and Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar besides Dawood Ibrahim.³⁹ However, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari rejected India's demand to hand over LeT chief Hafiz Mohd Sayeed and other fugitives and told CNN that they would be tried in Pakistani courts..⁴⁰

In other developments, PM Dr. Singh on November 30 stated that the government had decided to set up a Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), strengthen air and maritime security as well as create four National Security Guard (NSG) hubs in various parts of the country.⁴¹

³⁸ "Kashmir issue has no link to terror in India: Mukherjee," *Daily Excelsior*, December 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec11/newsupdate.htm#4>

³⁹ "India seeks custody of LeT chief from Pak," *Daily Excelsior*, December 3, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec03/news.htm#1>

⁴⁰ "Zardari rejects India's demand to hand over LeT chief, others," *Daily Excelsior*, December 3, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec03/newsupdate.htm#1>

⁴¹ "Govt to set up FIA, beef up security," *Daily Excelsior*, November 30, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08dec01/news.htm#3>