

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- *Suicide attacks in Baghdad kill nearly 100 people; Iraqi Army launches an operation against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia in Mosul; Iraq's Presidency Council approves the Accountability and Justice Law*

Two women suicide bombers killed nearly 100 people in a crowded Baghdad market place on February 1 with the US military blaming the Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AIM) for the attacks. Prime Minister Maliki vowed to “crush the terrorists and target their strongholds” while Secretary Rice condemned the “absolute bankruptcy and brutality” of the perpetrators.¹ This was the deadliest attack in Baghdad since the April 18, 2007 incident which killed over 190 people.

Iraqi forces meanwhile launched an operation in the northern city of Mosul to drive out the AIM. The outfit was held responsible for a blast in the city on January 23 which claimed over 50 lives. Guerillas also ambushed a convoy with a roadside bomb in Mosul on January 28 claiming 5 American lives. This brought the number of American soldiers killed in the year to 36, and reinforced the ability of insurgents to strike in the north at random.

In other developments, Iraq's Presidency Council – made up of President Jalal Talabani (Kurdish), Sunni Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi, Shiite Vice President Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Prime Minister Maliki, approved the Accountability and Justice Law on February 3. The Law, which promises to provide ex-Bathists a share in the government jobs, was earlier passed by the Parliament in the previous month.

Reuters quoted Narmeen Othman, Iraq's acting minister for women's affairs as stating that the number of divorcees and widows in the country could be as high as 2 million out of a total population of 27 million. Parliamentarian Samira al-Moussawi put the figure at close to 1 million, out of a total of 8.5 million women aged between 15 and 80 years. The statistics revealed the difficult socio-economic aspect to the conflict and the lack of proper effort on the part of the government to deal with the situation.²

CHINA

- *CPC warns Taiwan on referendum; 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Uruguay celebrated*

The Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee warned the authorities led by Chen-Shui-bian that a ‘referendum’

¹ “Two Bombings Wreak Carnage in Iraqi Capital,” *The New York Times*, February 2, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/02/world/middleeast/02iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

² “Iraq has million-woman social time-bomb,” *Reuters*, January 31, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080131/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-iraq-has-million-woman-social-time-b-d4a870c.html

on UN membership in the name of Taiwan was a dangerous step for which “a heavy price” will have to be paid.³ Meanwhile, Frank Hsieh, Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) candidate for the March election has accused mainland China of interfering in the presidential election. He charged that China was offering discounted flight tickets to Taiwanese business people to return home to vote next month for some particular candidates.⁴

Among other developments, the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Uruguay was celebrated during the week. President Hu Jintao and his Uruguayan counterpart Tabare Vazquez exchanged messages of congratulations with Hu expressing his gratitude to the Uruguayan government for supporting the ‘one-China’ policy.⁵

MYANMAR

- *NLD: Suu Kyi not satisfied with meetings with the Junta; EU calls on Yangon to free Suu Kyi; Gambari in Delhi discusses democratic reforms*

The spokesman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Nyan Win told reporters in Rangoon on January 30, 2008 that Aung San Suu Kyi was “not satisfied” with the meetings she has had with the military junta’s liaison officer, Labour Minister Aung Kyi, to resolve the country’s current political crisis. The meetings have been held as a result of the international pressure on the military junta after its crackdown of the pro-democracy protests in September 2007.⁶ The EU’s special envoy for Myanmar, Piero Fassino, after a meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram on January 29 also urged the country’s military regime to free Suu Kyi.⁷

In other developments, United Nations envoy on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari on a visit to New Delhi met Vice President Hamid Ansari, EAM Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon.⁸ Gambari discussed with Indian leaders the need to push for democratic reforms in that country.⁹

³ “Chen warned against Taiwan ‘referendum,’” *People’s Daily*, February 4, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6351075.html>

⁴ “Hsieh camp complains about flights,” *Taipei Times*, February 4, 2008, at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/02/04/2003400162>

⁵ “Chinese, Uruguayan leaders exchange congratulations on anniversary of diplomatic relations,” *PLA Daily*, February 4, 2008, at <http://english.pladaily.com.cn/>

⁶ “Inter Press Service: Junta has no plans for political change - Suu Kyi - Marwaan Macan-Markar,” *Burma Net*, January 31, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/01/31/inter-press-service-junta-has-no-plans-for-political-change-suu-kyi-marwaan-macan-markar/#more-10896>

⁷ “Agence France Presse: EU envoy calls for release of Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi” *Burma Net*, January 29, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/01/29/agence-france-presse-eu-envoy-calls-for-release-of-myanmars-aung-san-suu-kyi/#more-10844>

⁸ “UN envoy on Myanmar ends visit to India” *The Times of India*, February 1, 2008, at http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/UN_envoy_on_Myanmar_ends_visit_to_India_/articleshow/2747084.cms

⁹ “Mizzima News: Gambari in New Delhi to urge fresh Indian support - Mungpi” *Burma Net*, January 29, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/01/29/mizzima-news-gambari-in-new-delhi-to-urge-fresh-indian-support-mungpi/#more-10846>

SOUTH ASIA
AFGHANISTAN

- *Qaeda commander al-Libi reportedly killed; Germany turns down US request for more troops*

Reports noted that a senior Al Qaeda commander in Afghanistan, Abu Laith al-Libi was killed in a US missile strike in Pakistan's North Waziristan district recently.¹⁰ Al Libi was suspected of involvement in a suicide attack that killed 23 people outside Bagram air base during a visit by US Vice President Cheney in February 2007, among other terror strikes.

Meanwhile, the German government turned down a US request to contribute more troops as part of the 3,200 additional NATO contingents that will be deployed in the south of the country.¹¹ Germany's nearly 3,000 troops are mostly deployed in the relatively peaceful north of the country.

In other developments, a suicide attack inside a mosque in Kandahar killed the Deputy Governor of Helmand province and 5 other people on January 31 while a suicide attack on an Army bus in Kabul on the same day killed a civilian.

PAKISTAN

- *Suicide bomb attack kills 25 in Charsadda; Ceasefire in South Waziristan; US financial aid worth \$830 million announced for Pakistan; Benazir killed by bomb not gun, says Scotland Yard*

In a continuing spate of violence, at least 25 people were killed and 35 injured in a suicide bomb attack in Charsadda, Peshawar during an election rally of the Awami National Party (ANP) on February 9. The Provincial President of the ANP, Afrasayab Khattak, who was supposed to address the meeting however escaped unhurt.¹²

Meanwhile, the Taliban declared a unilateral ceasefire in South Waziristan on February 6 stating that the security forces would not be targeted by them.¹³ Prior to this, they had issued a warning to the local tribesmen in the area against giving any assistance to the government officials.¹⁴ In other domestic developments, the Scotland Yard in its report on the assassination of Benazir

¹⁰ "Senior Qaeda Commander Is Killed by U.S. Missile," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/world/asia/01qaeda.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹¹ "Germany turns down US request for more Afghan troops," *IANS*, February 1, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080201/r_t_ians_wl_europe/twl-germany-turns-down-us-request-for-mo-ef5d19c.html

¹² Daud Khattak and Manzoor Ali Shah, "25 killed in suicide attack on ANP rally in Charsadda," *Daily Times*, February 10, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\10\story_10-2-2008_pg1_1

¹³ "Taliban declare ceasefire in S Waziristan, Swat," *Daily Times*, February 7, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\07\story_7-2-2008_pg1_2

¹⁴ Munawar Afridi, "Taliban issue new warning in Darra: DCO convenes jirga," *Dawn*, February 6, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/06/top3.htm>

Bhutto asserted that she died of a head injury caused by a bomb blast and not from a gunshot wound as claimed by some.¹⁵

President George Bush meanwhile announced financial assistance worth \$830 million for Pakistan under the budget plan for 2009 “to foster strategic partnership” even as the Annual Threat Assessment presented to the US Congress on February 5 by US intelligence acknowledged that the nuclear assets of Pakistan were indeed “vulnerable.”¹⁶

BANGLADESH

- *Tensions at the Indo-Bangladesh border; HRW: Government has failed to check violations by the Army; Bangladesh to consider gas imports from Myanmar*

Tensions at the Indo-Bangladesh border rose with the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) exchanging fire on January 31 over the kidnapping of an Indian border guard by Bangladeshi smugglers on the previous day.¹⁷ A meeting between both the sides however failed to diffuse the situation as BDR later charged the BSF with firing at a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders as well as for killing a Bangladeshi trader on February 3.

In domestic developments, it was reported that Bangladesh's main political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) have managed to strike an informal deal to join forces in order to press the army-backed interim government to hold elections earlier than scheduled, latest by July 2008.¹⁸

The Special Assistant for Power and Energy Ministry, Dr. M. Tamim on February 3 stated that Bangladesh would consider gas import from Myanmar. Tamim noted that the country had either to go in for gas imports or undertake more explorations to meet a growing demand for the fossil fuel.¹⁹

Among other developments, Dhaka rejected the report of the Human Rights Watch released on January 31, which charged that the government had failed to keep the military from committing major violations, especially after the declaration of emergency in January 2007.²⁰

¹⁵ Imran Asghar, “Shooter and bomber same person: Scotland Yard : ‘Benazir killed by bomb, not bullet’,” *Daily Times*, February 9, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\09\story_9-2-2008_pg1_1

¹⁶ By Anwar Iqbal, “Bush seeks \$830m for Pakistan,” *Dawn*, February 5, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/05/top3.htm>; “Pakistan nuclear weapons vulnerable, says US,” *Daily Times*, February 6, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\06\story_6-2-2008_pg1_8

¹⁷ “3 Bangladeshis shot dead by BSF,” *The Daily Star*, February 1, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=21503>

¹⁸ “Rival Bangladesh parties join forces to press for poll,” *Reuters*, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSDHA74790>

¹⁹ “Bangladesh plans gas import from Myanmar” *News Today Bangladesh*, at <http://www.bangladesh-web.com/view.php?hidRecord=186133>

²⁰ “Bangladesh rebuts critical Human Rights Watch report” *The Associated Press*, February 1, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/01/asia/AS-GEN-Bangladesh-Human-Rights.php>

2. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- *Kakodkar: India ready to export civilian nuclear reactors: Kudankulam could have up to eight reactors; Steps to augment uranium production capacity afoot*

Dr. Anil Kakodkar, head of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), speaking to reporters at Kudankulam stated that India was prepared to export commercially viable civilian nuclear reactors to other developing nations and added that the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NCPIL) was capable of designing, fabricating and erecting commercially viable nuclear reactors. Dr. Kakodkar however pointed out that the approval of the Indian government and of the NSG would be necessary before the NCPIL went ahead with any such initiative.²¹ Noting that the government had allowed the construction of six 1,000MWe light water reactors at Kudankulam, he stated that the total number of reactors at the site could be raised to eight in the future.

On the need to augment uranium production to match the growing fuel demands of nuclear power reactors, Dr. Kakodkar noted that a uranium mine and processing mill would be commissioned shortly at Tummalapalli in Andhra Pradesh and that exploration projects would be taken up in Meghalaya and Karnataka.²²

NORTH KOREA

- *North Korea committed to de-nuclearisation process: Kim Jong Il; State Department Official to visit North Korea*

In light of recent reports questioning North Korea's commitment to the denuclearisation process, Kim Jong Il has assured a Chinese delegation which recently visited Pyongyang that his regime was still committed to the deal. In his meeting with Wang Jiarui, head of the liaison office of China's ruling Communist Party on January 31, 2008, Kim asserted that the present difficulties were "temporary and can be conquered."²³

IRAN

- *Lack of unanimity over third round of sanctions; South Africa, NAM countries want to wait for ElBaradei's progress report*

Lack of unanimity was apparent over the draft UN Security Council resolution to impose a new round of sanctions against Iran with the Chinese Ambassador to the UN, Liu Zhenmin, telling reporters that the process of discussions for drafting of a formal sanctions resolution would take a few weeks. The US on its

²¹ "India ready to export nuclear reactors," *The Hindu*, January 31, 2008, at <http://www.TheHindu.com/2008/01/31/stories/2008013154611300.htm>

²² R. Vimal Kumar, "Uranium production to be stepped up: Kakodkar," *The Hindu*, January 30, 2008, at <http://www.TheHindu.com/2008/01/30/stories/2008013054941300.htm>

²³ "N. Korea's Kim Committed to Nuclear Deal," *Washington Post*, January 31, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/31/AR2008013100155_pf.html

part wanted to move quickly on the resolution. While several European countries had indicated that they would like to move slowly on the resolution, South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo stated that his country would like to wait for the upcoming progress report by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, to be submitted in the third week of February.²⁴

US President George Bush meanwhile in his State of the Union address before the US Congress accused Tehran of developing ballistic missiles of increasing range and that it continued to develop its capability to enrich uranium, "which could be used to create a nuclear weapon."²⁵

3. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- *Union Govt to SC: Protocol on exchange of prisoners not working; 3 LeT terrorists killed in Poonch District*

The Union Government informed the Supreme Court that the protocol on the exchange of prisoners between India and Pakistan was not working. Additional Solicitor General Amarendra Sharan told a bench comprising Justices B. N. Agrawal and G. S. Singhvi on February 1 that Pakistan only 'recycled' hard-core terrorists and sent them back.²⁶

Meanwhile, in Jammu and Kashmir, as many as three top Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terrorists and two policemen were killed as security forces foiled an infiltration attempt on Line of Control in the Poonch district on February 2.²⁷

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- *Dr. Singh: North East must have permanent peace; Army Captain, two ULFA militants killed in encounter*

Concerned over the problems of insurgency in the North East, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, addressing Army and ITBP jawans in Lohitpur in Arunachal Pradesh on February 1, asserted that it was imperative to have lasting peace in the region.

Meanwhile, an Army officer, Captain S.K. Choudhury, who was awarded the President's Sena Medal this year for gallantry, died in an encounter with ULFA militants in Assam's Tinsukia district on January 27. Two ULFA militants were also killed in the encounter.²⁸

²⁴ Louis Charbonneau, "Iran sanctions vote at U.N. seen weeks away," *Reuters*, January 28, 2008, at <http://africa.reuters.com/wire/news/usnN28500038.html>

²⁵ "2008 State of the Union Address By President Bush," January 28, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/wh/rem/99783.htm>

²⁶ "Pak only interested in taking back hardcore ultras: Govt," *Daily Excelsior*, February 2, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb02/news.htm#3>

²⁷ "Three top Lashkar-e-Toiba militants and two police personnel killed in Jammu and Kashmir," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, February 3, 2008, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=2/3/2008#1

²⁸ "Sena Medal awardee dies in encounter," *The Hindu*, January 28, 2008, at <http://www.TheHindu.com/2008/01/28/stories/2008012854991200.htm>

Hindustan Times reported that the Union government has asked the intelligence agencies to closely monitor the growing nexus of the Maoists with the militant outfits of the North East region. Recently, an arrested senior Maoist cadre in Jharkhand revealed that the Maoists had already formed units in different districts of Assam, including Karbi Anglong and Golaghat.²⁹

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- *Anti-Maoist cell in offing in Delhi; Bastar is new Maoist epicentre, says Chattisgarh DGP*

The *Indian Express* reported that the Delhi Police has identified sixteen police stations as 'prone to Maoist infiltration', and that there was a plan for the establishment of an Anti-Maoist Cell in Delhi. Intelligence sources have also revealed that the Delhi Police was closely monitoring the activity of Maoist sympathizers and their associates in the city.³⁰

Meanwhile, as many as four Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in an ambush laid by the Maoists in Chattisgarh's Narayanpur district on February 2.³¹ In Andhra Pradesh, a Central Committee Member of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) Lanka Papi Reddy alias Ranganna surrendered before Home Minister K. Jana Reddy while in Orissa's Malkangiri district on January 28, Maoist insurgents exploded three landmines near an under-construction jail.

Chattisgarh DGP Vishwaranjan told reporters that Bastar region in the state was reportedly emerging as the training ground for Maoist extremists from across the country, with the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) reportedly running as many as four camps in the region. Apart from 8,000-10,000 PLGA insurgents and Jan militia in the region, the official stated that there were also 25,000-35,000 Maoist sympathizers or Sangham members.³²

Elsewhere, the CPI-Maoist in a statement confirmed the outfit's presence in Kerala. The statement made available to the local media stated that the activists of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) were co-operating with them in the state and that the outfit had full-fledged district committees in Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kannur and Palakkad.³³

²⁹ "Monitor 'red corridor' in NE: Centre," *The Hindustan Times*, January 29, 2008, at <http://www.TheHindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=1f045402-36ca-45d1-8658-da54b6e01ece&&Headline=Monitor+'red+corridor'+in+NE%3a+Centre>

³⁰ "Anti-Maoist cells in offing as Delhi feels the heat," *The Indian Express*, January 29, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/266491.html>

³¹ "Four CRPF men killed," *The Hindu*, February 3, 2008, at <http://www.TheHindu.com/2008/02/03/stories/2008020357420100.htm>

³² "Bastar is new Maoist epicentre: DGP says it's training ground for cadres from across India," *The Indian Express*, January 28, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/266150.html>

³³ "CPI-Maoist declares its presence in Kerala," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, February 1, 2008, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=2/1/2008#12