

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

February 11-17, 2(3), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- *Gates endorses pause in troop withdrawals; US military: Attacks across Iraq have fallen by over 60 per cent since June 2007; Iraqi Parliament passes the 2008 budget as well as a key reconciliation measure*

Debates over the American troop presence continued with US Defence Secretary Robert Gates in Baghdad advocating a pause in the withdrawals to prevent the situation from worsening. Reports indicated that the number of American troops would not probably drop below the pre-surge levels of 130,000 during the current year.¹ Iraq's National Security Advisor Mowaffaq al-Rubaie however disagreed over the need for a pause in the withdrawals and noted that Iraqi forces had taken over responsibilities in nine of Iraq's 18 provinces, and that they hoped to control all the provinces 18 before the end of the year.² The US military on its part asserted that attacks across Iraq had fallen by over 60 per cent since June 2007, on account of the troop surge while Iraqi forces claimed that attacks in Baghdad had fallen by over 80 per cent.³

In a significant development, the Iraqi Parliament passed the nearly \$50 billion budget for 2008 as well as granted amnesty to prisoners held without charges for over 6 months. It also approved a law defining provincial powers and requiring elections to provinces to be held before October 1, 2008.⁴

In other developments, Iran postponed the fourth round of talks with the US on Iraq that were scheduled to be held on February 15. Earlier rounds of discussions were held in May, July, and August 2007. The postponement was announced two days after the assassination of Hezbollah's Imad Moughniyah in Damascus.

CHINA

- *Chinese Foreign Ministry expresses 'concern' over Dr. Singh's visit to Arunachal; China rejects US spying charges; Infrastructure development continues in Xinjinag ahead of Olympics; China and Russia submit a joint-proposal for an international treaty to ban the deployment of weapons in outer space*

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Jianchao expressed "concern" over the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Arunachal Pradesh. The

¹ "Gates Endorses Pause in Iraq Troop Withdrawals," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/world/middleeast/12gates.html?ref=todayspaper>

² "Iraqi security adviser wants no troop withdrawal pause," *Reuters*, February 14, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080214/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-iraqi-security-adviser-wants-no-troo-d4a870c.html

³ "Attacks in Baghdad fall 80 percent - Iraq military," *Reuters*, February 16, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080216/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-attacks-in-baghdad-fall-80-percent-i-d4a870c.html

⁴ "Ending Impasse, Iraq Parliament Backs Measures," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/14/world/middleeast/14iraq.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper&oref=slogin

Chinese had earlier expressed verbally that “they were unhappy with the visit” of Dr. Singh.

Reacting to the US Justice Department revelations that four people were arrested on charges of spying for China in two separate cases, Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu rejected the charges as “groundless” and made “with ulterior motives.” He urged the US to abandon its ‘Cold War thinking.’⁵

Meanwhile, ahead of the 2008 Olympics, China has continued its efforts to develop the infrastructural facilities in the sensitive Xinjiang region. As per information given by the Xinjiang People Broadcasting Station, three railways worth 4.25 billion yuan would be constructed in the region by the beginning of the spring season. These included the Kuitun-Beitun project, the Turpan-Korla expansion project, and the Wuxi-Jinghe second line project.⁶

Xinhua reported that China and Russia have submitted a joint-proposal for an international treaty to ban the deployment of weapons in outer space. The draft treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT) was presented at a plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament, the world’s only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations.⁷

JAPAN

- *Hill expresses regret over the alleged rape of a Japanese girl in Okinawa by a US armed forces personnel*

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Christopher Hill expressed regret over the alleged rape of a girl in Okinawa Prefecture by a US armed forces personnel and stated that the U.S. military was “doing all it can to make sure that it has all the internal control to prevent these kinds of incidents.” Hill also noted that Secretary Rice would personally convey her regret when she meets Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura during her forthcoming trip to Japan.⁸

Reports noted that the Japanese government was in the process of determining whether it should officially recognize Kosovo which had declared its independence from Serbia. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura maintained that Japan had “good relations” with Serbia and “certain level of consideration” was therefore required in any decision.⁹

⁵ “China says U.S. spying charges ‘groundless’,” *People’s Daily*, February 15, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6354424.html>

⁶ “Central government has ratified three railway projects in Xinjiang”, *People’s Daily*, February 13, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90884/6353760.html>

⁷ “China, Russia present joint initiative on space arms race control”, *People’s Daily*, February 13, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6353226.html>

⁸ “Hill, Rice express regret over alleged rape by Marine in Okinawa”, *Japan Today*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/428433>

⁹ “Japan eyes recognizing Kosovo, but to show ‘consideration’ to Serbia”, *Japan Today*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/428458>

MYANMAR

- *Opposition groups in exile present a draft of the constitution; Ban ki-Moon calls for constitution-making process to be made more inclusive, participatory and transparent; Myanmar to visit Defexpo 2008*

The Federal Constitution Drafting and Coordinating Committee (FCDCC) of the Burmese opposition groups in exile during a press conference in Bangkok on February 15 stated that it had finished the second draft of the constitution, "Federal Republic of the Union of Burma." It claimed that the draft was endorsed by over 90 Burmese democracy and ethnic organizations and more than 120 individuals.¹⁰ Meanwhile, a regional human rights group has condemned the Junta's call for a constitution as an attempt to keep off the growing domestic and international pressure for genuine democratic reforms.¹¹ UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon renewed his call to make the constitution-making process more inclusive, participatory and transparent while UK's Foreign Secretary David Miliband called for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the authorities to allow her to participate in the drafting of the constitution.¹² The National League for Democracy on its part called for the creation of a "fair political climate."¹³

In other developments, China announced that it would support the UN Special Envoy on Myanmar and the Bulgarian government announced the imposition of wide-ranging sanctions.¹⁴ Reports also noted that a delegation from Myanmar would attend Asia's largest arms fair, Defexpo, to be held from February 16-19, in New Delhi to negotiate new arms contracts with Indian companies.¹⁵

¹⁰ "Mizzima News: Burmese opposition groups challenge junta's constitution - Mungpi," *Burma Net*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/15/mizzima-news-burmese-opposition-groups-challenge-juntas-constitution-mungpi/#more-11093>

¹¹ "Altsean-Burma (the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma): Referendum is the SPDC's latest con, regional human rights group says," *Burma Net*, February 14, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/14/altsean-burma-the-alternative-asean-network-on-burma-referendum-is-the-spdc%e2%80%99s-latest-con-regional-human-rights-group-says/#more-11067>

¹² "United Nations: Ban Ki-Moon renews call for inclusive constitution-making process in Myanmar," *Burma Net*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/11/united-nations-ban-ki-moon-renews-call-for-inclusive-constitution-making-process-in-myanmar/#more-11025>; "Press Trust Of India: Britain calls for Suu Kyi's immediate release," *Burma Net*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/13/press-trust-of-india-britain-calls-for-suu-kyis-immediate-release/>

¹³ "AFP: Aung San Suu Kyi's party calls for 'fair political climate' in Myanmar," *Burma Net*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/12/afp-aung-san-suu-kyis-party-calls-for-fair-political-climate-in-myanmar/#more-11044>

¹⁴ "Associated Press: China pledges to support UN special envoy on Myanmar," *Burma Net*, February 14, 2008 at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/14/associated-press-china-pledges-to-support-un-special-envoy-on-myanmar/#more-11072>; "Sofia News Agency: Bulgaria imposes restrictions against Myanmar" *Burma Net*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/13/sofia-news-agency-bulgaria-imposes-restrictions-against-myanmar/#more-11048>

¹⁵ "Irrawaddy: Burma to attend Indian Arms Fair - Violet Cho," *Burma Net*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/15/irrawaddy-burma-to-attend-indian-arms-fair-violet-cho/#more-11088>

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- *Deadly suicide attack in Kandahar claims nearly 80 lives; Australia calls on 'under-performing' NATO countries to share more of the burden*

US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee admitted to 'mistakes' and 'incoherence of efforts' in carrying out reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁶

A deadly suicide attack in Kandahar city at the venue of a dog-fighting competition on February 17 killed nearly 80 people. Reports noted that it was the worst single attack since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001. Security forces meanwhile launched a military operation in the western Farah province against the Taliban even as 3 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were killed in a roadside bomb blast on February 13 in southern Afghanistan's Musa Qula district. The district was recaptured by the Afghan forces in December 2007.

Debates continued over NATO troop involvement in the country. Australia, the largest non-NATO contributor to the Afghan effort with nearly 1,000 troops called on 'underperforming' NATO countries to share more of the burden.¹⁷ Secretary Gates at the Munich security conference asserted that NATO's success in stabilizing Afghanistan was crucial for protecting Europe from terrorist attacks.¹⁸

In other developments, reports indicated that over 900 people across the country have been killed since December 2007 due to the severe cold weather.

PAKISTAN

- *40 dead in a PPP election rally; 81,000 troops deployed for polls; Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan abducted; Operations continue in Swat*

At least 40 people were killed and 93 injured in a bomb explosion in Parachinagar where a PPP election rally was being held on February 16. Reports indicated that the bomb was planted in a car.¹⁹ In another incident of pre-election violence, militants bombed six polling stations near Anyat valley in Khar on the same day.²⁰

Meanwhile, Chief of Army Staff General Kayani stated that the government had deployed over 80,000 troops including para-military forces at

¹⁶ "Rice admits errors in Iraqi, Afghan reconstruction," *Reuters*, February 12, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080214/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-rice-admits-errors-in-iraqi-afghan-r-d4a870c.html

¹⁷ "Australia Says NATO Needs New Strategy in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/world/asia/13australia.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹⁸ "U.S. Ties Europe's Safety to Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/world/europe/11gates.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹⁹ Hussain Khan, "PPP rally bombed; 40 dead: Grisly end to electioneering," *Dawn*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/17/top1.htm>

²⁰ "Six polling stations blown up in Khar," *Dawn*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/17/top2.htm>

nearly 9000 polling stations considered to be sensitive in an attempt to ensure peaceful and fair polls.²¹²²

Among other developments, Tariq Azizuddin, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan was abducted from the Khyber tribal region along with his security guards on February 11. A massive search was launched on the Pak-Afghan border by the security forces.

As a part of the ongoing offensive against militants in Swat, security forces arrested 36 militants on February 10 and another 10 in Karachi on February 15.²³ The Army also launched massive operations against militants in Darra Adam Khel after rockets were fired on 'telecommunication installations' on February 14.²⁴

BANGLADESH

- *Chief Adviser affirms the goal of establishing a 'sustainable foundation' for democracy; BSF and BDR exchange fire at Baliadangi border in Thakurgaon district; Increase in flights between Dhaka and Delhi*

Even as the Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed affirmed that the ultimate goal of the caretaker government was to lay a sustainable foundation for democracy to flourish, the Law Adviser A.F. Hassan Ariff stated on February 14 that it was necessary to relax the state of emergency before the polls as it blocked the pre-election activities of the political parties.²⁵ The UK and the United States on their part have stressed that they believed in the Bangladeshi government's assurance of holding elections before 2008.²⁶ Bangladesh's leading trade partner Germany has also called for the establishment of a democratic society in Bangladesh that upholds human rights, freedom of the press and the security of lives.²⁷

Meanwhile, in the domestic political front, reports noted that the pro-Saifur faction of the BNP and some other political parties on February 15 have initiated discussions on forming a new political alliance in order to win the

²¹ "81,000 troops deployment by today," *Daily Times*, February 15, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\15\story_15-2-2008_pg1_5

²² "Army chief seeks support for peaceful polls: 81,000 troops deployed," *Dawn*, February 16, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/16/top2.htm>

²³ Hameedullah, "Two would-be bombers among 36 held in Swat," *Dawn*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/11/top3.htm>; S. Raza Hassan, "10 militants held in Karachi," *Dawn*, February 16, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/16/top1.htm>

²⁴ Munawer Afridi, "Operation in Darra after militants' rocket attack," *Dawn*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/15/top8.htm>

²⁵ "Sustainable democracy ultimate goal of govt," *The Daily Star*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23231>; "Relaxing emergency a must for polls: Law adviser says this is needed for pre-election activities of parties," *The Daily Star*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23419>

²⁶ "Polls must for no return to pre-1/11 politics" *The Daily Star*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23044>

²⁷ "German envoy stresses political reforms for democracy," *The Daily Star*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23078>

upcoming election.²⁸ Reports also noted that the Awami League's effort to form a grand electoral alliance before the elections was facing difficulties due to differences of opinion among key leaders in the party on the likely strategies to be adopted.²⁹

In other developments, Dhaka and Delhi signed a deal to double the number of weekly flights from 31 to 60. The BSF also handed over 18 Bangladeshi men, women and children, who were trafficked to India two years ago, to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Benapole check-post on February 12.³⁰ Reports also noted that the BSF and BDR exchanged gunfire at several points on Baliadangi border in Thakurgaon district on February 10.³¹

NEPAL

- *Government assures proportional representation to the minorities, invites the UMDF for talks*

Even as the government assured proportional representation to the minorities and the Madhesi groups in police, army and public enterprises, it invited the United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) - an alliance of the three agitating Madhesi parties comprising Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, Sadbhawana Party and Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party, for talks on the Terai issue.³² The twenty-two point agreement agreed upon by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) was stated to be the focal point of the discussions.³³ In a recent statement however, the Prime-Minister and the SPA have rejected the right to self-determination of the Madhesis and stated that the concerns of the groups would be addressed in the aftermath of the CA polls.³⁴

Maoist leader Prachanda meanwhile has stated that a political revolution needed to be given precedence before an economic revolution was launched in Nepal.³⁵

²⁸ "Pro-Saifur faction of BNP sits with parties," *The Daily Star*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23678>

²⁹ "Discord among key leaders of Awami League, allies," *The Daily Star*, February 16, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23612>

³⁰ "18 trafficked Bangladeshis return home: BSF hands them over to BDR," *The Daily Star*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=23235>

³¹ "BDR, BSF trade shots" *The Daily Star*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=22902>

³² "Cabinet decides to ensure reservation for marginalised communities," *Nepal News*, February 10, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb10/news05.php>

³³ "Govt formally invites UMDF for talks," *Nepal News*, February 14, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb14/news13.php>

³⁴ "PM, SPA articulate their bottom line on Madhes demands," *Nepal News*, February 17, 2008, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb17/news03.php>

³⁵ "Economic revolution after political revolution, says Prachanda," *Nepal News*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb17/news18.php>

SRI LANKA

- ***UN charges LTTE with grave human rights violations; Clashes between LTTE and Sri Lankan Army continue***

The United Nations has charged the LTTE with committing grave human rights violations, including the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence against children, particularly girls in situations of armed conflict.³⁶ Reports noted that the Sri Lanka government had launched a special programme to provide security in schools to be implemented jointly by the National Cadet Corps and the Education Ministry under the direction of the Defence Ministry.³⁷

Clashes between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army continued with the latter successfully capturing the 'Mannar Rice Bowl'.³⁸ Meanwhile, the offices of Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation in the US were sealed on charges of raising funds on behalf of LTTE.³⁹

On the bilateral front, Sri Lanka and Maldives have decided to cooperate with each other on issues relating to terrorism and environment.⁴⁰ The Japanese government reiterated its assurance to maintain the steady pace of aid flow to Sri Lanka.⁴¹

2. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- ***India continues to lobby Australia over nuclear deal; Russia to set up four additional nuclear power plants in Kudankulam; Burns: India and US don't have "all the time in the world" to complete the nuclear agreement***

Reports indicated that India continued to push the nuclear deal with the Australian government. Australia had recently announced its decision not to sell uranium to India, thereby reversing the decision taken by the John Howard administration. The Indian and Australian Prime Ministers are scheduled to meet twice in the year where the issue could be discussed. Earlier, Shyam Saran, the Prime Minister's nuclear envoy, had also visited Australia.⁴²

In other news, India and Russia finalised plans to build four new nuclear power stations at Koodankulam in Tamil Nadu. Moscow is already building two

³⁶ "Tigers among six blatant HR violators," *Daily News*, February 14, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/02/14/news03.asp>

³⁷ "Colombo claims destruction of LTTE operation centre," *The Hindu*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/17/stories/2008021755461200.htm>

³⁸ "Troops take area south of Adampan," *Daily News*, February 9, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/02/09/sec01.asp>

³⁹ "US lawmakers - Tiger lobby links exposed," *Daily News*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/02/11/sec01.asp>

⁴⁰ "Lanka, Maldives: Joint action to fight terror," *Daily News*, February 9, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/02/14/news01.asp>

⁴¹ "Aid commitments to Sri Lanka intact," *Daily News*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/02/15/news01.asp>

⁴² Greg Sheridan, "India pushing Nuke Deal," *The Australian*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23191547-2702,00.html>

1,000 megawatt light water nuclear power reactors at the site under the terms of an agreement made in June 1998. However, work on the new plants would only begin after the India-specific IAEA Safeguards and the NSG exemption are in place.⁴³

Meanwhile, Nicholas Burns, the pointman on the nuclear deal in the US State Department stated that India and the US did not have “all the time in the world” to complete the nuclear agreement.⁴⁴

IRAN

- *Iran begins testing of advanced centrifuges; Iran begins work on second nuclear power plant; Lavrov criticises Iranian missile test*

European and American diplomats have recently disclosed that Iran had begun testing its new centrifuges known as IR-2 and that it had introduced small amounts of uranium gas into the centrifuges. The new class of centrifuges would possibly quadruple Iran’s enrichment capabilities.⁴⁵ Gregory Schulte, the US ambassador to the IAEA warned Iran against pursuing more advanced uranium-enrichment technology noting that “any Iranian attempt at a more advanced centrifuge would be an escalation of Iran's ongoing non-compliance with its obligation to suspend all enrichment-related activities.”⁴⁶

In other developments, Iran reportedly provided the IAEA with answers to several questions about traces of highly enriched uranium (HEU) found at Tehran’s technical university and physics research centre.⁴⁷

Iran’s ambassador to Russia, Gholamreza Ansari disclosed that Tehran had started building a second atomic power plant at Karkhovin in the south-western Khuzestan province. Iran plans to build a 360 megawatt plant at the site.⁴⁸

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that Iranian missile launches raised suspicions about the real nature of Iran's atomic programme.⁴⁹

⁴³ “India, Russia agree nuclear deal,” *BBC*, February 12, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7241399.stm

⁴⁴ Hasan Suroor, “Burns for expeditious action on India-U.S. nuclear deal,” *The Hindu*, February 13, 2008, at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2008021354771200.htm&date=2008/02/13/&prd=th&>

⁴⁵ David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “Iran Is Reported to Test New Centrifuges to Make Atomic Fuel,” *The New York Times*, February 8, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/08/washington/08nukes.html?sq=international%20atomic%20energy%20agency&st=nyt&scp=1&pagewanted=print>; Mark Heinrich, “Iran tests advanced centrifuges with gas: diplomats,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/13/AR2008021302808_pf.html

⁴⁶ “US warns Iran over nuclear centrifuges,” *AFP*, February 8, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5glHTDq4tJw6qHxGaqQcQsGVn2KoA>

⁴⁷ Mark Heinrich, “Iran clarifies bomb-grade uranium traces to IAEA,” *Reuters*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=USL1226026220080212>

⁴⁸ “Iran starts second atomic power plant,” *Reuters*, February 8, 2008, at <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-31834520080208>

⁴⁹ “Russia criticises Iran's defiance,” *BBC*, February 13, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7244036.stm

While Russia and China have for long opposed a third round of sanctions, Moscow however recently agreed to support the US-led proposal for a third sanctions resolution.

PAKISTAN

- *Personnel of Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission abducted from north-western region; Pakistan conducts Hatf III test*

Two employees of the Pakistani Atomic Energy Commission on a mission to map mineral deposits in Pakistan's north western region were reportedly abducted by unidentified gunmen. Efforts to trace the nuclear technicians have not bore any results. Local officials have also stated that the identity or affiliation of the kidnappers was not known.⁵⁰

In other developments, Pakistan launched a short-range nuclear capable ballistic missile on February 13, 2008. A statement released by the Pakistani army noted that personnel from Pakistan's strategic force command carried out a 'successful' launch of the Hatf III (Ghaznavi) missile, which has a range of 290 kilometres.⁵¹

3. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- *LeT using young women to act as militants*

Daily Excelsior reported that the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) have been wooing young girls to act as militants especially for planting grenades and mobile telephone bombs to kill targeted persons. This revelation has been made by a LeT female cadre, who was recently arrested from Doda town.⁵²

Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman alias Rahman Bhai, a self-styled district commander of the LeT, who was involved in the bomb attacks on various courts across Uttar Pradesh on November 23, 2007, was killed along with one of his associate during a gunfight with the police in Pulwama district on February 15.⁵³

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- *As many as 31 militants surrender in Assam; Tea estates in Assam are Maoist breeding grounds, says media reports*

As many as 31 militants surrendered before the Army in Assam's Tinsukia district on February 11. The surrendered militants belonged to the Karbi

⁵⁰ "Pakistan nuclear staff go missing," *BBC*, February 12, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/7240414.stm

⁵¹ "Pakistan tests nuclear-capable missile: Army," *AFP*, February 13, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g4lbOqoHEh7gsMQKd8-khWrBkQUA>

⁵² "LeT plotting young girls for grenade attacks", *Daily Excelsior*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb11/news.htm#5>

⁵³ "LeT militant involved in UP blasts, associate killed", *Daily Excelsior*, February 16, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb16/news.htm#2>

Longri North Cachar Liberation Front (KLNLF), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA).⁵⁴

Meanwhile, four ULFA militants were killed following an encounter with a joint team of the army and police in Assam's Sibsagar district on February 16.⁵⁵ Earlier on February 11, four persons, including an Assam police personal, were killed and two more wounded when militants belonging to the Jewel Gorlosa-led faction of the Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) ambushed a convoy of NEEPCO officials in Assam's North Cachar Hills district.⁵⁶

Telegraph quoting Congress party's tea cell and Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangh, has reported that tea estates in Assam were turning into Maoist breeding grounds and are reportedly instigating the Adivasi community. The police suspect a link between Maoists and the Adivasi National Liberation Army (ANLA), which had become active in recent times.⁵⁷

Elsewhere, an Air Deccan staffer, Sumanta Dutta, was arrested on February 11 for allegedly helping the ULFA plan to hijack airplane from the region. The accused reportedly passed sensitive information about the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati.⁵⁸

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- *Maoists kill thirteen policemen and two civilians in Orissa*

As many as thirteen policemen and two civilians were killed when about 600 Maoists simultaneously attacked a local police training school, distinct armoury, and a police station in Orissa's Nayagarh district on February 15. Ten persons, including nine policemen were also wounded in the attack. The ultras also looted large quantities of arms and ammunitions.

Two Maoists were killed by the security forces during combing operation conducted after the Maoist attack. Two Air Force helicopters were also pressed into service to locate the Maoists movement. According to Nayagarh Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar, the Maoists first blocked all the four entry points to Nayagarh town and then attacked the arms depot at the local police training school, the district armoury and the local police station.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ "31 rebels surrender in Tinsukia", *Sentinel*, February 12, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁵⁵ "4 militants killed", *The Hindu*, February 16, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/17/stories/2008021750300100.htm>

⁵⁶ "4 die in DHD ambush", *Telegraph*, February 12, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080212/jsp/frontpage/story_8891997.jsp

⁵⁷ "Tea cell rings Maoist alarm - Team advises CM to cleanse gardens", *Telegraph*, February 13, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080213/jsp/northeast/story_8894590.jsp

⁵⁸ "Lid off hijack plot - Deccan staffer arrested for helping Ulfa", *Telegraph*, February 12, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080212/jsp/frontpage/story_8891996.jsp

⁵⁹ "15 killed in naxalite raids on Orissa police depots", *The Hindu*, February 17, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/17/stories/2008021757890100.htm>

Earlier on February 13 and 14, as many as seven Maoists, including an accused in MP Sunil Mahato murder case, were killed in two separate incidents of encounters with the security forces in Jharkhand's Dumaria block.⁶⁰

INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW - OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- *Six LeT terrorists arrested in Uttar Pradesh; NSA: LeT, JuM, HuJI part of Qaeda's 'elite terrorist network'*

As many as six LeT terrorists, who were involved in the terror attacks on the CRPF Group Centre at Rampur in Uttar Pradesh, and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, were arrested at Rampur on February 9 by the Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh Police. Interrogators claimed that before the Rampur attack, they were given training in intelligence gathering and handling of explosives for about a month by Pakistan's ISI.⁶¹

National Security Advisor M. K. Narayanan asserted that the LeT, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harkat-ul-Jehad-I-Islami were part of Al Qaeda's 'elite terrorist network' along with groups in Central and East Asia. Speaking at the Annual Munich Security Conference on February 10, Narayanan stated that this network of terror groups had common resource structures. On Al Qaeda, the NSA noted that its aims were political rather than religious and that the driving force behind the network was the power of ideas and the changing character of its leadership.⁶²

IV. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

FUEL PRICE HIKE

- *Petrol costlier by Rs. 2/litre, Diesel by Rs. 1/litre*

The Government of India finally decided to raise petrol prices by Rs. 2 per litre and diesel prices by Rs. 1 per litre after many months of stalling and opposition from the Left parties. The price rise however will only partially offset the financial burdens faced by oil marketing companies as they would continue to lose around Rs. 7.20/litre on petrol and Rs. 9.94/litre on diesel.⁶³

⁶⁰ "7 Naxals killed in separate encounters", *Indian Express*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/273060.html>

⁶¹ "Six militants involved in attacks on IISc, CRPF camp held in Uttar Pradesh", *The Hindu*, February 11, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/11/stories/2008021157590100.htm>

⁶² "NSA in Munich: Jaish, Lashkar are Qaeda elite", *Indian Express*, February 12, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/271639.html>

⁶³ "Government raises petrol and diesel prices," *The Economic Times*, February 16, 2008, at http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Features/The_Sunday_ET/Government_raises_petrol_and_diesel_prices/articleshow/2788476.cms

OVL PROPOSES INVESTMENTS IN SIBERIA

- *OVL seeks to tie up with Rosneft for Sakhalin-III*

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Videsh Limited (OVL) is set to make oil and gas investments in Sakhalin-III and the eastern Siberian region. Reports noted that OVL expressed its interest to bid for Sakhalin-III by tying up with Russian company Rosneft during the visit of the Russian Prime Minister Victor Zubkov. India had presently a 20% stake in Sakhalin-I which was operated by Exxon Mobil.

News sources also indicated the growing interest of Indian oil companies in oil and gas reserves of the Russian continental shelf. Russian companies like Rosneft were also considering investing in LNG import terminals being built by ONGC at Mangalore in Karnataka.⁶⁴

GAIL SIGNS AN MOU WITH RUSSIAN OIL AND GAS COMPANY ITERA

- *MoU for cooperation in CNG projects, and exploration and production opportunities*

Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Russian company ITERA for cooperation in CNG projects, gas-based petrochemical opportunities, as well as exploration and production opportunities in Russia and in the CIS countries.⁶⁵

RUSSIA-UKRAINE NATURAL GAS STANDOFF

- *Ukraine to settle outstanding bill of \$1.5 b with Gazprom provided it can negotiate a direct gas import arrangement, bypassing intermediaries*

Ukraine has stated its willingness to settle the \$1.5 billion natural gas bill it incurred with the Russian major Gazprom, provided it can have a direct gas import contract with it. The outstanding bill was the latest bone of contention between the two countries as Gazprom threatened to cut off supplies to Ukraine if Naftogas - the Ukrainian Gas Company, did not pay the debt.

The direct export agreement would help Ukraine to remove intermediaries such as RosUkrEnergo, which was a commodity trader registered in Switzerland and partly owned by Gazprom. The Ukrainians allege that the operations of these intermediaries were opaque and vulnerable to corruption and that they also increase the import price of natural gas. The Central Asian Republics were not able to supply gas to Ukraine due to a rise in internal demand caused by a particularly cold winter. To make up for the shortfall, Ukraine accepted the additional gas supply offer made by Gazprom. Ukraine

⁶⁴ "OVL Looks for Oil fields in Siberia," *The Hindu*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/15/stories/2008021555101700.htm>

⁶⁵ "GAIL signs MoU with ITERA Oil and Gas Company of Russia," *MoneyControl.com*, February 14, 2008, at <http://www.moneycontrol.com/india/news/pressmarket/gail-signs-mouitera-oilgas-companyrussia/14/49/326130>

had agreed to pay on a monthly basis, but the payments have not been made so far.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ "Ukraine sets conditions for paying natural gas bill," *International Herald Tribune*, February 11, 2008, at www.ihrt.com/articles/2008/02/11/business/11gazprom.php