

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **10 soldiers killed in Afghanistan; 2009 is critical year for Afghanistan: UN chief; UN: Security in Afghanistan may worsen in 2009; India suggests integrated approach for peace in Afghanistan; Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry nominated the next US ambassador to Afghanistan; Zardari, Karzai for Iran role in Afghanistan**

Four American soldiers, a Canadian soldier, an Afghan journalist, and six security guards were among those killed in continuing violence in the country during the week.¹ The Obama administration meanwhile was in the process of initiating a new approach to deal with the Afghan war. President Obama had earlier ordered 17,000 more troops to bolster the 38,000 US forces already deployed in the troubled country. Obama also nominated career military officer Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry as the new American ambassador to Afghanistan on March 11. Gen. Eikenberry had served in Afghanistan as Commander of coalition forces.²

India on its part suggested an integrated approach 'involving simultaneous action on three fronts - development, security and governance - to bring peace and stability to war torn Afghanistan.' This was conveyed by Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon during his talks on March 11 with members of the Obama administration in Washington, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.³

Earlier, on March 10, President Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, in Tehran to attend a conference of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), sought Iran's participation in an international effort to stabilise Afghanistan.⁴

In other developments, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in a report to the Security Council and the General Assembly, stated that '2009 is a critical year for Afghanistan'. The Afghan election commission has set August 20, 2009 as the date for presidential and provincial council elections. The UN chief asked the

¹ "Bomb Kills 1 Canadian Soldier in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, March 9, 2009, at http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2009/03/09/world/AP-AS-Afghanistan.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss;

"Blast kills six security guards in eastern Afghanistan," *Times of India*, March 11, 2009, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Blast-kills-six-security-guards-in-eastern-Afghanistan/articleshow/4253003.cms>; "10 soldiers killed in Afghanistan," *International Herald Tribune*, March 15, 2009, at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/03/15/asia/afghan.php>

² "Obama names US ambassadors to Afghanistan, Iraq," March 11, 2009, *International Herald Tribune*, at <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/03/11/america/NA-US-War-Envoys.php>

³ "India suggests integrated approach for peace in Afghanistan," *The Hindu*, March 12, 2009, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200903121151.htm>

⁴ "Zardari, Karzai for Iran role in Afghanistan," *The Hindu*, March 11, 2009, at <http://www.hindu.com/2009/03/11/stories/2009031154551500.htm>

Security Council to extend the UN mission in the country for another year to help the Afghan government with the election process as well as coordinate international aid efforts.⁵

PAKISTAN

- **'Long March' begins in Lahore; Nawaz Sharif defies house arrest orders; Gilani and Kayani meet to discuss the situation; US, and UK make diplomatic efforts to help broker a compromise**

Amidst mounting political crisis, the controversial 'Long March' finally began in Lahore on March 15. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, defying his house arrest orders, took part in the march which was made up of lawyers, members of the civil society and party activists.⁶ Reports however noted that Prime Minister Gilani had asked the Interior Ministry to ensure that Sharif got adequate security.⁷

Reports pointed out that President Zardari was contemplating a 'package deal' to address some of the major grievances of Mr. Sharif on the issue of judges and on the Supreme Court verdict on the Sharif brothers which debarred them from contesting elections. Mr. Zardari's moves were supported by the Pakistan army establishment as well as by the US.⁸

Army chief Gen. Kayani had met Prime Minister Gilani on March 11 in a bid to defuse the crisis situation in the country.⁹ PM Gilani also had a meeting with the Governor of Punjab on March 12 to discuss the situation in Punjab arising out of governor's rule.¹⁰

Reports also talked about the mediation efforts launched by the United States and Britain to end the confrontation between Mr. Zardari and Mr. Sharif. Richard Holbrooke, US Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, for instance spoke to the Pakistan President, Prime Minister and Mr. Sharif to broker a compromise.¹¹

⁵ "UN Chief: 2009 is critical year for Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2009, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/13/AR2009031302809.html>

⁶ "Nawaz under house arrest for three days: police," *Dawn*, March 15, 2009, at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/nawaz-under-house-arrest-police-hs>

⁷ "Gilani orders foolproof security for Nawaz Sharif," *Daily Times*, March 13, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\13\story_13-3-2009_pg1_1

⁸ "Govt considering deal for PML-N," *Daily Times*, March 14, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\14\story_14-3-2009_pg1_1

⁹ "Gilani, Kayani discuss political situation," *Daily Times*, March 12, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\12\story_12-3-2009_pg1_2

¹⁰ "Gilani, Taseer discuss Punjab situation," *The News*, March 13, 2009, http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

¹¹ "US, UK move to resolve crisis," *Daily Times*, March 13, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\13\story_13-3-2009_pg1_7

NEPAL

- **Ethnic unrest ends in Terai after agreement; PLA commanders urge Dahal to speed up the integration process; Nepal-India Water Resources Committee meets in New Delhi**

Indigenous organizations, including the Tharus of the Terai region, withdrew their protests after the signing of a six-point agreement with the government on March 14. Both sides agreed to amend the constitutional and legal provisions relating to the independent identities of indigenous nationalities, Muslims and other minorities. The president of the Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee, Laxman Tharu told presspersons that they will “wait and see whether the government will be sincere in its implementation.” Prime Minister Dahal on his part, stating that it was “natural for all castes, ethnic and indigenous nationalities and others to seek their distinct identities,” asserted that the agreement had addressed the demands and voices of all people. The agreement calls for the acts relating to police, armed police, army, education, development, health service and Nepal special services that have been promulgated through ordinances will be amended to ensure proportional representation for minorities.¹²

The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) commanders meanwhile urged Prime Minister Dahal to expedite the army integration process. During a meeting in Kathmandu attended by over 700 commanders of seven divisions on March 15, they drew the attention of Mr. Dahal to the problems being faced in the Maoist camps, among other issues. Earlier, Dahal had directed the PLA to stop recruitment of the ineligible combatants and assured its commanders that the government would find an alternate means to rehabilitate the disqualified combatants.¹³

In other developments, a two-day secretary-level meeting of Nepal-India Joint Committee on Water Resources concluded in New Delhi on March 12. The fourth meeting of the committee discussed a wide range of issues including ways to tap water resources potentials, flood and inundation control, re-construction of Koshi embankment, Pancheswor multi-purpose project, Saptakoshi high dam, electricity supply and building of transmission lines, among others.¹⁴ The meeting however failed to finalize the terms of reference on the Pancheshwar Development Authority.

¹² “Nepali gov’t, agitating ethnic groups ink deal,” *China View*, March 15, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/15/content_11013844.htm

¹³ “PLA urges PM Dahal to speed up integration,” *kantipuronline*, March 15, 2009, at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=184666>

¹⁴ “Nepal-India Water Meet Begins in New Delhi,” *The Himalayantimes*, March 11, 2009, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0va2qzpla9a9a3qa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20090312>

BANGLADESH

- **Army officers blame Sheikh Hasina for murder of over 70 officers in BDR mutiny; Home Ministry comes out with a report on militant outfits; Malaysia revokes the work visas of thousands of Bangladeshis; Bangladesh, Myanmar to work towards achieving a bilateral trade target of \$500 million**

Angry Bangladeshi army officers blamed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the murder of over 70 officers by mutineering BDR guards.¹⁵ The government on its part indicated that investigators had uncovered a link between the mutineers and a militant group responsible for a series of bombings. Commerce Minister Farukh Khan stated that some of the guards arrested had links to the Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB). The police have so far issued more than 1,000 arrest warrants for alleged involvement in the revolt. Detectives from Britain's Scotland Yard also arrived in Bangladesh to help in the investigations. The four-member police team will work with local as well as US detectives. Law Minister Shafique Ahmed also stated that there would be special tribunals or courts martial for the mutineers.¹⁶

New Age reported that the Bangladeshi Home Ministry has come out with a report on a dozen militant outfits listing their sources of funding, links to political parties, their operations, among other aspects. The organizations examined by Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder included Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI-B), Hizbut Towhid, Ulama Anjuman al Bainat, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islami Democratic Party, Islami Samaj, Touhid Trust, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Shahadat-e al Hikma Party Bangladesh, Tamira Ar-Din Bangladesh (Hizb-e-Abu Omar) and Allahr Dal. The Government on its part has so far banned four Islamist militant outfits – the JMB, HuJI-B, JMJB and Shahadat-e al Hikma.¹⁷

In a related development, twenty-seven Bangladeshis belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir were arrested for distributing leaflets criticising the government's handling of the savage mutiny. The organisation is banned in some countries but not in Bangladesh.¹⁸

In other developments, the Malaysian government has revoked the work visas of tens of thousands of Bangladeshis. Bangladeshi officials expressed shock at the decision, but the country's acting high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Waisuzzaman, stated that he was hopeful the Malaysian government might change its mind. Reports noted that 5.5 million Bangladeshis live and work

¹⁵ "Angry Bangladeshi army officers blame Sheikh Hasina for BDR Mutiny," *Bangladesh News.Net*, March 13, 2009, at <http://www.bangladeshnews.net/story/477260>

¹⁶ "'Militant link' to Dhaka mutiny," *BBC News*, March 12, 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7939733.stm

¹⁷ "12 militant outfits active in the country, says Home Ministry," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 17, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/17/2009#17

¹⁸ "27 arrested for anti-govt leaflets in city," *News from Bangladesh*, March 15, 2009, at <http://newsfrombangladesh.net/view.php?hidDate=2009-03-15&hidType=TOP>

abroad, and have sent more than \$9bn in 2008. Estimates suggest that about 500,000 Bangladeshis are among the three million Asian migrant workers in Malaysia.¹⁹

Reports noted that Myanmar and Bangladesh were deliberating on using the Chittagong Port for trading activities. One more border trade point, Taungphyo, is being planned by Myanmar in addition to Sittway and Maungtaw. Myanmar exports to Bangladesh include marine products, beans and pulses, and kitchen crops, while its imports included pharmaceuticals, ceramic, cotton fabric, raw jute, kitchenware and cosmetics. Bilateral trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh stood at \$140 million and both countries hope to achieve the target of \$500 million for the next fiscal year 2009-2010.²⁰

SRI LANKA

- **UNICEF: 150,000-200,000 civilians trapped in war zone; Health professionals worried about the growing rates of suicides; EAM Mukherjee: No military solution to the rights of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka; Vietnam hopes Sri Lanka would act as a bridge to expand its trade ties with South Asia**

The latest UNICEF humanitarian update shows that nutritional levels in the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka were lower than the national average due to the ongoing conflict compounded by a lack of supplies. The report also points out that 150,000-200,000 civilians were trapped inside the combat zone over an area of about 50 sq km.²¹

Meanwhile health professionals in Sri Lanka were pointing out that a growing number of people were consuming poison in order to end their lives. Police records showed that while the numbers of suicides over the past few years have declined from 8,449 in 1995 to 4,504 in 2006 and 4,225 in 2007, more than half of the deaths recorded as suicides in 2006 were due to poison - with some 2,268 men and 519 women consuming toxic substances.²²

India's External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee on his part stated that there was no military solution to the rights of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka. The Minister added that India would provide facilities for the rehabilitation of internally displaced Tamilians.²³

¹⁹ "Malaysia cuts Bangladeshi visas," *BBC News*, March 11, 2009, at <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7936452.stm?ad=1>

²⁰ "Myanmar, Bangladesh deliberate on using Chittagong port for trading activities," March 13, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/13/content_11008032.htm

²¹ "Sri Lanka: UN denounces misuse of food destined for children," IRIN News, March 12, 2009, at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83430>

²² "Suicide rate drops, but more people using poison," IRIN News, March 13, 2009, at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83435>

²³ "No military solution to Tamil issue: Mukherjee," *Daily Mirror*, March 14, 2009, at http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=43319

In other developments, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung hoped that Sri Lanka could serve as a bridge to expand Vietnam's economic, trade and investment activities with other South Asian countries. The Minister pointed out that though bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$61 million in 2008 – which was a 4 per cent increase, both countries were yet to tap their full potentials.²⁴

BHUTAN

- **Apprehensions about infiltration of militants from Bangladesh to Bhutan; International Rivers: Building of mega-dams by India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan can have an adverse impact on the Himalayan eco-system**

Reports have pointed out that the Communist Party of Bhutan and India's Northeast rebel groups like ULFA and NDFB have continued to maintain relations. Apprehensions were also being raised about the infiltration of militants from Bangladesh to Bhutan²⁵. Indian militant groups in Bangladesh were also reportedly shifting bases towards Nepal and Bhutan through North Bengal, thus raising security stakes in the region. In the past three months for instance, three trained KLO activists from the West Bengal-Assam border area in Tufanganj have been arrested.²⁶

A press release by International Rivers, an environmental NGO, suggests that building of mega-dams to generate electricity by India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan can have an adverse impact on the Himalayan eco-system. The report suggests that the possible impact of climate change on the region should be considered before turning the Himalayas into the most heavily dammed region in the world.²⁷

In other developments, in order to boost economic cooperation between Assam and Bhutan, the National Highway 151 linking Pathsala town in Assam to Bhutan border would be built.²⁸

MALDIVES

- **Clinton lauds Maldives decision to recognize Kosovo even as President Nausheed orders an investigation into allegations of bribe behind the decision**

²⁴ "Sri Lanka can be bridge to trade with South Asia: Vietnamese PM," *Daily News*, March 10, 2009, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/03/10/news31.asp>

²⁵ "India, Bhutan to boost security," *Assam Tribune*, March 9, 2009, at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar0909/at03>

²⁶ "Maoists, KLO shifting base: Reports," *The Statesman*, March 9, 2009, at <http://www.thestatesman.net/page.arcview.php?clid=10&id=279045&usrsess=1>

²⁷ "Himalayan dam boom spells trouble," *Peopleandplanet.Net*, March 10, 2009, at <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=3516>

²⁸ "Highway connecting Assam-Bhutan border to be road to prosperity," *NewPostOnline*, March 7, 2009, at <http://www.newspostonline.com/national/highway-connecting-assam-bhutan-border-to-be-road-to-prosperity-2009030738141>

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lauded the decision of Maldives to recognize Kosovo's independence even as President Nasheed ordered a police inquiry to investigate allegations that government officials accepted a \$2 million bribe to recognise Kosovo's independence.²⁹

Other reports also noted that Maldives was seeking German assistance for building the capacities of the Maldivian Police as well as for inviting foreign investment.

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

CHINA

- **11th Panchen Lama: Tibet has made progress since abolition of serfdom; Peoples Daily critical of the idea of "greater Tibet" as proposed by the 14th Dalai Lama; Military exercises between China and Pakistan conclude; Beijing reaffirms its stance on the South China Sea dispute**

The 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Democratic Reforms in Tibet stated that the Tibetan people could achieve progress only under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Visiting an exhibition in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in China, he praised the progress made by Tibet since the abolition of serfdom in the region.³⁰

Reports in the *People's Daily* meanwhile carried opinion which was critical of the idea of "greater Tibet" as proposed by the 14th Dalai Lama. Prof. An Caidan of the China Tibetology Research Centre noted that the idea of "greater Tibet" was not 'based on any historical facts nor fitted with any reality.' The report also cited the view of another Chinese scholar, Sun Hongnian of the Centre of China's Borderland History and Geography Research, a department of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as stating that "the idea of 'Greater Tibet' emerged after 1912. The regional government of Tibet argued with the central government for more land, backed by Britain who then governed India and wanted Tibet to be split from China."³¹

Military exercises between the Chinese and Pakistan Navy, 'Peace 09/Aman 09,' spread over 10 days concluded on the Arabia Sea off the southern Pakistani port of Karachi. The exercises involved anti-terror operations, search and rescue, among others and included some 20 warships, nine aircraft, as well

²⁹ "US welcome Maldives recognition of Kosovo," *MiadhuNews*, March 11, 2009, at <http://miadhu.com.mv/news.php?id=9546>; "Maldives president orders probe into alleged \$2m bribe to recognise Kosovo," *Sofiaecho*, March 11, 2009, at http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/03/11/687377_maldives-president-orders-probe-into-alleged-2-million-bribe-to-recognise-kosovo

³⁰ "Panchen Lama promises to maintain stability in Tibet," *Xinhua*, March 16, 2009, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6614408.html>

³¹ For a detailed report on this, please refer "Dalai Lama's 'Greater Tibet' neither historical fact nor fits in reality: experts," *Xinhua*, March 15, 2009, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6614224.html>

as six special force teams. These were the second series of exercises between the two countries.³²

In other developments, the Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue, in a meeting with the Philippines Ambassador, reaffirmed Beijing's stance on the South China Sea. Reiterating that the territorial sovereignty claim over the Huangyan and Nansha Island by any other country was illegal, Mr. Hu brought to the attention of the Ambassador the 2009 Baseline Bill signed by Philippines President Gloria Arroyo.³³

JAPAN

- **Aso: Urgent need to focus on efforts to boost the economy; China and Japan to resume security talks; Aso warns DPRK on rocket launch; Tokyo orders two naval vessels to join anti-piracy patrols off Somalia**

In domestic developments, leading opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa indicated that he might quit if his continuation affected the electoral image of the Democratic Party of Japan.³⁴ Prime Minister Taro Aso meanwhile indicated that he is unlikely to dissolve the House of Representatives for an election. Aso stated that there was an urgent need to focus on efforts to boost the economy and improve the difficult employment situation.³⁵

Reports noted that China and Japan will resume their security talks, suspended in 2006, by the end of March.³⁶ Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso also warned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that it should cancel its planned rocket launch, even if it was intended for a satellite program.³⁷ After months of deliberations on measures to help protect cargo ships without breaching its pacifist constitution, Tokyo ordered two naval vessels to join international patrols aimed at curbing pirate attacks off Somalia.³⁸

In other developments, reports noted that an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation which visited Tokyo was told by Japanese officials that they were considering imposing sanctions, delaying and even freezing new trade deals with Israel. This was in the backdrop of the Israeli decision to freeze a special

³² "Chinese destroyer leaves for home after multinational exercise in S Pakistan," *Xinhua*, March 15, 2009, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6614245.html>

³³ "China lodges stern representation to the Philippines on South China Sea issue," *Xinhua*, March 15, 2009, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6614238.html>

³⁴ "Japanese opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa may quit over scandal," *The Telegraph*, March 11, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/4971230/Japanese-opposition-leader-Ichiro-Ozawa-may-quit-over-scandal.html>

³⁵ "Aso indicates lower house dissolution this spring unlikely," *Kyodo*, March 15, 2009, at <http://home.kyodo.co.jp/modules/fstPhotos/index.php?photoid=33571>

³⁶ "China's Security Talks With Japan Will Resume, China Daily Says," *Bloomberg*, March 12, 2009, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=afNb6lIT7xwg&refer=japan#>

³⁷ "Japan warns DPRK to cancel satellite launch," *Xinhua*, March 13, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/14/content_11009019.htm

³⁸ "Japan sends navy to join Somalia anti-pirate patrols," *Reuters*, March 13, 2009, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE52C0GI20090313>

budget allotted to encourage exports to Japan.³⁹ Kenya is to get \$5 million from a new fund approved by Japanese Parliament to help feed the hungry in 21 countries.⁴⁰

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **Obama calls for ‘a comprehensive partnership’ between the US and Indonesia; Myanmar’s Foreign Minister to visit Indonesia; Thai government to review martial law provisions; Indonesia and Singapore come to an agreement on the western boundary dispute**

Reports noted that US President Barack Obama, in a telephone call with Indonesia’s Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono called on him to join hands and build ‘a comprehensive partnership’ between the two countries. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, on a recent visit to the country, also called for such a partnership.⁴¹

Myanmar’s Prime Minister Gen. Thein Sein will visit Indonesia for a two day visit, starting from March 16. Reports indicated that issues like democracy in Myanmar, release of opposition leader Suu Kyi from house arrest, among other issues of mutual interest would be discussed during the visit.⁴²

In an attempt to explore options to better tackle the rising insurgency in the southern part of Thailand, the government has decided to review the role of martial law in emergency situation within the country.⁴³ However, the extent to which its can carry out its decision would depend on the outcome of the motion filed by the opposition Puea Thai Party to impeach Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.⁴⁴

Indonesia and Singapore, after four years of negotiations, have come to an agreement to settle their disputes over the Western border. A bilateral maritime boundary agreement has already been signed to this effect. However, the two countries are yet to resolve their disputes over Eastern border.⁴⁵

³⁹ “Japan threatens economic sanctions on Israel,” *YNet News*, March 13, 2009, at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3685977,00.html>

⁴⁰ “Kenya to get Sh400m from Japan to fight hunger,” *Eastandard*, March 15, 2009, at <http://www.eastandard.net/InsidePage.php?id=1144008946&cid=14&j=&m=&d=>

⁴¹ “Obama asks Indonesia to ‘join hands,’” *The Jakarta Post*, March 14, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/14/obama-asks-indonesia-‘join-hands’.html>

⁴² “Myanmar junta leader to visit Indonesia next week,” *The Jakarta Post*, March 14, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/14/myanmar-junta-leader-visit-indonesia-next-week.html>

⁴³ “Govt plans a review of martial law,” *Bangkok Post*, March 16, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/13431/govt-plans-a-review-of-martial-law>

⁴⁴ “Puea Thai files to impeach Abhisit,” *The Bangkok Post*, March 11, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/137297/pm-faces-impeachment-motion>

⁴⁵ “RI, Singapore sign maritime boundary agreement,” *The Jakarta Post*, March 11, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/11/ri-singapore-sign-maritime-boundary-agreement.html>

C. WEST ASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

IRAN

- **Iran tests new air-to-surface missile; Former Iranian Prime Minister Mousavi announces candidature for presidential election; Rafsanjani Re-elected Assembly of Experts chairman; Ahmadinejad, Zardari, and Karzai meet in Tehran on the sidelines of the ECO Summit**

Iran stated that it had successfully armed its fighter jets with a new type of air-to-surface missiles with a range of 110km. The missile, weighing 500kg, can hit and destroy maritime targets. An automatic guidance capability for the missile and its special warhead designed for destroying major maritime targets were among the other important features of the missile.⁴⁶ Reports also stated that Iran had also developed and installed modern radar and launching systems on its fighter jets that would enhance the precision target capabilities of the jets.

Former prime minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi officially announced his candidacy for the June presidential election on March 10. Mousavi, who served as prime minister from 1981 to 1989, refused to run for president in 1997 and 2005 after much speculation. Former president Mohammad Khatami and National Confidence Party leader Mahdi Karroubi are also the two reformist hopefuls who have officially declared their candidacies so far. Mousavi has stated that the main reason for his candidature is his concern that the country's laws were being circumvented and if this was allowed to continue, it would pose a real threat to the Islamic Republic.⁴⁷

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani meanwhile was reelected as the Assembly of Experts chairman. He received 51 of the 79 votes cast. He is also the chairman of Iran's Expediency Council. Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi and Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi were also elected as the first and second deputy chairmen of the Assembly of Experts. The Assembly of Experts is constitutionally tasked to appoint and supervise the Leader. Assembly of Experts representatives are elected to eight-year terms in a general election.⁴⁸

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad and the visiting Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari held wide-ranging talks in Tehran and expressed their resolve to enhance bilateral ties between the two countries, particularly in the fields of energy, trade and economy. Mr. Zardari noted that Pakistan-Iran relations "do not reflect the brotherly feelings we have with each other" and called for their improvement.

Pakistani Zardari also met Afghan President Hamid Karzai on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Tehran and discussed various issues of mutual interest, including ways to jointly combat

⁴⁶ "Iranian fighter jets armed with new missiles," *Tehran Times*, March 9, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=190745

⁴⁷ "Mousavi officially announces presidential candidacy," *Tehran Times*, March 11, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=190909

⁴⁸ "Rafsanjani reelected Assembly of Experts chairman," *Tehran Times*, March 10, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=190899

terrorism and militancy, which was posing a common threat to peace and security in the region.⁴⁹ The ECO was founded by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in 1985. Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan later joined the group.

IRAQ

- **Suicide attacks on the rise; Prime Minister al-Maliki renews his call for changes to the 2005 constitution to better tackle national problems**

A suicide bomber killed 28 people, including 5 police officers, and wounded 57 others in an attack on a police academy even as the American military announced that it would withdraw 12,000 troops from the country by September 2009, as part of President Obama's plan to end 'combat mission' in Iraq by August 2010. While violence across Iraq has dropped in the previous month to its lowest levels since 2003, there have been many high-profile attacks in recent weeks, including a bombing at a cattle market in the city of Hilla on March 5 that killed 12 people and the attack on tribal chiefs in Baghdad which killed 33 people. While the peaceful elections in January have been cited as evidence of the improvement in Iraq's security forces, many military officials, Iraqi and American, have speculated that violence would rise after the elections.⁵⁰

Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki meanwhile called for an end to the practice of distributing top government jobs along religious and ethnic lines, stating that the system breeds weakness and mismanagement. He also renewed his call for changes to the 2005 constitution, which he contended restricted the ability of the central government to deal with national problems. US officials have also been pressing Iraq's leaders to speed up reconciliation among the country's rival ethnic and religious groups, especially since Washington has agreed to withdraw all its troops by the end of 2011. Sunni politicians on their part welcomed Mr. al-Maliki's remarks but called for more tangible steps, including the abolition of laws that ban thousands of Baathists from holding government posts.⁵¹

KAZAKHSTAN

- **India and Kazakhstan decide to sign a deal on Satpayev oil block**

The seventh meeting of the India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological, Industrial and Cultural Cooperation was held at Astana from March 12-13. Petroleum Minister Murli Deora led the Indian delegation while the Kazakh delegation was led by Sauat Mynbayev, the Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources. Both sides agreed to

⁴⁹ "Ahmedinejad, Zardari hold wide-ranging talks in Tehran," *Tehran Times/IRNA*, March 11, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=190900

⁵⁰ Marc Santora, "Suicide Attack Kills 28 in Baghdad," *New York Times*, March 9, 2009, at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html?_r=1

⁵¹ "Iraqi PM calls for reforms," *Tehran Times*, March 10, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=190837

sign a exploration and production agreement for the Satpayev oil block in the Caspian Sea at an "early date before the new subsoil use law is adopted in Kazakhstan."⁵²

II. NUCLEAR, MISSILES AND SPACE REVIEW

- **Reports: Iran draws attention to contradiction between IAEA report and US intelligence regarding fissile material; Iran's Nuclear Programme and its repercussion to Middle East**

Analysts pointed out that immediately after the launch of its satellite Omid, Iran drew the attention of international media to the perceived contradiction between the IAEA report and US Intelligence regarding the amount of fissile material Iran possessed.⁵³ Analysts also urged senior US officials and the media to exhibit greater care to accurately state what is known about Iran's nuclear capabilities.⁵⁴

Reports also noted that if Iran went nuclear, it would not only defy five UN Security Council resolutions but would also cause a 'proliferation cascade' in the Middle East.⁵⁵

Israel on its part charged that Iran was using the pretext of its ongoing talks with Western powers to pursue its nuclear ambitions. Israel's military intelligence head Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin told cabinet ministers that Iran had crossed the technological threshold and that 'reaching a military-grade nuclear capability is a question of synchronising its strategy with the production of a nuclear bomb.'⁵⁶

- **DRDO Tests PAD Interceptor Missile as well as Brahmos**

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully tested an indigenously developed interceptor missile. The missile interceptor, a Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) projectile, shot down a variant of the Dhanush surface-to-surface missile from a surface naval platform that simulated the terminal phase of a 1,500 km range 'enemy' ballistic missile.⁵⁷ The PAD missile, a two-stage rocket that uses liquid fuel in the initial stage and solid fuel in the second stage, intercepted the incoming missile at an altitude of 80 km off the coast of Orissa.⁵⁸ DRDO

⁵² "India, Kazakhstan to sign contract for Satpayev oil block," *Kazinform*, March 16, 2009, at <http://www.inform.kz/showarticle3.php?lang=eng&id=177444>

⁵³ Kaveh L Afrasiabi, "IAEA 'mismanagement' raises Tehran's ire," March 4, 2009, at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/KC04Ak01.html

⁵⁴ Greg Thielmann and Peter Crail, "Arms Experts Correct the Record on Iran Uranium Claims," March 2, 2009, <http://www.armscontrol.org/node/3540>

⁵⁵ Mark Fitzpatrick, "Drawing a Bright Redline: Forestalling Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," at http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_01-02/Fitzpatrick

⁵⁶ "Iran using nuclear talks to buy time for bomb: Israel," March 8, 2009, at http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Iran_using_nuclear_talks_to_buy_time_for_bomb_Israel_999.html

⁵⁷ "Missile Defence Shield: India Successfully Tests Interceptor," *The Hindu*, March 6, 2009

⁵⁸ S. Subramanian and Y. Mallikarjun, "Interceptor Does it Again," *The Hindu*, March 7, 2009, <http://www.hindu.com/2009/03/07/stories/2009030760681200.htm>

scientists noted that the interceptor was equipped with a 360 degree rotating Gimballed Directional Warhead (GDW) for the first time.⁵⁹

The DRDO also succeeded in its second attempt to test-fire the 290-km range Brahmos supersonic cruise missile at Pokhran, Rajasthan. The missile was the latest Block-II variant of the Brahmos, which is two times heavier than the US Tomahawk cruise missile and four times as fast.⁶⁰ The Indian Army, which is the end-user, however was yet to confirm whether the performance of the missile was a success as they were still evaluating flight data.⁶¹ Reports noted that the two vital benchmarks for the Army were whether the missile hit its target perfectly and successfully executed an 'S' maneuver that enables evasion of missile interception.⁶²

- **Concerns over North Korean Missile Launch**

China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi was among interlocutors who expressed concerns about a possible North Korean missile launch. Pyongyang on its part stated that it was going to place a communications satellite in space. Most countries and observers however pointed out that this was a cover for testing a long-range ballistic missile.⁶³

Japan and the United States also warned Pyongyang against undertaking the launch.⁶⁴ Reports noted that South Korea was also closely monitoring the launch which is slated for April first week.

III. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

- **Russia and Hungary sign gas pipeline deals**

Russia and Hungary on March 9 signed an agreement to set up a joint venture to build a new natural gas pipeline - the Hungarian leg of the South Stream pipeline that would bring gas from the Caspian Sea region to Europe. Under a separate agreement, Russia's Gazprom will participate in the construction of an underground gas storage facility in Hungary, which would turn the EU member into a major hub for Russian supplies. The deals were signed following talks

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Sujan Dutta, "Longest Wait for Result of Fastest Missile," *The Telegraph*, March 8, 2009, at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090308/jsp/frontpage/story_10642109.jsp

⁶¹ "New Version of Brahmos Missile Test-Fired Successfully," *Outlook*, March 4, 2009, at <http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?655286>

⁶² Sujan Dutta, "Longest Wait for Result of Fastest Missile," *The Telegraph*, March 8, 2009, at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090308/jsp/frontpage/story_10642109.jsp

⁶³ "Chinese Minister Indicates Opposition to N. Korea Missile Launch," *Kyodo News Service*, March 7, 2009, at <http://www6.lexisnexis.com/publisher/EndUser?Action=UserDisplayFullDocument&orgId=574&topicId=100049310&docId=1:937026127&start=1>

⁶⁴ "Japan, U.S. warn N. Korea against launch, urge resolution of abductions," March 6, 2009, at *Kyodo News Service*, <http://www6.lexisnexis.com/publisher/EndUser?Action=UserDisplayFullDocument&orgId=574&topicId=100049310&docId=1:937026145&start=5>

between the countries' prime ministers, Vladimir Putin and Hungary's Ferenc Gyurcsany.

Reports noted that by going ahead with the South Stream pipeline, Russia was seeking to undercut the Nabucco pipeline, which has been backed by the US and the EU to ease Europe's reliance on Russia for energy.⁶⁵

- **Iran's first nuclear plant to begin generating power by August, 2009**

Iran's Energy Minister Parviz Fattah stated that Iran's first nuclear power plant in the southern city of Bushehr will begin generating electricity by August 2009. The 1,000-megawatt power plant, where test operations were started in February, will produce about 500 megawatts of electricity.⁶⁶

IV. INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM REVIEW

- **Sharia Law begins in Swat Valley**

Sharia courts were formally inaugurated on March 12 by cleric Sufi Mohammad, whose son-in-law Maulana Fazlullah is the Taliban leader in Swat. The four courts which re-opened were in the Khwazakhel, Kabal, Varikot and Matta areas, all considered to be Taliban strongholds. Last month, the NWFP government signed an agreement with Sufi Mohammad's proscribed Tanzim-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM) for the implementation of the Sharia justice system. Sufi Mohammad, who opposes militancy, led thousands of TNSM workers into Swat to set up a peace camp there and to start talks with Maulana Fazlullah.⁶⁷

- **Pentagon: 10 per cent of Guantanamo inmates have returned to terrorism**

The Pentagon stated that more than 10 per cent of the over 500 Guantanamo inmates released so far have returned to indulge in terrorist activities. For instance, Mullah Abdullah Zakir who was held in Guantanamo until December 2007 was handed over to the Afghans and later released. Sources told the BBC that he led the fight against British forces stationed in Helmand province and UK government officials have also confirmed he was now closely involved in planning attacks on British and other NATO forces in Afghanistan and was operating with impunity from the Pakistani city of Quetta.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "Russia and Hungary Sign Gas Pipeline deals," *Business Week*, March 10, 2009, at <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D96R9CIG1.htm>

⁶⁶ "Iran's First Nuclear Plant to Begin generating Power by August 2009," *Asiaenergy*, March 10, 2009, at http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2009_03_08_archive.html

⁶⁷ "Sharia law begins in Swat valley," *BBC News*, March 12, 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7939495.stm

⁶⁸ "Guantanamo inmate joins Taleban," *BBC News*, March 12, 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7939341.stm

- **Baloch abductors threaten to kill UNHCR Official**

Abductors of UNHCR official John Solecki on March 16 threatened to kill him within 48 hours if the Government did not free more than 1,100 Baloch prisoners allegedly held in custody. Solecki, head of the UNHCR in Balochistan, was abducted at gunpoint from provincial capital Quetta on February 2. His driver was killed during the abduction. A spokesman for the Balochistan Liberation United Front urged the UN to fulfill its demands within 48 hours.⁶⁹

- **Bin Laden calls for holy war to free Iraq**

In a new audio message attributed to Osama bin Laden and sent to the Qatar-based TV channel al-Jazeera, the al-Qaeda leader calls for a holy war to free Iraq from US forces and for jihadists to launch attacks against Israel from Jordan. He also describes Israel's January military offensive in the Gaza Strip as a 'holocaust.' bin Laden's last message was on January 14 when he called on Muslims to take revenge against Israel for the Gaza offensive.⁷⁰

- **RAND: Film Piracy funding terror**

Rand Corporation in a new report has pointed out film piracy has been funding terror operations in the Indian sub-continent and beyond, thus confirmed what Indian intelligence agencies have been maintaining all along regarding underworld kingpin Dawood Ibrahim. The report notes that the D company siphoning off millions of dollars earned from film piracy, drug-running and other crimes to finance terror operations.

It notes that the moment a film is released in Mumbai, the 'D-Company' makes camera prints and sends them to Karachi or Kuala Lumpur where millions of DVDs are made and marketed across the world. After the Mumbai-based Valuable Group introduced satellite transmission of films directly to cinema halls, the gang members have established links with small-time theatres in Gujarat where the camera prints are taken at the first show of any new film. Identifying Al-Mansoor and Sadaf brands as belonging to Dawood, the report notes that the D-Company manages distribution network in Pakistan and has also acquired the infrastructure to manufacture pirate VHS tapes and VCDs for sale.

The report adds that film piracy can be more lucrative than drug-trafficking. A pirated DVD made in Malaysia for 70 cents is marked up more than 1,000 per cent and sold in London for about \$9. The profit margin is more

⁶⁹ "UN official's abductors set new 48-hour deadline," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 17, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/17/2009#7

⁷⁰ "Bin Laden releases holy war tape," *Bangladesh News.Net*, March 14, 2009, at <http://www.bangladeshnews.net/story/477781>

than three times higher than the mark-up for Iranian heroin and higher than the profit from Columbian cocaine, the report asserts.⁷¹

V. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **J&K government rules out giving State subject rights to Pakistani refugees**

The J&K Finance Minister Abdul Rahim Rather told the state assembly on March 9 that the state government will provide basic amenities to West Pakistani refugees but will not accord State Subject rights to them. He noted that a consensus was earlier reached in an all-party meeting convened by former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad that the state government would provide all basic amenities to the refugees as was provided to its state subjects.⁷²

NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENTS

- **DGP G.M. Srivastav: ULFA investing in Bangladesh tea, textile sectors**

Assam Director General of Police G.M. Srivastav told reporters on March 14 that that insurgent organisations operating in Assam, including the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), had business stakes to the tune of Rs. 860 crore in various businesses in Bangladesh. The DGP noted that they were also investing in tea gardens and the garment industry in Bangladesh. Srivastav also pointed out that most of the insurgent organisations from Northeast India get their training in Pakistan and Afghanistan and then operate from Bangladesh and charged that the Pakistani ISI was “one of the major funding sources for the militant groups operating in the region ...”⁷³

Media reports quoting West Bengal police has reported that the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) has opened a new wing specially to create unrest in the Northeast India and districts of West Bengal bordering Bangladesh. The wing is reportedly named as Tanzeen-e-Mohammedi.⁷⁴

⁷¹ “Film piracy funding terror: US thinktank,” *Times of India*, March 7, 2009, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Film-piracy-funding-terror-US-thinktank/rssarticleshow/4237371.cms>

⁷² “Govt rules out giving State Subject rights to Pak refugees,” *Daily Excelsior*, March 9, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09mar09/newsupdate.htm#4>

⁷³ “ULFA investing in Bangla tea, textile sectors: DGP,” *Assam Tribune*, March 15, 2009, at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar1509/at02>

⁷⁴ “Lashkar-e-Toiba has opened a new wing to create unrest in Northeast,” *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 9, 2009, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news3.asp?date3=2009%2F3%2F9#11