

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

March 17-23, 3(3), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- *President Bush and Cheney defend the Iraq war on the Fifth anniversary of its launch; Iraq war costs go over \$600 b; McCain: American withdrawal would increase Iranian influence*

On the fifth anniversary of the start of the Iraq war on March 19, US President George Bush defended the decision to launch the war and its present conduct, asserting that this was a fight “America can and must win.”¹ Even as the death toll of US soldiers crossed the 4,000 mark, other members of the Bush administration including Vice-President Dick Cheney, on a visit to Iraq, stated that the invasion was a ‘successful endeavour’ and termed the security gains as ‘dramatic’.²

President Bush also rejected the calls of Democratic Presidential candidates for an early troop withdrawal from the country, insisting that a retreat from Iraq would embolden the Al Qaeda and Iran. Republican Presidential candidate Senator John McCain, visiting Iraq as part of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee fact-finding committee, also applauded the troop surge and its effect on the overall security situation.³ Later speaking in Amman, Jordan, Senator McCain asserted that an American withdrawal from Iraq would increase Iranian influence in the region as well as increase American security challenges.⁴

Reports also noted that the Iraq war had now cost the US over \$600 b and that the long-term costs of the war could reach \$2-\$4 trillion.⁵ UNHCR reported that over 2.5 million Iraqis had been internally displaced since the 2003 US invasion and that over 2 million were refugees in Syria and Jordan.⁶ UNHCR also noted that Iraqis constituted the maximum number of people seeking asylum in other countries, with Russia, China, Serbia, and Pakistan being the other countries contributing the maximum number of people to the list of asylum seekers.

¹ “Bush Defends Iraq War in Speech,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/20/world/middleeast/20prexy.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper&oref=slogin

² “Cheney says Iraq changes ‘phenomenal’, ‘dramatic’,” *Reuters*, March 17, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080317/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-cheney-says-iraq-changes-phenomenal-2186892.html

³ “Cheney says Iraq invasion ‘successful endeavour’,” *Reuters*, March 17, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080317/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-cheney-says-iraq-invasion-successful-2186892.html

⁴ “McCain says U.S. pullout from Iraq would boost Iran,” *Reuters*, March 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080318/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-mccain-says-u-s-pullout-from-iraq-wo-2186892.html

⁵ “Estimates of Iraq War Cost Were Not Close to Ballpark,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/washington/19cost.html>

⁶ “Iraq blamed for increased asylum seekers,” *IANS*, March 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080318/r_t_ians_wl_europe/twl-iraq-blamed-for-increased-asylum-see-ef5d19c.html

Meanwhile, domestic efforts at reconciliation also faltered with the boycott by the Sunni Arab Accordance Front and the Shi'ite bloc led by cleric Moqtada al-Sadr of a reconciliation conference in Baghdad during the week that was opened by Prime Minister Maliki.⁷ These groups continued to be unhappy with their share of government positions as well as their say in security matters.

CHINA

- *Protests in Tibet gather momentum; People's Daily calls for effort to 'resolutely crush' Tibet independence forces; KMT wins March 22 Presidential elections in Taiwan*

Protests in Tibet against the Chinese oppression gathered momentum. In New Delhi, Tibetan protesters broke into the Chinese Embassy during the week, a few hours before the arrival of Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama in the capital. The Dalai Lama was to have discussed the unfolding Tibetan crisis with officials of the Indian government and the visiting US speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.⁸

People's Daily, the flagship newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party carried out an editorial calling for an effort to "resolutely crush" the "Tibet independence" forces. A commentary in the same newspaper read: "We must see through the secessionist forces' evil intentions, uphold the banners of maintaining social stability, safeguard the socialist legal system and protect people's fundamental interests, and resolutely crush the 'Tibet independence' forces' conspiracy and sabotaging activities so as to foster a favorable social environment for reform and development and for people's happiness and welfare."⁹

At the same time, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang reiterated that Beijing's offer of conducting a 'dialogue' with the Dalai Lama had not changed and called on him to give up his stance for Tibet independence and stop separatists activities.¹⁰

In Taiwan meanwhile, Ma Ying-jeou belonging to the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) won the March 22 presidential election, defeating the DPP's Frank Hsieh. The elections witnessed a turnout of over 76 percent out of the 17,321,622 registered voters.¹¹ The presidential victory followed the KMT's success in the January 12 legislative elections, in which it had won 81 out of the

⁷ "Reconciliation Conference Highlights Iraq's Deep Political and Religious Fissures," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/world/middleeast/19iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁸ "Tibetan protestors storm Chinese Embassy in Delhi," *Rediffnews.com*, March 21, 2008, at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2008/mar/21tibetrow5.htm>

⁹ "Crush 'Tibet independence' forces' conspiracy, *People's Daily* urges," *People's Daily*, March 22, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/6378810.html>

¹⁰ "FM: China's principle on dialogue with Dalai Lama unchanged," *People's Daily*, March 20, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6377659.html>

¹¹ "Decisive victory for Ma Ying-jeou," *Taipei Times*, March 23, 2008, at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/03/23/2003406711>

113 seats. The two victories assured the KMT of full control of Taiwan's executive and legislative branches of government.

Reports also noted that 'referendums' on launching Taiwan's bid to join the UN - put forward by the DPP and the KMT, failed due to the complicated legal threshold they had to meet.¹² According to the terms of the Referendum Act, the measures required the participation of at least 50 per cent of the eligible voters as well as the support of more than 50 per cent of the participating voters in order to be passed.¹³ The Chinese government on its part called on the major powers - including the United States and Japan, to stick to their 'One-China' policy and not support Taiwan's independence or its proposed 'referendum' on UN membership.¹⁴

JAPAN

- *Prime Minister Fukuda calls on Beijing to take positive steps to settle Tibetan disturbances; Foreign Minister Komura hopes Taiwan Straits issue would be resolved by direct dialogue*

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda expressed the hope that the Chinese government would take positive steps to settle the disturbances in Tibet before President Hu Jintao visited Japan in May. Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura has meanwhile stated that Tibet would be discussed at the forthcoming Japan-China summit meeting.¹⁵ Reports also noted that about 900 Tibetans and their Japanese supporters staged a protest meeting against the Chinese government's crackdown on Tibetan protesters.¹⁶

Foreign Minister Komura also expressed the hope that the issue surrounding Taiwan would be resolved peacefully by direct dialogue between the parties concerned on the Taiwan Straits. Insisting that Japan's diplomatic relations with China remain unchanged, Mr. Komura stated that Tokyo intended to maintain Japan-Taiwan relations "as a working relationship on a non-governmental basis."¹⁷

¹² "Taiwan residents veto 'UN membership referendum'," *People's Daily*, March 23, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6378961.html>

¹³ "Both U.N. bid referendums vetoed," *The Central News Agency*, March 22, 2008, at <http://www.cna.com.tw/cnaeng/EnglishTopNews/TopNewsDetail.aspx?TopNewsSerialnum=587&strTopNewsDate=20080322&strTopNewsID=200803220040>

¹⁴ "China calls on U.S., Japan to keep their word on Taiwan issue," *People's Daily*, March 22, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/6378817.html>

¹⁵ "Fukuda calls for China to settle Tibet unrest before Hu's visit," *Japan Today*, March 22, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/431824>

¹⁶ "900 rally in Tokyo against China over crackdown in Tibet," *Japan Today*, March 23, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/431898>

¹⁷ "Japan hopes for improved China-Taiwan relations," *Japan Today*, March 23, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/431894>

MYANMAR

- *Gambari acknowledges his disappointment with his Myanmar visit*

Reports noted that US lawmakers have proposed a Congressional resolution that urged President Bush to call on the UN to reject the Burmese military junta's constitution and not to recognize its efforts to legitimize it through a referendum scheduled to be held in May.¹⁸ The UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari meanwhile acknowledged that he was disappointed with the fact that his visit to Myanmar failed to yield any tangible results. He however affirmed that the UN would continue its engagement with the military authorities.¹⁹ In a related development, Thai Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama informed the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Bangkok disagreed with Washington on its approach of solving the Myanmar issue by imposing sanctions.²⁰

In other developments during the week, the governments of Brunei and Myanmar signed a MoU to promote trade relations between both the countries.²¹

US ELECTION REVIEW

- *Obama calls on America to grapple with the difficult issue of race; Democrats ahead in the money game; Out of Iraq Caucus supports Clinton, Gov. Richardson of New Mexico pitches for Obama; McCain visits Israel, London, Paris, reinforces his foreign policy experience; LA Times: McCain's foreign policy credentials not borne out by facts*

Leading Democratic Presidential Candidate Senator Barack Obama of Illinois delivered a major speech on the contentious issue of race in America on March 18 in Philadelphia. He was reacting to the posting of several videos of sermons given by the long-time pastor at his church in Chicago, Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr. that contained incendiary statements on a range of issues from AIDS to White people.²² Citing his own personal history as giving hope, Senator Obama conceded that the country's racial divisions were still active and that "the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away." He called upon Americans to acknowledge the difficult reality of race and face it and not "walk way now."

Meanwhile, the Democratic Presidential candidates were way ahead of the leading Republican candidate Senator John McCain in the arena of fund-raising. In reports filed with the Federal Election Commission on March 20, the Obama camp revealed that it had raised over \$55 million for the month of

¹⁸ "US Congressmen propose rejection of junta's constitution," *The Mizzima News*, March 18, 2008 at <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2008/Mar/61-Mar-2008.html>

¹⁹ "Gambari still hopeful after Burma visit failed to yield results," *The Mizzima News*, March 19, 2008 at <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2008/Mar/63-Mar-2008.html>

²⁰ "Thailand opposes U.S. sanction against Myanmar," *The Xinhua*, March 21, 2008 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/21/content_7835170.htm

²¹ "Myanmar, Brunei to promote trade ties," *The Xinhua*, March 21, 2008 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/21/content_7832382.htm

²² "Obama urges US to grapple with race issue," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/us/politics/19obama.html?ref=todayspaper>

February as against \$35 million by Senator Clinton.²³ This was in contrast to the \$11 million raised for the same month by Senator McCain.²⁴

The Democratic candidates on their part continued to pick up supporters to bolster their respective candidatures. While the Out of Iraq Caucus in the American Senate lent its support to Senator Clinton, Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico pitched in for Senator Obama.²⁵ Gov. Richardson's endorsement was seen as crucial by commentators as he had occupied senior positions in the Clinton administration including that of Energy Secretary and Ambassador to the UN and was a leading elected official among the Hispanics.²⁶

The Republican Presidential candidate Senator John McCain meanwhile visited Israel, London, and Paris before his scheduled visit to Iraq along with Senator Joseph Lieberman and Senator Lindsey Graham.²⁷ Mr. McCain's foreign trip showcased his foreign policy expertise as well reinforced the view that the US presence in Iraq would continue for a longer time period under a Republican administration. In Israel, speaking at the Katyusha-affected southern town of Sderot, Senator McCain defended Israel's military operations to stop rocket attacks and its blockade of Gaza. Though he did not visit Palestine, Mr. McCain expressed confidence in Mahmoud Abbas's commitment to reach a peace deal with Israel.²⁸

The Senator's remarks on his visit to London meanwhile put him on a collision course with the British authorities as he reiterated his preference for crop spraying in Afghanistan to eradicate poppies.²⁹ Britain has a lead role in Afghanistan's anti-narcotics program. The country had witnessed a record production of poppy in the previous year, especially in the Helmand province where most of the British forces were concentrated. His remarks also highlighted another area of disagreement should his bid for American presidency succeed in November. He stated that he was skeptical of the assessment of the recent US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that concluded that Iran had suspended its nuclear weapons programme. McCain reiterated that he would keep open the military option against Tehran.

²³ "Democratic donations keep pouring in, but for Clinton, there is a catch," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/22/us/politics/22funds.html?ref=todayspaper>

²⁴ "McCain turns his attention to raising cash for race," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/us/politics/21funds.html?ref=todayspaper>

²⁵ "An open Letter from The Members of the OUT of Iraq Caucus," *HillaryClinton.com*, March 18, 2008, at <http://www.hillaryclinton.com/news/release/view/?id=6600>

²⁶ "First a tense talk with Clinton, then Richardson backs Obama," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/22/us/politics/22richardson.html?ref=todayspaper>

²⁷ Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Michael Luo, "Iraqis see a candidate's agenda in McCain's Visit," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/03/17/world/middleeast/17mccain.html

²⁸ "McCain Backs Israeli Reprisals in Gaza," *Time*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1723863,00.html>

²⁹ Richard Beeston and Tom Baldwin, "John McCain praises British Forces' Sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan," *Timesonline*, March 21, 2008, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article3593914.ece>

In a related development, a report in the *Los Angeles Times* charged that Senator McCain's strong point - his experience on foreign policy issues and unequivocal hard stances on security issues - was not borne out by facts. The report noted that the Republican candidate had taken diverse views over his 25 years in Congress - ranging from pragmatic to hawkish. It noted that the Senator had proposed to cut off financial aid to embattled US forces in Somalia and that in 1983, tried to thwart President Regan's deployment of troops in Lebanon.³⁰

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- *Kai Eide appointed as UN Special Representative; Reports of collateral damage due to ISAF activities, denied by ISAF; Australia not to send more troops until NATO adopts a winning strategy*

Secretary General Ban ki-Moon appointed Kai Eide of Norway as the UN's Special Representative for Afghanistan. The earlier nomination of British politician Paddy Ashdown fell through with reports indicating that President Karzai was opposed to his appointment. Mr. Eide was expected to coordinate international aid activities among other responsibilities.

Meanwhile, reports of collateral damages due to coalition activities continued with Afghan officials reporting that over 50 people (including 18 Taliban insurgents) were killed in ISAF raids on March 17 in Helmand province of southern Afghanistan.³¹ The ISAF however denied the claim. 6 civilians were also reported killed in the Khost province during the week in NATO operations.

In other developments, Australian Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon speaking in Canberra stated that Australia would not contribute more troops to the effort in Afghanistan until NATO adopted a winning strategy. He however clarified that Canberra was committed to a long-term strategy for the country. A non-NATO country, Australia had about 1,000 troops operating along with IASF forces in south-central Afghanistan.³²

NEPAL

- *Political polarization among the Maoists continues*

Political polarization among the Maoists continued, this time due to a clash between the cadres of the CPN (Maoists) and the CPN (UML) during an

³⁰ "McCain's mixed signals on foreign policy," *LA Times*, March 16, 2008, at <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/politics/la-na-mccainpolicy16mar16,14792578.story>

³¹ "NATO air strikes kill 50 in Afghanistan: lawmaker," *IANS*, March 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080318/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-nato-air-strikes-kill-50-in-afghanis-d5d6288.html

³² "No more Australian troops to Afghanistan unless NATO reforms," *IANS*, March 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080318/r_t_ians_wl_intl/twl-no-more-australian-troops-to-afghani-3b409f0.html

election campaign event.³³ While the CPN (UML) raised objections over the 'violent' behaviour of the Maoists labeling it as 'political terrorism', the Nepali Congress reprimanded the Maoists over the violent incidents and asked it to refrain from attacking the political leadership.³⁴ Meanwhile, Maoist Chairman Prachanda accused the CPN (UML) of bowing down to US pressure.³⁵

In other developments, the Nepalese Ambassador to India Durgesh Man Singh voiced an interest in meeting Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to apprise him on issues concerning the borders, trade deficit, supply of petroleum products, among other issues.³⁶

BANGLADESH

- *Political parties demand withdrawal of state of emergency; Indian Navy ships visit Chittagong*

In domestic developments, leaders of important political parties on March 16 demanded that the caretaker government immediately withdraw the state of emergency and declare the schedule of general elections.³⁷

The visiting head of UNDP, Kemal Dervis met the Chief of Army Staff Gen. Moeen U. Ahmed and pledged the UNDP's budgetary and food assistance to Bangladesh to help the people hit hard by sky rocketing food prices.³⁸ The World Bank (WB) Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala also made a four-day visit to Bangladesh in order to get a better understanding of the key challenges facing the country and ways to deal with them.³⁹

In other developments, the Pakistani High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Babar emphasised the need for increased bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan while three Indian Navy ships INS Ranjit, INS Khanjar and INS Vinash arrived in Chittagong on a three-day goodwill visit.⁴⁰

³³ "Maoists, UML cadres clash in Chitwan," *Nepal News*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/mar/mar17/news10.php>

³⁴ "Prachanda will lose in both constituencies: UML leaders," *Nepal News*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/mar/mar19/news01.php>; "Mend your behaviour: NC tells Maoists," *Nepal News*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/mar/mar19/news09.php>

³⁵ "UML shied away from leftist alliance under US behest, claims Prachanda," *Nepal News*, March 18, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/mar/mar18/news02.php>

³⁶ "Singh prefers 'quiet diplomacy' to resolve contentious issues with India," *Nepal News*, March 17, 2008, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/mar/mar17/news11.php>

³⁷ "Lift emergency, declare poll date: Politicians demand at roundtable," *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=28098>

³⁸ "UN pledges food aid for Bangladesh," *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=28095>

³⁹ "WB MD in Dhaka to talk key challenges," *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=28102>

⁴⁰ "Pak envoy stresses need for increased trade with Bangladesh," *The Daily Star*, March 18, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=28216>

SRI LANKA

- *Rajapakse hails conduct of elections in Batticaloa; Dr. Singh calls for a negotiated political settlement to the Sri Lankan conflict*

Reports indicated that the LTTE was on an escalating recruitment drive in the war-torn areas and that the civilians were in a desperate bid to reach areas cleared out of the LTTE's control even as Wannai was declared to be liberated from the LTTE.⁴¹ A Sri Lankan Tamil was arrested in Canada on charges of collecting funds for the LTTE. The World Tamil Movement (WTM), the leading Tiger-front organisation in Canada admitted that the money was being sent to the Tigers to buy military equipment.⁴² President Rajapakse has meanwhile applauded the conduct of elections in Batticaloa as a victory for democracy and the defeat of terrorism.⁴³ The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) on its part charged the Rajapakse government of hastening the election process in the East.

Reports also cited Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of stating that there could be no military solution to the Sri Lankan conflict. Dr. Singh emphasized on a negotiated political settlement which would cater to the interests of all the stakeholders within the framework of a united Sri Lanka.⁴⁴

II. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

OIL AND GAS FOUND IN NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE OF PAKISTAN

- *Discovery containing 2882 bpd of oil and 45.8 mmcf of gas in the Tal Block*

The Pakistani Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources announced on March 19 the discovery of 2881 barrels per day of oil and 45.8 mmcf of gas in the Tal Block located in the North West Frontier Province. The block was being operated by a joint venture consisting of a foreign operator, OGDCL, PPL, POL and GHPL and was the third discovery made by the consortium in this block, which will be further tested for economic feasibility, production rate and scale.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "More civilians flee Wannai in continuing trend," *The Daily News*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/03/17/sec01.asp>; "Government in a hurry over polls: TULF," *The Hindu*, at March 24, 2008, <http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/24/stories/2008032455621600.htm>

⁴² "Lankan in Canada nabbed for raising funds for Tigers," *The Daily News*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/03/19/sec01.asp>

⁴³ "President likens Eastern victory to universal franchise," *Daily News*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/03/19/news01.asp>

⁴⁴ "India says there can be no military solution for Sri Lanka," *Colombo Page*, March 19, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/March19131340JV.html

⁴⁵ "Discovery of oil, gas in NWFP", *Daily times*, March 20, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C03%5C20%5Cstory_20-3-2008_pg5_5

CHINA TO INVEST \$30 B IN AFRICA

- *China's oil imports from Africa set to increase to 40 per cent of total imports in the next 10-15 years, from the current levels of 30 per cent*

The Executive President of China Petroleum and Petrochemical Industry Zhiming Zhao, while speaking on the sideline of the 3rd Sub-Sahara Oil and Gas Conference in Cape Town, South Africa announced that China was set to invest \$30 b in oil and gas projects in Africa in the next 10-15 years. These investments would increase China's oil imports from the resources-rich continent to 40 per cent from the current figure of 30 per cent. Zhiming also noted that Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil exporter, would be the top beneficiary of these increased investments.⁴⁶

EU-RUSSIA TALKS ON PARTNERSHIP ACCORD LIKELY IN APRIL 2008

- *Progress as concerns of Poland and Lithuania addressed as two statements on security of energy supplies annexed*

EU is all set to launch talks with Russia to negotiate a partnership accord most likely in April 2008 after it made significant progress on the long-stalled mandate to negotiate the accord with Moscow. Progress was achieved with the concerns of Poland and Lithuania - which have been blocking the talks since 2006, were addressed as the EU ambassadors agreed to annex two statements dealing with security of energy supplies to the draft document.⁴⁷

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- *Lt. Col. Kadam, LeT's Kashmir chief killed in encounter; HM militants make abortive bid to blow up a flyover in Srinagar*

Two soldiers, including Lt. Col. M. S. Kadam were killed and four others wounded in a gun battle with the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terrorists at Chathura in Baramulla district on March 16. The encounter took place when the LeT terrorists opened fire on the security forces during a search operation. In the ensuing encounter, the Kashmir valley chief of the LeT Halif Naasir was also gunned down. Naasir was the most wanted terrorist in Baramulla, Bandipore and Kupwara districts and his killing was a major achievement for security forces, and an enormous setback for terrorists, particularly those of LeT.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, terrorists belonging to the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) made an abortive bid to blow up a flyover in Srinagar on March 19 by exploding an

⁴⁶ "China to invest \$30bn in African oil and gas", *Tide News*, March 22, 2008, at [http://www.thetidenews.com/article.aspx?qrDate=03/19/2008&qrTitle=China%20to%20invest%20\\$30bn%20in%20African%20oil%20and%20gas&qrColumn=BUSINESS](http://www.thetidenews.com/article.aspx?qrDate=03/19/2008&qrTitle=China%20to%20invest%20$30bn%20in%20African%20oil%20and%20gas&qrColumn=BUSINESS)

⁴⁷ Paul Taylor, "EU nears Russia talks mandate, deal seen in April," *The Guardian*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/feedarticle?id=7397661>

⁴⁸ "Lt Col among 2 soldiers killed in fierce gunbattle, Lashkar's Kashmir chief killed", *Daily Excelsior*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08mar17/news.htm#1>

Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The IED was kept beneath an observation post on the flyover which was being manned by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). One person was killed and 16 others sustained injuries.⁴⁹ In another incident during the week, a combined team of police and Army gunned down four LeT terrorists in a fierce encounter in Doda district.

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- *Terrorists kill fourteen non-Manipuris; NSCN (IM) lifts 'emergency' in Nagaland; Union Minister Jaiswal: Northeast insurgent groups have links with the ISI*

In Manipur, unidentified terrorists gunned down fourteen non-Manipuris at different places of the State on March 17-18. No terrorist group had so far claim responsibility for the killings.⁵⁰ The Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) strongly condemned the killings stating that their fight was against the Government of India and not against all the Indians.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the Manipur Police on March 19 gunned down two Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) terrorists suspected to have been involved in the killings of the non-Manipuris.⁵²

Further, four persons were killed and 60 others wounded when suspected militants triggered a powerful blast in Assam's Dhemaji district on March 16. Assam Police suspected the blast to be the handiwork of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). The ULFA, however, denied its involvement, stating that 'a gang of pseudo revolutionaries created by the enemy,' had carried out the attack with the ulterior motive of creating mistrust among the various tribes and communities. The explosion took place when a huge crowd was enjoying the cultural evening on the occasion of Ali Aye Lrigang - a seed sowing festival of the Mishing tribe.⁵³

Meanwhile, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) announced the revocation of its self-proclaimed 'emergency' in Nagaland on March 22 in view of "an improvement on law and order front," according to the outfit's chairman Isak Chishi Swu. Swu further stated that following the revocation of emergency, all kilonsers (ministers) of the NSCN-IM had been reinstated with immediate effect.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ "One killed, 16 injured in blast on flyover", *Daily Excelsior*, March 20, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08mar20/news.htm#3>

⁵⁰ "Seven more migrant labourers shot dead bringing death toll to 14," *Imphal Free Press*, March 19, 2008, at http://kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=headline&newsid=41522&typeid=1&Idoc_Session=9e55de00285f326f149a7cf7b0ecf0d9

⁵¹ "RPF condemns targeting migrant workers," *Sangai Express*, March 20, 2008, at http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/News_pages/Local_page-03.html

⁵² "Manipur migrant killers shot dead," *Telegraph*, March 21, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080321/jsp/northeast/story_9043455.jsp

⁵³ "Four killed, 60 injured in Assam blast," *The Hindu*, March 17, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/17/stories/2008031758931200.htm>

⁵⁴ "NSCN lifts 'emergency' in Nagaland," *Telegraph*, March 23, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080323/jsp/northeast/story_9045891.jsp

Elsewhere, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Sriprakash Jaiswal informed the Lok Sabha on March 18 that some insurgent groups of the North-East, particularly ULFA, had links with Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and other terrorist organizations like the Harkat-ul-jehad Islami (HuJI).⁵⁵

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- *Seventeen Maoists killed in Chattisgarh*

A joint team of Andhra Pradesh Police and Chhattisgarh Police shot dead as many as seventeen Maoists during a joint offensive launched against the Maoists in the dense forests between Pamedu in Andhra Pradesh and Bijapur in Chhattisgarh on March 18. One AK-47, three SLR, and several landmines were recovered from the incident sites.⁵⁶

IV. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- *EAM: Deal can neither be mended nor be ended; Government keen to make safeguards document public; Advani calls for amending Atomic Energy Act for insulating India from Hyde Act implications; EAM to meet Bush and Rice during Washington visit*

The debate on the nuclear deal continued following the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting during the week wherein both the UPA and the Left sought more time. Responding to statements from the opposition in the Parliament that the government should either “mend or end the nuclear deal,” External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee stated that the government was at such a stage in the dialogue where it could neither end it nor mend it.⁵⁷ The Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani in an interview also called for amending the Atomic Energy Act so that India will be insulated from the implications of the Hyde Act.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, reports indicated that the government was keen to make public the safeguards pact with the IAEA to enable it to arrive at a broad consensus. Reports also noted that the UN’s nuclear watch dog and the government had an informal agreement to make the document public simultaneously.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ “NE insurgents have links with ISI, HuJI: MOS Home,” *Sentinel*, March 19, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁵⁶ “17 Maoists killed in encounter,” *The Hindu*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/19/stories/2008031952530600.htm>

⁵⁷ Gargi Parsai, “Can neither mend nor end nuclear deal: Pranab,” *The Hindu*, March 20, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/20/stories/2008032055081200.htm>

⁵⁸ “Advani brings it back on table: amend law to insulate India from Hyde Act,” *Yahoo News*, March 22, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indianexpress/20080322/r_t_ie_nl_politics/tnl-advani-brings-it-back-on-table-amend-0058794.html

⁵⁹ “India keen to make public safeguards pact with IAEA,” *IANS-Sify News*, March 19, 2008, at <http://sify.com/news/fullstory.php?id=14625231>

IRAN

- *Bush: Iran cannot be trusted just to develop nuclear power; P-5 prepares an incentive package for Iran, hopes Iran would stop enrichment*

President George Bush in an interview to the Voice of America stated that Iran had the right to have civilian nuclear power as long as fuel for its reactors was provided by an outside source. He added that the Iranian government cannot be trusted to develop nuclear power solely for peaceful purposes as they had not been “forthcoming about their enrichment of fuels.” Bush noted that Russia's offer to provide fuel on a contractual basis “would help solve the problem.”⁶⁰

Meanwhile, reports indicated that the United States and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council were preparing a package of incentives aimed at inducing Iran's newly-elected parliament to concede in ending its uranium-enrichment program. The proposals, encompassing economic, technological and security benefits included provision of spare parts for Iran's aging fleet of Boeing aircraft and help in developing a civilian nuclear energy program. Though the offer in question was similar to that made in 2006, which Iran had rejected, officials involved in drafting the proposal noted that the timing of the incentives would be more specific this time around.⁶¹

NORTH KOREA

- *Pyongyang agrees to work with US to find solution to the impasse*

After talks between the United States and North Korea in Geneva, both the countries agreed to “continue the discussion” to find a solution to the impasse regarding Pyongyang's denuclearisation process, an issue that was holding up the nuclear deal.⁶² Pyongyang on its part asserted that the Six-Party talks to ensure North Korean denuclearisation would continue.

In other developments, Ambassador Christopher Hill reiterated that North Korea must hand over the list detailing all its nuclear activities quickly and that Pyongyang should address US claims of a secret uranium enrichment program and its past record of nuclear proliferation.⁶³

Note: This Review does not contain the Pakistan section as Dr. Priyanka Singh was on leave.

⁶⁰ Bill Rodgers, “Bush Calls on Iran to Stop Enriching Uranium,” *VOA News*, March 20, 2008, at <http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-03-20-voa3.cfm>

⁶¹ Nicholas Kravov, “Incentives package prepared for Iran,” *The Washington Times*, March 18, 2008, at <http://washingtontimes.com/article/20080318/FOREIGN/589530246/1003>

⁶² “N. Korea: Nuclear Arms Talks to Continue,” *Washington Post*, March 18, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/18/AR2008031800186_pf.html

⁶³ Foster Klug, “US Awaiting North Korea's Nuclear List,” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/7398349>