

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **Obama's unveils new AfPak strategy; US NSA Gen. James Jones: New Afghan-Pak strategy has nothing to do with Kashmir; Peter Galbraith appointed UN Deputy Envoy**

US President Barack Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27. Noting that the situation was "increasingly perilous," Obama vowed to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future."¹ In addition to the 17,000 troops that are being sent to Afghanistan, Obama announced that another 4,000 will help train the Afghan Army and police. Hundreds of civilian experts will also be sent to bolster the reconstruction efforts and tackle the opium trade, which provides the Taliban with billions of dollars each year.² The US President stated that the US will accelerate efforts to build an Afghan army of 134,000 and a police force of around 82,000 personnel.

Unveiling the AfPak strategy, Mr. Obama stressed that "the future of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor, Pakistan. In the nearly eight years since 9/11, al-Qaeda and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. This almost certainly includes al-Qaeda's leadership - Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri."³

US National Security Advisor Gen. James Jones told newsmen at the Foreign Press Centre in Washington on March 27 that the US's new strategy for Afghanistan had nothing to do with the Kashmir dispute. Gen. Jones noted that "Kashmir is a separate issue."⁴

In other developments, the UN appointed Peter Galbraith, a US diplomat, as its deputy envoy to Afghanistan. The UK's new ambassador to Afghanistan Mark Sedwill stated that the British had long-term plans in Afghanistan and that its armed forces may be in the country for another five years while civilians could stay more than 20 years.⁵

¹ "Obama Sounds Cautious Note as He Sets Out Afghan Plan," *New York Times*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/26/washington/28prexy.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

² "Barack Obama offers new strategy to tame Pakistan," *The Times*, March 28, 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5989417.ece>

³ "Obama on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," *The White House*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/March/20090327121221xjsnommis0.1558496.html&distid=ucs>

⁴ "New Afghan-Pak strategy has nothing to do with Kashmir: US," *UNI*, March 28, 2009, at [http://uniindia.com/unilive/unisite.nsf/\\$All/1150340F136AE678652575870012A021?OpenDocument](http://uniindia.com/unilive/unisite.nsf/$All/1150340F136AE678652575870012A021?OpenDocument)

⁵ "UK in Afghanistan for 'long-term'," *BBC*, March 24, 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7962151.stm

PAKISTAN

- **Reports: Pakistan not happy with Obama's new AfPak strategy; 76 killed in suicide bomb attack in Khyber Agency; Iftikhar Chaudhary resumes duties as Chief Justice; Zardari reiterates PPP's commitment to bring peace to Balochistan**

Reports noted that Pakistan was not happy with President Obama's AfPak strategy announced on March 27. The US President's assertion that there would not be any more 'blank cheques' for Pakistan was being especially viewed with concern in Islamabad.⁶

At least 76 people were killed and over 100 injured in a suicide bomb attack at Jamrud in Khyber Agency on March 27. Several security persons were also killed in the blast which took place in a mosque on the Peshawar-Torkham Highway.⁷

Governors' rule in Punjab was withdrawn after the PPP announced its decision to support the chief ministerial candidate of PML-N. Nawaz Sharif and PM Gilani reconciled their differences after meeting at Raiwind on March 22. Mr. Sharif stated that he would now work with the PPP "for changing the destiny of the nation."⁸

The newly reinstated Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, after taking charge on March 24, vowed to free the judicial system of corruption and restore the rule of law. PM Gilani on his part, addressing the PPP parliamentary party meeting in Lahore on March 25, claimed that it was the PPP which had rescued the federation by reestablishing the judiciary.⁹

In other developments, President Zardari, addressing party workers on a visit to Quetta on March 26, reiterated the PPP's commitment to bring peace to Balochistan.¹⁰

BHUTAN

- **Bhutan and India sign another hydropower agreement; Tshering Tobgay elected as the new PDP President; Chief Justice Tobgye: Fifteen sub-districts to separate courts; Exiled Bhutanese oppose 'one nation, one people' policy**

Bhutan and India signed another hydro-power agreement, which will help ensure a 15 percent increase in the country's production capacity by 2020, by up

⁶ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Islamabad not happy with Obama strategy," *Dawn*, March 29, 2009, at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/Dawn%20Content%20Library/dawn/news/pakistan/islamabad-not-happy-with-obama-strategy--bi>

⁷ Daud Khattak & Nasrullah Afridi, "76 killed in Jamrud mosque bombing," *The News*, March 28, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁸ Babar Dogar, "Nawaz decides to join hands with PPP," *The News*, March 24, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁹ "PPP saved federation by restoring judges: Gilani," *Daily Times*, March 26, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\26\story_26-3-2009_pg1_1

¹⁰ "Zardari vows to heal Balochistan's wounds," *The News*, March 27, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

to 11,576 MW, instead of the earlier target of 10,000 MW which was fixed in 2008.¹¹

In domestic developments, Tshering Tobgay was elected as the new People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, in the aftermath of the resignation of Sangay Ngedup. Ngedup took responsibility for the failure of the PDP in the 2008 elections.¹²

Chief Justice Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye stated that fifteen sub-districts would now be having separate courts. Tobgye added that the move marked "a major step in ensuring a vibrant and independent judiciary."¹³

In other developments, exiled Bhutanese organised a protest in front of the Asian Arts Museum in San Francisco to oppose the 'One Nation, One People' policy of Bhutanese government.¹⁴ The demonstrators highlighted alleged contradictions in the Bhutanese democratic transition.

BANGLADESH

- **Islamic militants threaten English-language schools in Dhaka; Founding member of HuJI arrested; Cairns Energy seeks to raise price of gas sold to PetroBangla; Bangladesh and India renew the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade for two more years**

Reports noted the increasingly higher profile of extremist elements with cadres of the outlawed Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) for instance distributing leaflets threatening the government law enforcement agencies of "any action anytime."¹⁵ Islamist militants were also making threats against English-language schools in Dhaka.¹⁶

Security agencies arrested a founding member of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI-BD), Maulana Sheikh Abdus Salam, from his home in the Bashundhara residential area of Dhaka on March 23. Salam is the *ameer* (chief) of the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) who reportedly went to Afghanistan in the early 1980s and returned in 1989. Sources noted that some Afghan war veterans led by Salam launched the HuJI at the Jatiya Press Club on April 30, 1992.¹⁷

¹¹ "Indo-Bhutan hydropower initiative increase installation capacity," *Economic Times*, March 26, 2009, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/News-By-Industry/Indo-Bhutan-hydropower-initiative-increase-installation-capacity/articleshow/4320446.cms>

¹² "Tshering Tobgay was elected as the new PDP president," *Kuensel Online*, March 26, 2009, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=12178>

¹³ "A court for every dungkhag," *Kuensel Online*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=12167>

¹⁴ "Diaspora shows other side of Bhutan," *Bhutan News Service*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.bhutannewsservice.com/main-news/diaspora-shows-other-side-of-bhutan/>

¹⁵ "Gono Mukti Fouz distributes leaflets threatening law enforcement agencies in Kushtia District," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 17, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/17/2009#14

¹⁶ "Militants threaten Bangladesh schools," *Reuters UK*, March 20, 2009, at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKTRE52J1BS20090320>

¹⁷ "Top HuJI cadre arrested in Dhaka," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 24, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/24/2009#15

The Chairman of PetroBangla stated that the government was reviewing a proposal by the UK-based Cairn Energy Plc to raise the price of gas sold to state-run oil, gas and mineral corporation Petrobangla. Cairn Energy also sought the rights to sell gas to any firm other than Petrobangla or raise price for its planned exploration works in a number of onshore and offshore fields.¹⁸

In other developments, Bangladesh and India renewed the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, first signed in 1972, for two more years. Officials stated that businessmen will be able to transport consumer goods from India by water all the way to Dhaka and Narayanganj by middle of June 2010. Currently, only a small portion of cargo, mainly cement raw materials and crude oil, comes from India by waterways using the Khulna and Sirajganj jetties. India has also been urging that Ashuganj be included as another port of call to boost inland water trade.¹⁹

SRI LANKA

- **Karuna: LTTE has lost 90 per cent of its fighters; Reports: India has set up a hospital in north Lanka to cater to displaced Tamils; Calls made to sever Colombo's ties with Oslo on charges of facilitating meeting with LTTE's KP; Karunanidhi: Legal action against Colombo if it goes ahead with its plans to convert Kachatheevu into 'sacred' island**

Former LTTE military commander and now government Minister Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan alias Karuna Amman stated that the LTTE experienced a loss of more than 90 percent of its fighters and that it was now "finished." He also pointed out that around 1,500 surviving rebels were trapped and had no way of escaping.²⁰ Other reports noted that the LTTE's hold over territory had diminished to around less than one sq km. The government's Defence Affairs spokesman revealed that LTTE cadres had "infiltrated the No-Fire-Zone" (NFZ) and were carrying out terror activities in the NFZ.²¹

Reports noted that India had set up a hospital in north Sri Lanka to provide medical aid to the displaced Tamil civilians. Indian authorities were also considering an expansion of the 115-bed hospital near eastern Trincomalee district.²²

NFF leader Wimal Weerawansa urged the government to sever all diplomatic ties with Norway on the grounds that Oslo had facilitated talks

¹⁸ "Bangladesh examines Cairn proposal to raise gas price", *Reuters UK*, March 29, 2009, at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/rbssEnergyNews/idUKDHA7380420090329>

¹⁹ "India Goods To Reach Dhaka By Water In 2010", *Independent Bangladesh*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.independent-bangladesh.com/2009032410755/business/india-goods-to-reach-dhaka-by-water-in-2010.html>

²⁰ "LTTE 'finished', says Minister Muralitharan," *Daily News*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/03/25/sec01.asp>

²¹ "LTTE holds to 1 sq km," *Daily News*, March 27, 2009, at http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/03/30/main_News.asp

²² "India may expand hospital facility in Lanka war-zone," *Daily News*, March 24, 2009, at http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=442

between John Holmes and Kumaran Padmanadan (KP), who was the LTTE's focal man for international arms procurement.²³

In other developments, reports noted that Sri Lanka's economy was expected to grow around 5.5 percent in 2009.²⁴ Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi meanwhile asserted that his government would not hesitate to initiate legal action against the Sri Lankan Government if it went ahead with its plans to convert Kacchatheevu into a 'sacred' island and tourist spot.²⁵

MALDIVES

- **Maldives lobbies UNHRC to adopt resolution on climate change and human rights; Majlis cancels licenses issued to foreign parties for fishing in EEZ**

In a successful diplomatic move, Maldives has lobbied the UN Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution on the relationship between human rights and climate change. The resolution states that global warming violates human rights of people and adds that all states must shoulder the responsibility and work together to mitigate and adapt to climate change.²⁶ President Nasheed on his part has cautioned that if the oceans rose by two metres, low-lying islands of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean would be wiped off.²⁷

In other developments, Majlis voted for cancellation of all licenses issued to foreign parties for fishing in the Maldives Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The move was taken in order to minimize the losses faced by fishermen and fishing vessel owners.²⁸

²³ "Sever all diplomatic ties with Norway - Wimal," *Daily Mirror*, March 25, 2009, at http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=44515

²⁴ "Lanka's economy to grow around 5.5% in 2009," *Daily News*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/03/27/bus01.asp>

²⁵ "Legal action if Lanka declares islet sacred area - Karunanidhi," *Daily Mirror*, March 22, 2009, at http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=44194

²⁶ "Maldives leads UN climate change debate," *Minivian News*, March 26, 2009, at http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=6237

²⁷ "Maldives' carbon neutral plan is not greenwash, just imperfect progress," *The Guardian*, March 26, 2009, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2009/mar/26/maldives-carbon-neutral-greenwash>

²⁸ "MPs calls for cancellation of licenses for fishing in EEZ," *Miadhunews*, March 26, 2009, at <http://www.miadhunews.com/mv/news.php?id=9679>

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

CHINA

- **China says it is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan to solve its problems; China, Australia vow to improve bilateral ties; Foreign Minister Yang: China, EU relationship off to a good start; BT network vulnerable to potential attack from China; Tourists allowed to enter Tibet from April 5; WEF: Taiwan 13th most networked economy in the world**

The Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Song Tao, addressing the conference on Afghanistan in Moscow organized under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), that the SCO had devoted itself to safeguarding regional peace and stability, and that it was ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in solving its problems. Song noted that the SCO will actively cooperate with the Afghan government in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational crimes "so as to safeguard regional peace and stability." Song called on the parties present to support the UN's leading role in Afghanistan's reconstruction, to aid Afghanistan in its elections, and to improve and enhance regional cooperation mechanisms. The Chinese Minister stated that Beijing had also written off a loan of \$75 million it had earlier provided to Afghanistan.²⁹

Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping meanwhile met with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith in Beijing and vowed to improve bilateral ties. Xi noted that the Chinese government always viewed China-Australia ties from the "strategic height and long-term perspective." Xi stated that China was willing to strengthen dialogues at all levels with Australia, promote negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement, and deepen bilateral communication and cooperation in comprehensive fields on the basis of mutual respect and principle of equality and mutual benefit.³⁰

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, talking to reporters on March 29 stated that the China-EU relationship got off to a good start in the current year on the back of Premier Wen Jiabao's successful visit to Europe. During his talks with Benita Ferrero-Waldner, commissioner for external relations of the European Commission, it was stressed that both EU and China had important international responsibilities in coping with the financial crisis, climate change and other global challenges.³¹

In other developments, reports indicated that a new £10bn communications network being developed by British Telecom is vulnerable to a potential attack from within China as the network uses equipment supplied by

²⁹ "China calls on int'l community to cooperate on Afghanistan," *Xinhua*, March 27, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/28/content_11087296.htm

³⁰ "China, Australia vow to enhance bilateral ties," *Xinhua*, March 27, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/27/content_11085673.htm

³¹ "Chinese FM says relationship with EU off to good start this year," *Xinhua*, March 29, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/29/content_11095374.htm

the Chinese firm Huawei.³² In developments relating to Tibet, even as China reiterated that it opposed the activities of the governments of any other country providing support or a platform for the Dalai Lama's secessionist activity, reports noted that the Chinese government will allow tourists to enter Tibet from April 5, 2009.³³

In Taiwan-related developments, directors of major state-owned media outlets from the Chinese mainland ended a nine-day visit to Taiwan on March 27. This was the highest-level media trip to the island province. It was also reported that more than 140,000 Chinese mainland tourists visited Taiwan from July 2008 to March 2009.³⁴ The World Economic Forum (WEF) on March 26 stated that Taiwan was the 13th most networked economy in the world.³⁵

JAPAN

- **Japan may shoot down North Korean rocket**

Reports indicated that Japan may order its military to shoot down a North Korean rocket if it threatens to hit the country.³⁶ There were also indications that Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) Aegis guided-missile destroyers were headed for the Sea of Japan to intercept the DPRK's rocket in case it falls onto Japanese territory.³⁷

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **Thai PM refuses to step down despite ongoing protests; Thailand offers to mediate between Myanmar and KNU; Than Shwe urges political parties to abandon 'foreign ideologies'; Najib Razak to replace Abdullah Badawi as the next PM; Violence in Aceh peaks**

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva refused to step down despite the ongoing protests with around 30,000 supporters of fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawala sieging the government complex on March 26.³⁸ Ahisit also rejected

³² "Britain could be shut down by hackers from China, intelligence experts warn," *The Telegraph*, March 29, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/5072204/Britain-could-be-shut-down-by-hackers-from-China-intelligence-experts-warn.html>

³³ "China 'opposes any platform' for Dalai Lama's secessionist activity," *Xinhua*, March 24, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/24/content_11065441.htm

³⁴ "More than 140,000 Chinese mainlanders visit Taiwan in nine months," *Xinhua*, March 25, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/25/content_11073091.htm

³⁵ "Taiwan is world's 13th most networked economy: WEF," *eTaiwannews*, March 26, 2009, at [http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=903862\(=eng_news](http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=903862(=eng_news)

³⁶ "Japan readies NKorea rocket launch response," *Associated Foreign Press*, March 25, 2009, at http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20090325/wl_afp/nkoreajapanmissiledefencepolitics_20090325073053

³⁷ "Japan's guided-missile destroyers head for Sea of Japan ahead of DPRK's rocket launch," *Xinhua*, March 28, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/28/content_11087716.htm

³⁸ "Red Shirt Protest Rally begins," *The Bangkok Post*, March 26, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/138659/red-shirt-rally-begins>

the national reconciliation bill which was proposed by the opposition Puea Thai Party with a view to paving a way for the return of Thaskin.³⁹

Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya meanwhile has agreed to help push the Karen National Union (KNU) to disarm its cadres.⁴⁰ The KNU on its part has welcomed Thailand's offer to mediate with the Burmese government to forge reconciliation with it.⁴¹ In other developments, the Thai government has assured Sri Lanka of its assistance in monitoring movements of LTTE members within Thailand.⁴²

In Myanmar, junta chief Than Shwe urged political parties to do abandon foreign ideologies if they wanted true democracy to emerge within the county.⁴³ The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) meanwhile has issued a fresh appeal for permission to visit its leader Suu Kyi as well as some other central executive committee members.⁴⁴ The appeal was issued a few days after a UN panel stated that by keeping Suu Kyi under house arrest, the military junta had not only violated international law, but that it has violated the state law as well.⁴⁵

In Malaysia, reports noted that Najib Razak will replace Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the next PM. Najib has pledged to bring about reforms within the ruling UNMO party. However, reports also stated that allegations of corruption and murder against Najib, along with his low popularity ratings, may prove to be a hindrance in fulfilling that pledge.⁴⁶ In other developments, two Malaysian opposition newspapers have been banned for three months on charges of inciting hatred against the government.⁴⁷

Indonesia's military has firmly denied US mining giant Freeport McMoran's recent declaration that it had paid Indonesian troops to guard its Grasberg mine in Papua. Reports noted that despite efforts by the Indonesian

³⁹ "Weekly Highlights," *The Bangkok Post*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/138737/weekly-highlights>

⁴⁰ "Kasit agrees to push KNU disarmament," *The Bangkok Post*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/13874/kasit-agrees-to-push-knu-disarmament>

⁴¹ "KNU welcomes mediation offer," *The Bangkok Post*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/13921/knu-welcomes-mediation-offer>

⁴² "Govt offers to watch Tigers," *The Bangkok Post*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/14046/govt-offers-to-watch-tigers>

⁴³ "Myanmar leader warns on democracy at parade," *The Bangkok Post*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138740/myanmar-leader-warns-on-democracy-at-parade>

⁴⁴ "Myanmar Opposition asks for Suu Kyi meeting," *The Bangkok Post*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138427/myanmar-opposition-asks-for-suu-kyi-meeting>

⁴⁵ "Burma breaks own law holding Suu Kyi: UN Panel," *The Bangkok Post*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138382/myanmar-breaks-own-law-holding-suu-kyi-un-panel>

⁴⁶ "Boost for new Malaysian PM as allies win top posts," *The Bangkok Post*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138742/boost-for-new-malaysian-pm-as-allies-win-top-posts>

⁴⁷ "Malaysia says press incited 'hatred' for government," *The Bangkok Post*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138399/malaysia-says-press-incited-hatred-for-govt>

government to stop such payments, they have continued.⁴⁸ Political violence meanwhile between former separatist guerrillas and the military has reached its peak in Aceh province, bringing into question the relevance of the 2005 Helsinki deal reached between the conflicting parties.⁴⁹ In other developments, Indonesia agreed to swap currency worth US\$15 billion with China, as part of an effort to help boost confidence in the rupiah vis-a-vis the US dollar.⁵⁰

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Miliband urges Tehran to take opportunity offered by Obama to improve relations; US at Moscow meet: Afghanistan a “very productive area” for engagement with Tehran; Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator meets NSA Narayanan**

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary David Miliband told reporters that Britain supported multilateral and bilateral talks with Iran over its nuclear issue. He added that Iran could exercise its rights to access civilian nuclear technology if it was willing to abide by its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Referring to the recent messages by the US President Barack Obama to engage in direct talks with the Islamic Republic, Miliband urged Iran to take the opportunity “to move towards a position where it can exercise its rights in international community.”⁵¹

US officials meanwhile, at the SCO-sponsored meeting on Afghanistan in Moscow, have stated that Afghanistan was a “very productive area” for engagement between the US and Iran. The leader of the Iranian delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Mehdi Akhonzadeh, reaffirmed his government’s stance that Washington needed to change its policies before relations could be improved. Iran has also confirmed that it will attend the upcoming Hague conference on Afghanistan, a step being viewed by analysts as a signal that Tehran was ready to help the new US administration in its moves to restore stability in its eastern neighbour.⁵²

Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili held talks with NSA M.K. Narayanan in New Delhi on March 27 and discussed issues of mutual interest.

⁴⁸ “Indonesia military denies ‘direct’ payments from US Miner,” March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138493/indonesia-military-says-no-direct-payments-from-us-miner>

⁴⁹ “Aceh Peace in Peril as Indonesia elections loom,” The Bangkok Post, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/138407/aceh-peace-in-peril-as-indonesian-elections-loom>

⁵⁰ “RI seeks to reduce dollar dependency,” The Jakarta Post, March 27, 2009 at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/27/ri-seeks-reduce-dollar-dependency.html>

⁵¹ “Britain wants bilateral talks with Iran over the nuclear issue,” *IRNA*, March 26, 2009, at <http://www5.irna.ir/En/View/FullStory/?NewsId=409520&IdLanguage=3>

⁵² “Iran could work together in Afghanistan,” *Khaleej Times*, March 27, 2009, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/March/middleeast_March518.xml§ion=middleeast

India and Iran, among other issues, are negotiating a gas pipeline deal which has been stalled by disagreements over costs and Indian fears for the line's safety in Pakistan.⁵³

IRAQ

- **Turkish President visits Baghdad; Suicide bomber kills 23 in northern Iraq amidst rising Kurdish-Arab tensions**

Turkish President Abdullah Gul, in a landmark visit to Iraq, urged the Iraqi government to do more to root out Kurdish separatists hiding in the mountains along Iraq's border with Turkey. Iraq's President Talabani on his part promised his country's help in disarming the PKK from the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Both sides also discussed issues relating to oil exports from Iraq. The pipeline that runs through predominantly Kurdish areas in northern Iraq and south-western Turkey to the Turkish port of Ceyhan has often been the target of sabotage since the US-led invasion in 2003.⁵⁴

A suicide bomber struck meanwhile struck at a tent filled with Kurdish funeral mourners, killing 23 people in the northern town of Jalula. The region has witnessed a power struggle between the Kurds and the Arabs in recent times. A series of high-profile bombings over the past month have raised concerns that insurgents may be regrouping as the US begins to scale down combat operations and hand over security responsibility to the Iraqis, ahead of a planned American troop withdrawal by the end of 2011.

Reports noted that Kurdish-Arab tension was beginning to acquire major significance threatening Iraqi stability given that the threat posed by Sunni and Shia insurgents had diminished. Prime Minister al-Maliki had also complained that the 2005 constitution gave too much power to regional authorities, including the Kurds while Kurdish politicians on their part have accused al-Maliki of wanting to expand his power at their expense.⁵⁵

II. NUCLEAR, MISSILES AND SPACE REVIEW

NUCLEAR

- **Tight race on for head of IAEA, Japan's Amano up against South Africa's Minty**

Reports noted that a close race was on for the post of the director general of the IAEA after 12 year stint of its current head Mohamed el-Baradei ends this year.

⁵³ "Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili visits India," *Arabia NDTV*, March 28, 2009, at http://arabia.ndtv.com/Story.aspx?pageheader=news&sub_category=&ID=NEWEN20090089031

⁵⁴ "Turkey, Iraq vow to halt Kurdish rebel attacks," *Khaleej Times*, March 24, 2009, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/March/middleeast_March462.xml§ion=middleeast

⁵⁵ "Suicide bomb blast kills 23 at funeral in Iraq," *Khaleej Times*, March 24, 2009, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/March/middleeast_March463.xml§ion=middleeast

Japan has nominated the 62-year old Yukiya Amano, a career civil servant in Japan's Foreign Service, who is also well-known among international disarmament and nuclear proliferation experts. He is up against South Africa's Abdul Samad Minty. Both the candidates are their country's respective ambassadors to the IAEA.⁵⁶

The change in the leadership comes at a pivotal time in the organisation's history, faced with the Iranian nuclear challenge. Sources indicated that the two officials could not be more different in their personalities and attitudes towards issues like arms control and atomic energy.⁵⁷

- **Central Asia NWFZ enters into force**

The treaty creating a zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia entered into force on March 21. Five countries of the region - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are parties to the Treaty. The Director General IAEA welcomed the entry into force of the CANWFZ and stated that this was "an additional contribution to our efforts for a world free from nuclear weapons and is an important regional confidence-building and security measure." The Director General noted that the Treaty creating the zone requires the Treaty States to have both a Safeguards Agreement and an Additional Protocol, which would enable the Agency to "not only provide assurances about declared nuclear activities but equally, also, assurances about the absence of possible undeclared nuclear activities in the zone."⁵⁸

- **China energy arm plans to up nuclear capacity**

Reports noted that China will shortly announce a plan to nearly double its 2020 nuclear power capacity goal to 75,000 megawatts (up from the 40,000) and towards this end, the government was urging firms to acquire uranium from abroad to build up a fuel reserve. China's new energy plans will give renewed hope to the global nuclear industry, represented by firms such as Areva of France and US-based Westinghouse, while offering a market for uranium suppliers such as Anglo-Australian BHP Billiton.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Todd Crowell, "Tight race for atomic agency's hot seat," *Asia Times*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/KC25Dh01.html>

⁵⁷ Borzou Daragahi, "IAEA succession battle shapes nuclear agency's future," *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2009, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-fg-vienna-nuclear18-2009mar18,0,3259640.story>

⁵⁸ "Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia IAEA Welcomes Entry into Force of Treaty Joining Five States in Region," IAEA, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2009/canwfztreaty.html>

⁵⁹ "China energy arm plans to up nuclear capacity," *The China Post*, March 31, 2009, at <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/business/asia/b-china/2009/03/31/202393/China-energy.htm>

- **Petraeus: Iran nuke a 'a couple of years' away**

The head of the US Central Command Gen. David Petraeus told CNN that Iran was still "a couple of years" away from having enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon.⁶⁰ The head of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Amos Yadlin, however told the Israeli Parliament in the previous week that Iran will have the capacity to build a nuclear weapon within a year but that it was "not rushing to produce one."

SPACE AND MISSILES

- **ISRO says RISAT is Indian-built, even as speculations mount on Israeli technical inputs**

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) denied that the Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT) due to be launched shortly by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from the Sriharikota spaceport is developed by Israel. ISRO Chairman K. Madhavan Nair asserted that the satellite was Indian-built.⁶¹

Nevertheless, ISRO officials were ambiguous in their statements about Israeli technical inputs in the satellite. There is speculation that Israel may have provided the Synthetic Aperture Radar for the satellite.

- **Block II version of Brahmos successfully test-fired**

The Block II version of the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired by the DRDO, in what was the second launch of the missile in the past month. The Block II version is a land attack missile developed for the Army.⁶² DRDO officials noted that the missile was ready for induction and that the missile met all performance benchmarks. Reports noted that Indian Army officials present at the test site have yet to confirm whether they are satisfied with the performance of the cruise missile.

- **South Korea, Japan, US warn DPRK not to go ahead with rocket launch**

South Korea, Japan and the United States have warned North Korea not to undertake the launch of its rocket scheduled for the first week of April as it would violate a 2006 UN resolution that bars North Korea from pursuing any missile related activity.⁶³ Pyongyang on its part however maintains that the rocket will place a satellite in space and that it was not a missile test.

⁶⁰ Petraeus, "Iran nuke a 'a couple of years' away," *Middle East Times*, March 29, 2009, at http://www.metimes.com/Politics/2009/03/29/iran_nuke_a_a_couple_of_years_away_petraeus/afp/

⁶¹ "Radar Imaging Satellite Ours, not Israel's, says ISRO Chairman," *Yahoo News*, March 26, 2009, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/20/20090326/1416/tnl-radar-imaging-satellite-ours-not-isr.html>

⁶² "Supersonic BrahMos successfully tested in Pokhran," *Hindustan Times*, March 29, 2009, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?sectionName=HomePage&id=5f384230-3968-4cbc-8eeb-7ad666025b64&Headline=Supersonic+BrahMos+cruise+missile+hits+'bulls+eye'>

⁶³ "Rocket Launch Warning Issued," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2009, at <http://www6.lexisnexis.com/publisher/EndUser?Action=UserDisplayFullDocument&orgId=574&topicId=100007194&docId=1:947837419&start=5>

The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) has revealed that the rocket has already been positioned on the launch pad at North Korea's Musudan-ri missile site.⁶⁴ The think tank notes that the rocket's configuration resembles a Taepodong-2 missile, having a potential range of more than 6,000 kilometers.

III. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

- **China and Myanmar sign deals for a 2,000 km gas and oil pipeline**

China signed a contract with Myanmar on March 27 to build a 2,000-km gas and oil pipeline running through Ruili and Kunming in Yunnan province, Guizhou province to Chongqing municipality in southwestern China. This would help China avoid the long detour through the congested Malacca Straits as well as strengthen its access to rich energy reserves in Myanmar. Both the countries have also agreed to work together to develop hydropower projects. China, one of Myanmar's few diplomatic allies, has been very active in investing in the country's resources, including natural gas, oil, minerals and timber.⁶⁵

- **China's CNOOC announces two new discoveries in Bohai Bay**

CNOOC Limited announced that it had successfully drilled two new oil and gas discoveries-*Bozhong* (BZ) 2-1 and *Qinhuangdao* (QHD) 29-2 in the Bohai Bay. Zhu Weilin, Executive Vice President of the Company stated that "both the structures are on large scale with thick oil pays, and contain light crude."⁶⁶

IV. INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM REVIEW

- **US offers up to \$11 million as reward to capture al-Qaeda terrorists in Pakistan; Seven Arab militants killed in South Waziristan agency; Adm. Mullen: ISI supporting al-Qaeda and Taliban; Kilcullen: Failure of Pakistani state could have devastating consequences for region and the world; Taliban charges that mobile network in Waziristan is an attempt by the government to spy on their activities; Reports: LeT planning to carry out subversive activities during general elections**

The US on March 25 offered up to \$11 million in rewards to find and capture three al-Qaeda terrorists, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud, who had a \$5 million bounty on his capture. The other two terrorists

⁶⁴ "Satellite Imagery of the Musudan-ri Missile Site in North Korea: Version 2," *ISIS*, March 27, 2009, at http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/Musudan_Ri_27March2009.pdf

⁶⁵ "China, Myanmar in oil deal," *Reuters*, March 26, 2009, at http://asiaenergy.blogspot.com/2009_03_22_archive.html.

⁶⁶ "China's CNOOC announces two new discoveries in Bohai Bay," *Oil online*, March 26, 2009, at http://asiaenergy.blogspot.com/2009_03_22_archive.html.

were Sirajuddin Haqqani and Abu Yahya al-Libi.⁶⁷ In a related development, seven militants believed to be Arab nationals, were killed and three others injured when they were attacked by US drones near the Makeen area of South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on March 25.⁶⁸

The US Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen told CNN on March 27 that there were indications that elements of Pakistan's intelligence service were supporting the al-Qaeda and the Taliban.⁶⁹

A top adviser to the US Central Command, David Kilcullen, meanwhile warned that the Pakistani State could collapse within six months if immediate steps were not taken to remedy the situation. Kilcullen urged US policymakers to focus their attention on Pakistan as a failure in that country could have devastating consequences for the entire region as well as the international community. In an interview to *The Washington Post*, Kilcullen pointed out that Pakistan "has 173 million people, 100 nuclear weapons, an army bigger than the US Army, and al-Qaeda headquarters sitting right there in the two-thirds of the country that the government doesn't control. ... The collapse of Pakistan, al-Qaeda acquiring nuclear weapons, an extremist takeover – that would dwarf everything we've seen in the war on terror today."⁷⁰

The Taliban warned the Pakistani government to stop expanding the mobile telephone network in Waziristan, claiming it was an attempt to spy on their activities. Pamphlets were circulated in Wana, the main town of South Waziristan, warning authorities to stop the network expansion and ordering vendors to stop selling SIM cards. The pamphlet charged that a "Jewish, Zionist-backed company is setting up the mobile phone network in Waziristan, which would be used to spy on Taliban activities and for drone attacks. ... This network is equipped with a global positioning system (GPS) and can give the location of a person even if his mobile phone is switched off ... In Iraq and Afghanistan, such a system has been used to launch attacks against *mujahideen*."⁷¹

In other developments, quoting intelligence sources, *Times of India* reported that the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) was planning to infiltrate the country's

⁶⁷ "US offers \$5m reward for Baitullah Mehsud," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 26, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/26/2009#2

⁶⁸ "Seven Arab militants killed in drone attack in South Waziristan," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 26, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/26/2009#2

⁶⁹ "Pakistan's intelligence service backing al Qaeda and Taliban, says Admiral Mike Mullen," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 28, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/28/2009#12

⁷⁰ "Pakistan could collapse in six months, says CENTCOM adviser," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 24, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/24/2009#15

⁷¹ "Taliban warn Government against operating cellular service in Waziristan," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 25, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/25/2009#13

borders in Rajasthan and Punjab to carry out subversion during the general elections scheduled to be held in April and May 2009.⁷²

V. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Seventeen militants and eight soldiers killed in Kupwara; Gen. James Jones: Kashmir is a separate issue; President Obama favours constructive diplomacy with India and Pakistan “to lessen tensions between two nuclear-armed nations”**

Seventeen militants and eight soldiers were killed in a five-day long encounter between the militants and the security forces in the Kupwara area of Jammu and Kashmir which ended on March 24. The equipment seized from the militants suggested that Pakistani security forces had assisted them in their infiltration attempts. At least 23 AK assault rifles, one pistol, four Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGLs), 19 UBGL grenades, two hand grenades, two global positioning systems and 10 radio sets were recovered. The LeT claimed responsibility for the Kupwara siege and threatened to intensify attacks across the Kashmir valley.

The Army on its part stated that there were around “300-400 terrorists in the Kashmir valley and 700-800 in Jammu and Kashmir” and that more terrorists were waiting to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir.⁷³ The Kupwara attack was the first major militant attack of LeT in Kashmir after the group was blamed for the deadly attacks in Mumbai in November 2008.

The Obama administration has meanwhile categorically ruled out involving itself in the Kashmir issue but expressed desire to help India and Pakistan build more trust and confidence. US NSA Gen. James Jones told foreign correspondents at a briefing in Washington on March 26 that “Kashmir is a separate issue,” and that the US does not “intend to get involved in that (Kashmir) issue.” Earlier, President Obama, unveiling his new AfPak strategy, favoured using constructive diplomacy with India and Pakistan “to lessen tensions between two nuclear-armed nations that too often teeter on the edge of escalation and confrontation.”⁷⁴

⁷² “Lashkar-e-Toiba trying to infiltrate militants through fenced borders in Rajasthan and Punjab,” *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 27, 2009, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/27/2009#11

⁷³ “Kupwara operation: Militants were from Lashkar-e-Toiba,” *Daily Excelsior*, March 25, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09mar25/newsupdate.htm#3>

⁷⁴ “Obama Administration says no to Kashmir,” *Daily Excelsior*, March 27, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09mar28/newsupdate.htm#1>

NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENTS

- **Arms racket busted in Mizoram**

The Mizoram police busted a gang of international arms smugglers after arresting a Chin tribal from Myanmar who was on his way to deliver rocket launchers to militants in the Northeast. The kingpin of the racket, Khatsi Anpao, was apprehended from an Aizawl-bound bus on March 21. Anpao's interrogation led to the arrest of three more members of the gang. The police suspect that the arms were being taken to Cachar district in south Assam en route to the adjoining North Cachar Hills district, a beehive of insurgency. Reports noted that this was the second incident of an arms haul in Mizoram involving Chin traffickers.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ "Arms racket busted in Mizoram," *Telegraph*, March 24, 2009, at http://telegraphindia.com/1090324/jsp/northeast/story_10711551.jsp