

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **NATO allies involved in formulating strategy to ensure peaceful conduct of presidential elections; Poland to increase its troop presence in the country; German Chancellor Merkel and Defence Minister Jung visit Afghanistan; US-led coalition kills 27 insurgents in southern Afghanistan; Women's rights activist gunned down in Kandahar by Taliban**

Even as reports suggested that NATO allies were engaged in formulating strategy to ensure the successful conduct of presidential elections scheduled for August 20, Poland announced that it would contribute 400 more troops, to the 1,600 already present in the country.¹ German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung visited northern Afghanistan on April 6. Germany has 3,800 troops serving in Afghanistan.

Afghan and US-led coalition forces meanwhile claimed that they killed 27 suspected insurgents in two separate clashes in southern Afghanistan on April 10.² In another incident, a female provincial official known for fighting for women's rights issues, Sitara Achakzai was gunned down on April 12 in Kandahar. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.³

PAKISTAN

- **Violence erupts in Balochistan after Chakwal suicide attack; PM Gilani calls for a "comprehensive and integrated national counter terrorism policy"; Holbrooke: Taliban inside Pakistan directing war in Afghanistan against US forces; British PM Brown asks Zardari to take action against rising militancy inside his country in the aftermath of arrest of 11 Pakistanis in the UK; Zardari urges PM Gilani to implement Charter of Democracy**

After the horrific suicide attack in Chakwal on April 6, violence erupted in Balochistan province leading to the death of more than two dozen people and injuring several more.⁴ In view of the rising incidents of terror within the country, Prime Minister Gilani chaired a meeting on national security on April 6

¹ "Poland to increase troops in NATO mission in Afghanistan," *China View*, April 10, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/10/content_11164999.htm

² "US: 27 suspected insurgents killed in Afghanistan," *The Associated Press*, April 11, 2009, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hvWEqWq3CrRvaQCmt21MfoYhjZJQD97FKGMG0>

³ "Female Official Killed in Southern Afghanistan," *ABC News*, April 12, 2009, at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=7316490>

⁴ Saleem Shahid and Amanullah Kasi, "16 killed on second day of strike in Balochistan," *Dawn*, April 12, 2009, at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/balochistan/shutter-down-strike-balochistan-seven-killed--qs>

in Islamabad and called on the states to formulate a “comprehensive and integrated national counter terrorism policy” to fight terrorism effectively.⁵

US Envoy Richard Holbrooke, who was on a visit to Islamabad during the week, charged that top Taliban leaders positioned inside Pakistan were directing the war in Afghanistan against US forces.⁶ Prime Minister Gordon Brown also urged President Zardari to take concrete action against rising militancy in his country after the UK police arrested at least 11 Pakistanis on charges of plotting a terror attack.⁷

In other domestic developments, President Zardari initiated the process to implement the Charter of Democracy (CoD) and urged the government of PM Gilani to adopt the charter as soon as possible.⁸ Later, the National Assembly adopted a resolution authorizing the speaker to introduce the legislation in the house.⁹

NEPAL

- **Nepalese foreign Minister visits China, ahead of the visit of PM Dahal in May; MoU signed between Nepal and China to promote trade and investment; India to provide aid worth Rs. 90 million for infrastructure projects; Maoists bag three seats in by-polls**

Nepal’s Foreign Minister Upendra Yadav visited China during the week ahead of the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal scheduled for May. Yadav met with Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping and with the Chairman of the People’s Government of Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Chhamba Puncog. Mr. Yadav in his meetings reiterated Nepal’s commitment to the ‘One-China’ policy while Mr. Xi stated that China always treated relations with Nepal from a strategic and long-term perspective.¹⁰

In a related development, the Nepal-China Executives Council (NCEC) and Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) signed a MoU on promoting trade and investment between the two countries on April 6. A joint committee was envisaged to be formed to attract Chinese investments in Nepal.¹¹

⁵ Asim Yasin, “PM chairs meeting on national security; seeks national counter-terrorism plan,” *The News*, April 7, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁶ “Political consensus in Pakistan over terrorism problem: Afghan Taliban leadership hiding in Pakistan: US,” *Daily Times*, April 8, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\04\08\story_8-4-2009_pg1_1

⁷ “11 Pakistanis arrested in UK terror swoop,” *The News*, April 10, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁸ “President writes letter to PM, Zardari asks government to implement CoD soon,” *Daily Times*, April 10, 2009, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\04\10\story_10-4-2009_pg1_1

⁹ Asim Yasin, “NA speaker authorised to form committee on CoD,” *The News*, April 11, 2009, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

¹⁰ “FM embarks on a week-long visit to China; discusses bilateral issues with TAR chairman,” *nepalnews.com*, April 5, 2009, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2009/apr/apr05/news01.php>

¹¹ “MoU signed between Nepal and China to promote trade and investment,” *China Vie*, April 6, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/06/content_11140118.htm

India meanwhile agreed to provide financial assistance worth Rs. 90.82 million for infrastructure projects in the country, including for the building of schools and roads in Kathmandu and in the far eastern districts of Jhapa and Morang. A press release of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu stated that these projects were being undertaken “in response to requests from respective District Development Committees (DDCs) and in consultation with Government of Nepal,” to be implemented as Small Development Projects under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme.¹²

In other developments, the Unified CPN-Maoist party bagged three out of six parliamentary seats in the April 10 by-polls. The Maoists retained Rolpa and Kaski constituencies besides winning in Kachanpur, which was a Nepali Congress (NC) stronghold. NC, CPN-UML and Madhesi People's Rights Forum won one seat each in Morang-7, Morang-5 and Dhanusha-5 constituencies respectively.¹³

SRI LANKA

- **Rajapakse declares a ‘temporary halt’ to military operations; Post-conflict reconstruction measures being contemplated; Pro-LTTE TNA-led delegation visiting India from April 16-17; Libya and Lanka sign MoU for exchanging trade information, among other issues**

President Mahinda Rajapakse declared a “temporary halt” to military operations against the LTTE even as the UN cautioned against moves that could cause a potential bloodbath in the country’s North East.¹⁴

Reports noted that Colombo has initiated measures exploring the avenues for post-conflict reconstruction. Emphasis was being given to infrastructure projects and the construction of bridges, roads and railways with the aim to reconnect the north with the rest of the island.¹⁵

Meanwhile, reports noted that a Tamil National Alliance (TNA)-led delegation would be visiting India from April 16-17 to discuss various issues, including the ongoing conflict as well as the political environment in a post-conflict environment.¹⁶

In other developments, Libya and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for strengthening cooperation in the exchange of foreign trade data, participation in trade fairs organized in the two countries, exchange

¹² “Indian aid of Rs 90 million for schools and road in 3 districts,” *nepalnews.com*, Apr 9, 2009, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2009/apr/apr09/news17.php>

¹³ “Maoists bag three seats in Nepal by-polls; NC suffers setback,” *Press Trust of India*, April 12, 2009, at <http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/BD4D22ECD54097FD652575960023EEC8?OpenDocument>

¹⁴ “Sri Lanka military declares truce,” *BBC News*, April 12, 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7995719.stm

¹⁵ “Northern Revival,” *Lankabusiness Online*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.lankabusinessonline.com/fullstory.php?nid=139162302>

¹⁶ “Lanka Tamil MPs head for Delhi,” *Times of India*, April 12, 2009, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Lanka-Tamil-MPs-head-for-Delhi/articleshow/4390621.cms>

of information on commercial missions, market research, foreign trade specificities and investment opportunities.¹⁷

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

JAPAN

- **Japan renews economic sanctions against Pyongyang; PM Aso unveils \$150 billion stimulus package; South Korea protests against Japanese history textbooks; Venezuela and Japan create \$4 billion investment fund**

Reacting to the North Korean missile launch, Japan renewed for another year the unilateral economic sanctions it had imposed against Pyongyang. Measures included the tightening of money flows and a lowered cap on remittances.¹⁸

In domestic developments, Japan formally unveiled its \$150 billion stimulus package as it seeks to revive its flagging economy. Prime Minister Taro Aso stated that the plan, worth about 3 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, was primarily aimed at protecting livelihoods and fostering future growth.¹⁹

South Korea meanwhile protested against the Japanese government's approval of the 'distorted' history textbooks that do not mention the country's colonization of the Korean Peninsula.²⁰

In other developments, Venezuela and Japan created a \$4 billion investment fund as a new source of financing that would fill a budget gap created by a massive downturn in the price of oil.²¹

SOUTH KOREA

- **Seoul to work with Beijing and Tokyo at Six-Party talks on North Korea; South Korea and ASEAN settle on agreement on investment issues; Seoul to contribute \$24 billion to regional foreign currency reserve pool**

South Korea, along with China and Japan, at a meeting in Pattaya in Thailand, agreed to continue pushing forward the agenda of the Six-Party talks aimed at

¹⁷ "Libya, Sri Lanka chambers of commerce sign pact," *Afriquejet*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/libya,-sri-lanka-chambers-of-commerce-sign-pact-2009041125325.html>

¹⁸ "Japan renews sanctions on N Korea," *BBC News*, April 10, 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7993283.stm>

¹⁹ "Japan PM unveils \$150bn stimulus," *BBC News*, April 10, 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7991194.stm>

²⁰ "S. Korea condemns Japan over approving distorted history textbook," *Xinhua*, April 9, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/09/content_11158647.htm

²¹ "Venezuela creates \$4 bln fund with Japan," *Reuters*, April 7, 2009, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSN0745506220090407>

realising the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. PM Wen of China urged that any action that may further complicate the situation should be avoided.²²

South Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meanwhile finalised an agreement regarding investment issues, an issue which had hampered their free trade talks. Towards signing a free trade pact, South Korea and ASEAN have had talks covering four areas of merchandise, services, investment and dispute settlement. While an agreement on merchandise came into effect in 2008, the deal on services will be enforced from May 2009. ASEAN is South Korea's fifth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$53.5 billion in 2005.²³

In other developments, ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan confirmed that South Korea will contribute \$24 billion to the planned regional foreign currency reserve pool, as part of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) program.²⁴

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **14th ASEAN Summit cancelled even as the Thai PM refuses to step down; Indonesia condemns North Korean satellite launch; Malaysia's Razak: Postponement of ASEAN Summit could deter growth of regional forum; Indo-Myanmar Kaladan project to begin by end of 2009; India's Ambassador to Myanmar: Hurdles remain in boosting Indo-Myanmar border trade despite efforts to address them**

With a view to containing the increasing violence by pro-Thaksin groups, a state of emergency was declared in Bangkok and in five nearby provinces even as the 14th ASEAN Summit meeting scheduled to have been held on April 11 was cancelled. Despite the on-going anti-government demonstrations, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and his deputy Suthep Thaugsuban have refused to step down.²⁵

In Indonesia meanwhile, despite the charges of rampant irregularities, the legislative elections held on April 9 remained peaceful, including in the usually violence-prone Aceh province.²⁶ Reports indicated that the ruling party led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was leading, having secured 20.48 percent

²² "China, Japan, S. Korea agree to push forward Six-Party talks," *Xinhua*, April 11, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/12/content_11170852.htm

²³ "S Korea, ASEAN settle agreement on investment," *Xinhua*, April 9, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/09/content_11157285.htm

²⁴ "ASEAN chief: South Korea to contribute \$24 bln to foreign reserve pool," *Xinhua*, April 10, 2009, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/11/content_11166595.htm

²⁵ "Abhisit Refuses to Resign," *Bernama.com*, April 11, 2009, at http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/news_lite.php?id=403488

²⁶ "Irregularities and Violations Commonplace on polling day," *The Jakarta Post*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/04/10/irregularities-and-violations-commonplace-polling-day.html>

of the vote.²⁷ Indonesia also expressed concerns over North Korea's 'satellite' launch as it had escalated tensions in the Korean Peninsula.²⁸ In other developments, reports noted that Indonesia had started negotiating with global institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Finance Corporation (IFC) to secure more trade support to deal with the current financial crisis.²⁹

Malaysian Prime Minister Nazib Razak stated that the postponement of the 14th ASEAN Summit could deter the further development of the regional forum.³⁰ However, Nazib stressed that Thailand need not give up its position as the ASEAN chair. Reports also noted that Malaysia was making efforts to resolve the issue of over 15,000 Rohingya refugees through the good offices of the ASEAN secretariat.³¹

Reports noted that the work on the Indo-Myanmar joint venture linking the country's northeast region with Myanmar, the Kaladan project, was expected to begin by the end of 2009. India on its part will construct a port at Sittwe, which was around 400 kilometers from Aizawl.³²

Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Alok Sen meanwhile stated that in order to facilitate cross-border trade, several measures were being taken and pointed out the recent agreements signed by the Union Bank of India with three Myanmar banks. He however admitted that despite such positive measures, certain operational problems still remained as hurdles in further boosting bilateral trade.³³

In other developments, Myanmar granted permission to Daewoo International of South Korea allowing it to continue its exploration activities at the Bay of Bengal AD-7 offshore site. The site was the setting for the recent naval confrontation between Myanmar and Bangladesh.³⁴

²⁷ "Party Democrat Leads Indonesian Parliamentary Election," *Bernamea.com*, April 12, 2009, at http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/news_lite.php?id=403571

²⁸ "RI concerned with North Korean Satellite launch," *The Jakarta Post*, April 6, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/04/06/ri-concerned-with-north-korea-satellite039-launch.html>

²⁹ "RI seeks more trade support," *The Jakarta Post*, April 9, 2009, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/04/08/ri-seeks-more-trade-support.html>

³⁰ "'Postponement of Summits can impede Asean's Work-Najib,'" *Bernamea.com*, April 12, 2009, at http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/news_lite.php?id=403533

³¹ "M'sia Striving to Resolve Rohingya Refuggee Problem-Rais," *Bernamea.com*, April 8, 2009, at http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/news_lite.php?id=402684

³² "Border trade reviewed," *Indo-Burma News*, April 11, 2009, at <http://www.indoburmanews.net/archives-1/2009/april-2009/border-trade-reviewed>

³³ "UBI signs pact with Yangon banks, onus placed on state government," *Indo-Burma News*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.indoburmanews.net/archives-1/2009/april-2009/ubi-signs-pact-with-yangon-banks-onus-placed-on-state-govt>

³⁴ "Daewoo Clings to Offshore Site claimed by Burma, Bangladesh," *Indo-Burma News*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.indoburmanews.net/archives-1/2009/april-2009/daewoo-clings-to-offshore-site-claimed-by-burma-bangladesh>

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **5+1 powers recognise Tehran's right to a peaceful nuclear programme but urge it to resume negotiations; Ahmadinejad inaugurates the country's first nuclear fuel manufacturing plant in Isfahan on 'National Nuclear Day'; Iran, Pakistan and Afghan officials meet in Islamabad ahead of the trilateral summit in Tehran in May**

At the P5+1 (permanent members of the UNSC and Germany) meeting in London on April 8 on the Iranian nuclear issue, the countries recognised Iran's right to a civilian nuclear program but urged it to resume negotiations with the group. The members of the group also welcomed the change in the US policy towards Iran and its decision to participate in the proceedings.³⁵

President Ahmadinejad meanwhile inaugurated his country's first nuclear fuel manufacturing plant in Isfahan on April 9, Iran's 'National Nuclear Day.' Mr. Ahmadinejad during his speech stated that Iran had achieved its nuclear progress under "the worst political and psychological pressure, even the threat of military invasion." The head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization, Gholamreza Aghazadeh on his part announced that Iran had increased the number of its centrifuges to 7,000. In February, the IAEA had put the number at 5,600. The US State Department spokesman, Robert Wood on his part stated that Iran's claims of nuclear advances should be viewed "with skepticism."³⁶

In other developments, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Kabir Farahi, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Mehdi Akhundzadeh, and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir met in Islamabad to make preparations for an Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan trilateral summit in Tehran next month, aimed at forging mutual understanding on key issues threatening regional peace and stability. The meeting agreed to pursue a common vision for peace, security, stability and prosperity by enhancing partnership on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect and in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.³⁷

IRAQ

- **Obama makes first visit to Iraq after assuming office; Suicide bomber kills 12 in Baghdad; Increasing tensions between government in Baghdad and Sunni militias**

US President Barack Obama met with military commanders and Iraqi leaders on an unannounced visit to Iraq on April 7, a day after a string of bombings across Baghdad killed 37 people. The attacks underscored the security challenges still

³⁵ "Group 5+1 urges Iran nuclear talks," IRNA, April 8, 2009, at <http://www5.irna.ir/En/View/FullStory/?NewsId=426373&IdLanguage=3>

³⁶ Nazila Fathi, "Iran Claims Gains in Nuclear Program," *New York Times*, April 10, 2009, at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/10/world/middleeast/10iran.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper

³⁷ "Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan agree on enhanced anti-terror cooperation," *Tehran Times*, April 12, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=192025

present even as the US military prepares to implement Mr. Obama's order to withdraw all combat troops by August 2010. President Obama on his part admitted that though there had been significant progress in Iraq, much work still remained to be done by the leaders of Iraq's squabbling political factions to reach "equitable, fair" solutions.³⁸

A suicide bomber meanwhile killed 12 Sunni militiamen at an Iraqi army post south of Baghdad on April 11. Five US soldiers and two Iraqi policemen also died on April 10 in a truck suicide bombing at a police post in the northern city of Mosul. Earlier in the week, bombings in the Shi'ite areas of Baghdad killed at least 44 people. The US-sponsored Sunni militias, the Sahwas, were instrumental in reducing the violence in Iraq but ties between them and the Shi'ite-led government in Baghdad have come under increasing strain due to a series of recent arrests of their members. Delays in paying them have also contributed to rising tensions.³⁹

II. MISSILES, SPACE AND NUCLEAR REVIEW

MISSILES AND SPACE

- **UNSC condemns North Korea's missile launch; Pyongyang charges that the resolution is 'unjust' and 'brigandish'**

The UN Security Council unanimously condemned North Korea's missile launch of April 5. The resolution unambiguously stated that Pyongyang was in breach of its obligations under a 2006 UNSC resolution that requires North Korea not to undertake missile launches.⁴⁰ While Japan and the US wanted a stronger and legally binding resolution, China and Russia were opposed to excessively punitive measures. Pyongyang reacted harshly to the resolution terming it a "brigandish," "wanton" and "unjust" violation of its sovereignty.⁴¹ It has also threatened to pull out of the Six-Party talks. China on its part has called for restraint and insisted that North Korea continue with the process of negotiations.

- **Ahmadinejad: Iran to launch another satellite soon**

Notwithstanding the West's concerns over Tehran's launch of satellite 'Omid' in February 2009, Iran's President Mahmood Ahmedinejad stated that his country will launch another satellite that is expected to be placed in a higher orbital

³⁸ "Obama in Iraq to push for political progress," *Tehran Times*, April 8, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=191712

³⁹ "Suicide bomber kills 12 Iraqi militiamen," *Tehran Times*, April 12, 2009, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=192009

⁴⁰ "UN Slams North Korea's Missile Launch," *The Press Association*, April 14, 2009, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5hKWes0RscCp2hA8DM0BSQVMz1kSw>

⁴¹ "North Korea Says It Will Boycott Nuclear Talks, Restart Weapons Plant," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2009, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/14/AR2009041400607.html>

zone.⁴² Given the dual-use nature of space technology, Iran's space program has evoked substantial concern in the West over its strategic intentions.

NUCLEAR ISSUES

- **Obama's call for a nuclear weapons free world: Mixed reactions and skepticism**

There has been mixed reactions to President Obama's call for a "world without nuclear weapons." Some analysts suggested that the call was similar to the then President Ronald Reagan's idealistic, unfulfilled dream of eliminating the threat of nuclear annihilation.⁴³ Others noted that the measure was intended to support strengthening the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which carries with it the promise of the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.⁴⁴ Analysts also noted that nuclear weapons could not be un-invented and that the technology was over 60 years old and that the materials and skills needed were widely available.⁴⁵

French officials meanwhile were quoted as stating that Paris had begun to reduce its nuclear arsenal long before President Obama issued his call for a "world without nuclear weapons." Reports noted that France had halted nuclear testing in 1996 even as the US Senate had held up Washington's approval of a comprehensive test ban treaty. President Sarkozy had pledged last year to cut back France's nuclear stockpile, even as he reiterated his government's commitment to retaining an independent deterrent based on four ballistic missile submarines and several dozen fighter-bombers.⁴⁶

- **Larijani: World powers must accept a nuclear Iran**

Iranian parliament speaker Ali Larijani called on world powers to accept the Islamic Republic as a nuclear power even as top officials vowed no let-up in Tehran's sensitive uranium enrichment drive. Larijani's comments came after the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, China, France,

⁴² "Iran to Launch New Satellite into Orbit," *Times of India*, April 15, 2009, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Iran-to-launch-new-satellite-into-orbit-Report/articleshow/4402410.cms>

⁴³ Anne Gearan, "Obama no-nukes pledge not so farfetched," April 3, 2009, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hTI9LCYRaFYqQspPybjJHEGdvKIAD97B9FI00>

⁴⁴ "Mr. Obama and Nuclear Weapons," April 13, 2009, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/12/AR2009041202327.html>

⁴⁵ "Safe without the bomb? A nuclear-free world may never come about, but there can be safety in trying," *Economist*, April 8, 2009, at http://www.economist.com/opinion/displayStory.cfm?story_id=13446771

⁴⁶ "France Unmoved By Obama Nuclear Doctrine As Russia Modernises Strategic Forces," April 14, 2009, at <http://richardcochrane.hypocrisy.com/2009/04/14/france-unmoved-by-obama-nuclear-doctrine-as-russia-modernises-strategic-nuclear-forces-rendering-start-ii-moot/>

Russia and the United States - plus Germany (5+1) offered to hold direct talks with Iran over its nuclear programme.⁴⁷

III. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

- **India launches its biggest auction of oil and gas blocks**

India launched its biggest auction of oil and gas blocks on April 9 at a time when global players were cutting down on exploration and production budgets because of recession. Petroleum secretary R.S. Pandey, at the launch of the eighth round of the new exploration and licensing policy (NELP-VIII), stated that "the most effective antidote (to the recession) is the generation of economic activity."

Mr. Pandey however clarified that the government might not allocate any block if it received a poor response but added that if the response was good, "we will offer another 30-40 blocks in the next phase." A total of 70 blocks were on offer, which included 24 deep-water, 28 shallow-water and 18 land-based blocks spread throughout the country. For the first time, the government was also offering blocks in the western Andaman region, close to the hydrocarbon-rich areas of Indonesia and Myanmar.⁴⁸

- **Putin: Russia-China pipeline to be completed soon**

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told lawmakers on April 6 that a long-awaited oil pipeline from Russia is expected to reach China within weeks and that state oil-pipe builder Transneft will soon finish laying the pipes. Reports noted that the 67-km pipeline link - the first between the two countries, will deliver 300 million tons of oil to China from 2010 to 2030, equivalent to 7 percent of China's oil consumption in 2008.

The two countries began discussions on the construction of the pipeline in 2001, but an agreement was not reached until October 2008, when China promised a \$25-billion loan to the Russian oil sector. The Sino-Russian pipeline is part of the 4,700-km East Siberia-Pacific Ocean line, designed to export Russian crude oil to the Asia-Pacific markets.

Professor Xia Yishan, an energy expert at the China Institute of International Studies, stated that the pipeline will make Russian oil a "more straightforward, consistent and long lasting" alternative to Middle East and African sources, which currently make up 80 percent of China's oil imports.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ "Middle East Times, World powers must accept a nuclear Iran: Larijani," April 15, 2009, at http://www.metimes.com/Politics/2009/04/12/world_powers_must_accept_a_nuclear_iran_larijani/afp/

⁴⁸ "India starts oil auctions," *Asia Energy*, April 9, 2009, at <http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2009/04/india-starts-oil-auctions.html>

⁴⁹ "Russian pipeline to reach China soon," *English.people.com*, April 8, 2009, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/6631808.html>

- **China, Myanmar sign gas pipeline agreement**

China and Myanmar signed an agreement to construct \$15 billion oil and a \$1 billion gas pipeline stretching from Myanmar's Arakan coast to Kunming. The pipelines will allow oil shipments from the Middle East and West Africa to be delivered to the Chinese mainland directly without passing through the strategically precarious Malacca Straits, while also facilitating export of Myanmar's own gas reserves. Construction of the pipelines is expected to finish by 2013. In addition to the pipelines, a port for oil tankers and a gas collection terminal will be built on an island near Kyaukphyu. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) will hold 50.9 percent in the project while the remaining stake will belong to the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). China will however bear all the expenses of the project.⁵⁰

IV. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **PM Dr. Singh: Intrusion a serious threat to poll process; Army not aware of Taliban presence in Kashmir**

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh admitted in New Delhi on April 10 that armed intrusion into India was a serious threat which could disrupt the poll process. Replying to a media persons query whether armed intrusion by Taliban posed a threat to the country, Dr. Singh noted that "terrorists with evil designs have not given up their plans to interfere with the poll process." He added that the successful completion of elections in Jammu and Kashmir was not liked by some forces abroad and that they were trying to make every effort to disrupt the poll process.⁵¹

As the reports of Taliban having entered Kashmir increased security concerns, the Army on April 8 clarified that it was not aware of any such presence in the Kashmir valley. Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani rubbished the claims about the presence of Taliban stating that the reports were an "attempt by the Indian security agencies to malign the Kashmir freedom struggle."

LeT spokesman Abdullah Ghaznavi also denied that there were any Taliban elements fighting security forces in Kashmir. He added that it was "the Taliban phobia of the Government of India that they are crying hoarse about their presence in Kashmir. First they talked about Taliban in Lahore, then too close to India's western borders and now inside Kashmir."

Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram on his part told journalists that he cannot say whether the militant outfits operating in Kashmir were under the

⁵⁰ "China, Myanmar sign pipeline agreement," *Asia Energy*, April 6, 2009, at <http://asianenergy.blogspot.com/2009/04/china-myanmar-sign-pipeline-agreement.html>

⁵¹ "Intrusion serious threat to poll process: PM," *Daily Excelsior*, April 11, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09apr11/news.htm#2>

control of Taliban. He however did not rule out links between the jihadis in Kashmir and the Taliban.⁵²

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Maoists kill nine soldiers in Chattisgarh; CRPF to raise 10 new battalions to fight terrorism and cyber crime**

In a major attack, suspected naxalites killed nine Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in an encounter at Sukma in Chhatisgarh's Dantewada district on April 10. Three naxalites were also killed in the incident. The CRPF party was on a search operation duty for elections. The encounter reportedly lasted over three hours. Reports noted that this was the first time AK-series rifles have been seized from the naxalites.

Police sources in Raipur stated nearly 200 Maoists ambushed the CRPF contingent, which went to Chinta Guppa village in Dantewada district on receipt of information that the rebels were holding a meeting there.⁵³ The naxalites also killed five more CRPF personnel in a meticulously executed ambush at Khunti in Jharkhand on April 11.⁵⁴

In other developments, reports noted that the CRPF will raise 10 new battalions of specially trained personnel to deal with the growing menace of terrorism in the country. The force will be equipped with modern gadgets and weapons and would be trained in the handling of modern weapons as well as develop expertise to tackle cyber crime.⁵⁵

NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENTS

- **Eight people killed in Assam blasts**

On the eve of Prime Minister Dr. Singh's visit to Assam, suspected militants of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) set off three blasts and mounted a grenade attack on April 6, a day before its founding day. At least eight persons were killed and over 62 were injured in the terror attacks. The explosions took place amidst reports that the two top bomb experts of the ULFA - identified by the police as Monohari Rajbongshi and Pradip Kalita, recently arrived in the city to carry out such attacks.⁵⁶

⁵² "Army says not aware of Taliban presence in Valley," *Daily Excelsior*, April 9, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09apr09/news.htm#1>

⁵³ "Maoists kill 9 CRPF jawans in Dantewada," *Hindu*, April 11, 2009, at <http://www.hindu.com/2009/04/11/stories/2009041158230100.htm>

⁵⁴ "Rebels kill 5 CRPF jawans," *Telegraph*, April 12, 2009, at http://telegraphindia.com/1090412/jsp/frontpage/story_10809131.jsp

⁵⁵ "CRPF to raise bns to fight terror," *Daily Excelsior*, April 10, 2009, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/09apr10/news2.htm#3>

⁵⁶ "8 killed in Assam blasts," *Hindu*, April 7, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2009/04/07/stories/2009040758220100.htm>