

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## 1. COUNTRY REVIEW

### A. SOUTH ASIA

#### PAKISTAN

- **President Musharraf to seek vote of confidence; Ruling coalition meets to discuss charges against Musharraf; Violence continues in Swat; Floods affects 100,000 people in Rajanpura**

The ruling coalition finally agreed to go ahead with the impeachment process against President Musharraf under Article 47 of the constitution.<sup>1</sup> A special committee comprising of leaders of the PML-N, the PPP and others met in Islamabad on August 10 to discuss the proposed charge sheet against Musharraf.<sup>2</sup> The PPP and the PML-N leadership which met on August 8 also decided to make Musharraf into a non-functional president.<sup>3</sup>

President Musharraf meanwhile, addressing a luncheon on August 4 at the Governor House in Quetta charged India along with other foreign elements of creating instability in Balochistan.<sup>4</sup>

In continuing violence in Swat, at least 14 militants including a Taliban commander were killed on August 6.<sup>5</sup> Taliban leader Baitullah Masood on his part threatened to launch country-wide suicide attacks if the government continued its operations in Swat.<sup>6</sup>

In other developments, at least 6 people lost their lives and over 100,000 displaced after heavy rainfall caused floods in the Rajanpur area of Multan. Reports noted that the flood swept away hundreds of dwellings and caused heavy damage to agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

#### NEPAL

- **Maoists fail to form the government within stipulated time; Differences crop up over plum portfolios; President orders CA to elect Prime Minister; Civil society groups criticize the failure to form government; India provides grant assistance to local bodies and NGOs**

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<sup>1</sup> Amir Wasim, "Countdown Begins: Asif, Nawaz shrug off 58(2)b threat; Musharraf to be asked by national and provincial assemblies to seek vote of confidence; impeachment to be followed by reinstatement of judges," *Dawn*, August 08, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/08/08/top1.htm>

<sup>2</sup> "President's impeachment: Ruling coalition meeting to continue on Monday," *The News*, August 10, 2008, at <http://thenews.jang.com.pk/updates.asp?id=51667>

<sup>3</sup> Hamid Mir, "Musharraf to be made non-functional president," *The News*, August 09, 2008, at [http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc\\_default.asp](http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp)

<sup>4</sup> "Musharraf blames India for unrest in Balochistan," *Daily Times*, August 05, 2008, at [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\08\05\story\\_5-8-2008\\_pg1\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\08\05\story_5-8-2008_pg1_1)

<sup>5</sup> Hameedullah Khan, "Key Taliban commander among 14 killed in Swat," *Dawn*, August 07, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/08/07/top5.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Mushtaq Yusufzai & Hasbanullah Khan, "TTP threatens suicide attacks in Karachi," *The News*, August 06, 2008, at [http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc\\_default.asp](http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp)

<sup>7</sup> Shakeel Ahmad, "Flood havoc in Rajanpur; 7 killed, 100,000 displaced," *Dawn*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/08/04/top2.htm>

In a major blow to the ongoing peace process, the four big parties - CPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress (NC), Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) - failed to form the new government within the stipulated ten day period. On July 30, the President of Nepal had invited the CPN-Maoist to form the government within a weeks' time. Initially, the four big parties agreed to form a national unity government (UG) and had agreed to prepare a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) to reflect the agendas of all the parties. To this end, they had also decided to form a four-member taskforce.<sup>8</sup> However, a separate initiative to form the government by the NC and the Maoists affected their unity. Maoist chairman Prachanda on his part blamed the NC for reducing the chances of forming a consensus government.<sup>9</sup>

Reports noted that talks among the four parties failed because of their inability to divide plum ministerial portfolios. The Maoists wanted at least two of the portfolios of Home and Defense, which was not agreeable to others. The NC and UML on their part wanted the defense and home portfolios respectively. The NC and the UML also proposed that the Maoists keep the finance portfolio while the MJF could get the foreign affairs portfolio.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly (CA) fixed August 15 as the date for the election of the Prime Minister. President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav directed the CA Secretariat to conduct the election of the PM after the parties failed to form a consensus government within the 10-day deadline.<sup>11</sup>

Civil society leaders urged the political parties to keep intact the coalition till the final draft of the new constitution was prepared through the Constituent Assembly. Former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana noted that civilians were feeling insecure due to the political developments. Human rights activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar blamed the lack of coalition culture among the political parties for the imbroglio. Lilamani Pokhrel of People's Front called on the political parties to concentrate on reconstruction and strive for lasting peace by leaving aside all sorts of pride.<sup>12</sup>

India meanwhile agreed to grant assistance for the implementation of small development projects through local bodies and non-governmental organizations. The scheme would cover projects such as roads, education, health and community development.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Four major parties agree to form 'national unity govt'," *Nepalnews*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/aug/aug04/news12.php>

<sup>9</sup> "Which side will UML take?," *Kantipuronline*, August 07, 2008, at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=156174>

<sup>10</sup> "Parties haggle over plum portfolios," *Nepalnews*, August 09, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/aug/aug09/news02.php>

<sup>11</sup> "PM election on Friday," *Nepalnews*, August 11, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/aug/aug11/news10.php>

<sup>12</sup> "Keep up coalition culture: Civil Society leaders," *Gorkhapatra*, August 06, 2008, at [http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article\\_id=4548&cat\\_id=4](http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article_id=4548&cat_id=4)

<sup>13</sup> "India to give grant help for small projects," *Gorkhapatra*, August 06, 2008, at [http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article\\_id=4547&cat\\_id=4](http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article_id=4547&cat_id=4)

## BHUTAN

- **Nepal and Bhutan agree to talk on the Bhutanese refugees issue; India commits Rs. 400 million for currency stabilization efforts**

On the sidelines of the SAARC Summit in Colombo, Nepal and Bhutan agreed to continue their talks on issues relating to Bhutanese refugees. These talks were last held in December 2003.<sup>14</sup>

India meanwhile committed around Rs. 400 million towards efforts to stabilize the currency of Bhutan. This was made during the recent visit to India of Prime Minister Jigme Y Thinley.<sup>15</sup>

## BANGLADESH

- **AL wins 8 mayoral posts; BNP terms the elections 'unconstitutional'; Govt.: Emergency not to be lifted before parliamentary elections in December; US appreciates conduct of mayoral and municipality elections**

Elections to the four city corporations and nine municipalities were conducted on August 4.<sup>16</sup> The AL dominated these elections as its candidates won eight mayoral posts out of nine, while the BNP-nominated candidate secured one post in the municipality elections.<sup>17</sup> The AL on its part stuck to its position of not participating in the parliamentary elections without the lifting of the emergency.<sup>18</sup> AL's acting President Zillur Rahman asserted that elections would lack enthusiasm among the people due to the state of emergency.<sup>19</sup>

BNP leader Khandker Delwar Hossain criticised the caretaker government for conducting the provincial elections, terming them 'unconstitutional.' It asserted that the caretaker government planned to create a group through local body elections which would allow them to cling to power.<sup>20</sup> AL's acting General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam alleged that the BNP was trying to jeopardize the environment of parliamentary polls by stigmatizing the local body elections as an 'election of entente.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Bhutan-Nepal talks to resume," *Kuenselonline*, August 06, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=10935>

<sup>15</sup> "Bhutan to receive India's credit facility," *Bhutan News Service*, July 27, 2008, at <http://www.apfanews.com/news/?id=31313030>

<sup>16</sup> "Polls in 4 city corporations today under emergency," *The Daily Star*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=48842>

<sup>17</sup> "Mayoral Polls in Nine Municipalities: AL gets eight, BNP one," *The Daily Star*, August 05, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=48985>

<sup>18</sup> "Demand for Lifting Emergency: AL seeks int'l support to put pressure on govt," *The Daily Star*, August 08, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=49422>

<sup>19</sup> "City polls lack enthusiasm among voters: Zillur," *The Daily Star*, August 05, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=49029>

<sup>20</sup> "Govt wants to create a group thru' farcical local body polls," *The Daily Star*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=48851>

<sup>21</sup> "BNP trying to stigmatise local body polls: AL," *The Daily Star*, August 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=49330>

The caretaker government however asserted that it would not lift the emergency before the parliamentary polls in December.<sup>22</sup> The United States on its part appreciated the conduct of the municipal and mayoral polls as an important step towards the establishment of a democratically-elected government.<sup>23</sup>

In other developments, the Bangladeshi government announced that it will start talks with neighbours, including with India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, to forge bi-lateral Free Trade Agreements.<sup>24</sup>

## SRI LANKA

- **Reports: LTTE controlling about 6 per cent of Lankan territory; Sri Lankan military: 43 guerillas killed in fierce fighting; PM Singh: India would like to see democratic forces prevail in Sri Lanka's northeast; LTTE sympathizers in Tamil Nadu arrested**

Reports noted that the LTTE's ability to counter-attack in a major way had been seriously eroded over the past year. The defeat in the East had eroded it of a valuable training ground as well as a region from where it could recruit cadres. The LTTE was reportedly appealing to Tamil families to contribute at least one member each, irrespective of age and gender, to take on the advancing Lankan military.<sup>25</sup> Reports noted that the LTTE controlled only about 4,000 sq km, which was about 6 percent of Sri Lanka's land territory. The population under its control was said to be about 250,000 - a mere 1.25 percent of the country's total.

The Sri Lankan military said in statement revealed that battles in the rebel-held Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu regions resulted in the deaths of 28 persons, including 12 rebels and a soldier.<sup>26</sup> The defence ministry later stated that some 43 guerrillas and four soldiers had died in the fierce fighting.<sup>27</sup> Independent verification of the death toll however was not possible as journalists were barred from the war zone.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meanwhile met an array of representatives of Sri Lankan political parties in Colombo, on the sidelines of the SAARC summit. He also met Tamil groups which were not only opposed to the LTTE but also sympathetic to it. Dr. Singh reiterated that India would like to see the democratic forces prevail in Sri Lanka's northeast.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Bangladesh emergency to stay for polls," *The Daily Times*, August 08, 2008, at [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C08%5C08%5Cstory\\_8-8-2008\\_pg4\\_18](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C08%5C08%5Cstory_8-8-2008_pg4_18)

<sup>23</sup> "Local body polls a significant step towards democracy: US," *The Daily Star*, August 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=49333>

<sup>24</sup> "Govt to start FTA talks with India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka," *The Daily Star*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=48803>

<sup>25</sup> "LTTE retreating in Lanka; India neutral," *The Times of India*, August 05, 2008, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-3327994>

<sup>26</sup> "28 killed in new Sri Lanka fighting," *The International Herald Tribune*, August 05, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=15009411>

<sup>27</sup> "47 die in rebel attack in Sri Lanka: defence ministry," August 07, 2008, at [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gueO4xG1RbJ-LZx4Yof\\_Tfxdo1ZQ](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gueO4xG1RbJ-LZx4Yof_Tfxdo1ZQ)

<sup>28</sup> See "LTTE retreating in Lanka; India neutral"

Reports also noted that sympathizers of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu were being targeted so that they did not source war materials from India. A sudden spurt in the arrests of LTTE men and their Indian associates in the state indicated the growing dependence of the Tamil Tigers on India to source its war materials, according to government sources. Since July 1, 2008, 7 Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils each had been taken into custody.<sup>29</sup> Those arrested included a senior leader of the Sea Tigers, Thambi Anna.

The Chinese government offered more assistance for Sri Lanka and also pledge to expedite current projects following a meeting between President Rajapaksa and President Hu Jintao in Beijing.<sup>30</sup> Rajapaksa, on a four-day visit to China, also held discussions with the Minister of Commerce Chen Deming. Bilateral trade between the two countries had increased by around 28 per cent. While Chinese exports to Sri Lanka rose by nearly 29 per cent, its imports increased by nearly 30 per cent.

## MALDIVES

- **Gayoom ratifies new constitution, confident of victory in forthcoming presidential elections; India and Maldives discuss climate change as potential area for cooperation**

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom asserted that he was confident of victory in the forthcoming presidential elections. Gayoom claimed that under his leadership since 1968, Maldives had made progress on issues related to education, health and poverty. He also stresses that another five-year term would enable him to complete his promise of democratic reforms.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, a new constitution was ratified on August 7 by Mr. Gayoom. The Maldivian President noted that the new constitution would provide civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights on par with international standards.<sup>32</sup>

Male also announced that it would contest as the SAARC candidate for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council. India on its part confirmed its support for the candidature of Maldives. Sources also noted that Maldives was also seeking a seat in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Tamil Nadu arrests betray LTTE dependence on India," *The Economic Times*, August 08, 2008, at [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/Tamil\\_Nadu\\_arrests\\_betray\\_LTTE\\_dependence\\_on\\_India/articleshow/3341572.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/Tamil_Nadu_arrests_betray_LTTE_dependence_on_India/articleshow/3341572.cms)

<sup>30</sup> See Dinesh Weerawansa, "China pledges more help for Lanka, Ongoing projects to be expedited," *The Sunday Observer*, August 10, 2008 <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2008/08/10/new03.asp>

<sup>31</sup> "I am confident of a comprehensive victory in the presidential election: President Gayoom," *Republic of the Maldives*, August 04, 2008, at [http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng\\_news.php?news:4866:1](http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng_news.php?news:4866:1)

<sup>32</sup> "The President ratifies the new Constitution," *Republic of the Maldives*, August 07, 2008, at [http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng\\_news.php?news:4878:1](http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng_news.php?news:4878:1)

<sup>33</sup> "The President announces that the Maldives bid for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council to represent SAARC," *Republic of the Maldives*, August 03, 2008, at [http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng\\_news.php?news:4865:1](http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng_news.php?news:4865:1)

Prime Minister Dr. Singh, in his meeting with President Gayoom at the SAARC Summit, expressed satisfaction over the evolving relationship and emphasized on increased connectivity between the two countries. Issues related to climate change were discussed as potential areas of cooperation.<sup>34</sup>

## B. SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIA

### MYANMAR

- **Supporters of NLD remember '8.8.88' protests; UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights meets senior members of NLD and NUP**

Supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) donned black clothes to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1988 uprising on August 8, which the military authorities had crushed. They held a commemorative rally at Yenangyaung Township. No arrests were however reported even though security was tightened in Rangoon.<sup>35</sup>

Reports noted that Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, met senior members of NLD and National Unity Party (NUP) on August 6. The NLD leaders briefed the UN envoy on the recent national constitutional referendum, and reiterated their demand for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. They also explained their objections to the forcible entry into the party headquarters of government-backed civil organizations, including the Union Solidarity and Development Association and Swan Arrshin.<sup>36</sup>

### CHINA

- **Hu for dialogue and exchanges to forge constructive bilateral relations with US; 18 ETIM terrorists arrested in the year**

President Hu Jintao met the visiting US President George Bush on the sidelines of the Olympic Games. Hu expressed his interest to forge bilateral relations with the US in a constructive manner and called for dialogue and exchanges to enhance understanding and mutual trust between the two countries.<sup>37</sup> Hu also reiterated that Beijing would not change its stance on the critical Taiwan issue.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh says future generations of Maldivians will be grateful for the massive reforms that President Gayoom is introducing," *Republic of the Maldives*, August 03, 2008, at [http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng\\_news.php?news:4870:1](http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/pages/eng_news.php?news:4870:1)

<sup>35</sup> "Many in Rangoon Wear Black on 8.8.88 Anniversary," *Irrawaddy*, August 09, 2008, at [http://irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art\\_id=13788](http://irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art_id=13788)

<sup>36</sup> "UN envoy in Burma meets opposition parties," *Mizzima*, August 09, 2008, at <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/4-inside-burma/871-un-envoy-in-burma-meets-opposition-parties>

<sup>37</sup> "Hu meets Bush, underscoring China-U.S. relations," *People's Daily*, August 10, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6471319.html>

<sup>38</sup> "President: China's stance against "Taiwan independence" will never change," *People's Daily*, August 10, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6471252.html>

President Bush had earlier criticized the Chinese government's track record on human rights in a speech at Bangkok.

Reports indicated that eight terrorists who had carried out series of explosions in Xinjiang in the previous week had been shot dead. The terrorists, who were active in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, were involved in blasts in supermarkets, hotels and government buildings in Kuqa County, which killed security guards, policemen, and civilians.<sup>39</sup> *Xinhua* further reported that police had arrested 18 members of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM).<sup>40</sup>

A series of publications, "The History of China's Science and Technology," edited by the Institute of the History of Science at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, were released. The Chinese version, "Science and Civilization in China," was first written in the 1950s by the British scholar Joseph Needham.<sup>41</sup> These compositions were intended to highlight the scientific achievements of the Chinese since ancient times.

## C. WEST ASIA

### IRAQ

- **Moqtada al-Sadr to disarm if US starts withdrawing troops; Iraqi FM: Iraq and US very close to security pact; 13 people killed in blasts in Tarmiya and Khanaqin**

A spokesman for Iraqi Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr stated that Sadr would dissolve his Mehdi Army militia if the US started withdrawing troops according to a set timetable. The comments came at a crucial stage in talks between Baghdad and Washington over a new security pact that would provide a legal basis for US troops to operate in Iraq when the UN mandate expires at the end of the year.<sup>42</sup> Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari on his part noted that US and Iraqi negotiators were 'very close' to reaching a long-term security pact. Zebari maintained that the Iraqis were insisting on the inclusion of a "very clear timeline" for the withdrawal of US-led forces. President Bush has however refused to accept any timetable for bringing back the US troops, though he and

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<sup>39</sup> "Eight terrorists killed, two blow themselves up in Xinjiang," *People's Daily*, August 11, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6471628.html>

<sup>40</sup> "Chinese police say 18 Turkistan terrorist suspects arrested this year," *People's Daily*, August 05, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6467045.html>

<sup>41</sup> "'The History of China's Science and Technology" published," *People's Daily*, August 06, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90881/6467801.html>

<sup>42</sup> "Sadr to disarm if US withdraws on timetable," *Khaleej Times*, August 10, 2008, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast\\_August197.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast_August197.xml&section=middleeast).

Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki had agreed in July to set a 'time-horizon' for ending the US mission.<sup>43</sup>

In continuing violence, around 13 people were killed, including an American soldier, in a wave of attacks across Iraq on August 10. A bomb exploded at a vacant house in Tarmiya, a largely Sunni district and once a major stronghold of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. In the northern Diyala Province, two people were killed and 27 wounded when a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the city of Khanaqin. Ten of the wounded were members of the Kurdish police force.

Interior Ministry officials indicated that some of the attacks, six of which occurred in Baghdad, were related to the impasse in Parliament over the provincial council election law. The election law, passed recently in parliament, was vetoed by the president over disagreements among Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens about the status of the ethnically-mixed northern city of Kirkuk.<sup>44</sup>

## IRAN

- **IRGC tests naval weapon; Reports: Israel builds up its strike capabilities; Larijani condemns government's policies**

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) commander Brig. Gen. Mohammad-Ali Ja'fari stated that they had tested a naval weapon that could destroy any vessel in a range of 300 km (190 miles). Reports noted that the announcement would stoke tensions over Tehran's disputed nuclear programme after it failed to meet an informal deadline to respond to a package of incentives offered by six world powers. US forces were currently stationed in several countries around the Gulf, including in Bahrain where the US Navy's Fifth Fleet was based. Iran has contented that US forces were in range of its weapons and has threatened to impose controls on shipping in the Gulf if it was attacked militarily.<sup>45</sup>

Reports also noted that Israel was building up its strike capabilities amidst growing anxieties over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Tel Aviv had recently purchased 90 F-16I fighter planes that can carry enough fuel to reach Iran, and would receive 11 more by the end of 2009. It had also bought two new Dolphin submarines from Germany reportedly capable of firing nuclear-armed warheads. It already possesses three Dolphin submarines. However, recent developments indicate that Washington may be moving away from a military option. These included a proposal to open a low-level US diplomatic office in Teheran and the

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<sup>43</sup> "Iraq, US 'very close' on security deal: Iraqi FM," *Khaleej Times*, August 10, 2008, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast\\_August228.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast_August228.xml&section=middleeast).

<sup>44</sup> "Iraq Struck by Wave of Bomb Attacks, Killing 13," *The New York Times*, August 10, 2008, at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

<sup>45</sup> "Iran tests naval weapon with 300 km range," *IRNA*, August 04, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-24/0808043655113439.htm>

decision to allow a senior US diplomat to participate alongside Iran in international talks in Geneva.<sup>46</sup>

Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani meanwhile called on the government to tackle the rising inflation. President Ahmadinejad has recently faced mounting criticism for his economic policies which have pushed inflation over 26 percent. Larijani also asserted that the West was not troubled by Iran's nuclear program but by the power that Tehran exercised in the Middle East.<sup>47</sup>

#### D. US ELECTION REVIEW

- **Polls indicate Obama ahead of McCain; Sen. Evan Bayh in the running to be Obama's running mate; Western states gain significance in the presidential race; McCain stresses on the need to ensure energy security**

A recent poll published in the *Time* magazine indicated that the Democratic candidate Sen. Barack Obama was ahead of his Republican contender John McCain. The poll noted that 46 percent of the people surveyed would vote in favour of Obama while 41 percent would vote for Mr. McCain. It also showed that both candidates experienced a drop in their respective support bases by 1 and 2 percentage points respectively.<sup>48</sup> The results of this poll were in congruence with another report by the VOA which stated that Americans were wary of the policies of President Bush and that they hoped to see a change of guard taking place in favour of the Democrats.<sup>49</sup>

There was also widespread speculation that Sen. Evan Bayh would likely be Mr. Obama's probable candidate for his running mate.<sup>50</sup> Sen. Obama meanwhile reiterated that small contributions such as \$200 accounted for more than half of the \$340 million funds collected so far in his campaign. Reports however noted that one-third of his total funds had been accumulated from donations worth at least \$1000.<sup>51</sup>

Reports also noted that eight states on the Western coast, largely viewed as Republican strongholds, were slated to play a significant role in the elections.

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<sup>46</sup> "Israel considers military option for Iran nukes," *Khaleej Times*, August 07, 2008, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast\\_August171.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/August/middleeast_August171.xml&section=middleeast)

<sup>47</sup> "Larijani urges action on economic problems," *Tehran Times*, August 11, 2008, at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=175088](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=175088)

<sup>48</sup> "Obama Remains Ahead of McCain in U.S. Race," Angus Reid Global Monitor: Polls & Research, August 10, 2008, at [http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/31469/obama\\_remains\\_ahead\\_of\\_mccain\\_in\\_us\\_race](http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/31469/obama_remains_ahead_of_mccain_in_us_race)

<sup>49</sup> Jim Malone, "Experts Say US Voters Withholding Judgment on Obama," *Voice of America*, August 01, 2008, at <http://voanews.com/english/2008-08-01-voa62.cfm>

<sup>50</sup> Larry Rohter, "Obama-Bayh Event Sparks More Buzz," *The New York Times*, August 06, 2008, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/obama-bayh-event-sparks-more-buzz/index.html?nl=pol&emc=pola2>

<sup>51</sup> Michael Luo and Christopher Drew, "Big Donors, Too, Have Seats at Obama Fund-Raising Table," *The New York Times*, August 06, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/us/politics/06bundlers.html?nl=pol&emc=pola1>

Both the parties were reportedly concentrating on the region which had lately undergone notable demographic changes and therefore could play a crucial role in determining the final results.<sup>52</sup>

In other developments, on a visit to a nuclear plant in Michigan on August 5, Sen. McCain stressed the need to ensure energy security. He expressed his support to build 45 nuclear power reactors by the year 2030, calling it an “all-of-the-above-approach.” Sen. Obama on his part insisted that there were other issues which required attention, such as the disposal of nuclear waste and security of nuclear materials.<sup>53</sup>

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

### JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Crisis in J&K deepens; Alert in Kashmir Valley ahead of anti-blockade march to PoK**

The crisis in the Jammu and Kashmir deepened on August 10 as the Central Government’s effort to end the economic blockade of the Jammu-Srinagar highway fell on deaf ears and the issue appeared to be getting polarized along regional and communal lines. In the meantime, valley-based politicians led by People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti stated they would join the August 11 ‘Muzaffarabad Chalo’ call given by the Kashmir Fruit Growers' Association. The state government on its part deployed additional security in Srinagar in view of the separatist call to march to Muzaffarabad in PoK. The Hurriyat Conference announced that a convoy of fruit-laden trucks from Kashmir would proceed towards Muzaffarabad and people of Muslim majority areas in Jammu would march towards Rawalakote.<sup>54</sup>

Differences also cropped up in the all-party delegation that visited J&K to review the ongoing situation in the state, with the NC disapproving the nationwide agitation called by the BJP on the Amarnath issue, while the BJP on its part blamed the government for the delay in holding the talks. After a two-day visit to the strife-torn state, a delegation led by Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil returned to New Delhi on August 10. The Home Minister exuded confidence that an amicable solution would be found.

Earlier, the Shri Amarnath Yatra Sangarsh Samiti (SAYSS), leading the agitation over the land transfer issue, refused to hold talks with the delegation

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<sup>52</sup> Anne Ryman, “West emerges as new battleground region,” *The Arizona Republic*, August 10, 2008, at <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2008/08/10/20080810westernstates0810.html>

<sup>53</sup> Mary Ann Giordano and Larry Rohter, “McCain at Nuclear Plant Highlights Energy Issue,” *The New York Times*, August 06, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/us/politics/06nuke.html?nl=pol&emc=pola1>

<sup>54</sup> “Alert in Valley ahead of anti-blockade march,” *Times of India*, August 11, 2008, at [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Alert\\_in\\_Valley\\_ahead\\_of\\_anti-blockade\\_march/articleshow/3350572.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Alert_in_Valley_ahead_of_anti-blockade_march/articleshow/3350572.cms)

members, objecting to the presence of NC leader Farooq Abdullah, PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti and J and K Pradesh Congress Committee leader Saifuddin Soz. The SAYSS spokesperson Leela Karan Sharma accused these leaders as responsible for the present turmoil in the state.<sup>55</sup> It had earlier criticised the Central Government for not inviting it to the all-party meeting convened by the Prime Minister Dr. Singh in New Delhi to resolve the row and alleged that such a step would lead to further alienation of Jammu region.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, on August 7, Governor N.N. Vohra appointed three Advisors to assist him in the effective administration of the state. These included H. H. Tyabji, Dr. S.S. Bloeria and C. Phunsog, retired IAS officers of the J&K cadre and who had earlier served as Chief Secretaries of the state.<sup>57</sup>

## NORTHEAST INSURGENCY

- **Insurgents call boycott of Independence Day celebration**

A general strike on August 15 has been called in the entire northeastern states by several insurgent groups as a part of their boycott of the Independence Day celebrations. In a joint statement issued by the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF), Tripura People's Democratic Front (TPDF) and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) on August 10, these organisations appealed to the people of the region to support them and make the boycott and general strike a complete success.<sup>58</sup>

Reports noted that the Assam government was considering setting up of detention camps for suspected migrants to ensure that they did not slip away while the government examined their status. The proposed camps would house suspected Bangladeshis so that they cannot escape deportation once their status as illegal migrants was confirmed.<sup>59</sup>

## OTHER INTERNAL SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

- **Tribunal lifts ban on SIMI, SC stays order**

A Special Tribunal on August 5 lifted the ban imposed by the Central Government on the activities of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), stating that there was no fresh evidence to justify the extension of the ban which was first clamped in 2001. The order by Justice Geeta Mittal of the Delhi High

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<sup>55</sup> "All party delegation arrives in Jammu, curfew in several districts," *Times of India*, August 09, 2008, at [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/All-party\\_team\\_reaches\\_Jammu\\_curfew\\_in\\_4\\_districts/articleshow/3345279.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/All-party_team_reaches_Jammu_curfew_in_4_districts/articleshow/3345279.cms)

<sup>56</sup> "Centre worried about Kashmir, not Jammu: Samiti," *Daily Excelsior*, August 07, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08aug07/news.htm#3>

<sup>57</sup> "Governor appoints Advisors," *Daily Excelsior*, August 08, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08aug08/news.htm#2>

<sup>58</sup> "NE militant outfits call Independence Day boycott", *Imphal Free Press*, August 10, 2008, at [http://kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=headline&newsid=42966&typeid=1&Idoc\\_Session=f95ce8cf8395134af1fd86c5fc715ded](http://kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=headline&newsid=42966&typeid=1&Idoc_Session=f95ce8cf8395134af1fd86c5fc715ded)

<sup>59</sup> "Detention tool to check influx - Camps to hold migrants till deportation", *Telegraph*, August 4, 2008, at [http://telegraphindia.com/1080804/jsp/northeast/story\\_9642105.jsp](http://telegraphindia.com/1080804/jsp/northeast/story_9642105.jsp)

Court came at a time when there was speculation of the role of SIMI in the serial blasts in Ahmedabad and Bangalore. The ban on SIMI had earlier been extended thrice. The judge held that the Central Government had given no new evidence against the organisation to warrant an extension.<sup>60</sup> The Supreme Court however on August 6 stayed the tribunal order.<sup>61</sup>

### III. NUCLEAR REVIEW

#### INDIA

- **US circulates draft granting exemption to India to all NSG members; Foreign Secretary and Special Envoy to visit Vienna to answer concerns of individual NSG members; Bush administration would try to get Congressional approval for 123 agreement in early September**

The US circulated the draft of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines to all the members of the Group. Reportedly, the draft links the waiving of the cartel's export restrictions for India to the non-proliferation commitments PM Manmohan Singh made in July 2005 and does not impose any extraneous conditions. However, the US did indicate the possibility of the draft undergoing substantial revision once the 45-nation group takes up the India exemption in Vienna on August 21.<sup>62</sup> Reports also noted that Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and the PM's Special Envoy, Shyam Saran, would travel to Vienna to clarify questions individual NSG members might have.

In other news, the Bush administration has indicated that it would try hard to get Congressional approval for the civil nuclear deal with India by the end of the year, after hopefully getting the NSG clearance by early September. The acting State Department spokesperson, Gonzalo Gallegos stated that the administration was working with the US Congress to discuss the issues and resolve any outstanding concerns that they may have.<sup>63</sup>

#### IRAN

- **Iran describes talks with Heinonen as 'constructive'; Jalili writes to Solana, asks for more details about Western proposal; Iran-EU to engage in talks to resolve nuclear crisis**

Iran described two days of talks with Olli Heinonen, the IAEA Deputy Director of Safeguards, as "constructive" and vowed future discussions with the UN

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<sup>60</sup> "Tribunal lifts ban on SIMI", *Hindu*, August 6, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/08/06/stories/2008080658400100.htm>

<sup>61</sup> "Court stays order lifting ban on SIMI", *Hindu*, August 7, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/08/07/stories/2008080757770100.htm>

<sup>62</sup> Siddharth Varadarajan, "NSG draft waiver covers all nuclear items," *The Hindu*, August 12, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/08/12/stories/2008081254711000.htm>

<sup>63</sup> "US working hard to get n-deal through this year," *Times of India*, August 08, 2008, at [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/US\\_working\\_hard\\_to\\_get\\_n-deal\\_through\\_this\\_year/articleshow/3340674.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/US_working_hard_to_get_n-deal_through_this_year/articleshow/3340674.cms)



- **ISRO and IIT Kanpur to develop micro-satellites**

IIT Kanpur, in a bid to enhance the flow of information pertaining to disaster management, will develop a micro-satellite in collaboration with IRSO. The micro-satellite would give accurate information on the nation's agricultural situation, transmit warnings about natural calamities like floods and famine and would also act as a communicating device for other space satellites.<sup>69</sup>

- **India to acquire global navigation satellite system**

India will soon acquire a comprehensive global navigation satellite system to meet the requirements of ISRO and the Airports Authority of India (AAI). India had tied up recently with the US aerospace major Raytheon Company for the final phase of its ambitious Global Positioning Satellite-aided Geosynchronous Augmented Navigation System (GAGAN). GAGAN would provide satellite-based navigation for civil aviation across South and East Asia, and would also provide India with a "the most accurate, flexible and efficient" air navigation system.<sup>70</sup>

## **RUSSIA**

- **Launch of satellite on converted 'Satan' ICBM postponed**

The launch of a converted RS-20 Voevoda intercontinental ballistic missile to put a Thai earth observation satellite in orbit on August 6 was postponed. No new date was however specified. The Thai satellite would have been the third to be launched by Russia's Strategic Missile Forces and Kosmotras from the Yasny launch site. Russia launched the Genesis I and Genesis II inflatable spacecraft from the same location in July 2006 and June 2007 respectively, under a contract with the US company Bigelow Aerospace.<sup>71</sup>

- **Russia may deploy bombers and missiles in Belarus**

Alexander Surikov, Russia's Ambassador to Belarus, stated that Russia could deploy short-range missiles and strategic bombers in Belarus in response to the planned US missile-defense sites in Europe. Russia perceives the US plans to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic as a threat to its security.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "IIT Kanpur to develop Micro Satellite," *Deccan Herald*, August 03, 2008, at <http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Aug32008/scroll2008080382539.asp?section=scrollingnews>

<sup>70</sup> "India to get global navigation system for ISRO, AAI," *The Economic Times*, August 04, 2008, at [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/India\\_to\\_get\\_global\\_navigation\\_system\\_for\\_ISRO\\_AAI/articleshow/3320545.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/India_to_get_global_navigation_system_for_ISRO_AAI/articleshow/3320545.cms)

<sup>71</sup> "Russian launch of satellite on converted 'Satan' ICBM postponed," August 06, 2008, at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/news/2008/space-080806-rianovosti01.htm>

<sup>72</sup> "Russia May Send Missiles to Belarus," August 07, 2008, *Moscow Times*, at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/1010/42/369630.htm>

## UNITED STATES

- **Obama not to cut NASA budget**

Sen. Barack Obama, speaking in Titusville near the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida stated that NASA's budget would not be cut if he was elected. He had earlier called for the delay in the Constellation program by five years and the use of up to \$5 billion from the NASA budget for education purposes. Obama asserted, "Under his watch, NASA will inspire the world once again and is going to help grow the economy right here in Brevard County."<sup>73</sup>

- **NASA extends Phoenix Lander Mission**

NASA has extended its Phoenix Lander Mission up to the end of September. This followed the confirmation of the presence of water in Mars. The Lander started digging trenches into Martian soil after touching down near the planet's North Pole on May 25, revealing a white substance that scientists confirmed was ice in June.<sup>74</sup> Laboratory tests aboard NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander have identified water in a soil sample, following which the mission has been extended.

- **NASA confirms the presence of a liquid lake on Saturn's moon**

NASA scientists confirmed the presence of a liquid lake containing hydrocarbons and ethane on Saturn's moon Titan. This made Titan the only known body in our solar system beyond the Earth to have liquid on its surface.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> "Barack Obama pledges space advocacy," *Florida Today*, August 03, 2008, at <http://m.floridatoday.com/news.jsp?key=106198&rc=lo>

<sup>74</sup> "Mission Extended As Phoenix Confirms Martian Water," *Mars Daily*, August 01, 2008, at [http://www.marsdaily.com/reports/Mission\\_Extended\\_As\\_Phoenix\\_Confirms\\_Martian\\_Water\\_999.html](http://www.marsdaily.com/reports/Mission_Extended_As_Phoenix_Confirms_Martian_Water_999.html)

<sup>75</sup> "NASA Confirms Liquid Lake on Saturn Moon," July 30, 2008, at [http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2008/jul/HQ\\_08\\_193\\_Titan\\_lake.html](http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2008/jul/HQ_08_193_Titan_lake.html)