

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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CONTENTS		PAGE
I. COUNTRY REVIEWS		
	A. SOUTH ASIA	3-7
	AFGHANISTAN	
	PAKISTAN	
	NEPAL	
	BHUTAN	
	SRI LANKA	
	B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA	7-9
	CHINA	
	MYANMAR	
	C. WEST ASIA	10-12
	IRAN	
	IRAQ	
II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	12-15
	MAOIST INSURGENCY	
	NORTHEAST	
	OTHER DEVELOPMENTS	
III. SPACE AND MISSILE REVIEW	MISSILES	15-17
	SPACE	

1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **US-Russia differences over extending the mandate of the ISAF at the UNSC; Governor of Uruzgan province killed in NATO operation; Gates urges NATO to do more to reduce civilian casualties; Impending food crisis due to drought, refugees, and rising world food prices**

The UN Security Council on September 18 postponed its scheduled passage of a resolution seeking to extend the mandate of the NATO-led ISAF force by another year due to lack of consensus on the issue. Reports noted that differences cropped up between Russia and the US over the text of the resolution regarding the issue of rising civilian casualties as a result of IASF operations.¹

With the UN reporting that the month of August registered the highest number of civilian casualties since 2001 and growing domestic opposition to increasing civilian casualties, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, on a visit to Afghanistan, urged US and NATO forces to do more to reduce civilian casualties during military operations.² In the latest such incident, the governor of Uruzgan province, Ruzi Khan Barakzai was accidentally killed by NATO troops during a military operation.³

In other developments, major aid agencies, including Oxfam have warned that a quarter of the Afghan population of nearly nine million people could face food shortages during the coming winter due to the poor harvest and drought conditions prevailing across much of the country. Returning refugees and rising world food prices have further added to the problem.⁴ In the wake of the impending crisis, Britain announced an extra \$5 million of food aid, raising to \$11 million the total food aid pledged to Afghanistan by the British government since the beginning of the year. The aid would be spent through the World Food Programme.⁵

¹ "US, Russia at Odds on Afghanistan," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, September 19, 2008, at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=62321>

² "US 'Must Cut' Afghan Casualties," *BBC News*, September 17, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7620608.stm; "Gates Regrets Collateral Damage," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, September 17, 2008, at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=62212>

³ "Karzai 'Sorrow' Over Ally's Death," *BBC News*, September 18, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7623988.stm

⁴ "War and Drought Threaten Afghan Food Supply," *The New York Times*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/world/asia/19afghan.html>

⁵ "Britain Announces Extra Food Aid for Afghanistan," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=62247>

PAKISTAN

- **60 dead in suicide attack in Islamabad; Gordon Brown in Islamabad; Negroponte: Unilateral actions will not curb militancy; Boucher calls for reforms in ISI; Peace talks in Swat fail**

In what is being termed as 'Pakistan's 9/11,' at least 60 people were killed and hundreds injured in a suicide attack at the Marriott hotel in Islamabad on September 20. The incident took place a short while after the newly-elected President Asif Zardari addressed the Parliament. A truck full of explosives slammed into the hotel premises located in a high security zone of the capital.⁶ Reports also suggested that the actual target of the truck bomb was the Parliament building where civil and military leaders had gathered for Zardari's address.⁷

President Zardari met British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in Islamabad on September 16. Both leaders discussed among other issues, the ongoing US strikes in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan and the rising discontentment due to the death of civilians in US missile strikes.⁸ In a related development, US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Michael Mullen visited Islamabad during the week. He reiterated the US commitment to respect the sovereignty of Pakistan. Islamabad had earlier expressed strong reservations against unilateral US air strikes.⁹ US Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, in a statement in Washington on September 18, also noted that "unilateral actions cannot defeat militants in Pakistan."¹⁰

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher on September 15 voiced apprehensions about possible linkages between the ISI and al-Qaeda. He called on the Pakistani establishment to introduce reforms in the intelligence agency.¹¹

Meanwhile, ceasefire talks between the army and the Taliban in the Swat region failed.¹² At least 21 people were killed during security operations in the Bajaur Agency on September 14.¹³

⁶ Shakeel Anjum, "60 dead in Pakistan's 9/11," *The News*, September 21, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁷ Muhammad Ahmad Noorani, "Parliament was the target," *The News*, September 21, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁸ "Zardari-Brown to discuss US attacks today," *Daily Times*, September 16, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\09\16\story_16-9-2008_pg1_3

⁹ "Unilateral airstrikes unacceptable: Pakistan," *Daily Times*, September 18, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\09\18\story_18-9-2008_pg1_1

¹⁰ Anwar Iqbal, "Unilateral actions cannot defeat militants, says Negroponte," *Dawn*, September 19, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/19/top1.htm>

¹¹ "Reform ISI: US," *Daily Times*, September 17, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\09\17\story_17-9-2008_pg1_1

¹² "Swat truce talks fail," *Dawn*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/15/top4.htm>

¹³ "21 killed in Bajaur operations," *Dawn*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/15/top3.htm>

NEPAL

- **Prachanda concludes a fruitful visit to India; EAM Mukherjee urges a working relationship based on “cooperation for economic growth”; Prachanda terms the relationship as “unassailable”; Both the countries to undertake a “comprehensive review of the existing trade and transit arrangements”**

Nepal’s Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) concluded a fruitful visit to India during the week. The Nepalese delegation included the External Affairs Minister, Minister of Water Resources, Communication and Supplies. Reports noted that the broad agenda of Prachanda’s visit included discussions with the Indian leadership issues relating to the Kosi Barrage and the review of the 1950 Friendship Treaty.¹⁴ Ahead of the visit, Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala had warned Dahal to refrain from signing any deal with India as the Maoist government was a “caretaker government.”¹⁵

However, a lot of fruitful ground was covered during the visit. On the issue of water sharing, both countries decided to set up a ministerial-level committee as well as revive the secretary-level joint committee, which has been non-operational for some time, and set up eight technical committees, to deal with the issues involved.¹⁶

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee urged a working relationship based on “cooperation for economic growth” and highlighted the strong “cultural relations” between the two countries.¹⁷ Opposition leader L. K Advani also assured continued support to Nepal, an assurance which was considered significant due to BJP’S past skepticism about Nepal’s transition to a secular republic.¹⁸ Prachanda on his part termed the relationship between both the countries as “unassailable.”¹⁹

Both the countries also decided to take up “mega projects” and a “comprehensive review of the existing trade and transit arrangements with a view to promoting industrialization in Nepal.” New Delhi also decided to provide approximately Rs. 150 crores for the next three months in order to guarantee steady flow of petroleum supplies to Nepal.²⁰

¹⁴ “PM consults with NC, UML leaders on his India tour,” *Nepal News*, September 13, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/sep/sep13/news05.php>

¹⁵ “Koirala warns PM not to sign any treaty with India,” *Nepal News*, September 13, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/sep/sep13/news04.php>

¹⁶ “India-Nepal agree on action plan to avert floods,” *Nepal News*, September 16, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/sep/sep16/news12.php>

¹⁷ “Indian leaders pledge continued support to Nepal,” *Nepal News*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/sep/sep15/news07.php>

¹⁸ “PM Dahal meets with Indian PM Singh,” *Nepal News*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/sep/sep15/news12.php>

¹⁹ “Prachanda: Nepal’s ties with India unassailable,” *The Hindu*, September 16, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/16/stories/2008091657900100.htm>

²⁰ “India and Nepal decide to step up economic relations,” *The Hindu*, September 16, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/18/stories/2008091860801200.htm>

BHUTAN

- **Bhutan's growth rate second highest in South Asia; HUROB makes an appeal to Prachanda to raise issue of Bhutanese refugees at the UN; US ready to take in more refugees**

Reports noted that Bhutan's growth rate was the second highest in South Asia. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has estimated that by 2008, Bhutan's growth rate would be over 14 percent. A major reason for the current increase in the rate of growth was the export of power from the Tala hydropower station to India. Bhutan's current account balance had also switched from deficit to a surplus of 10.5 percent of the GDP, with the ADB projecting the surplus for 2009 at 4 percent.²¹

Meanwhile, the issue of Bhutanese refugees again came to the fore with the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) making an appeal to Nepal's Prime Minister, Puspa Kamal Dahal to raise the issue at the UN General Assembly. The organization, in a letter addressed to Prachanda, stated that they were "victims of Bhutan government's arbitrary policy of ethnic cleansing, targeting the Nepali-speaking southern Bhutanese." It criticized the third country resettlement programme, charging that the programme had sidelined the "right to return of more than 100,000 Bhutanese citizens dwelling in Nepal."²²

US Ambassador to Nepal Nancy Powell also stated that the figure of 60,000 refugees was not a limit set by the United States and added that the US would be ready to take in more refugees, if they expressed an interest in the third country resettlement programme.²³

SRI LANKA

- **Rajapakse: LTTE will be "completely crushed";**

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that he was happy with the progress made by the military in its quest to capture LTTE's last strongholds in the north. He expressed Colombo's determination to "completely crush" the LTTE sooner than later. At an interactive session with the Sri Lanka Foreign Correspondents Association (FCA), Rajapakse also stated if LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran was captured alive, he would be handed over to India as he was wanted in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Ruling out talks with the LTTE, Rajapaksa asserted that the only concession the government was ready to give to the Tigers was an opportunity to surrender.²⁴

²¹ "Bhutan growth rate to decline, but still ahead in SA," *Afpa News*, September 9, 2008, at <http://www.apfanews.com/news/?id=31313436>

²² "Rights body asks Prachanda to raise Bhutanese issue," *Afpa News*, September 9, 2008, at <http://www.apfanews.com/news/?id=31313531>

²³ "US eager to sustain partnership for peace with Nepal," *The Rising Nepal*, September 8, 2008, at http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/detail.php?article_id=6442&cat_id=4

²⁴ B. Muralidhar Reddy, "Surrender only option for LTTE," *The Hindu*, September 17, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/17/stories/2008091756841700.htm>

In a controversial move, the Sri Lankan government announced that citizens from the battle-torn north, who have been living in and around the capital for the past five years, would have to register themselves with the police in view of the prevailing security environment. Police spokesperson Ranjith Gunasekera, at a news conference, stated that the registration would be held on September 21, at which citizens would have to fill a one-page declaration giving details of their place of origin and purpose of their current stay. The government's decision came within days after Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa expressed concern over the spurt in influx of people to Colombo and its surrounding towns in past few weeks. He added that the presence of such a large number of outsiders posed a "huge security threat."²⁵

Army chief Lieutenant-General Sarath Fonseka told *Daily News* that security forces operating in Wanni were ready to face "gas attacks by the LTTE." Confirming that the LTTE had fired canisters of CS gas in Akkarayankulam and Vannivilankulam, Gen. Fonseka clarified that it was not a chemical weapon, but used for anti-hijacking operations, as well as a riot control agent and was considered non-lethal.²⁶

A Special Tribunal headed by Justice Vikramjit Sen has meanwhile asked the Indian government to produce fresh evidence against the LTTE so as to have the ban on the group extended by another two years. The LTTE counsel argued that the group could not be banned because it did not come within the territorial jurisdiction of the Indian government.²⁷

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

CHINA

- **12th round of Special Representatives talk held in Beijing; Beijing hopes Iran crisis is resolved through dialogue and consultation; China supports UN observer missions' duties in Georgia; Wen Jiabao meets chief adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed of Bangladesh; 10,000 km Turkmenistan pipeline to go into operation as scheduled; Taiwan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs expresses disappointment over rejection of Taiwan's bid to participate at the UN**

On the sidelines of the 12th round of Special Representative's meeting between China and India in Beijing, Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping expressed the hope that a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary issue would be found. Xi told National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan that both the countries "should

²⁵ B. Muralidhar Reddy, "Colombo: registration process not to harass anyone," *The Hindu*, September 19, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/19/stories/2008091957031700.htm>

²⁶ Ranil Wijayapala, "Army ready for any type of LTTE attack: Commander," *The Daily News*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/09/18/sec02.asp>

²⁷ "Indian government asked to justify LTTE ban," *The New Indian Express*, September 8, 2008, at <http://www.expressbuzz.com/edition/story.aspx?artid=6OeVdfKjDZo=&title=Indian%20government%20asked%20to%20justify%20LTTE%20ban&type=Article>

maintain peace and tranquility in the border area before the boundary issue is resolved". While NSA Narayanan led the Indian delegation, the Chinese side was led by Dai Bingquo.²⁸

Li Yuanchao, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Organisation Department of the CPC Central Committee, in his meeting with C.K. Chandrappan of the Communist Party of India (CPI) expressed the hope that the two parties would "maintain frequent contacts and strengthen exchanges of experiences to contribute to deepening the reciprocal cooperation between the two nations and the cause of each other." The CPC had also appreciated CPI's stand on the Tibet protest issue.²⁹

Beijing has urged concerned parties involved in the Iranian nuclear crisis to resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu stated that China "had noticed that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had released a report on Iran's nuclear issue, and China appreciated IAEA's effort in solving the problem."³⁰

The Chinese government also expressed its support to the UN observer missions' duties in Georgia, noting that since its establishment, the UN mission had played a significant role in maintaining peace and stability in Abkhazia. The UN mission was sent to Georgia in August 1993 under UNSC Resolution 858 to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia. On the current proposal to send peace-keeping forces to South Ossetia, foreign ministry spokeswoman stated that China was considering the proposal and had noted the situation.³¹

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met with the Chief Advisor to the Bangladesh government Fakhruddin Ahmed in Beijing and noted that China was ready to adopt new measures for the further development of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Both the countries signed several agreements regarding their bilateral ties during the course of Mr. Ahmed's visit.³²

Reports noted that the pipeline designed to transport Turkmenistan's natural gas to China would go into operation as scheduled. In June, China and Turkmenistan had jointly launched the 10,000 km pipeline project starting from Turkmenistan's Amu-darya River region, passing through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and winding its way to east and south China. The pipeline will have

²⁸ "Vice president: China hopes for "fair, reasonable" settlement of boundary issue with India," *People's Daily*, September 18, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6502216.html>

²⁹ "Senior CPC official calls for deeper ties with Communist Party of India," *People's Daily*, September 18, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6502223.html>

³⁰ "China calls for dialogue on Iran's nuclear issue," *People's Daily*, September 16, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6500473.html>

³¹ "FM: China supports UN observer mission in Georgia," *People's Daily*, September 18, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6502200.html>

³² "Chinese premier eyes new economic relations with Bangladesh," *People's Daily*, September 16, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6500178.html>

an annual transmission capacity of 40 billion cubic meters and will be operational for 30 years.³³

In Taiwan, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Andrew Hsia expressed disappointment over rejection of Taiwan's fresh bid to participate at the United Nations. He however added that Taiwan understands "that it is very difficult at this stage." Following Ma Ying-jeou's 'modus vivendi' diplomatic strategy, Taiwan asked the UN to consider its meaningful participation in UN-affiliated agencies rather than full UN membership.³⁴

MYANMAR

- **France: UN should put more pressure on Myanmar; CRPP calls for dialogue between opposition and the junta**

Expressing dissatisfaction with the lack of progress in Myanmar, the French Ambassador to the UN, Jean Maurice Ripert on September 18 called on the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to put more pressure on the country's ruling junta. Speaking to reporters in New York, Mr. Ripert noted that France rejected unilateral decision of the authorities to hold the referendum on a draft constitution held in May earlier this year. He also offered conditional support for the diplomatic efforts of Ibrahim Gambari, the UN special envoy on Myanmar, who visited the country last month without achieving any tangible results.³⁵

Meanwhile, the Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) on September 16 called for dialogue between the junta and the opposition. Speaking at the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Rangoon, CRPP Secretary Aye Thar Aung stated that dialogue was the only solution for change in Myanmar. The CRPP dismissed the junta's plans for a 2010 general election and urged the international community to pressure the regime to engage in dialogue. It also criticized the military government's "seven-step road map," and termed as illegal the national convention, state constitution and national referendum as they were conducted against the will of the people.³⁶

³³ "Turkmenistan-China natural gas pipeline to go into operation on schedule," *People's Daily*, September 20, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6503059.html>

³⁴ "MOFA regrets but not surprised at Taiwan's setback at U.N.," *Central News Agency*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.cna.com.tw/cnaeng/EnglishTopNews/TopNewsDetail.aspx?TopNewsSerialnum=2242&strTopNewsDate=20080918&strTopNewsID=200809180014>

³⁵ "UN Should Put More Pressure on Burma: France," *Irrawaddy*, September 20, 2008, at http://www.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=14282

³⁶ "Dialogue, Not Elections: CRPP," *Irrawaddy*, September 17, 2008, at http://www.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=14274

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Presidential elections date announced; Israeli President prefers economic sanctions against Iran; Iran protests Israeli Minister's statement on kidnapping Ahmadinejad; Supreme Leader appeals to all government branches to team up in implementing economic reform plan; India signs an extradition treaty with Iran**

The Director General of the elections bureau, Ali Asghar Sharifi announced that Iran's tenth round of presidential elections would be held on June 12, 2009. The date was approved by the Guardian Council, a conservative-controlled oversight body that vets legislation and supervises elections in the Islamic republic. According to Iran's constitution, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who came to power in 2005, is eligible to run for a second term but he has so far not indicated if he would do so. Ahmadinejad has also received the support of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for another term. Other possible candidates whose names have been floated include the conservative Tehran mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, former reformist president Mohammad Khatami, and Mehdi Karoubi, former parliament speaker and head of the reformist Etemad-e Melli (national confidence) party.³⁷

Israel's President Shimon Peres, after meeting with US Vice-president Dick Cheney has expressed his opposition to a military strike on Iran and stated that he preferred the use of economic sanctions to persuade Tehran to halt its nuclear enrichment programme. Peres added that "If the Americans manage to form a coalition to unify their positions with those of Europeans, they have sufficient means to exert pressure on the Iranians."³⁸

Iran lodged a protest at the UN after Israeli minister Rafi Eitan suggested in an interview with a German magazine that his country could kidnap Iran's president over threats he has made against Israel. Iran's UN ambassador, Mohammad Khazee called the remarks "outrageous and vicious" and requested the UN Security Council to take action. Khazee charged that such remarks constituted a violation of international law and contravened the most fundamental principles of the Charter of the UN.³⁹

In domestic developments, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei urged the three government branches to coordinate in implementing the economic reform plan as well as the general policies of Article 44 of the Constitution. The plan, prepared to reduce excessive waste of the country's

³⁷ "Iran's presidential elections set for June 12, 2009," *Khaleej Times*, September 7, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/September/middleeast_September95.xml§ion=middleeast

³⁸ "Israeli president opposes attack on Iran's N-sites," *Khaleej Times*, September 7, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/September/middleeast_September97.xml§ion=middleeast

³⁹ "Iran raps Israel kidnap threat," *BBC News*, September 10, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7607764.stm

resources, especially energy, and to ensure that low-income families pay fewer taxes, calls for paying subsidies for various products directly to the people, among other measures. Khamenei warned that officials should not take any action which would have negative consequences on people's lives.⁴⁰

In other developments, I&B Minister P.R. Dasmunshi told reporters that the Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing an Extradition Treaty with Iran. The agreement will provide a legal framework for bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the investigation and prosecution of crime, tracing, restraining or forfeiting of the proceeds and instruments of crime.⁴¹

IRAQ

- **Japan's Defence Minister announces withdrawal of troops from Iraq; Iraqi forces arrest al-Qaeda leaders; No Victory in Iraq: Gen David Petraeus; US Withdraw of 8000 Troops from Iraq**

Japan's defense minister announced that his country's air defense troops would be withdrawn from Iraq. While no timetable was given for the withdrawal, a Kyodo News dispatch noted that it could happen before the end of the year. Japan's air force has been involved in airlifting materials and armed troops between Kuwait and locations in Iraq, including Baghdad, to help US-led coalition forces since 2006.⁴²

A Iraqi defence ministry spokesman, Gen. Mohammed al-Askari revealed that three leaders of al-Qaeda were arrested in a raid in Diyala province and that three would-be suicide bombers were killed. Troops had raided two houses in the Kanaan district of Diyala, to the northwest of Baghdad, acting on a tip-off. They also seized about 10 bombs, six vehicles, weapons and other material. Iraqi forces have over the past few months stepped up their actions against al-Qaeda strongholds, notably in Diyala and in the northern city of Mosul.⁴³

The outgoing commander of US troops in Iraq, Gen David Petraeus, told reporters that the recent security gains were "not irreversible" and that the US still faced a "long struggle." Gen. Petraeus had overseen the implementation of the 'troop surge', including the deployment of nearly 30,000 additional troops to trouble spots in Iraq. He summed up the situation as "still hard but hopeful,"

⁴⁰ "Economic reform plan requires coordination among govt. branches: Leader," *Tehran Times*, September 11, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=177613

⁴¹ "India to sign extradition treaty with Iran," *IRNA*, September 12, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-17/0809126625120921.htm>

⁴² "Japan announces Iraqi withdrawal: Report," *Khaleej Times*, September 11, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2008/September/international_September1045.xml§ion=international

⁴³ "Iraq army arrests Al Qaeda leaders: ministry," *Khaleej Times*, September 11, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/September/middleeast_September185.xml§ion=middleeast

saying that progress in Iraq was “a bit more durable” but that the situation remained fragile.⁴⁴

President George Bush meanwhile announced the withdrawal of 8,000 combat troops from Iraq in remarks made at the National Defence University. There are around 146,000 US forces in Iraq currently. Bush also hinted that more troops could return to the US in the first half of 2009 if conditions in Iraq improved further.⁴⁵

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **PM: J&K situation still fragile**

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh stated that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of Amarnath land row was still fragile. He was speaking at the two-day Governor’s Conference which began in New Delhi on September 17. Dr. Singh noted that the controversy relating to the temporary allotment of land to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board and the prolonged violence triggered by it had offset some of the gains made by the state in recent times.⁴⁶

Four security forces personnel were killed and another wounded in an encounter with militants in Poonch district on September 14.⁴⁷ Three militants, including a ‘district commander’ of Hizbul Mujahideen, were gunned down by the security forces in two separate encounters in Ramban district and in Poonch district.⁴⁸ In other developments, on September 19, fifty people including a senior Central Reserve Police Force officer and 19 policemen were wounded as pro-freedom agitators clashed with the police in different parts of Srinagar.⁴⁹

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Supreme Court: Implement NHRC recommendations on Salwa Judum**

The Supreme Court of India in September 19 asked the Chhattisgarh Government to implement some of the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), dealing with the activities of the Salwa Judum set up by the state to tackle left-wing extremism. The NHRC had been asked by the Supreme Court to probe allegations that the Salwa Judum was committing

⁴⁴ “No victory in Iraq, says Petraeus,” *BBC News*, September 11, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7610405.stm

⁴⁵ “Bush announces withdrawal of 8,000 troops from Iraq,” *Guardian*, September 9, 2008, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/09/iraq.usa>

⁴⁶ “J&K situation still fragile, says PM,” *Daily Excelsior*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep18/news.htm#1>

⁴⁷ “4 security personnel killed in encounter with militants,” *Daily Excelsior*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep15/news.htm#5>

⁴⁸ “3 top ultras killed in Ramban, Surankot,” *Daily Excelsior*, September 15, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep15/body.htm>

⁴⁹ “CRPF officer, 19 policemen among 50 injured in Kashmir clashes,” *Daily Excelsior*, September 19, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep19/news.htm#8>

atrocities on innocent people. A Bench comprising Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justices P. Sathasivam and J.M. Panchal told senior counsel K.K. Venugopal, appearing for Chhattisgarh, that the commission had “done a meticulous work. It has given a series of recommendations. It is very painful to read the report. It says there is arson and looting, people are armed and they [Salwa Judum] are committing serious offences ...” Chief Justice Balakrishnan observed that the state may consider implementing “remedial measures” suggested in the report. Mr. Venugopal assured the Court that the government would implement the recommendations which were of “immediate concern.”⁵⁰

NORTHEAST INSURGENCY

- **BDR hands over 18 militants to BSF; Union Home Ministry expresses its inability to disband the Unified Command**

In a rare goodwill gesture, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) handed over 18 All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) militants to the Border Security Force (BSF) in Tripura on September 13. The militants confessed that the BDR had raided their headquarters at Satchherri across Sadar North’s border in Simna on October 10, 2004, after which they were handed over to the Chunarughat police station, and sentenced for three years’ rigorous imprisonment. At the end of the sentence two months back, the BDR decided to hand them over to the BSF.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Central Government summarily rejected the possibility of disbanding the Unified Command. The B Company of ULFA’s 28 battalion had set it as a condition for it to come over ground. The Union Home Ministry on its part had reportedly conveyed to the Assam Government its inability to accept the demand.⁵²

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **Second Administrative Reforms Commission: Not enough laws to deal with terror**

A key government-appointed commission felt that the existing laws were not enough to deal with terrorism and recommended a comprehensive anti-terrorist legislation. The second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in its 185-page eighth report ‘Combating Terrorism,’ released on September 16 stated that a “comprehensive and effective legal framework to deal with all aspects of terrorism needs to be enacted.” The Commission’s chairman M. Veerappa Moily called for the incorporation of a legal provision as a separate chapter in the

⁵⁰ ‘Implement NHRC recommendations on Salwa Judum, Supreme Court asks Chhattisgarh government,’ *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, September 20, 2008, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news3.asp?date3=2008%2F9%2F20&image2.x=4&image2.y=6#16

⁵¹ “BDR hands over 18 militants to BSF,” *Telegraph*, September 15, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080915/jsp/northeast/story_9833635.jsp

⁵² “Centre rejects Ulfa B proviso: Unified Command not to be disbanded,” *Telegraph*, September 20, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080920/jsp/northeast/story_9861574.jsp

National Security Act, 1980 to deal more effectively with terrorism. The Commission also suggested that no person accused of an offence punishable under NSA should be released on bail.

Suggesting the formation of a federal agency to investigate terrorist offences, the report called for a specialised division within the CBI to deal with terror cases. It called for professionally competent personnel who had proven integrity to be recruited for this special division. The Commission also recommended that special fast track courts should be set up exclusive for trial of terrorism-related cases. The Commission felt that there was a need to define 'more clearly' criminal acts which can be construed as being terrorist in nature. Taking a strong view of the issue of terror financing, the panel recommended suitable amendments in the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to widen its scope and outreach.⁵³

- **Dr. Manmohan Singh: We need to strengthen anti-terror laws**

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, addressing the Governors' Conference in New Delhi on September 17, hit out at the Pakistan-based terrorist groups for their role in recent serial bomb blasts. Added that the involvement of local elements added a new dimension to the terrorist threat, Dr. Singh favoured further strengthening of anti-terror laws. He however noted that security and intelligence agencies had been successful in thwarting and pre-empting several terrorist attacks.⁵⁴

- **I&B Minister rules out move to bring back POTA**

Information and Broadcasting Minister and Cabinet spokesperson Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi, briefing reporters after the special Cabinet meeting which discussed the security situation in the country after the Delhi blasts, ruled out any move to bring back the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) or introduce any additional laws to combat terror. He also announced that a series of measures to strengthen the intelligence machinery, including the creation of a research and technology wing in the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to analyse the new modus operandi of terrorists, and steps to install gadgets such as closed circuit televisions and metal detectors in market places, were decided upon by the Cabinet.⁵⁵

- **Key Indian Mujahideen functionaries gunned down in Delhi**

Two terrorists, including a key Indian Mujahideen (IM) functionary who played a major role in the Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and the recent Delhi serial

⁵³ "Not enough laws to deal with terror: Moily Panel," *Daily Excelsior*, September 17, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep17/news.htm#2>

⁵⁴ "Manmohan: we need to strengthen anti-terror laws," *The Hindu*, September 18, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/18/stories/2008091858210100.htm>

⁵⁵ "No return of POTA, says Dasmunsi," *The Hindu*, September 19, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/19/stories/2008091958630100.htm>

blasts, were gunned down in an encounter in Jamia Nagar, South Delhi on September 19. Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, a highly decorated officer, who led the operation, was killed in the encounter. Two militants however managed to flee. An AK-series assault rifle and two .30 pistols were found from the site of the incident.⁵⁶ The Delhi Police also claimed that the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was the vital link between the banned SIMI and the Indian Mujahideen.⁵⁷

III. SPACE AND MISSILE REVIEW

MISSILES

- **Pentagon proposes sale of air defence systems to UAE potentially valued at over \$9 billion**

The Pentagon has proposed the sale of air defense systems and helicopters to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), valued potentially at more than \$9 billion. The main item of the sale would be the \$7 billion Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. Avenger and vehicle-mounted Stinger Launch Platform fire units from Boeing and Raytheon would cost over \$700 million. UAE would also receive up to \$445 million in Surface-Launched Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (SL-AMRAAM) from Raytheon. The package also includes up to \$121 million for Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile systems from Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.⁵⁸

- **US Navy's new submarine conducts cruise missile launches**

The US Navy conducted multiple launches of Tomahawk cruise missiles from USS Virginia (SSN-774) in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the program's developmental and operational testing efforts. The missile launches, which were the first ever for a Virginia-class submarine, included the launch and extended flight of multiple missiles to demonstrate the Virginia's launch capabilities.⁵⁹

SPACE

- **\$2.6 billion allocated for GLONASS**

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin signed a directive allocating an additional \$2.6 billion to develop the country's Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) satellite system. GLONASS is the Russian equivalent of the US Global Positioning System (GPS), designed for both military and civilian

⁵⁶ "2 terrorists shot dead in Delhi," *The Hindu*, September 20, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/20/stories/2008092058060100.htm>

⁵⁷ "LeT has vital link with SIMI, IM," *Daily Excelsior*, September 21, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08sep21/news1.htm#1>

⁵⁸ "U.S. to sell \$7 bln missile-defense system to UAE," September 10, 2008, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN1048220120080910>

⁵⁹ "Navy's Newest Submarine Class Conducts Tomahawk Cruise Missile Launches," September 15, 2008, at http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=39545

use.⁶⁰ Reports also noted that Russia could include Cuba and Venezuela as partners to use the system.⁶¹

- **Launch of China's manned spacecraft advanced by a month**

The Chinese have brought forward the launch date of their third manned aircraft by a month. The Shenzhou-VII spacecraft was first scheduled for take off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu province at the end of October. It has now been rescheduled for take off between September 25 and September 30.⁶² Reports carried by *China Daily* and *China.org.cn* have identified the crew as Zhai Zhigang, a 42-year-old fighter pilot tipped to become China's first spacewalker, Liu Boming and Jing Haipeng.

- **Turkey to launch two new satellites, Turksat 4A and Turksat 5A**

Turkey plans to launch two new satellites, Turksat 4A and Turksat 5A, in the next six years, Turkey's satellite operator Turksat announced on September 17. Turkey's new generation communication satellite Turksat 3A was launched in June from the French Guiana.⁶³

- **India's moon mission to take off in October**

India's moon mission is to lift off in the last week of October. Chandrayaan-1 passed a crucial test which simulated conditions that the space craft would encounter in the hostile vacuum-like environment near the moon. According to ISRO, India's first mission to the moon is to be launched sometime around October 22-26 from Sriharikota.⁶⁴ The launch date could be pushed to December if the earliest launch window in October is missed.

- **Russia, France sign contract to launch 10 rockets**

Russia's space agency and French satellite launch firm Arianespace signed a contract on September 20 to launch 10 Russian Soyuz-ST carrier rockets from the Kourou space center in French Guiana. The contract was signed by Russian Federal Space Agency head Anatoly Perminov and Arianespace Chairman and

⁶⁰ "Putin Orders Additional 2.6 Billion On Glonass Development," September 15, 2008, at http://www.gpsdaily.com/reports/Putin_Orders_Additional_Funding_On_Glonass_Development_999.html

⁶¹ "Venezuela, Cuba may join Russian military's navigation system," September 17, 2008, at http://www.gpsdaily.com/reports/Venezuela_Cuba_may_join_Russian_militarys_navigation_system_999.html

⁶² "Optimal conditions set for spacewalk," September 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90881/6498034.html>

⁶³ "Turkey plans to launch 2 new satellites," September 17, 2008, at http://www.spacemart.com/reports/Turkey_Plans_To_Launch_Two_Satellites_In_Six_Years_999.html

⁶⁴ "India's moon mission to lift off in October," September 13, 2008, at <http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20080065236&ch=9/13/2008%206:20:00%20PM>

CEO Jean-Yves Le Gall on the sidelines of an investment forum under way in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi. ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "Russia, France sign contract to launch 10 rockets from Kourou," September 20, 2008, at <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080920/116990159.html>