

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **At least 10 killed and over 30 injured in multiple attacks by Taliban; Karzai accuses "enemies of Afghanistan" of "trying to spread fear among Kabul citizens"; US Asst Secy Crowley praises Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) for successfully handling the attacks; Gates opposes talks with Mullah Omar; Independent Election Commission postpones parliamentary election till September 18, 2010; 11,000 kgs of narcotics seized in southern Helmand**

At least 10 people were killed and over 30 injured in a series of coordinated attacks by Taliban militants in Kabul on January 18. 7 militants were among those killed in the operation. Several government ministries and shopping centres were targeted. Afghan President Hamid Karzai condemned the attacks and blamed the "enemies of Afghanistan" for trying to "spread fear among Kabul citizens."

The US Embassy stated that it would continue to work with allies and partners "to defeat our common enemy and build a more secure and prosperous future."¹ US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley praised the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) for successfully handling the terrorist strikes.² US Defence Secretary Robert Gates on his part stated that terrorists would use such tactics and that it was difficult to stop such assaults. He was also opposed to talks with the hardline elements of the Taliban like Mullah Omar though he admitted that "reintegration and reconciliation" were critical to a resolution of the conflict.³

The Independent Election Commission meanwhile has postponed the parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on May 22 till September 18 due to financial problems, logistical challenges and continuing violence. The decision was welcomed by international organizations and Western governments, which had been urging Kabul to delay the elections until electoral reforms were carried out.⁴

In other developments, the Interior Ministry revealed that more than 11,000 kgs of narcotics were seized in the southern Helmand province. The province has been a hotbed of the Taliban insurgency.⁵

¹ 'Taliban militants attack Afghan capital', *The Guardian*, January 18, 2010 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/18/taliban-militants-attack-kabul-centre>

² 'We are facing a determined insurgency in Afghanistan: US', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 20, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=88284>

³ 'Gates opposes talks with Omar', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 19, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=88238>

⁴ 'Afghanistan Postpones Parliamentary Election by 4 Months', *The New York Times*, January 24, 2010 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/25/world/asia/25afghan.html?scp=4&sq=afghanistan&st=cse>

⁵ '11,000 kilos of narcotics seized', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 19, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=88261>

PAKISTAN

- **Gates: Al-Qaeda and its 'syndicate' will undertake activities to de-stabilize the region; Holbrooke: Clear links between Pakistani Taliban and the Khost suicide bomber; Miliband: Pakistan a top priority for British foreign policy; Reports: Zardari could face trial as NRO immunity ends; PPP pledges support for Zardari**

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates in Pakistan after visiting India stated that the Al Qaeda and its 'syndicate' comprising the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and the LeT could undertake activities that could de-stabilize the whole region.⁶ Gates also stated that the Al Qaeda in all likelihood will not leave the Af-Pak region in the near future as the area has been the "source of inspiration" to the group.⁷ The US Defence Secretary was hopeful that the operations against the Taliban could be extended to North Waziristan also.⁸

US Special Envoy to the region Richard Holbrooke in Kabul on January 17 stated that there were clear links between the Pakistani Taliban and the suicide bomber who attacked CIA forward post in Khost. He pointed out to the video released earlier in the month which showed the Jordanian suicide bomber alongside the TTP chief.⁹

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, testifying before the US Foreign Relations Committee on January 21 stated that Pakistan was a top priority in British foreign policy.¹⁰

In domestic developments, reports noted that cases against President Zardari and others might be re-opened after the Supreme Court ended the "immunity" of these individuals under the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO).¹¹ The PPP on its part expressed full solidarity with Mr. Zardari.¹²

⁶ 'Al Qaeda can trigger Indo-Pak war: Gates', *Daily Times*, January 21, 2010 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\01\21\story_21-1-2010_pg1_1

⁷ Baqir Sajjad Syed, 'Al Qaeda in no mood to quit region: Gates', *Dawn*, January 23, 2010 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/al-qaeda-in-no-mood-to-quit-region-gates-310>

⁸ 'Gates wants military operation extended to NWA', *The News*, January 22, 2010 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁹ 'Pakistan 'aware of presence of Afghan Taliban': TTP video indicates cross-border links, says Holbrooke', *Dawn*, January 18, 2010 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/pakistan-aware-of-presence-of-afghan-taliban-ttp-video-indicates-crossborder-links%2C-says-holbrooke-810>

¹⁰ 'Pakistan tops UK's foreign policy priority list', *Dawn*, January 23, 2010 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/12-pakistan-tops-uks-foreign-policy-priority-list-310--bi-08>

¹¹ Ansar Abbasi, 'No immunity in NRO cases', *The News*, January 20, 2010 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

¹² 'PPP to stand by Zardari', *Daily Times*, January 24, 2010 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\01\24\story_24-1-2010_pg1_1

BHUTAN

- **Bhutan PM: Militants from India in no position to re-establish bases inside Bhutan; China and Bhutan hold 19th round of border talks; Statistical Bureau: Inflation averaged 4.41 per cent during 2009; PM Thinley: Medical college with assistance from India to be built by 2012; Bhutan and India finalise implementation agreements for Punatsangchhu-II and Mangdechhu hydroelectric projects**

Even as reports indicated that Bhutanese security forces during the past year had cracked down on three Maoist camps in southern districts and captured about eight rebels, Prime Minister Thinley asserted that militants from India were in no position to re-establish bases in Bhutan.¹³

The 19th round of border talks between China and Bhutan took place from January 11-13 in Thimpu. Both countries agreed to undertake a joint field survey of disputed areas. China also announced that it would be participating in April 2010 SAARC summit to be hosted by Bhutan.¹⁴

Bhutan's National Statistical Bureau (NSB) indicated that inflation in 2009 had averaged 4.41 percent mainly due to rising food prices. Inflation had peaked to 8.3 percent during the year.¹⁵

PM Thinley, addressing a large gathering at Gelephu on January 21 stated that his government would try and link all the 205 gewogs in the country with roads. The PM also added that a medical college with assistance from India would be built by 2012. On foreign direct investments (FDI), Mr. Thinley stated that Bhutan would encourage the participation of international financial institutions and emphasized that the aim of his government was to advertise Bhutan as an organic food producer.¹⁶

In other developments, Bhutan and India have finalised the implementation agreements for Punatsangchhu-II and Mangdechhu hydroelectric projects. Economic Affairs Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk also announced that the construction of the 4,060 MW Sunkosh hydropower project would also start by early 2011.¹⁷

¹³ 'Assam militants cannot set up base again: Bhutan PM Thinley', *Mangalorwan Times*, January 14, 2010 at <http://mangalorean.com/news.php?newstype=local&newsid=165451>

¹⁴ 'Joint field survey next on agenda', *The Kuensel*, January 14, 2010 at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=14485>

¹⁵ '4.41% inflation in 2009', *The Kuensel*, January 12, 2010 at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=14461>

¹⁶ 'PM spells out plans till end of term', *The Kuensel*, January 21, 2010 at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=14537>

¹⁷ 'Punatsangchhu-II and Mangdechhu Hydropower Projects to start by April', *Bhutan Broadcasting Service*, January 12, 2010 at <http://www.bbs.gov.bt/news/2010/01/12/Punatsangchhu-II%20and%20Mangdechhu%20Hydropower%20Projects%20to%20start%20by%20April.html>

MALDIVES

- **Bangladesh and Maldives to forge a joint front on climate change; President Nasheed: Maldives tapping Indian companies in the renewable energy sector; Foreign Minister Shaheed requests continued Indian support towards strengthening the Maldivian parliament, judiciary and independent commissions**

Bangladesh and Maldives have decided to forge a joint front on the issue of climate change. The newly-appointed Maldivian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Ahmed Saree, appreciated PM Sheikh Hasina's stand at the Copenhagen Summit as well as her personal commitment on reducing carbon emissions.¹⁸

President Mohammad Nasheed announced that Maldives was involved in the process of engaging various Indian companies to further the renewable energy sector as part of its efforts to make the country carbon neutral within the next decade.¹⁹

Foreign Minister Ahmed Shaheed, during his meeting with Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao acknowledged India's constructive role in his country's democratic transition and requested continued support for Indian assistance towards strengthening the Maldivian parliament, judiciary and independent commissions.²⁰

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **PLA sets up a Satellite Navigation Engineering Department; PLA's "Directives to Political Work in Military Training in 2010" urges strengthening military training programmes at all levels; Austrian Defence Minister meets Gen. Liang; PLA units help in tackling heavy snow in Xinjiang**

The PLA set up a Satellite Navigation Engineering Department under the aegis of the Survey and Mapping College of the Information Engineering University (IEU). The new department is expected to produce trainees schooled in satellite navigation skills for the PLA.²¹

¹⁸ 'Male agrees to work with Dhaka on climate change', *Gulf Times*, January 24, 2010 at http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=338728&version=1&template_id=44&parent_id=24

¹⁹ 'Maldives keen on tie-ups with Indian cos in renewable energy', *DNA*, January 23, 2010 at http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report_maldives-keen-on-tie-ups-with-indian-cos-in-renewable-energy_1338498

²⁰ 'India played a key role in Maldives Democratic transition', *Miadhru News*, January 25, 2010 at <http://www.miadhru.com/2010/01/local-news/india-played-a-key-role-in-maldives-democratic-transition/>

²¹ 'PLA satellite navigation training institution set up', *PLA Daily*, January 20, 2010 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-01/20/content_4121537.htm

Reports also noted that the PLA had established a complete range of armored equipment to meet the requirements of various battlefield situations.²² Meanwhile, the “Directives to Political Work in Military Training in 2010” recently issued by the PLA’s General Political Department (GPD) urges strengthening military training programmes at all levels as the most important task in strengthening core capabilities.²³

The visiting Austrian Defence Minister Norbert Darabos and the Chief of Defense Staff Edmund Entacher met with Defense Minister Liang Guanglie on January 21. Gen. Liang affirmed that China was ready to work with Austria to further the bilateral relationship.²⁴

In other developments, heavy snow and strong winds have led to serious disruptions in the operation of public transport facilities and roads in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The difficult climatic conditions have also resulted in the loss of over 155 million yuan. The troops of the PLA and the People’s Armed Police Force (APF) stationed in Xinjiang according to reports were involved in helping authorities restore normalcy.²⁵

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Lavrov urges West not to push Iran into a corner by imposing fresh sanctions; Eight people dead in a train accident 700 km east of Tehran**

Eight people were killed and 12 injured when a train traveling from Mashhad to Tehran derailed about 700 kilometers east of Tehran. It was the deadliest accident since February 2004 when a runaway train carrying fuel and industrial chemicals derailed, setting off explosions that destroyed five villages killing more than 200 people in northeastern Iran.²⁶

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Tehran to work towards allaying Western fears over its nuclear programme. He also stated that Western powers should take a sober approach and not push Iran into a corner by imposing fresh sanctions. Mr. Lavrov added that Russia was unhappy with

²² ‘PLA armored equipment forms complete system’, *PLA Daily*, January 22, 2010 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-01/22/content_4123386.htm

²³ ‘GPD urges to do well in political work in military training’, *PLA Daily*, January 22, 2010 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-01/22/content_4123365.htm

²⁴ ‘China, Austria pledge to further military ties’, *PLA Daily*, January 22, 2010 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-01/22/content_4122804.htm

²⁵ ‘Servicemen and civilians in Xinjiang fight against snow disaster’, *PLA Daily*, January 21, 2010 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-01/21/content_4122338.htm

²⁶ ‘Eight killed in Iran train derailment’, *Khaleej Times*, January 23, 2010 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/January/middleeast_January478.xml§ion=middleeast

Tehran's dismissal of the UN-brokered proposal to send uranium to France and Russia for enrichment.²⁷

IRAQ

- **Thousands of Shiites support decision of Iraq's EC to ban candidates allegedly linked to the Baath party**

Hundreds of Shiites staged demonstrations in the southern cities of Najaf and Basra in support of a decision by the Election Commission to bar candidates linked to former dictator Saddam Hussein. The Election Commission has banned more than 500 candidates from the March 7, 2010 vote due to their alleged links with the outlawed Baath party. The protesters claimed that Baathists and Nazis were "two faces of the same coin" and that a return to Baath rule will see a return of "attacks and prison."²⁸

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

DEFENCE NATIONAL

- **India to buy 29 more MiG-29Ks**

Reports noted that the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by PM Dr. Singh has approved of the decision to buy 29 MiG-29Ks worth \$1.2 billion. These planes are in addition to 16 jets that have already been ordered along with the Gorshkov aircraft carrier in 2004 in a \$1.5 billion contract. The additional planes will operate from both the Gorshkov as well as the indigenous Air Defence Ship (ADS) aircraft carrier, currently being built at the Cochin Shipyard.²⁹

- **India raises defence export license concerns with US**

During his meeting with the visiting US Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, Defence Minister A.K. Antony raised "concerns regarding denial of export licenses" to various Indian defence industrial establishments and their inclusion in the US 'Entity List'. Expressing "satisfaction" with the progress of bilateral defence cooperation since the signing of bilateral cooperation agreement in 2005, Mr. Antony informed his visiting counterpart that the bilateral defence trade relations "should move from a purely buyer-seller relationship to a more comprehensive relationship covering transfer of technology and co-production."³⁰

²⁷ 'Russia warns against rushing to Iran sanctions', *Khaleej Times*, January 23, 2010 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/January/middleeast_January473.xml§ion=middleeast

²⁸ 'Iraqis protest in support of 'Saddam' candidates ban', *Khaleej Times*, January 21, 2010 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/January/middleeast_January446.xml§ion=middleeast

²⁹ Rajat Pandit, 'India, Russia to ink \$1.2 bn deal for 29 more MiG-29Ks', *The Times of India*, January 18, 2010

³⁰ 'India raises defence export license concerns with US,' January 20, 2010 at http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_india-raises-defence-export-license-concerns-with-us_1337108