

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

PAKISTAN

- **Pakistan warns against international support for India nuclear programme; Pakistan, Russia in talks on tackling militancy, nuclear proliferation; Obama reviews progress on Afghan conflict; Reports: Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to set up a joint commission for reaching out to Afghan Taliban**

Pakistan has warned that growing international support for rival India's nuclear programme would force Islamabad to bolster its deterrence which would destabilise the region. In the opening session of the 2011 Conference on Disarmament, Pakistan's Ambassador Zamir Akram sharply criticized the reported moves to bring its neighbour into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and other bodies that will allow trade of nuclear materials. Akram stated, "Apart from undermining the validity and sanctity of the international non-proliferation regime, these measures shall further destabilise security in South Asia."¹

Reports noted that Pakistan and Russia deliberated upon the ways to tackle militancy and nuclear proliferation during the talks between the two sides which was aimed at overcoming decades of distrust between the two countries. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov led the Russian delegation for a two-day dialogue in Islamabad. Reports noted that Afghanistan crisis is also expected to be discussed between both sides as the United States prepares to withdraw from the region. It would be worth noting that during the cold war, Pakistan was allied with the United States and the Soviet Union backed India. The two were bitter enemies in the 1980s when Pakistan supported Mujahideen guerrillas battling Soviet troops in Afghanistan and also during the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. However, ties between the two sides have warmed since a 2003 visit by then Pakistan's President Musharraf which was the first by a Pakistani leader in 30 years. ²

US President Barack Obama reviewed the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan with senior American officials serving in the region as he gears up for a landmark visit later this year. The meeting in the White House was held with President's national security team and military, intelligence and diplomatic

¹ "Pakistan warns against India nuclear support", *Dawn*, January 25 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/25/pakistan-warns-against-india-nuclear-support.html>

² Pakistan, Russia in talks on militancy, nuclear proliferation", *Dawn*, January 24 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/24/pakistan-russia-in-talks-on-militancy-nuclear-proliferation.html>

officials working in the region. About 100,000 US troops deployed in Afghanistan are due to gradually begin withdrawing in July this year as Afghan forces assume greater security responsibilities. Obama “got an update on the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, both from a counterterrorism perspective as well as the security situation in Afghanistan,” the White House spokesman Robert Gibbs informed.³

Meanwhile, reports noted that Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to set up a joint commission for reaching out to Afghan Taliban, implying that Kabul has finally assigned a formal role to Islamabad in the reconciliation process, though it would only be the role of a facilitator. The proceedings were dubbed as ‘preparatory to the new Pak-US-Afghanistan trilateral process’, which begins next month in Washington. The joint peace commission will include diplomatic, military and intelligence representatives from both countries, plus the Deputy Chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council.⁴

NEPAL

- **Political deadlock continues in Nepal; UCPN-Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal blames external forces for the continued deadlock over the prime ministerial election; Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) makes no progress on the integration issue due to the Maoists’ demand; Nepal President Dr Ram Baran Yadav pays an official visit to India**

Despite the hand over of PLA to the AISC secretariat on January 22, the political deadlock continues in Nepal. On January 24, a three party- Nepali Congress (NC), CPN-UML and UCPM (Maoist) meeting was ended inconclusively. The Maoists argued that there is no point in holding talks if others do not accept a Maoist-led consensus government. The NC and UML have reportedly argued that they would not accept a Maoist-led government unless the Maoists cooperate with the government to drive the peace process and constitution-drafting forward. The parties have failed to nominate their candidates to the prime minister election till January 31. As a result, a chance of forming a consensus government by February 3rd looks bleak.⁵

Interestingly, UCPN-Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal said on January 30 that the country would not get a new prime minister even in the scheduled third

³ “Obama reviews Afghan conflict, Pakistan visit”, Dawn, January 25 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/25/pakistan-warns-against-india-nuclear-support.html>

⁴ Pakistan gets role in Afghan peace talks, Dawn, January 28 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/28/pakistan-gets-role-in-afghan-peace-talks.html>

⁵ “Consensus govt chance slim”, *Republica*, January 25, 2011, http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=27528

round of voting in the parliament on February 6. He blamed external forces, indirectly hinting towards India, for the continuous deadlock over the prime ministerial election.⁶

Moreover, the Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) on January 24 made no progress on the integration issue due to the Maoists' demand that political consensus on modality of integration and rehabilitation be finalized before regrouping of combatants.⁷

Meanwhile, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal Dr Ram Baran Yadav embarked on an official visit to India on January 27. During his 10-day visit, President Dr Yadav is scheduled to meet India's President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, key ministers and other political leaders in India.⁸

SRI LANKA

- **Sri Lanka expresses concern over attacks on Sri Lankan Buddhist monks at Maha Bodhi Centre in Chennai; Sri Lanka receives flood relief and rehabilitation assistance from Thailand, Italy and China**

Government of Sri Lanka has expressed great concern over the incident of attack on two Sri Lankan Buddhist monks at Maha Bodhi Centre in Chennai, India. The Indian High Commission has assured Sri Lanka's Ministry of External Affairs that a full investigation would be carried out into the attack and necessary action would be taken to ensure the safety and welfare of the Maha Bodhi Centre and other Sri Lankan institutions and establishments in the State of Tamil Nadu.⁹

Reports noted that Sri Lanka has been receiving humanitarian relief assistance for the flood victims from various countries across the world. Last week, Thailand, Italy and China provided a cheque of US \$ 100,000, relief material

⁶ "Talks have fallen prey to conspiracy: Dahal", *Republica*, January 30, 2011 at http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=27734

⁷ "Modality of integration: Maoist demand baffles spl panel," *ekantipur.com*, January 25, 2011 at <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/01/24/top-story/modality-of-integration-maoist-demand-baffles-spl-panel/217605.html>

⁸ "Prez to leave for India visit Thursday", *Republica* January 27, 2011, at http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=27606

⁹ "Chennai Mahabodhi Attack: SL High Comm requests security for all Lankans", January 25, 2011 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201101/20110125chennai_mahabodhi_attack.htm; "India to Carry Out Full Investigation on Maha Bodhi Attack", January 25, 2011 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201101/20110125india_to_carry_out_investigation_on_attack.htm.

worth US\$ 465,000 and \$ 1.5 million, respectively for the relief and rehabilitation in the areas devastated by the recent floods.¹⁰

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **Russia and China hold the fifth strategic security talks; Chinese State Councilor condemns terrorist attacks in Moscow; Tajik Defence Minister visits China; Chinese and Kazakh frontier agencies hold talks; Civil-defence in North China beefed up; Importance of military publicity underscored; MAMS comes to be known as “Iron Army for Epidemic Prevention”; The PLA focuses on mobility; China sends assistance to Sri Lanka to fight flood**

Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo led the Chinese delegation to attend the fifth round of strategic security talks between Russia and China. The talks were held on Monday 24 January in Moscow. The two countries pledged to further strengthen national, regional and international security. The two parties discussed major international issues and the further development of strategic partnership and interaction between Russia and China.¹¹

The visiting Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo condemned the terrorist attack at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport that killed 35 on Monday. He stated while meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, “We have learned that a terrorist attack occurred at the Domodedovo Airport yesterday. We are simply shocked by this news. We condemn this terrorist attack”. During the meeting the two leaders discussed bilateral ties, regional situation and issues relating to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and others.¹²

Last week, Sherali Khairulloyev, Defense Minister of Tajikistan visited China. As part of the visit, he met with Liang Guanglie, State Councilor and Minister of National Defense. During the meeting, Liang Guanglie said that China and Tajikistan had a history of friendly exchanges. On this occasion, Khairulloyev also recognized and appreciated China’s long-term precious assistance and support to Tajikistan. He further hoped that the two countries would continue to

¹⁰ “Flood assistance from Thailand, Italy”, January 27, 2011 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201101/20110127flood_assistance_thailand_italy.htm

¹¹ “Russia, China hold 5th round of security talks”, *China Daily* (Online), 25 January 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-01/25/content_11909231.htm

¹² “Chinese state councilor condemns Moscow bombing”, *China Daily* (Online), 26 January 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-01/26/content_11918309.htm.

enhance coordination and cooperation under the guidance of the “Shanghai Spirit” within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.¹³

The representatives of frontier agencies of China and Kazakhstan held talks on January 21, 2011 at Makanchi Town of Kazakhstan. It is noteworthy that since the two countries signed a new border agreement in July 29, 2003, the two frontier agencies have had close contacts, and carried out nearly 30 joint management and control operations in the joint management border sections, ensuring the security and stability of the joint management border sections.¹⁴

Reports noted that during the 11th Five-Year Plan period, building of organization and command, communication and warning, protection engineering, rescue strength and protection of key targets have been promoted in the cities of North China in order to enhance civil-defence.¹⁵

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) organized a conference on the military publicity and cultural work in Beijing from January 19 to 20, 2011. Directors of publicity departments in the major units of the PLA at the level of military area command participated in this meeting. On this occasion, Li Jinai, member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and director of the General Political Department (GPD) of the PLA, underscore the importance of the military publicity and cultural work.¹⁶

Reports noted that a seminar on the Implementation of Diversified Military Tasks held at the Military Academy of Medical Sciences (MAMS) of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was organized on January 19. It also learnt from this seminar that the MAMS and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention of the PLA had undertaken 18 diversified military tasks in 2010. MAMS – described as “Iron Army for Epidemic Prevention” – has participated in almost all major events such as major international events hosted by China, major disasters both at home and abroad and major unexpected public health incidents in recent years. It has been recorded that the MAMS has dispatched 262 persons/times of experts including several academicians to the frontline in 2010 and 680-plus persons/times of people to directly participate in various tasks. In

¹³ “Liang Guanglie meets Tajikistani counterpart”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 24 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/24/content_4375224.htm.

¹⁴ “Chinese and Kazakh frontier agencies hold representative talks”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 26 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/26/content_4376582_2.htm.

¹⁵ “General layout of air situation early warning network in north China’s key cities completed”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 28 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/28/content_4378204.htm

¹⁶ “PLA publicity directors’ conference held in Beijing”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 21 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/21/content_4373818.htm

the year 2010, the MAMS has also signed agreements with the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the China Animal Disease Prevention and Control Center to jointly advance the construction of disease control and prevention system as well as anthroponosis control and prevention system.¹⁷

According to reports, in recent years, China has vigorously focused on mobility in its military trainings. It has undertaken several military exercises to improve its mobility. Recently, the troop units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) stationed in the Fengtai District of Beijing Municipality, capital of the People's Republic of China, carried out their military exercises. The sole focus of these exercises was on mobility. These exercises were undertaken in urban areas and military mobility was checked in the traffic jams.¹⁸

In other developments, last week, the PLA dispatched the disaster relief material to Sri Lanka. This exercise was undertaken in response to Sri Lanka's soliciting help to fight against recent catastrophic flood that Sri Lanka had to suffer. The assistance China delivered is worth RMB 10 million Yuan.¹⁹

JAPAN

- **Prime Minister Kan calls for the launch of free-trade talks with the European Union; Japan extends SDF mission in Golan Heights for another six months; Prime Minister Kan rules out any plans to dissolve the House of Representatives for a snap election**

In a significant development, Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan has called for the launch of free-trade talks with the European Union. He made this appeal during his address at the meeting of the World Economic Forum. His speech primarily focused on two themes – the opening up of Japan and the importance of reinforcing social bonds.²⁰

In another development, Japan has decided to extend the Self-Defense Forces mission taking part in U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights for another six months-- till September 30, 2011.²¹

¹⁷ "MAMS displays fine quality in disease control and prevention", *PLA Daily* (Online), 24 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/24/content_4375249.htm

¹⁸ "Beijing's Fengtai District seeks military-civilian integrated development", *PLA Daily* (Online), 30 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/30/content_4378960.htm

¹⁹ "Disaster relief materials transported to Sri Lanka", *PLA Daily* (Online), 25 January 2011 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-01/25/content_4375802.htm

²⁰ "Kan at Davos calls for FTA with EU, opening up of Japan to free trade" *Japan Times*, January 30, 2011 at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nb20110130a1.html>

²¹ "Japan extends SDF peacekeeping mission in Golan Heights for half year+" *Associated Press*, January 27, 2011 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9L11C402&show_article=1

On the domestic front, Prime Minister Kan has said that he has "absolutely" no plans to dissolve the House of Representatives for a snap election. Kan stated during the lower house plenary session, "To enact the fiscal 2011 budget as soon as possible is our top priority and I will put my full efforts into this." He added, "At the moment, I absolutely have no plans to dissolve (the lower house for a snap election)."²²

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **India- Indonesia sign 18 MoUs; Myanmar parliament session starts; Nagaland MLAs visit Myanmar; Thailand to solve border disputes peacefully; India- Lao FTA on goods implemented; China- Myanmar sign agreement on bank loans**

India and Indonesia have signed 18 business MoUs in infrastructure, manufacture, mining and other areas worth \$15.1 billion during the visit of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in New Delhi. Later, addressing a joint meeting under aegis of CII, ASSOCHAM and FICCI, Indonesian President mentioned that as members of the G20, India and Indonesia are strong economies in a dynamic Asia. India's GDP amounts to \$ 1.8 trillion and Indonesia's GDP registers at \$700 billion so the combined GDP thus amount to \$2.5 trillion. He further mentioned that Indonesia's bilateral trade tripled in the last five years from \$4 billion in 2005 and is expected to reach \$12 billion in 2010.²³

Reports noted that Myanmar has started its first three-chamber parliament sessions simultaneously on 31 January with the sessions of the house of representatives (lower house) and house of nationalities (upper house) taking place at the newly- built parliament buildings in the new capital of Nay Pyi Taw, while the sessions of region or state parliament also began separately in 14 respective regions or states on the same day. The summon for the first sessions of the three-level parliaments in two decades by the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) came nearly three months after the end of the multi-party general election on November 7, 2010.²⁴

²² "Kan has no plans to dissolve lower house for snap election+" *Associated Press*, January 26, 2011 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9KVRHNO0&show_article=1

²³ India- Indonesia signed 18 business MoU, *Confederation of Indian Industry*, 25 January, 2011 at <http://www.cii.in/PressreleasesDetail.aspx?id=3352&gid=7>

²⁴ Myanmar starts first parliament sessions in new capital, *Xinhua*, 31 January, 2011 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-01/31/c_13714676.htm

Reports noted that a team of Indian province Nagaland's legislators, government officials and businessmen visited Myanmar from January 23 to January 27. The leaders were received by the Naga populace there in Myanmar's Naga self-administered zone. The team comprised of Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Law & Justice Yitachu, Chairman of the NSMDC Kipili Sangtam, Chairman of Marcofed Cheno Loching John Konyak, Commissioner and Secretary for IPR & NRE MK Mero and Thepfuneituo Rio and Kuovisie-o Rio.²⁵

The Thai government will use peaceful ways to settle the continuing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said on January 29. He said both Thailand and Cambodia are parts of ASEAN and therefore, solution of any conflict between the two countries should be in a peaceful manner.²⁶

Meanwhile, India has implemented the free trade pact with Lao that slashes import duties on thousands of products, like seafood, chemicals and apparel. In turn, Lao People's Democratic Republic will also slash import duties on a host of Indian goods. With the implementation of the FTA with Lao PDR, India's FTA has become functional with the eight member countries of ASEAN.²⁷

In other developments in the region, the Ministry of Finance and Revenue of Myanmar and the Exim Bank of China signed agreements on bank loans on January 27. The agreements include the one on renminbi loan for mutually beneficial cooperation and a main agreement between the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and the Chinese bank on the loan.²⁸

C. CENTRAL ASIA & RUSSIA

CENTRAL ASIA

- **Kazak President expresses willingness to stay in office for as long as his health holds; Kazakh Foreign Minister visits Brussels; Kazakhstan capital Astana to host 7th Winter Asian Games; USAID presents a plan for a rail corridor linking Kyrgyzstan with China; Turkey is in**

²⁵ Naga MLAs in Myanmar, *Morung Express*, 28 January, 2011 at <http://www.morungexpress.com/frontpage/61281.html>

²⁶ PM: Govt to peacefully solve boarder, *Bangkok Post*, 29 January, 2011 at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/218841/pm-govt-to-peacefully-solve-boarder-dispute>

²⁷ India implements FTA on goods with Lao, *Business Standard*, 28 January, 2011 at <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/india-implements-ftagoodslao/123805/on>

²⁸ Myanmar, China sign agreements on bank loans, *People's Daily Online*, 28 January, 2011 at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90778/7275107.html>

negotiations with Kyrgyz government to supply jet fuel to the American military base of Manas; Kyrgyzstan trains Afghan Border Police; Tajikistan offers support to Russia on counter terrorism front; Turkmenistan beefs up its armed forces; Uzbekistan President Karimov visits Brussels to seek improved ties with NATO; EU to open office in Tashkent

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has stated that he is willing to stay in office for as long as his health holds. He made these remarks while speaking in an annual address to the nation at a joint meeting of the parliament's houses. It would be worth noting that President Nazarbayev has been offered huge public support, through a petition signed by half the electorate or five million citizens, for a referendum proposal that would keep him in power until 2020. Kazakhstan's upper and lower chambers of parliament unanimously agreed earlier this month to change the constitution in a move that would permit the nation to vote in a referendum on whether to drop presidential elections in 2012 and 2017.²⁹

The Kazakh Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev visited Brussels and met with EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and other EU officials. Talks were held on a range of issues such as regional security, situation in Kyrgyzstan, international efforts to respond to the nuclear program underway in Iran. However the main focus of the deliberations between both sides was on upping economic and trade ties by agreeing to speedily conclude a new cooperation framework agreement as the old partnership forged two decades ago have expired.³⁰

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan capital Astana is set to host the 7th winter Asian Games scheduled from January 30 to February 6, 2011. The security has been tightened security at its major transportation facilities especially in the light of the recent January 24 terrorist attack in Moscow's Domodedovo airport which killed at least 35 people.³¹

Reports noted that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) presented a study detailing a proposed multi-modal rail corridor that would link Kyrgyzstan with China. This is aimed at facilitating travel, trade and

²⁹ 'Nazarbayev: Will stay in office as long as health allows' *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Nazarbayev-Will-stay-in-office-as-long-as-health-allows/viewstory.aspx?id=3105>

³⁰ 'Kazakh FM meets with EU officials in Brussels' *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakh-FM-meets-with-EU-officials-in-Brussels/viewstory.aspx?id=3106>

³¹ 'Kazakhstan tightens airport, railway security after Moscow bombing', *Central Asia Newswire*, January 26, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-tightens-airport-railway-security-after-Moscow-bombing/viewstory.aspx?id=3070>

transport throughout Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The proposed route would link rail stations in Osh in Southern Kyrgyzstan and Balykchy in Northern Kyrgyzstan with Kashgar, China.³²

Turkish Petroleum International Company (TPIC) President Mithat Cansiz has confirmed that the company is in negotiations with Kyrgyz government officials to supply thousands of tons of jet fuel to the American military base of Manas. Manas air base is the transit was opened in December 2001 as a critical transit point to support U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.³³ Meanwhile reports noted that Kyrgyzstan's State Customs Service is training Afghan border control officers in a five-week course on how to crack down on smuggling while speeding the flow of goods across borders.³⁴ This is being done with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assistance.

Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon has offered his support to work closely on security issues with his Russian counterpart over the suicide blast at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport. The two leaders also noted that they supported the resumption of the Tajik-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. Two Tajiks were killed and 16 injured in the blast.³⁵

Reports noted that Turkmenistan is beefing up its armed forces, vowing to fight more energetically against transnational drug smuggling and reaffirming its neutrality at the same time. President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov stated on January 27, "In accordance with the military doctrine of neutral Turkmenistan that takes a purely defensive character aimed at further strengthening the defense capability of the national army, we will systematically strengthen its logistical base at the expense of the most advanced military equipment and weapons," the Turkmen leader said. Reports noted that this is being done in view of keeping Turkmenistan out of the Russian-controlled Collective Security Treaty

³² 'USAID studies transit corridor through Kyrgyzstan', , *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/USAID-studies-transit-corridor-through-Kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=3110>

³³ 'Turkey in talks to supply jet fuel to Manas Air Base', , *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Turkeyinbspin-talks-to-supplynbspjjet-fuel-to-Manas-Air-Base/viewstory.aspx?id=3103>

³⁴ 'Kyrgyz customs service trains Afghan border police', *Central Asia Newswire*, January 25, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Kyrgyz-customs-service-trains-Afghan-border-police/viewstory.aspx?id=3051>

³⁵ 'Tajik, Russian presidents vow security cooperation after Moscow blast', *Central Asia Newswire*, January 26, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajik-Russian-presidents-vow-security-cooperation-after-Moscow-blast/viewstory.aspx?id=3069>

Organization (CSTO), as well as the Russian- and Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).³⁶

Uzbekistan's leader Islam Karimov visited Brussels and made efforts to boost his country's ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during a meeting with NATO Chief Rasmussen at its headquarters in Brussels on Monday. Karimov and Rasmussen discussed Uzbekistan's 6+3 initiative for Afghanistan that proposes adding NATO to the current 6+2 grouping of Afghanistan's three Central Asian neighbors, the United States and Russia. The two sides discussed boosting joint activities in countering drug trafficking and terrorism, on threat of the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and the processes involved in planning decisions within NATO.³⁷

In other developments, the European Union is prepared to open a representative office in the Uzbekistan capital of Tashkent. The deal was brokered through Uzbek President Islam Karimov's visit in the last week of January to Brussels to meet with European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) representatives. The opening of the office at Tashkent will renew its relations with EU which had soured since the brutal crack down on protesters in Andijan by the former.³⁸

RUSSIA

- **At least 35 people killed and more than 100 injured in a suicide bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport; Russian President Medvedev vows to track down and punish those responsible for the gruesome incident; International community condemns Moscow attack; President Dmitry Medvedev postpones his visit to Davos; Russia's Rosneft reaches an agreement with Exxon Mobil; Russian President signs new START ratification document**

In a suicide bomb attack at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, at least 35 people have been killed more than 100 people were injured. Reports noted that the attack bore an uncanny resemblance to the methods and tactics used by militants who have been fighting for a separate Islamist state in the North Caucasus. The

³⁶ 'Turkmenistan beefs up military as Russia regains influence' by Martin Sieff, *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/Turkmenistanbeefs-upnbspmilitary-as-Russia-regains-influence/viewstory.aspx?id=3096>

³⁷ 'Uzbek president seeks improved NATO relations during Brussels meeting', *Central Asia Newswire*, January 25, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbek-president-seeks-improved-NATO-relations-during-Brussels-meeting/viewstory.aspx?id=3059>

³⁸ 'European Union to open Tashkent office', *Central Asia Newswire*, January 28, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/European-Union-to-open-Tashkent-office/viewstory.aspx?id=3101>

goal of the rebels is to unite five Muslim majority Russian provinces of North Caucasus into a single, independent state ruled by Sharia law.³⁹

Meanwhile, Russian President Medvedev has vowed to track down and punish those responsible for the gruesome incident. International condemnation and sympathy poured in for Russia with US President Barack Obama offering Russia help and condemning the outrageous act of terrorism.⁴⁰

In the aftermath of the blasts, President Dmitry Medvedev immediately ordered authorities to beef up security at Moscow's two other commercial airports and other key transport facilities. He also postponed his plan to visit Davos where he was going to promote Russia as a safe, profitable investment haven to world business leaders.⁴¹

In a significant development, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has signed the ratification of a nuclear arms cut pact with the United States. The document slashes the Russian and US nuclear arsenals to a maximum of 1,550 nuclear warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200. The new arms reduction accord, replacing START 1, which expired in December 2009, was signed by Russian President Medvedev and US President Obama in Prague in April 2010. The treaty will formally come into force after the exchange of ratification documents, which is due to take place at the meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers scheduled for February 3-4 2011 at Munich. The new treaty will define parameters for strategic nuclear arms reductions over the next decade.⁴²

In other developments, Russia's Rosneft has signed an agreement worth US\$ 1 billion with Exxon Mobil to develop oil and gas resources in the Black Sea. This is aimed at boosting Russia's energy sector amidst concerns of investing in the country plagued by bureaucratic red-tapism and corruption. The agreement gives Exxon access to Russian resources and Russia access to Exxon's technology. They will explore an 11,200-square-kilometer deep water offshore area in Russia's sector of the Black Sea. The two firms already work together in oil fields off Sakhalin in Russia's Pacific Far East, but this is their first deal in the Black Sea.⁴³

³⁹ "Moscow Bombing: Carnage at Russia's Domodedovo Airport", *BBC News*, January 24, 2011 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12268662>

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² "Medvedev signs ratification of nuke pact with US", Associated Press, January 28, 2011 at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110128/ap_on_re_eu/eu_russia_us_nuclear

⁴³ "Exxon, Rosneft sign Black Sea exploration deal", *New Europe*, January 30, 2011 at <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/Exxon-Rosneft-sign-Black-Sea-exploration-deal/104447.php>

D. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Iran's Parliament approves Ali Akbar Salehi as Foreign Minister of Iran**

Iran's parliament narrowly approved Ali Akbar Salehi as Foreign Minister of Iran who was the choice President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The lawmakers' verdict on Salehi is being seen as a test of the president's hold on support in parliament, after his disputed re-election in 2009 which caused a rift among hardline rulers of the country. Parliament speaker Ali Larijani informed that Salehi secured the vote of confidence from the legislative body by getting 146 votes out of 243. Reports noted that Salehi approval by the parliament will be a relief to Ahmadinejad, who has faced growing criticism from parliamentarians who mainly accuse him of concentrating power in his own hands and riding roughshod over the views of lawmakers.⁴⁴

IRAQ

- **At least 48 people killed in a massive blast in Baghdad; Iraqi Prime Minister orders arrest of the area's security chief in the immediate aftermath of the attack**

At least 48 people were killed in a massive car bomb explosion which ripped through a funeral ceremony in a Shia district of Baghdad. Witnesses said the car bomb was driven by a suicide attacker. Though, Iraqi Prime Minister Noori al-Maliki ordered the arrest of the area's security chief, Army Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed al-Obeidi, in the immediate aftermath of the attack.⁴⁵

E. USA

- **US Secretary of State Clinton calls for "an orderly transition" to a more politically open Egypt but stops short of asking its embattled President Mubarak to step down**

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called on Sunday for "an orderly transition" to a more politically open Egypt, but stopped short of asking its

⁴⁴ "MPs approve Ahmadinejad ally as foreign minister," *Khaleej Times*, January 30, 2011, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/January/middleeast_January660.xml§ion=middleeast

⁴⁵ "Iraq forces on alert after Baghdad blasts kill 53," *Tehran Times*, January 29, 2011, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=234845

embattled president, Hosni Mubarak, to step down. Meanwhile, US President Obama spoke to the leaders in the region, including King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and reinforced this position. Reports noted that Obama administration has walked a fine line in recent days in balancing its alliance with President Mubarak, a crucial partner in Middle East peace talks and with its desire not to be on the wrong side of history. However, Clinton's comments suggested that the Obama administration was running out of patience with the Egyptian leader.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "Clinton Calls for Orderly Transition in Egypt" *The New York Times*, January 30, 2011 at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/world/middleeast/31diplo.html?_r=1&ref=world