

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- US sets conditions for talks with Taliban; NATO Defence Ministers meet in Istanbul; Karzai government contemplating introducing conscription to increase armed forces strength; Obama seeks \$113 billion for US military operations in Afghanistan for 2011; UNSC welcomes priorities set at London Conference; Pakistan against any Indian role in Afghanistan; Kiyani: Pakistan wants a "peaceful, stable and friendly" Afghanistan; 32 militants killed in Helmand province

US Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, addressing a press conference on February 1, stated that insurgents must end ties with al-Qaeda, lay down weapons and accept the Afghan constitution before the US can accept talks with the Taliban. Stating that the US was ready to play its role in the Afghan-led reconciliation process, he added that efforts were in place to bring local Taliban commanders into the mainstream.¹

NATO Defence Ministers meanwhile held a meeting in Istanbul from February 4-5. NATO ministers were meeting for the first time after President Obama announced his decision to send an additional 30,000 troops. Other countries have agreed to provide an additional 10,000 troops, which would push force levels over 140,000.²

President Karzai at the Munich security conference stated that his government was considering introducing conscription in order to increase the strength of the Afghan Army and police force to 300,000 by 2012 to ensure security without international help.³

President Obama meanwhile sought about \$113 billion for US military operations in Afghanistan for the fiscal year 2011 beginning October 2010. This represents an increase of \$11 billion over the 2010 figure of \$102 billion.⁴

The UN Security Council welcomed the decisions made at the London conference on Afghanistan and noted that the conference set a clear agenda and agreed priorities on Security, Governance and Economic Development, and Regional Co-operation/International Architecture.⁵

Pakistan's Defence Minister Ahmad Mukhtar Speaking told the visiting UK Naval Chief Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope that Pakistan was strongly against

¹ 'US envoy sets conditions for Afghan talks', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 1, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=89003>

² 'NATO putting more optimistic face on Afghan war', *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/05/AR2010020500733.html>

³ 'Karzai: Afghanistan may institute conscription', *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/07/AR2010020701040.html>

⁴ 'Obama seeks \$113b for Afghan war costs', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 2, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=89022>

⁵ 'UNSC supports London conference', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 6, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=89174>

any Indian role in Afghanistan and added that his country was seriously concerned at growing Indian influence there.⁶ Pakistan army chief Gen. Kiyani meeting foreign journalists in Rawalpindi meanwhile stated that Pakistan wanted a "peaceful, stable and friendly" Afghanistan which would guarantee Pakistan "strategic depth".⁷

In other developments, reports noted that 32 Taliban militants were killed in a joint operation by Afghan and the NATO-led forces in Helmand province. Three Afghan soldiers lost their lives.⁸

B. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- IAEA chief meets Mottaki, urges 'accelerated' dialogue process; Ahmadinejad asks his atomic energy agency to start production of higher enriched uranium

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano held talks with Iran's foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki at the sidelines of the Munich security conference and discussed the nuclear fuel swap plan, among other issues. Amano was in favour of an 'accelerated' dialogue process with Tehran on the issue.⁹

In a move likely to increase international concerns, President Ahmadinejad asked his country's atomic agency to start the production of higher enriched uranium. He also indicated that his country had "no problem" in exporting low-enriched uranium for higher enrichment abroad. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates meanwhile urged the international community to come together to bring greater pressure on Iran to force it to abandon its nuclear program.¹⁰

IRAQ

- 54 killed in suicide attack in Baghdad

A female suicide bomber detonated an explosives vest among Shiite pilgrims in Baghdad killing at least 54 people. The Shia pilgrims were marking the end of 40 days of mourning commemorating the death of Prophet Muhammad's grandson. 32 pilgrims were killed by a female suicide bomber in 2009 as well. The attack

⁶ 'Pakistan worried at growing Indian role in Afghanistan', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 2, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=89044>

⁷ 'Pakistan's army chief seeks stable Afghanistan', *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/01/AR2010020102506.html>

⁸ '32 militants killed in S Afghanistan', *Xinhua*, February 4, 2010 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-02/04/c_13163753.htm

⁹ 'IAEA chief seeks 'accelerated' dialogue with Iran', *Khaleej Times*, February 6, 2010, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast_February184.xml§ion=middleeast

¹⁰ 'Iran orders higher enrichment of uranium', *Khaleej Times*, February 7, 2010 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast_February199.xml§ion=middleeast

came amidst heightened tensions between Sunni and Shia groups ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for March.¹¹

EAM KRISHNA VISITS KUWAIT

- **Meets Kuwait's leadership, discusses issues of mutual interest**

External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna met with Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al Ahmed Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah during his two-day visit from February 3-4, 2010. Krishna discussed a number of bilateral and regional issues with them including developments in Pakistan and Afghanistan, energy security, Israel-Palestine peace process, developments in Iraq and Iran, UN Security Council reforms, people-to-people contacts among other issues. Reports noted that the Kuwaiti leadership envisaged a greater role for India in the international arena.¹²

To combat the scourge of terrorism, both the countries discussed the need to exchange more information, especially among intelligence agencies and have decided to set up 'India-Kuwait Joint Mechanism on Combating International Terrorism'.¹³ Mr. Krishna also stated that there was considerable scope for Kuwaiti investments in India, especially in infrastructure sector, petro-chemicals, fertilisers, and power generation.

THAROOR VISITS OMAN

- **Urge Omani businessmen to take advantage of 'huge' investment opportunities in India**

Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor visited Oman on February 4-7, 2010. He was accompanied by a 14-member delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Pointing out that Oman has always been a strategic trading and business partner of India, Tharoor expressed the hope that his visit will increase the levels of trust and mutual cooperation.¹⁴

Addressing the Oman-India Business Forum in Muscat, Tharoor stated that the "destinies of the Gulf countries and India are closely interlinked" and noted Oman's role as an important interlocutor in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).¹⁵ Tharoor urged Omani businessmen to make the best use of the "huge" investment opportunities

¹¹ 'Iraqi female bomber kills dozens', BBC News, February 1, 2010 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8490819.stm

¹² 'Krishna to seek closer ties with Kuwait', The Hindu, February 2, 2010 at <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/04/stories/2010020455201000.htm>

¹³ 'India, Kuwait to set up joint mechanism to combat terrorism', Business Standard, February 8, 2010 at <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/india-kuwait-to-set-up-mechanism-to-combat-terrorism/84981/on>

¹⁴ 'Tharoor arrives with trade on mind', Times of Oman, February 6, 2010 at <http://www.timesofoman.com/innercat.asp?detail=33116>

¹⁵ 'Tharoor attends Oman-India Business Forum', Oman Observer, at <http://www.omanobserver.com/>

available in India, adding that the “return on investment on an enduring basis are far higher in India than anywhere else.” He told his audience that the World Bank has projected an 8 per cent rate of growth for India in 2010, “which will make it the fastest-growing economy.”¹⁶

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

NATIONAL

- **L&T, EADS to revise terms of defence JV**

Reports noted that Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and the Franco-German aerospace and defence group, EADS, are re-working their defence joint venture plan after the earlier plan failed to get clearance from the Government on the grounds that it was not in conformity with its FDI policy. As per the revived plan, L&T will hold 74 per cent of the proposed JV and the rest will be held by EADS.

L&T is planning to step up its defence business from the current levels of Rs. 400 crore to Rs. 2,500 crore in the next five years and the proposed JV with EADS was considered crucial in that regard. A spokesperson for EADS Defence and Security meanwhile asserted that India “is a key market.”¹⁷

- **Agni-3 test fired successfully**

The fourth test of the nuclear capable Agni-III missile was conducted successfully from Wheeler Island, off the coast of Odisha. A press release noted that the missile, with a flight range of 3,500 km “hit the target with pin-point accuracy and met all the mission objectives.” The test was part of the user (the Army) trial ahead of its induction into the armed forces.

The two-stage solid-propelled missile is 17 metres long and 2 metres in diameter, with a launch weight of 50 tonnes and a pay load capability of 1.5 tonnes. The first test of the missile in July 2006 had failed, but its second and third flights in April 2007 and May 2008 were successful. About 80 to 85 per cent of the components of the missile are indigenously developed.¹⁸

¹⁶ ‘Tharoor pitches for Omani investment in India’, *Times of Oman*, February 8, 2010 at <http://www.timesofoman.com/echoice.asp?detail=33214&rand=hqQP8MH5P0rGvr7L9W8r86L94X>

¹⁷ Abhinaba Das & Kausik Datta, ‘L&T, EADS revive JV plans; to tweak equity structure to clear FDI hurdle’, *The Economic Times*, February 5, 2010

¹⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Defence, ‘Fourth Test Flight of Long Range Missile Agni-3 Successful’, Press Release, February 7, 2010; T.S. Subramanian and Y. Mallikarjun, ‘DRDO raises the bar, sets its sights on 5,000-km Agni-V’, *The Hindu*, February 8, 2010