

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

February 22-28, 2(4), 2010

**EDITOR: S. SAMUEL C. RAJIV**

**REVIEW ADVISOR: S. KALYANARAMAN**

## CONTRIBUTORS

**PRANAMITA BARUAH** – Southeast Asia

**LAXMAN KUMAR BEHERA** – Defence Issues

**PRASHANT KUMAR PRADHAN** – PM's Riyadh Visit

**MAHTAB ALAM RIZVI** – Iran, Iraq

**SANJEEV KUMAR SHRIVASTAV** - Afghanistan

**GUNJAN SINGH** – Korean Peninsula

**PRASHANT KUMAR SINGH** - China



**INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES,  
1, DEVELOPMENT ENCLAVE, RAO TULA RAM MARG, NEW DELHI – 110010**

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## 1. COUNTRY REVIEW

### A. SOUTH ASIA

#### AFGHANISTAN

- **6 Indians among 17 killed in Kabul attack; Karzai and Krishna strongly condemn the attacks; Afghan government formally establishes control over Marjah; 27 civilians killed in NATO air strikes near Marjah; US says it is still hopeful of Dutch support in Afghan war; Another top Taliban commander captured in Pakistan**

Six Indians were among 17 people killed as the Taliban carried out a string of attacks in Kabul. Among the Indians who died in the attack included two Major-rank army officers, an ITBP constable, an engineer, a Kandhahar consulate staffer and a tabla player who was part of a cultural delegation. At least 10 others, including five Indian Army officers, were injured in the attacks. 11 others, including locals and nationals from other countries, were also killed. The bombers attacked guest houses rented out by the Indian embassy for its staffers and those involved in developmental work in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna strongly condemned the attacks terming them as “barbaric” and a matter of “deep concern”. He stated that these attacks were “the handiwork of those who are desperate to undermine the friendship between India and Afghanistan, and do not wish to see a strong, democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan.” President Karzai on his part stressed that “attacks on Indian citizens will not affect relations between India and Afghanistan.”<sup>2</sup> Karzai called up Prime Minister Singh and extended his condolences over the death of Indian nationals.<sup>3</sup>

The Afghan government took formal control of the erstwhile Taliban stronghold of Marjah on February 25. The Afghan national flag was raised in a central market while US Marines and Afghan troops continued to work to eliminate the remaining pockets of militants.<sup>4</sup>

In continuing operations elsewhere, 27 civilians were killed in a NATO air strike near the border of Uruzgan and Dai Kondi provinces in southern Afghanistan on February 22. The NATO forces were hunting for insurgents who had escaped the offensive in the Marja area. The Afghan Cabinet condemned the deaths as “unjustifiable.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Two Army officers among six Indians killed in Kabul attack’, *DNA India*, February 26, 2010 at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/55075/two-army-officers-among-six.html>

<sup>2</sup> ‘At least 9 Indians killed in Kabul attack’, *The Hindu*, February 26, 2010 at <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article114082.ece>

<sup>3</sup> ‘Afghanistan - President Karzai Calls Indian PM to Condole with Kabul Terror Victims’, *ISRIA*, February 28, 2010 at [http://www.isria.com/pages/28\\_February\\_2010\\_59.php](http://www.isria.com/pages/28_February_2010_59.php)

<sup>4</sup> ‘Afghan government claims Taliban stronghold’, *The Hindu*, February 25, 2010 at <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/international/article113555.ece>

<sup>5</sup> ‘NATO air strike kills 27 civilians in Afghanistan’, *The New York Times*, February 22, 2010 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/23/world/asia/23afghan.html?scp=4&sq=afghanistan&st=cse>

Meanwhile, a top Taliban commander Maulvi Kabir was captured in Nowshera district of Pakistan's North-Western Frontier Province by Pakistan security forces. He was reportedly arrested on the basis of information provided by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban commander who was arrested in Pakistan in the previous week.<sup>6</sup>

In other developments, a senior Pentagon official indicated that the US was still hopeful that a new Dutch government could keep some troops in Afghanistan. The Netherlands government collapsed on February 20 after the Labour Party pulled out of the ruling coalition, insisting that it could not support a NATO request to extend the Dutch mission in Afghanistan past this year.<sup>7</sup>

## B. EAST ASIA

### CHINA

- **CMC Vice Chairman urges the PLA to adhere to its political philosophy; China says Japanese 'hyper-reaction' to China's military power is creating unnecessary problems; China blames the US for deterioration in bilateral relations following arms sale to Taiwan; China says accusation linking government involvement in cyber-attacks is "irresponsible"**

Guo Boxiong, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), urged the PLA to firmly adhere to the basic political tenet of serving the Chinese people 'wholeheartedly' while inspecting troops in Shanghai.<sup>8</sup>

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Huang Xueping stated that Japan's 'hyper-reaction' to China's military power creates unnecessary problems in bilateral ties. He was responding to reports which indicated that Japanese leaders may undertake measures to strengthen the country's defence policies, including closer defence ties with the US, in order to confront China's increased military strength.<sup>9</sup> China meanwhile reiterated that it will stand by its decision to suspend its military ties with the US on account of its arms sale to Taiwan.<sup>10</sup>

Reacting to reports alleging Chinese government involvement in overseas cyber attacks, a defence ministry spokesman asserted that such a conclusion was "irresponsible" and being done with "ulterior motives."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 'Another Top Taliban Leader held', *The Nation*, February 22, 2010 at <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/22-Feb-2010/Another-top-Taliban-leader-held>

<sup>7</sup> 'US official sees chance Dutch stay in Afghanistan', *Reuters*, February 23, 2010 at <http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-46379420100223>

<sup>8</sup> 'Guo Boxiong Urges to Keep PLA's Inherent Political Quality', *PLA Daily*, February 26, 2010 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/26/content\\_4142177.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/26/content_4142177.htm)

<sup>9</sup> 'China Urges Japan-U.S. Military Co-op not to Target Third Party', *PLA Daily*, February 26, 2010 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/26/content\\_4141924.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/26/content_4141924.htm)

<sup>10</sup> 'China's Position on Suspending Military Visits with U.S. 'Unchanged': Spokesman', *PLA Daily*, February 25, 2010 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/25/content\\_4141588.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/25/content_4141588.htm)

<sup>11</sup> 'Linking Hackers' Cyber Attacks with Chinese Government, Military Groundless: Defense Spokesman', *PLA Daily*, February 25, 2010 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/25/content\\_4141609.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-02/25/content_4141609.htm)

## KOREAN PENINSULA

- **Discussions on ways to restart the nuclear talks held between US and South Korea; Pyongyang insists it will not give up nuclear arms for "petty economic aid"; Security dialogue involving China, Japan and South Korea to discuss military and security matters of mutual concern being mooted by Seoul; Chinese fishing boats seized by South Korea's Coast Guard**

South Korea's chief negotiator to the Six-Party talks Wi Sung-lac held talks with his US counterpart Stephen Bosworth on ways to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. The meeting came after both of them made separate trips to Beijing for discussions on ways to resume the negotiations.<sup>12</sup>

South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan visited Mexico and the US and discussed the North Korean nuclear talks among other issues. The upcoming G-20 economic summit to be held in Seoul later in the year also figured prominently in the discussions.<sup>13</sup>

North Korea on its part vowed that it will not give up nuclear arms for "petty economic aid," and insisted that it only developed nuclear weapons to counter "the deepening US nuclear threats."<sup>14</sup>

South Korea meanwhile has accepted a proposal by North Korea to hold talks involving military personnel at their joint industrial complex in the North.<sup>15</sup>

Reports noted that the South Korean government was making renewed efforts to launch a security dialogue involving China and Japan to discuss military and security matters of mutual concern. The forum could be launched before the end of the year.<sup>16</sup>

In other developments, Chinese fishing boats were seized by the South Korean Coast Guard as they were allegedly poaching in South Korea's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 'Nuclear envoys of Korea, U.S. discuss ways to resume N. Korea nuclear talks', *Yonhap News*, February 25, 2010 at

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/25/0401000000AEN20100225009900315.HTML>

<sup>13</sup> 'S. Korean foreign minister embarks on trip to Mexico, U.S.', *Yonhap News*, February 23, 2010 at

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/23/0401000000AEN20100223007400315.HTML>

<sup>14</sup> 'N. Korea pledges not to abandon nukes for 'petty' economic aid', *Yonhap News*, February 19, 2010 at

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/19/0401000000AEN20100219006700315.HTML>

<sup>15</sup> 'S. Korea accepts North's proposal on military talks', *Yonhap News*, February 28, 2010 at

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/28/73/0401000000AEN20100228002100320F.HTML>

<sup>16</sup> 'Korea, Japan and China seeking to establish security talks', *Korea Herald*, February 15, 2010 at

[http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html\\_dir/2010/02/15/201002150023.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2010/02/15/201002150023.asp)

<sup>17</sup> 'Korean Coast Guard seize Chinese fishing boats near Jeju', *Korea Herald*, February 15, 2010 at

[http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html\\_dir/2010/02/15/201002150005.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2010/02/15/201002150005.asp)

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **Bangkok Bank offices attacked, UDD denies any connection and charges it is being framed to invoke Internal Security Act; Indonesian President inaugurates the 11<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Bali**

The offices of the Bangkok Bank came under attack a day after the Thai Supreme Court ordered the seizure of 46.43 billion baht from former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. A hand grenade exploded outside the Silom branch of the bank while another was found at the Rama II branch.<sup>18</sup> Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has charged that some groups were trying to provoke unrest in the country and ordered the military to ensure peace and order.<sup>19</sup>

The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) meanwhile has denied any connection with the bomb attacks. The UDD has alleged that the government was trying to blame it for the attacks in order to pave the way for invoking the Internal Security Act.<sup>20</sup> The opposition Puea Thai party on its part has demanded the resignation of Suthep Thaugsuban, Deputy Prime Minister who is also in charge of security affairs.<sup>21</sup>

In other developments, Indonesian President Susilo Yudhoyono inaugurated the 11<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Bali on February 24. The ministerial level meeting is being attended by about 1,000 delegations from 130 countries, and is seen as an important gathering ahead of the 16<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Mexico towards the end of the year.<sup>22</sup>

## C. WEST ASIA

### IRAN

- **Iran says 20 more sites earmarked for uranium enrichment**

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation Ali Akbar Salehi stated that "close to 20 sites" for new nuclear enrichment plants have been earmarked and construction of two of them could begin this year itself. It is interesting to note that the Iranian New Year begins on March 21.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'Grenade explodes at Bangkok Bank', *Bangkok Post*, February 27, 2010 at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/169953/bomb-explodes-at-bangkok-bank-branch>

<sup>19</sup> 'PM asks for help from military', *Bangkok Post*, February 28, 2010 at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/169997/pm-asks-for-help-from-military>

<sup>20</sup> 'UDD denies link in bomb attacks', *Bangkok Post*, February 28, 2010 at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/170025/udd-denies-link-in-bomb-attacks>

<sup>21</sup> 'Puea Thai calls for removal of Suthep', *Bangkok Post*, February 28, 2010 at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/170012/puea-thai-calls-for-removal-of-suthep>

<sup>22</sup> 'President opens UNEP ministerial-level meeting', *The Jakarta Post*, February 24, 2010 at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/02/24/president-opens-unep-ministerial-level-meeting.html>

<sup>23</sup> 'Iran earmarks sites for 10 uranium plants', *Khaleej Times*, February 22, 2010 at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast\\_February541.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast_February541.xml&section=middleeast)

## IRAQ

- **Top Iraqi Sunni leader agrees to participate in general election**

Reports noted that Saleh Al Mutlaq, a top Sunni politician belonging to the National Dialogue Front (NDF) has decided to take part in the upcoming general election. He had earlier stated that his party will not take part in the polls after he was banned from contesting the elections. The NDF with 11 seats in the outgoing legislature is the second-largest Sunni bloc in parliament and is a part of Prime Minister Al Maliki's coalition.<sup>24</sup>

## SAUDI ARABIA

- **Prime Minister Singh visits Saudi Arabia, Riyadh Declaration signed**

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid a three day visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from February 27-March 1. He was accompanied by his cabinet colleagues including Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Murli Deora, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor and National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon.

King Abdullah and Prime Minister Singh signed the 'Riyadh Declaration' on February 28. The Declaration has been termed 'a new era of strategic partnership' and identified certain core areas of cooperation between the two countries. Both the countries vowed to jointly combat terrorism and money laundering even as they signed an extradition treaty. They agreed to enhance cooperation relating to exchange of information regarding terrorist activities and vowed to develop joint strategies to combat the threats of money laundering, narcotics and arms and human trafficking.<sup>25</sup>

On scientific and technological cooperation, memoranda of understanding on cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space, information technology and services between the Saudi Press Agency and the Press Trust of India, cultural exchange and advanced computing services were agreed upon.<sup>26</sup> King Abdullah and PM Singh also discussed several regional issues like the Israel-Palestine peace process, Iranian nuclear issue and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Sunni leader decides to take part in Iraq election', *Khaleej Times*, February 25, 2010 at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast\\_February584.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast_February584.xml&section=middleeast)

<sup>25</sup> 'India, Saudi Arabia sign extradition treaty, pledge to fight terror', *The Times of India*, March 1, 2010 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Saudi-Arabia-sign-extradition-treaty-pledge-to-fight-terror/articleshow/5630045.cms>

<sup>26</sup> 'Riyadh Declaration cements ties', *Arab News*, March 1, 2010 at <http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article24178.ece>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEW

### NATIONAL

- **US urges India to raise defence FDI cap to 49 per cent**

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Robert Blake urged India to raise the FDI cap in defence from the current 26 per cent to 49 per cent. He added that a higher FDI cap will "provide more opportunities for US companies interested in defence sales in India." US defence companies have bagged orders worth billions of dollars from India in recent past.<sup>27</sup>

- **Defence Budget increases by four per cent**

The Union Budget 2010-11, presented in Parliament on February 26, 2010 has increased the defence budget by 3.98 per cent to Rs. 1,47,344 crores (\$31.9 billion). The percentage growth in the defence budget is however far low compared to the over 34 per cent increase in last year's budget. While Rs. 87,377 crores (59.3 per cent) has been provided for revenue expenditure, Rs. 60,000 (40.7 per cent) crores has been earmarked for capital expenditure. In percentage terms, the budget stands at 2.12 per cent and 13.29 per cent of the DGP and total central government expenditure respectively.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 'US asks India to raise cap FDI in defence to 49', *Zee News*, February 25, 2010 at <http://www.zeenews.com/news606921.html>

<sup>28</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Finance, *Union Budget 2010-11*