

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

January 07-13, 1(2), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- *Accountability and Justice Law passed by Iraqi Parliament on January 12; US launches renewed raids against Sunni insurgents; WHO: Over 150,000 Iraqi deaths till June 2006*

The Iraqi Parliament, in an important step of national reconciliation, passed the Accountability and Justice Law on January 12. The Bill is designed to allow former members of the Baath Party occupy government offices again, provided they were not involved in crimes against Iraqis during the regime of Saddam Hussein. It had been pending before the Parliament since March 2007 due to opposition from Shiite members. President Bush, on a tour of the region, praised the Iraqi measure as an “an important step toward reconciliation.”¹ Talking to reporters in Kuwait, he also stated that additional troop withdrawals from Iraq would depend solely on the developing situation there, to be reviewed by General Petraeus in March/April.

The American military meanwhile launched air raids supported by assault troops against suspected insurgent targets in the Latifiya district (south of Baghdad), along with continuing operations in Diyala province (north of Baghdad) and in Salahuddin province (northwest of Baghdad). Reports noted that these attacks targeted Sunni insurgents who had shifted their operations away from Baghdad due to the ‘troop surge’.² These insurgents had renewed their attacks against the local tribal leaders aligned with the US-backed Awakening Councils, killing two of them during the week.³ The US military on its part lost 16 soldiers during the first 2 weeks of the year due to these operations.

The WHO meanwhile in a new study has estimated that over 150,000 Iraqis had died since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 till the middle of 2006. The Iraq Body Count, a nongovernmental group based in Britain had put the number of civilians dead at 47,668 while another study by Johns Hopkins University had estimated that about 600,000 were killed in the same period.⁴

CHINA

- *Dr. Singh's visit to Beijing, Both sides agree on a 'Shared Vision for the 21st Century'*

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Beijing during the week and both sides pledged to take Sino-Indian bilateral ties to a higher level. Chinese

¹ “Iraq eases curb for former officials of Hussein’s party,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

² “US bombs Iraqi insurgent hideouts,” *The New York Times*, January 11, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

³ “Suicide bomber kills key Sunni leader,” *The New York Times*, January 8, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/world/middleeast/08iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁴ “WHO says Iraq civilian death toll higher than cited”, *The New York Times*, January 10, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/10/world/middleeast/10casualties.html?ref=todayspaper>

Premier Wen Jiabao asserted that both China and India were “cooperative partners rather than competitors”. To give a major push to the bilateral ties, the two countries signed 10 deals in areas ranging from economic planning to housing, and railway construction to health and culture. Two important proposals they agreed to implement included the decision to hold another joint-military drill in India to build more confidence between two armies and to launch a feasibility study on a regional trading agreement at a convenient time.⁵

A joint-document titled “A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India” was also signed. The declaration covered both bilateral and multi-lateral issues like politics, energy, nuclear, climate change, disarmament, terrorism, religion, regional trade and integrity, defense and the border issue. At the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, Dr. Singh reminded his audience that China and India were destined to play in the “transformation of Asia and the world”.⁶

Among other developments, Chen Bingde, the PLA Chief of the General Staff noted that it was in the US’s interest not to send any wrong signal on the ‘Taiwan independence’ issue which would bring trouble to Sino-US relationship. Describing the issue as a ‘sensitive’ one, Chen accused Taiwanese leader Chen Shui-bian’s ‘stubbornness’ to intensify the secessionist activities.⁷

MYANMAR

- *Aung San Suu Kyi meets the junta’s liaison officer, Aung Kyi*

Detained opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, met the junta’s liaison officer, Aung Kyi on January 12. The meeting between Suu Kyi and Aung Kyi, who is also Minister of Labor, was the forth since the crackdown on pro-democracy protests in September last.⁸

Meanwhile, a bomb explosion at Naypyidaw railway station in Pyinmana on January 12 killed one woman. It was the first bomb blast since the military junta moved the capital to Naypyidaw from Rangoon in November 2005.⁹

⁵ Qin Jize, “Sino-Indian Ties Cemented,” *China Daily*, January 15, 2008, p.1.

⁶ “China, India reinforce confidence to boost ties,” *People’s Daily*, January 16, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6338951.html>

⁷ “Chinese senior military official urges U.S. not to send wrong signal to Taiwan,” *People’s Daily*, January 15, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6338021.html>

⁸ “Suu Kyi meets Junta’s liaison officer again,” *Irrawaddy*, January 13, 2008, at http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9912

⁹ “Bomb Blast in Pyinmana, One Woman Killed,” *Irrawaddy*, January 13, 2008, at http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9911

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- ***3,000 additional US Marines for southern Afghanistan likely; Japanese government approves resumption of refueling mission***

Reports indicated that over 3000 additional US marines would be sent to southern Afghanistan as NATO forces were facing a growing Taliban in the region. It was reported that Gen. Dan McNeill, commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan requested the additional forces, a request supported by Adm. William Fallon, commander of American forces in the Middle East and by Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Out of the 40,000 troops under NATO command, 14,000 were American, apart from the additional 12,000 American forces engaged in counter-terror operations.

Among other developments, the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party government of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on January 11 passed a special law authorizing its navy to resume refueling missions in the Indian Ocean in support on the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan. The mission, suspended in November 2007 was expected to resume by the end of the month.¹⁰

PAKISTAN

- ***Suicide bomb attack hits Lahore High Court; Peace deal initiated in North Waziristan; Scotland Yard delivers preliminary findings on Benazir Bhutto's assassination; US intervention concerns Pakistan***

Acts of violence continued across the country as 24 people were killed and around 80 injured in a suicide bomb attack outside the Lahore High Court on January 10. The bomber targeted police personnel deployed to control the lawyers' protests against the Musharraf government.¹¹

A peace deal was initiated by a tribal Jirga between the government and pro-Taliban militants on January 12 as a part of which the army withdrew from important check posts in North Waziristan. The situation became peaceful after paramilitary forces took control of the check posts. Prior to this development, at least 50 militants were killed by security forces in North Waziristan on January 9.¹²

Washington meanwhile raised Pakistani concerns by stating that it could go after Taliban targets inside Pakistan on its own.¹³ Later in the week however,

¹⁰ "Japan approves bill on Afghan war," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/12/world/asia/12japan.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹¹ "24 killed, 80 injured in blast outside Lahore High Court: Terror comes to Lahore," *Daily Times*, January 11, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\01\11\story_11-1-2008_pg1_1

¹² Iqbal Khattak, "Soldiers withdrawn from key posts in North Waziristan: Jirga negotiating new peace deal," *Daily Times*, January 13, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\01\13\story_13-1-2008_pg1_1

¹³ "US reviews fight against Qaeda in Pakistan," *Daily Times*, January 8, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\01\08\story_8-1-2008_pg1_2

the US clarified that it would not indulge in any act which was not acceptable to the government of Pakistan.¹⁴

The Scotland Yard submitted its preliminary report on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto to President Musharraf on January 15.¹⁵ In a related development, the investigating agencies identified the man who shot at Mrs. Bhutto as belonging to Swabi. More details were not released.

BANGLADESH

- *Four advisers of the caretaker government resign, five new advisers sworn in; EC announces plan to redraw parliamentary constituencies*

Four advisers of the caretaker government resigned on January 7. These included Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hosein, Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury, Industries Adviser Geetara Safiya Chowdhury and Health and Family Welfare Adviser Maj. Gen. (retd) A.S.M. Matiur Rahman. Earlier on December 26, Education Adviser Ayub Quadri had resigned in the wake of the Paris-bound artefact scandal.¹⁶ Five new advisers were sworn in on January 8, including former attorney general A.F. Hassan Ariff, planning expert Hossain Zillur Rahman, retired bureaucrat A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, former National Security Intelligence chief Golam Kader and NGO activist Rasheda K. Chowdhury.¹⁷

The Election Commission on January 8 also announced a plan for redrawing the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies in 61 districts of the country based on densities of population. This was intended as an effort to maintain consistency in the number of voters for each seats. As a result, the number of parliamentary seats for urban areas would significantly increase, while rural areas would witness a decrease.¹⁸

Bangladeshi foreign affairs adviser Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury meanwhile expressed his satisfaction at the reported decision by the Indian government to lift the ban on Bangladeshi investments in India. Chowdhury noted that this would help Bangladeshi businessmen eager to invest in north-eastern India.¹⁹

Among other developments, the first BIMSTEC ministerial meeting on poverty alleviation, scheduled to be held in Dhaka during January 9-10, was put

¹⁴ "US tries to calm strike speculations," *Daily Times*, January 13, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\01\13\story_13-1-2008_pg1_3

¹⁵ "Scotland Yard team 'quietly' delivers report on BB's killing to president," *Daily Times*, January 10, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\01\10\story_10-1-2008_pg1_4

¹⁶ "Mainul, Tapan, Geetara, Matiur resign as advisers," *Daily Star*, January 7, 2007, at <http://thedailystar.net/latest/updates.php?pid=-99>

¹⁷ "Five advisers sworn in," *New Age*, January 9, 2008, at <http://newagebd.com/front.html#1>

¹⁸ "EC to redraw outline of constituencies," *Daily Star*, January 9, 2008, at <http://thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=18458>

¹⁹ "Decision to lift ban on Bangladeshi investments hailed," *The Hindu*, January 7, 2007, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/07/stories/2008010762561300.htm>

off due to the lukewarm response from BIMSTEC members. The 9th BIMSTEC ministerial meeting was held in New Delhi on August 9, 2006.

NEPAL

- *Army Chief warns against ideological orientation of Maoist cadres who could possibly join the armed forces; Incidents of violence in Terai continuing; UN allocates more than \$100 million in aid for post-conflict reconstruction*

Chief of Army Staff Rookmangud Katawal has asserted that any ideological orientation of Maoist cadres who could be possibly inducted into the Army would not be tolerated. He was commenting on the interim statute which stated that a 'high-level military commission would be formed to look after the two armies – Nepali Army and the PLA' during the CA elections.²⁰ Prime Minister Koirala has also talked about 'adjusting' the Maoist combatants in other sectors such as those providing industrial security.²¹ Prachanda has however vociferously raised objections to both these statements stating that they were against the 'letter and spirit' of the interim constitution.²²

Reports noted that the sporadic incidents of violence continuing in the Terai region suggested that the leadership of the CPN was not that effective in the proper control of its cadres. The Young Communist League (YCL) has been at the center of much of this violence. Maoist President Prachanda has issued statements that action would be taken. CPN-UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal has on his part claimed that such activities would have a detrimental effect on the peace process and the constituency assembly (CA) polls.²³

Among other developments, UK's ambassador to Nepal Andrew Hall in a recent statement has urged the political parties' to hold the CA elections on time. The UK provides financial assistance worth \$90million every year to Nepal.²⁴ In a related development, the United Nations has decided to allocate more than \$104

²⁰ "Army demurs on induction of PLA fighters," *The Himalayan Times*, January 6, 2008, <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0sfqzpb7Ra1va.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080107>

²¹ "NA should not be politicised: PM," *The Himalayan Times*, January 8, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0sdqzpb7Sa2va.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=200801092008>

²² "Maoists see red over Koirala's stand on PLA," *The Himalayan Times*, January 9, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0wkqzpb7Sa8sa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080110>

²³ "Is Maoist Leadership Losing Control Over its Cadre?," *The Himalayan Times*, January 7, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0va3qzpb7Qa9sa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080107>

²⁴ "Failure to Hold Polls will Tarnish SPA's Image: Hall," *The Himalayan Times*, January 10, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0va2qzpb7Sa8qa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080110>

million in aid for Nepal's post-conflict reconstruction.²⁵ Reports also noted that Secretary General Ban ki-Moon had also decided against any downsizing of the UN presence in Nepal, considering it an important factor in the maintaining of a conducive environment for elections.²⁶

SRI LANKA

- *Rajapakse: Government faced with the dual challenges of eradicating poverty and terrorism; FBI: LTTE one of the "most dangerous and deadly extremist outfits in the world";*

President Mahinda Rajapakse called on the political parties to join him in his efforts towards providing the Tamilians of the North-East with the same rights as being enjoyed by other people.²⁷ In a public statement released on January 7, he noted that the Government was faced with the dual challenges of eradicating poverty and terrorism.

Even as the All-Party Representative Committee (APRC) announced that it would soon be submitting a report on the political solution in the country, the LTTE in a statement asserted that it was "ready to implement every clause of the CFA agreement and respect it 100 per cent." It has also requested Norway to continue its "facilitation role with the support of the international community" and appealed to the international community to realize a 'just' solution to the problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka.²⁸ The LTTE's intelligence resource person Col. Charles (Shanmuganathan Ravishankar) meanwhile was killed by the Sri Lankan Army in a random claymore attack on January 6.²⁹

Among other developments, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), has issued a public statement terming the LTTE as one of the "most dangerous and deadly extremist outfits in the world," which has inspired many terrorist networks around the globe.³⁰

²⁵ "UN Seeks Over \$100 Million Aid for Nepal" *The Himalayan Times*, January 12, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=6a1Qa4rgo2am8&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080112>

²⁶ "UNSC to meet to decide on Ban's," *The Himalayan Times*, January 11, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0sa2qzpb7a8a6ra.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080112>

²⁷ "Help extend benefits to Tamils: Rajapaksa," *The Hindu*, January 8, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/08/stories/2008010856381400.htm>

²⁸ "Rajapaksa seeks panel report on conflict resolution," *The Hindu*, January 11, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/11/stories/2008011160251600.htm>

²⁹ "Chief of LTTE's 'military intelligence' killed," *The Hindu*, January 7, 2008, <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/07/stories/2008010762661400.htm>

³⁰ "FBI: LTTE has inspired networks worldwide," *The Hindu*, January 12, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/12/stories/2008011258500100.htm>

2. NUCLEAR REVIEW

PAKISTAN

- *ElBaradei expresses concern over security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal; Pakistan expresses unhappiness over the comments; IAEA says Director General's comments quoted out of context*

Director General of IAEA Mohammed ElBaradei expressed concerns over the possibility that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into extremist hands.³¹ Dr. ElBaradei stated that he feared that a war in the Middle East or in the Muslim world could have grave repercussions in Pakistan, more than in Iran. Pakistan expressed unhappiness over the remarks made by the IAEA chief. The Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson Mohammed Sadiq stated that the IAEA chief should "be careful about his statements and ought to remain within his mandate."³² He added that Pakistan was a responsible nuclear weapons state.

However, the diplomatic melee seemed to be blowing over by the January 11 with Foreign Office spokesperson confirming that the IAEA had informed the Pakistani Mission in Vienna that the IAEA chief's remarks about nuclear security had been quoted out of context.³³

INDIA

- *EAM says that government would not proceed with deal if Left parties withdraw support from the government; India-IAEA talks enter fifth round of negotiations*

The controversy surrounding the Indo-US nuclear deal deepened further with EAM Pranab Mukherjee stating that the government "would not like to proceed with the deal" if the Left parties withdrew support to the government. He however noted that pullout of the agreement would have "some adverse impact" on India's standing in the world.³⁴

India and IAEA meanwhile have not yet finalised the text of the India-specific safeguards agreement during the fourth round of talks. The delegations have agreed to meet on January 15 for a fifth round of negotiations. Reports have indicated that the issue of New Delhi's right to hold its strategic reserve to meet lifetime supply for its civilian nuclear plants is a sticking point which has delayed conclusion of the negotiations.³⁵

³¹ "Atomic chief fears for security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal," *AFP*, January 8, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hYXpJN93zTFqVQAJexHtLPXVDmUw>

³² "Pakistan hits out at UN nuclear chief's concerns," *Khaleej Times*, January 9, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?xfile=data/subcontinent/2008/January/subcontinent_January316.xml§ion=subcontinent&col=

³³ "Pakistan enjoys good cooperation with DG IAEA: Foreign Office," *Associate Press of Pakistan*, January 11, 2008, at http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25995&Itemid=1

³⁴ "We will drop nuclear deal if Left withdraws support: Pranab," *The Hindu*, January 14, 2008, at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2008011454710100.htm&date=2008/01/14/&prdt=th&>

³⁵ Nilova Roy Choudhury, "Next round of India, IAEA talks on Jan 15," *Hindustan Times*, January 9, 2008, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print.aspx?Id=f29b21de-9370-4219-a9ce-41030b976063>

NORTH KOREA

- *Chris Hill says North Korea might be delaying declaration due to concerns about further scrutiny, expresses satisfaction over progress on disablement; South Korean President-elect says he would be ready to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-il*

Christopher Hill, the top US nuclear envoy on the North Korean denuclearisation stated that North Korea may be dragging its feet on fully declaring its nuclear activities for fear of revealing hidden programs that would invite further scrutiny.³⁶ With regard to the disablement process however, during a visit to South Korea on January 8, Ambassador Hill expressed his satisfaction noting that it had gone well. He added that some of the things that held up the disablement were safety and technical issue and not related to any negotiation aspects.³⁷

In other news, Lee Myung-bak, the South Korean President-elect on January 14 expressed his willingness to meet with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il anytime if it could help persuade North Korea to abandon his nuclear weapons programs.³⁸

IRAN

- *Iran, IAEA wrap up latest round of talks; Iran provides ElBaradei with new information of Iran's new generation centrifuges*

Iran and IAEA have wrapped up the latest round of talks on January 8. The talks aimed at resolving the ambiguities over several elements of the Iranian nuclear programme. Reports indicated that the latest round of talks centered on uranium particle contamination found in the past by UN inspectors at the technical college of Tehran University. In previous rounds, the two sides have held discussions about Iran's past experiments with plutonium and its use of uranium-enriching P1 and P2 centrifuges.³⁹

In other news, Iran has promised IAEA inspectors that it will answer all the remaining questions about its past nuclear activities within four weeks. Making the announcement, the spokeswoman for the IAEA Director General noted that Dr. ElBaradei was also given new information on Iran's "new generation of centrifuges" during the weekend talks with Iranian leaders.⁴⁰

³⁶ "US envoy says NKorea possibly holding off on nuclear declaration for fear of scrutiny," *International Herald Tribune*, January 11, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=9144649>

³⁷ "Christopher R. Hill, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs: Comments Upon Arrival in South Korea," January 8, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2008/01/98871.htm>

³⁸ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Proposes Meeting With North," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/world/asia/15korea.html?sq=nuclear&scp=7&pagewanted=print>

³⁹ "Iran, IAEA close new chapter in nuclear talks: report," *Yahoo News*, January 9, 2008, at http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080109/wl_mideast_afp/irannuclearpoliticsiaea_080109140957&print_r=1;_ylt=AiPNn7OEiGoduA5_wYnv5xSbOrgF

⁴⁰ "Iran Agrees to Answer Nuclear Questions," *New York Times*, January 13, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/world/AP-Nuclear-Iran.html?sq=elbaradei&scp=3&pagewanted=print>

3. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- *Tarun Gogoi suspects a 'third force' behind the Adivasi unrest in state*

In an interview to PTI in Guwahati on January 9, Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi reiterated that India's neighbouring countries, particularly Bangladesh, were encouraging insurgency and jihadi activities in Assam. He also charged that a 'third force' with suspected Naxalite links to Jharkhand was working behind the growing Adivasi uprising in the state. Gogoi noted that if there was a problem in Assam, "it should be solved here."⁴¹

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- *55 Maoists surrender in Maharashtra*

As many as 55 Maoists surrendered before the district authorities at Gadchiroli in Maharashtra on January 13.⁴² They all belonged to three 'dalams' ((armed squads).

Meanwhile, in Andhra Pradesh, cadres of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) killed D. Ramaswamy, a leader of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) party on January 8.⁴³

AP POLICE: IED'S IN MECCA MASJID AND AJMER BLASTS FROM HYDERABAD

- *Explosives smuggled from Bangladesh by an LeT operative*

The Hindu quoting AP police sources reported that IEDs that were used in the Mecca Masjid and Ajmer blasts were fabricated in Hyderabad. According to sources, a HuJI activist named Abu Hamja prepared eight IEDs in Hyderabad in May of last year and the explosive material was smuggled into the city from Bangladesh by an alleged LeT operative called Shaik Abdul Nayeem.⁴⁴

4. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

IRAN-PAKISTAN-INDIA GAS PIPELINE

- *Pak Cabinet approves GSPA; Iran keen on Indian participation in IPI*

The Gas Sales and Purchase Agreement (GSPA) to be signed by Tehran and Islamabad was approved by the Pakistani cabinet earlier in the week. However, reports noted that the Iranian government had not yet sought the approval of their board on IPI which had the status of a standing committee.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "Neighbouring nations aiding jihadi activities: Gogoi," *Sentinel*, January 9, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁴² "55 naxalites surrender," *The Hindu*, January 14, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/13/stories/2008011350390100.htm>

⁴³ "Maoists kill political leader in Andhra Pradesh," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, January 9, 2008, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=1/9/2008

⁴⁴ "Mecca Masjid, Ajmer blast bombs made in Hyderabad," *The Hindu*, January 13, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/01/12/stories/2008011250010100.htm>

⁴⁵ Zafar Bhutta, "Iran gas purchasing agreement delayed," *The Daily Times*, January ,2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C01%5C11%5Cstory_11-1-2008_pg5_13

The Pakistani cabinet approval included the planned gas purchases, a government guarantee, gas sales to local supply companies and dealing with additional gas if India does not join the project.

Iran meanwhile has reiterated its long-standing position that they were 'very keen' that India joined the project. Reports also indicated that the Iranian side had also proposed that the forthcoming two-day India-Pakistan bilateral meeting in New Delhi on February 14-16 to resolve the contentious issue of transit fees be turned into a tri-lateral meeting involving Tehran.⁴⁶ Industry observers, experts and senior officials on the Indian side however averred that no agreement was possible with Pakistan till such time that elections were held and a new government was sworn in.⁴⁷

EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

- *Chevron to bid under NELP-VII*

John Digby, president of Chevron Petroleum India Pvt. Ltd stated that the company was holding consultations with four Indian firms for joint bids on oil and gas blocks being auctioned under the New Exploration and Licensing Policy round VII (NELP-VII).⁴⁸ The government had put 57 oil and gas blocks for auction under the seventh round of NELP at the end of last year.

⁴⁶ "IPI natural gas deal waiting for India," *Press TV*, January 12, 2008, at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=38458§ionid=3510213>

⁴⁷ "Iran may not sign gas pipeline pact with Pakistan next week," *Economic Times*, January 11, 2008, at economictimes.indiatimes.com/.../articleshow/2692628.cms

⁴⁸ Prince Mathews Thomas and Tuhin Kar, "Chevron considering bidding for India New Oil Gas," *CNNmoney.com*, January 8, 2008, at http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/djf500/200801080438DOWJONESDJONLINE000153_FORTUNE5.htm