

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

PAKISTAN

- **US drone attacks continue despite protests in the National Assembly; Spate of violent incidents in tribal region; 'Friends of Pakistan' meet in Abu Dhabi**

Prime Minister Gilani, speaking at the National Assembly on November 20, termed the continuing US drone attacks in the NWFP as "intolerable."¹ The Pakistani Foreign Office also reportedly sent a letter to the US Ambassador in Islamabad noting its concerns regarding this issue. However, the attacks continued with at least five people getting killed on November 22.²

The flurry of violent incidents across the country continued unabated. At least 16 militants, including a Lashkar commander, were killed in Khar on November 16.³ 44 Taliban were killed on November 20, over 10 of whom were reportedly 'foreigners,' in Khar/Mingora on November 20.⁴ Again in Bajaur Agency, 22 militants were killed and 5 injured near the Damadola area on November 21.⁵

Meanwhile, Gen. Kayani, at the NATO Defence Committee meeting in Brussels on November 19, urged NATO member countries to engage the Pashtun residents along the Pak-Afghan border in their security operations.⁶ In other developments, 'Friends of Pakistan' group made up of 14 countries, including the US and Saudi Arabia, met in Abu Dhabi on November 17 to discuss strategies of helping Pakistan overcome the prevailing economic crisis as well as meet its energy requirements.⁷

NEPAL

- **Rifts within the Maoists at the central committee meeting; Protests against YCL's criminal activities; Reports: Nepal discusses Kalapani issue in meeting with Chinese military delegation**

The 35-member Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) met on November 18 with senior leaders expressing differences of

¹ Raja Asghar, "US drone attacks intolerable: PM: No secret accord with Washington, NA assured," *Dawn*, November 21, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/21/top1.htm>

² Haji Mujtaba & Javed Afridi, "Another US drone attack kills five in NWA," *The News*, November 23, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

³ "Lashkar commander, 16 militants killed in Bajaur," *Dawn*, November 17, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/11/17/top2.htm>

⁴ "44 Taliban killed, Mohmand braces for new offensive," *Daily Times*, November 21, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\11\21\story_21-11-2008_pg1_1

⁵ "22 militants killed in Bajaur blitz," *The News*, November 22, 2008, at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁶ "Kayani urges NATO to win support of tribesmen," *Daily Times*, November 20, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\11\20\story_20-11-2008_pg1_3

⁷ "Friends hammer out framework for co-operation," *Daily Times*, November 18, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\11\18\story_18-11-2008_pg1_1

opinion on a range of issues. Party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and leader of the hard-line faction, Mohan Baidya presented separate political documents on the political situation in Nepal. Dahal on his part presented three options on republicanism. These included a federal democratic republic, a people's republic and a transitional republic and called on the need for integration of Maoist combatants into the security structures of the Nepal Army. Baidya on the other hand asserted that there was no alternative to the "immediate adoption of People's Republic."⁸

Meanwhile, protestors in Kathmandu charged that cadres of the Young Communist League (YCL) had killed Nirmal Pant and Pushkar Dangol, two students who were abducted a month ago by the YCL.⁹ CPN (UML) General Secretary Jhala Nath Khanal, leading the protesters stated that the unruly activities of the YCL had enraged the general public.¹⁰ The party-affiliated Democratic National Youth Association (DNYA) President, Ajambar Rai, warned of dire consequences if YCL did not dismantle its paramilitary structures immediately.¹¹ President of Nepali Congress-affiliated Nepal Tarun Dal, Mahendra Yadav, declared that if the culprits of the another (Dhading) murder case were not brought to justice, his organisation would launch demonstrations to topple the current government led by the CPN (Maoist). YCL chief Ganesh Man Pun however stated that attempts were being made to intensify demonstrations against the Maoists and terrorise the public on baseless allegations of murder.

With Nepal struggling to resolve its political uncertainties, Chinese engagements in the country have increased manifold since April 2006. Reports have noted that Beijing has been focusing attention on the Indo-Nepal border regions in order to create a buffer between the Chinese border and Tibetan refugees living in India. Recently, a Chinese delegation led by Maj. Gen. Ei Hujeng visited the Nepali Home Ministry on November 20 to discuss issues ranging from border management and military assistance. The issue of Kalapani border dispute between India and Nepal reportedly figured prominently in the discussion and the Nepali side assured the Chinese delegation that it could be settled through a trilateral mechanism between Nepal, India and China.¹²

⁸ "Dahal, Baidya at loggerheads," *kantipuronline*, November 17, 2008, at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=167162>

⁹ "Protest against YCL over killing of two abductees," *kantipuronline*, November 17, 2008, at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=167292>

¹⁰ "Crimes increasing due to YCL: Khanal," *nepalnews*, November 20, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov20/news05.php>

¹¹ "Youth organisations accuse each other of promoting impunity, unruly acts," *nepalnews*, November 20, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov20/news07.php>

¹² "DPM discusses Kalapani issue with Chinese military delegates," *nepalnews*, November 21, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/nov/nov21/news01.php>

BHUTAN

- **Labour shortages being witnessed due to stringent labour laws; Bhutan making laudable strides in ICT, in poverty reduction; Illiteracy and unemployment still remain major challenges; PM Thinley applauds BIMSTEC as a free-trade area**

Reports have noted that although the industrial base of Bhutan was expanding, labour shortages were being witnessed at various levels. This was mainly due to the restrictions imposed on hiring labourers from across the border. Stringent labour laws have made the hiring of workers costly with stiff penalties for workers found working illegally.¹³

The country has however made laudable strides in the outreach of information communication technology (ICT). For instance, the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), has launched a website for updating the prices of agriculture commodities.¹⁴

A recent report on the Millennium Development Goals notes that Bhutan has made substantial progress on issues like malnutrition among children (which has reduced from 19 percent in 2000 to 9.8 percent in 2007), a decrease in the number of people living below the poverty line (from 36.3 percent in 2000 to 23.2 percent in 2007). The report notes that major challenges still faced by Bhutan include illiteracy and unemployment. Unemployment rate among the youth had quadrupled from 2.2 percent in 1998 to 9.9 percent in 2007 and around 16,500 children still cannot access primary education.¹⁵

In other developments, Bhutan would be hosting the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory, which would be a centre of information on culture-related issues. Poverty reduction and community vitalization would be the two focal areas of research for the centre.¹⁶ Bhutan has also applauded the proposal of making BIMSTEC a free-trade zone area. Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley noted that transport and infrastructure, international terrorism, crime and drug trafficking, poverty alleviation and environmental degradation were potential areas of cooperation between countries of the region.¹⁷

¹³ "Labour shortage stunts industrial growth," *Kuensel Online*, November 7, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11437>

¹⁴ "Taking ICT to the grassroots," *Kuensel Online*, November 17, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11473>

¹⁵ "MDG: Good prognosis but challenges remain," *Kuensel Online*, November 22, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11508>

¹⁶ "Cultural Observatory to be set up in Bhutan," *Kuensel Online*, November 15, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11460>

¹⁷ "PM calls for greater BIMSTEC initiatives," *Kuensel Online*, November 15, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=11461>

BANGLADESH

- **AL finalises its nominations for the December 18 polls; BNP to take part in polls only if held on December 28; Bangladesh-Myanmar maritime delimitation talks end**

The Awami League (AL) finalised its nominations for the December 18 national polls on November 17. The list leaves out a good number of party bigwigs under scrutiny due to emergency power rules, including for allegations of corruption and for patronising crime.¹⁸ Reports noted that several grassroots-level AL leaders in several districts expressed dissatisfaction over the nominated candidates, and for the party high command ignoring the credentials of dedicated and acceptable leaders.¹⁹

AL President Sheikh Hasina meanwhile stated that the general elections should be held on December 18 with the participation of all political parties.²⁰ The caretaker government on its part proposed a dialogue with Sheikh Hasina on the possibility of holding the elections on December 28, a proposal first floated by the rival BNP.²¹ The BNP-led four-party alliance announced on November 20 that it would take part in the parliamentary elections only if it is held on December 28. It also maintained that the government must fulfill three of its key conditions before the polls if it has to ensure its participation.²² The EC held fresh negotiations with the BNP on November 21 to reach a consensus over the issue.²³

Both the political parties have lodged objections with the EC regarding organisations monitoring the December 18 polls. They have asked the Commission to disqualify around 40 such observer bodies which they charged were not impartial enough.²⁴

In other developments, the Bangladesh-Myanmar expert-level maritime delimitation talks ended with both sides to meet again in Yangon in January 2009. This will be only four months ahead of Myanmar's deadline for maritime demarcation claims to UN.²⁵ Reports also noted that the US has agreed to

¹⁸ "Poll dreams over for many AL stalwarts: Conviction, reform issue rule nomination," *The Daily Star*, November 18, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=63842>

¹⁹ "AL tickets trigger protests in several districts: Party men reject nominees for 18 JS seats in 8 districts," *The Daily Star*, November 19, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=63957>

²⁰ "Hasina for polls on Dec 18 with participation of all," *The Daily Star*, November 21, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64285>

²¹ "Govt Bid to Sit with AL: No need for talks now, settle issue with BNP: Hasina," *The Daily Star*, November 22, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64415>

²² "4-party says yes to JS polls on Dec 28: Khaleda blasts govt's talks handling; EC hails announcement, sits with BNP today; AL yet to react; govt feels upbeat," *The Daily Star*, November 21, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64295>

²³ "Dialogue with 4-party Alliance, EC terms it satisfactory, talks with 14-party today: CEC for quick decision as time running out," *The Daily Star*, November 22, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=64413>

²⁴ "AL, BNP want 24 poll observers out," *The Daily Star*, November 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=63712>

²⁵ "Next round talks in Myanmar: Dhaka sees 'progress'," *The Daily Star*, November 18, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=63858>

provide a grant assistance of \$15 million to Bangladesh for installing radiation detection equipment and associated infrastructure at Chittagong Seaport.²⁶

MALDIVES

- **New armed forces chief appointed; Police chief removed; Gayoom accused of stealing property from Presidential residence**

President Mohammed Nasheed appointed Brig. Moosa Ali Jaleel as the new armed forces chief in place of Maj. Gen. Mohamed Zahir, who took over as the National Security Advisor. Reports suggested that the reason for the change was the Armed Forces Act, which was ratified in April and came into force three months later. The Act makes the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) accountable to the Majlis (parliament) and the law for the first time. Mr. Nasheed also removed the police chief Adam Zahir, who was widely accused of widespread corruption and human rights abuses.²⁷

Reports have also noted that former president Abdul Gayoom has been accused of unlawfully stealing property from the presidential palace. Mr. Gayoom has however rejected the allegations and stated that he “always worked in the best interest of this country.”²⁸

In other developments, the Civil Service Commission cut its staff and suspended the hiring of new employees. Those laid off would be provided with social security and other benefits. Since the new administration took over, the total number of ministries has been reduced by over one-third.²⁹

B. EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

CHINA

- **China calls for reform of the UNSC; Hu urges greater regional cooperation to tide over global economic crisis; US opens its sixth Consulate in Wuhan**

China has called for greater representation of developing countries, especially the countries from Africa, in a reformed UN Security Council (UNSC). This was stated by Liu Zhenmin, Chinese deputy representative to the UN, during a debate on the issue of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the UNSC.³⁰

²⁶ “\$15m US grant for installing radiation detector at Chittagong Port,” *The Daily Star*, November 18, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?id=63792>

²⁷ “Armed Forces Chief Removed,” *Minivan News*, November 19, 2008, at http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5501

²⁸ “Gayoom Denies Stealing From Presidential Palace,” *Minivan News*, November 20, 2008, at http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5529

²⁹ “Civil Service Jobs Cut,” *Minivan News*, November 20, 2008, at http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=5517

³⁰ “China urges greater representation of developing nations in Security Council reform,” *People’s Daily*, November 19, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6536460.html>

President Hu Jintao, at the 16th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Lima, Peru called for regional cooperation in dealing with the global financial crisis.³¹ Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang meanwhile, reacting to the participation of Chinese Taipei, stated that the sovereign members of the (APEC) will handle Chinese Taipei's participation on the principle of One-China policy.³²

Meanwhile, the Strait Exchange Foundation's (SEF) vice-chairman and secretary general, Kao Koong-lian was in China leading a delegation to meet the Taiwanese businessmen operating in Guangdong province. This delegation will have a meeting with their counterpart in Beijing, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).³³

Reports noted that Japan will host a trilateral summit with China and South Korea on December 13 to discuss various global issues, including the financial crisis. The three Prime Ministers will meet at the Khyshu National Museum to deepen cooperation on a range of issues. The first such meeting was planned in September but was postponed due to the abrupt resignation of the then Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.³⁴

In other developments, the United States opened its sixth Consulate on Chinese territory in Wuhan, capital of the Central Hubei Province during the week. The consulate will cover issues related to the three neighbouring provinces of Hunan, Henan and Jiangxi. While it's current functions were restricted to providing emergency services to American citizens as well as promoting American exports, it hopes to advance commercial and economic contacts soon.³⁵

JAPAN

- **Japan likely to end its mission in Iraq by the end of the year; Japan, Canada agree for increased cooperation in Afghanistan; Tokyo considering a naval mission off the Somalian coast**

Reports noted that Japan will hold a National Security Council meeting soon that will in effect end the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift mission in Iraq by the end of the year.³⁶ Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone meanwhile, in a

³¹ "President Hu Jintao attends APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting," *People's Daily*, November 23, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6538653.html>

³² "APEC meetings to handle Chinese Taipei 'under one-China policy'," *People's Daily*, November 20, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6537519.html>

³³ "SEF delegation heads to mainland China to visit Taiwan businessmen," *Central News Agency*, November 20, 2008, at <http://www.cna.com.tw/cnaeng/EnglishTopNews/TopNewsDetail.aspx?TopNewsSerialnum=2816&strTopNewsDate=20081120&strTopNewsID=200811200030>

³⁴ "Japan to host summit with China, S.Korea on financial crisis," *People's Daily*, November 21, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6538313.html>

³⁵ "U.S. opens new consulate general in central China," *People's Daily*, November 21, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6537630.html>

³⁶ "Exit order for Japan's air defense troops in Iraq expected on Nov. 28," *The Associated Press*, November 22, 2008, at http://www.breitbart.com/print.php?id=D94JUCF80&show_article=1

meeting with his Canadian counterpart Lawrence Cannon, has agreed for increasing cooperation between their countries in their missions in Afghanistan.³⁷

Reports also noted that Tokyo was considering sending a naval mission to guard its cargo ships off the Somalian coast where pirates have recently seized several vessels.³⁸

MYANMAR

- **Myanmar-Bangladesh maritime talks fail; Myanmar-China oil pipeline to start in 2009**

Myanmar and Bangladesh failed to resolve their concerns over a disputed maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. The next round of talks will resume in Myanmar in January 2009. The two-day maritime boundary delimitation talks ended inconclusively as both sides refused to change their positions on the method of marking the coastline of the exclusive economic zones. Bangladesh's additional foreign secretary M.A.K. Mahmood told reporters in Dhaka on November 17 that Myanmar's proposed corridor in the Bay was not acceptable and that Dhaka wanted 'equity' to be "the guiding method to settle the issue under the UN [United Nations] Convention on the 1982 Law of the Sea." The January meeting was only four months ahead of the military regime's deadline for maritime demarcation claims to the UN. Myanmar will have to claim the maritime demarcation with Bangladesh by May 21, 2009 while the Bangladeshi deadline is July 27, 2011 under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982).³⁹

Reports noted that the project to build an oil and gas pipeline from Myanmar's southwestern port in Kyaukpyu to China's Yunnan Province will start in early 2009. Under a \$2.5 billion agreement between the two countries, the China National Petrol Corp will have 50.9 per cent stake while state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise will hold the rest. The project, which includes a \$1.5 billion oil pipeline and a \$1.04 billion gas pipeline, was expected to provide an alternative route for China's crude imports from the Middle East and Africa and ease the country's worries of its over-dependence on energy transportation through the Strait of Malacca.

In other developments, Zhang Gaoli, a political bureau member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and his delegation

³⁷ "Japan, Canada agree to step up cooperation on Afghanistan," *The Associated Press*, November 20, 2008, at http://www.breitbart.com/print.php?id=D94IPBV00&show_article=1

³⁸ "Japan To Study Anti-Piracy Mission Near Somalia: Lobbyists," *The Associated Foreign Press*, November 19, 2008, at <http://www.nasdaq.com/aspxcontent/NewsStory.aspx?cpath=20081119\ACQDJON200811190500DOWJONESDJONLINE000388.htm&&mypage=newsheadlines&title=Japan%20To%20Study%20Anti-Piracy%20Mission%20Near%20Somalia%20-%20Lobbyists>

³⁹ "Burma-Bangladesh Maritime Talks Fail," *Irrawaddy*, November 19, 2008, at http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14651

concluded its three-day visit to Myanmar. The Chinese delegation met Prime Minister Gen. Thein Sein in Naypyidaw on November 19.⁴⁰

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **Iran's former prime minister willing to run for president if Khatami opts out; Iran, Afghanistan and the UN Officials meet to discuss measures to counter drug trafficking; UN General Assembly resolution condemns human rights violations in Iran; Larijani urges Baghdad to reject US security pact**

Former Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi stated that if former President Mohammad Khatami stayed out of next years presidential race, he might consider running for the post. Mousavi, who was a senior advisor to Khatami when he was president, however clarified that he favored Khatami's candidacy. Reformists on their part have put pressure on Khatami to run, but he has so far refused to enter the race. Mousavi was Iran's prime minister from 1981 to 1989 when the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was president. The post of prime minister was abolished in an amendment to the constitution in 1989.⁴¹

Iran, Afghanistan and the UN Mission in Kabul meanwhile held their first tripartite meeting on measures to counter drug trafficking from Afghanistan. UN Secretary General's Special representative for Afghanistan, Kai Eide, Iran's Ambassador to Kabul, Fada-Hossein Maleki and the Afghan Minister of Counter Narcotics, Gen. Khodaidad led the respective delegations. Maleki underlined the significance of cooperation in fighting narcotics and called for avoiding a political approach in dealing with the phenomenon. Maleki also noted that Iran had set up 25 checkpoints on the borders with the necessary equipment to counter drug trafficking. The Afghan minister on his part stated that his country was determined to promote cooperation with neighboring countries and NATO to prevent poppy cultivation and drug trafficking.⁴²

A key committee of the UN General Assembly passed resolution condemning human rights violations in Iran, by 70 votes to 51, though 60 countries abstained. The resolution goes to the full assembly next month, but diplomats stated that the outcome was expected to be similar. The nonbinding resolution, urges Iran to end the alleged torture and cruel punishment of detainees, the executions of juveniles, stonings to death, violent repression of women demonstrators, discrimination against ethnic minorities and members of

⁴⁰ "Sino-Burmese Pipeline Work to Begin Soon," *Irrawaddy*, November 21, 2008, at http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14669

⁴¹ "Mir-Hossein says he will 'think' of candidacy if Khatami stays out," *Tehran Times*, November 18, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=182734

⁴² "Iran, Afghanistan, UN discuss anti-narcotic measures," *IRNA*, November 20, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-22/0811203394184009.htm>

the Baha'i faith, and restrictions on freedom of religion and belief. British Ambassador to the UN John Sawers noted that the resolution puts "the spotlight on Iran's very poor human rights record." A Baha'i spokeswoman, Bani Dugal, stated that the assembly action "cleared the way for a thorough investigation of human rights abuses in Iran." She added that the entire seven-member Baha'i national leadership in Iran was being held in a Tehran jail.⁴³

Reports noted that Iran had disrupted a spying ring working on Israel's behalf with the execution of a telecoms engineer, Ali Ashtari, who was convicted in June of spying for Mossad. Officials stated that Ashtari, who had spied for Mossad for three years, was engaged in intercepting communications of Iranian officials working in the military and in its controversial nuclear programme. The case was tried against a backdrop of concerns in Iran that Israel was planning to launch a pre-emptive strike against its nuclear facilities.⁴⁴

In other developments, Parliament speaker Ali Larijani called on Baghdad to resist signing a security pact with US. Larijani charged that the so-called security pact would turn Iraq into another US state. He added that the US was being seen as a rouge state which had fixed its greedy eyes on the wealth of other nations.⁴⁵

IRAQ

- **Security pact between Iraq and the US signed; Protests against pact**

Iraq and the US signed a long-awaited security pact requiring Washington to withdraw its forces by the end of 2011. The pact, which must still be passed by the Iraqi parliament, was signed by Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari and US ambassador Ryan Crocker at a ceremony ending months of negotiations on the future of the US presence. In Washington, Adm. Mike Mullen stated that the US still preferred a withdrawal based on security conditions rather than timetables. The pact commits Washington to withdraw its forces numbering 150,000 troops by December 31, 2011. Reports noted that the decision to include a withdrawal date was taken by the US to make the accord politically palatable in Iraq. The deal also provides a system for Iraqi courts to try US soldiers for serious crimes committed while off duty, but only under very tight conditions.⁴⁶

⁴³ "Iran fails to halt UN assembly rights resolution," *Khaleej Times*, November 22, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/November/middleeast_November429.xml§ion=middleeast

⁴⁴ "Israel spy put to death in Iran," *BBC News*, November 22, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7743638.stm

⁴⁵ "Iraqi nation, gov't should not be deceived by mottos within US security pact - Larijani," *IRNA*, November 18, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-24/0811182662005729.htm>

⁴⁶ "Iraq, US sign pact to pull troops out in 3 years," *Khaleej Times*, November 18, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2008/November/international_November1205.xml§ion=international

Iran has registered its opposition to the deal. Thousands of supporters of the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr also took to the streets in Baghdad to protest against its provisions.⁴⁷

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **High turnout in 1st and 2nd phases of J&K polls**

Defying the boycott call given by separatists, a large number of people turned up for the first and second phase of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir on November 17 and 22. Ten constituencies that went to the polls in the first phase on November 17 recorded a 55 per cent voter turnout. Contrary to expectations of a complete boycott, three constituencies in the Bandipore district witnessed moderate to brisk polling. Polling took place amid stringent security measures, chilly weather, a complete strike and the boycott call given by the Coordination Committee spearheading an anti-election campaign.⁴⁸

Kashmiris yet again defied the separatist boycott call to vote in large numbers in the second phase of polls on November 22. About 65 per cent of the nearly five-lakh electorate voted to decide the fate of 81 candidates, including NC leader Omar Abdullah. Analysts noted that the absence of the militant threat has also contributed to the high voter turnout. For the first time in 20 years, militants have pledged non-violent elections. More than 800 people were killed in the terrorist violence in the run up to polls in 2002.⁴⁹

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **31 Maoists surrender in Andhra Pradesh**

At least 31 Communist Party of India (CPI-Maoist) cadres surrendered before the Superintendent of Police, Akun Sabharwal, in the Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh on November 17. According to Sabharwal, among the 31 cadres, six were in the rank of commanders, three deputy commanders and the rest members.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Iraqis protest against troop deal," *BBC News*, November 21, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7741263.stm

⁴⁸ "55 p.c. turnout in J&K polls," *The Hindu*, November 18, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/18/stories/2008111857590100.htm>

⁴⁹ "65% turnout in second round of J&K polls," *Times of India*, November 23, 2008, at http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/JK_polls_Over_65_turnout_in_phase_II/articleshow/3746845.cms

⁵⁰ "31 Maoists surrender in Andhra Pradesh," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, November 18, 2008, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=11/18/2008#9

NORTHEAST INSURGENCY

- **Shivraj Patil: Assam law and order situation is worrisome; 15 ULFA and NDFB cadres arrested in connection with October 30 serial blasts**

Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil stated that the law-and-order situation in Assam was the worst in the entire north-eastern region. Speaking at the inauguration of the two-day annual conference of police chiefs from all over the country on November 22, Mr. Patil added that Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya were quite peaceful. He further noted that though Tripura had improved nearly 40 per cent, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur continued to suffer.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Assam Government on November 21 announced a slew of measures to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into the state. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi stated that two detention camps to hold those who have been declared foreigners by the tribunals would be set up at Mancachar in Dhubri district and Mahisashan in Karimganj district. Gogoi added that people entering Assam from Bangladesh would henceforth be required to submit their local address, photographs and provide fingerprints at the checkpoints. He also mooted possible fencing along the Bhutan and Myanmar borders.⁵²

In other developments, as many as 15 people, including United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) cadres, were arrested in connection with the October 30 serial blasts in Assam. CM Tarun Gogoi however admitted that though the brain behind the blasts could not be identified as yet, he was sure that the particular group was based in Bangladesh. Discounting the possibility of a Maoist link with the blasts, Mr. Gogoi stated that the possibility of fact Maoists causing trouble in the future could not be ruled out.⁵³

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **Shivraj Patil: No POTA to combat terror**

The Central Government on November 22 asked the States to raise Special Forces to counter terrorism which is fast spreading its tentacles across the country. Inaugurating a two-day meeting of the country's top police officers in New Delhi on November 22, Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil stated that raising specialised forces was the need of the hour. Patil, however, ruled out any possibility of introducing tougher laws like the POTA to deal with the menace. The

⁵¹ "Asom law and order worries Patil," *Sentinel*, November 23, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁵² "Govt moves to curb influx," *Telegraph*, November 22, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1081122/jsp/northeast/story_10144832.jsp

⁵³ "Brain behind blasts in Bangladesh, we need Centre's help: Gogoi," *Sentinel*, November 22, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

Conference was attended by the chiefs of police from all States and Union Territories, para-military forces and security agencies.⁵⁴

Warning that terrorism was a fast-changing phenomenon which was assuming dangerous proportions, Patil noted that terror groups could resort to “nuclear, biological and chemical devices” in future. He called on the police forces to be better prepared to deal with these kinds of situations. The minister bemoaned the poor utilisation of central funds by the states for police modernization and called on the states to strengthen their intelligence mechanism.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ “No POTA to combat terror: Shivraj Patil,” *The Hindu*, November 22, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200811221180.htm>

⁵⁵ “Beware changing face of terror: Patil,” *The Hindu*, November 23, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/23/stories/2008112359760900.htm>