

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

February 18-24, 2(4), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- *Turkey launches fresh attacks against PKK rebels inside Iraq, UN, US urge restraint; Sadr asks Mahdi Army militia to extend ceasefire by another 6 months*

Turkey attacked PKK positions inside northern Iraq during the week involving nearly 10,000 troops and backed by fighter jets. Reports noted that nearly 80 rebels and over 5 Turkish troops had died in the ongoing operations.¹ The PKK on its part claimed that over 20 Turkish soldiers had died and that it had also downed an attack helicopter. While Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdogan asserted that the operation would be 'limited', Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshayr Zebari charged that the operation was an 'escalation' and asked Turkey to withdraw its troops from Iraqi territory.²

UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon expressed concern over the developments and called for "utmost restraint, and for respect of the international borders between Iraq and Turkey." The United States again urged both Turkey and Iraq to cooperate in dealing with the PKK threat.³ Defence Secretary Robert Gates noted that military attacks will not solve the problem and called on Ankara to take political and economic measures to address the concerns of the Kurds so that the rebels would not be able to draw on popular support.⁴

In domestic developments, Moqtada Al Sadr asked his Shiite militia, the Mahdi Army, to extend its ceasefire by another 6 months generating hopes that violence levels would continue to fall. However, sporadic incidents of violence continued to claim lives across the country. 8 Iraqi soldiers and 3 American soldiers were killed in different parts of Baghdad on February 19. A barrage of rockets at the US military base in the capital during the week also claimed over 5 lives. US and Iraqi security forces also accounted for 14 Al Qaeda militants in the city of Samarra, north of Baghdad.

¹ "49 killed during Turkish army incursion in northern Iraq," *IANS*, February 23, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080223/r_t_ians_wl_europe/twl-49-killed-during-turkish-army-incurs-ef5d19c.html

² "Turkish Troops Enter Iraq in Pursuit of Kurdish Militants," *The New York Times*, February 23, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/23/world/middleeast/23turkey.html?ref=todayspaper>

³ "U.N. urges Turkey to respect Iraq's border," *Reuters*, February 23, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080223/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-u-n-urges-turkey-to-respect-iraq-s-b-d4a870c.html

⁴ "Turkish strike won't solve PKK problem - U.S.'s Gates," *Reuters*, February 24, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080224/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-turkish-strike-won-t-solve-pkk-probl-d4a870c.html

CHINA

- *China expresses apprehension over Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence; China asserts it is concerned over the situation in Darfur*

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao expressed grave apprehension over Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and noted that its action could result in "negative influence on peace and stability in the Balkan region and particularly on the realization of building a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo." He further added that China was in favour of resolving the Kosovo crisis through a mutually acceptable plan of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia under the framework of international law.⁵ Later, the Foreign Ministry official stressed that the UNSC Resolution 1244 was "still the political and legal basis of resolving the issue of Kosovo's status."⁶

Reacting to Steven Spielberg's decision to withdraw from his position as the Beijing Olympics artistic advisor due to China's ties with Sudan, the Chinese Ambassador to Sudan Li Chengwen asserted that China was "very concerned over the Darfur issue" and that Beijing has been working closely with the UN to end the crisis through "political means."⁷ The special representative of the Chinese government on the Darfur issue, Liu Guijin also noted that China had "adopted a high degree of restraint in its arms sale to developing countries, including Sudan."⁸

Reports also indicated that the Chinese government had intensified its crackdown in the Xinjiang region ahead of the Olympics, with the police killing two persons of a terrorist gang and arresting 15 others in the previous month in Urumqi, capital of northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.⁹

JAPAN

- *Chinese and Japanese Vice Foreign Ministers discuss East China Sea issue; Maritime Self-Defence Force Chief dismissed over an incident of collision over a destroyer and a fishing boat*

Xinhua reported that China and Japan had agreed to strive for an early settlement of the East China Sea issue. This was discussed and agreed by both the parties during a two-day long high-level strategic exchange mechanism between the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Japanese counterpart Mitoji Yabunaka which focused on enhancing mutual trust between

⁵ "China 'deeply concerned' over Kosovo's declaration of independence", *People's Daily*, February 18, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6355852.html>

⁶ "China says UN resolution is 'political, legal basis' for Kosovo issue", *People's Daily*, February 19, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6356823.html>

⁷ "China's role in Darfur positive", *People's Daily*, February 18, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6355644.html>

⁸ "Chinese envoy: Western media exaggerate China's limited arms sale to Sudan", *People's Daily*, February 23, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6359295.html>

⁹ "Chinese police kill 2 terrorists, arrest 15 others", *People's Daily*, February 18, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6356151.html>

the two countries.¹⁰ However, *Japan Today* reported that the Vice-ministers from both the countries had failed in their talks to find a way to resolve the long-standing dispute over the development of gas fields in the East China Sea.¹¹

The Japanese Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba dismissed Maritime Self-Defence Force Chief of Staff Adm. Eiji Yoshikawa over the incident of a collision between a high-tech Aegis destroyer *Atago* and a fishing boat *Seitoku Maru* which left two fishermen missing. Reports noted that the Minister was particularly unhappy about the delay on the part of Adm. Yoshikawa in notifying him and the Prime Minister about the incident. Prime Minister Fukuda also ordered the Defence Minister to fundamentally reform the ministry as criticism grew over its handling of the collision.¹²

MYANMAR

- *NLD rejects Government's referendum plans; Gambari expresses optimism on finding a solution; India: Sanctions would not achieve the goal of peace and stability*

Reports noted that the National League for Democracy (NLD) rejected the military government's referendum and election plans, asserting that these would not lead to democratic reforms and that it was another tactic by the junta to extend military rule.¹³ The government however announced on February 19 that a draft of the new constitution had been completed and that it would be put for a referendum in May and that elections would follow in 2010.¹⁴ Reports also noted that Suu Kyi would not be allowed to take part in the proposed elections as she had been married to a foreigner.¹⁵

Meanwhile, UN special envoy to Burma Ibrahim Gambari expressed optimism towards seeking a solution to Myanmar's political problems as he started his latest round of visits to various Asian capitals, including Singapore, Indonesia, and Japan.¹⁶ India, which had asked the Myanmar government to

¹⁰ "Strategic dialogue: China, Japan agree to resolve East China Sea issue early", *LA Daily*, February 24, 2008, at <http://english.pladaily.com.cn/>

¹¹ "Japan-China talks fail to resolve gas field dispute", *Japan Today*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/429060>

¹² "Ishiba fires MSDF chief after Fukuda orders drastic reform of Defense Ministry", *Japan Today*, February 23, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/428895>

¹³ "Mizzima News: NLD rejects Burmese junta's referendum and election plan - Maung Dee," *Burma Net*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/18/mizzima-news-nld-rejects-burmese-juntas-referendum-and-election-plan-maung-dee/#more-11115>

¹⁴ "BBC News: Burma confirms draft constitution", *Burma Net*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/19/bbc-news-burma-confirms-draft-constitution/#more-11132>

¹⁵ "Washington Post via Reuters: Myanmar to bar Suu Kyi from 2010 polls: report - Saheed Azhar," *Burma Net*, February 20, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/20/washington-post-via-reuters-myanmar-to-bar-suu-kyi-from-2010-polls-report-%e2%80%93-saheed-azhar/#more-11150>

¹⁶ "Reuters: Gambari starts Asian tour," *Burma Net*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/18/reuters-gambari-starts-asian-tour/#more-11102>

allow Gambari to visit the country, on its part maintained that sanctions would not achieve the goal of peace and stability in Myanmar.¹⁷

In other developments, international interlocutors like the European Union again threatened further punitive measures against the military regime.¹⁸ Thailand expressed its support for UN efforts to mediate a solution and stated that it would raise the Myanmar issue at the regional ministerial meeting of ASEAN in Singapore.¹⁹

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- *Over 35 killed in another deadly suicide attack near Kandahar; Scheffer: Militants inflicting greater casualties to influence public opinion in NATO countries*

Following the deadly suicide attack on February 17 on the outskirts of Kandahar which claimed over 100 lives, another deadly attack in Spinboldak near Kandahar on February 19 killed nearly 40 civilians and injured as many people.²⁰ The bomber had targeted a convoy of Canadian troops in the vicinity. With a car bomb exploding the very next day killing one civilian, Kandahar was experiencing the biggest spurt of such deadly attacks since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Reports noted that the rising levels of violence had claimed over 6,000 people in 2007.²¹

The Canadian Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hilier on his part noted that the Taliban was targeting the Canadian troops to prevent the extension of their stay in the country beyond February 2009.²² Canada had about 2,500 troops in the country. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, addressing the media in Kabul along with President Hamid Karzai on February 21 stated that the militants were inflicting greater casualties in order to influence public opinion in NATO countries.²³

¹⁷ "Times of India: India persuades Myanmar to let UN envoy visit," *Burma Net*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/18/times-of-india-india-persuades-myanmar-to-let-un-envoy-visit/#more-11106>

¹⁸ "Mizzima News: EU reiterates calls for reform in Burma," *Burma Net*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/19/mizzima-news-eu-reiterates-calls-for-reform-in-burma/#more-11121>

¹⁹ "TNA: Thailand to raise Myanmar issue at ASEAN retreat," *Burma Net*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/02/19/tna-thailand-to-raise-myanmar-issue-at-asean-retreat/#more-11123>

²⁰ "Suicide Attack Kills 36 in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/19/world/asia/19afghan.html?ref=todayspaper>

²¹ "Seven killed in roadside bombing in Afghanistan," *IANS*, February 23, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080223/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-seven-killed-in-roadside-bombing-in-d5d6288.html

²² "Taliban sees Canada vulnerable for now - general," *Reuters*, February 23, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080223/r_t_rtrs_wl_us/twl-taliban-sees-canada-vulnerable-for-n-d4a870c.html

²³ "NATO Chief Warns of Threats to Afghan Mission," *The New York Times*, February 22, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/22/world/asia/22afghan.html?ref=todayspaper>

PAKISTAN

- *PPP and PML-N emerge victorious, to form a coalition government; PPP's Fahim likely to be the new Prime Minister; US reiterates Musharraf's role in the new government*

In the general elections held on February 18, the PPP won 88 and the PML-N 65 out of the total of 268 seats that were contested. The results inflicted a crushing defeat on PML-Q backed by President Musharraf.²⁴ Reports stated that talks were still on for the formation of a coalition government comprising of the PPP and PML-N, which would also likely include the Awami National Party (ANP).²⁵ The PPP on its part endorsed Makhdoom Amin Fahim as its prime ministerial candidate on February 22. The party also took a stand that the newly elected National Assembly would take a decision on the issue of deposed judges.²⁶

The election process which was otherwise peaceful claimed the lives of at least 19 people and injured 157.²⁷ Nevertheless, the Commonwealth Secretary General Don Mckinnon, in a message to the Secretary of the Election commission in Pakistan welcomed the conduct of the elections and acknowledged that they were 'fair and peaceful'.²⁸

US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher on his part asserted that Washington still backed a strong role for President Musharraf in the new government.²⁹ The American and British envoys in Islamabad also met with members of the PPP and the PML-N on February 22 and discussed issues relating to the formation of a government.³⁰

Meanwhile, efforts were initiated in the troubled area of North Waziristan to restore a controversial peace deal which was earlier criticized as being lenient to the demands of the militants. The decision to this effect was taken after the authorities and the tribal leaders reached a consensus in a meeting at agency headquarters in Miramshah on February 24.³¹

²⁴ Raja Asghar, "PPP, PML-N in sight of magical number," *Dawn*, February 20, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/20/top1.htm>

²⁵ "Nawaz, Zardari agree to form coalition govt," *Daily Times*, February 22, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\22\story_22-2-2008_pg1_1

²⁶ "PPP endorses Fahim, says NA to decide on judges," *Daily Times*, February 23, 2008 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\02\23\story_23-2-2008_pg1_1

²⁷ "19 killed, 157 injured in violence, says minister," *Dawn*, February 19, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/19/top6.htm>

²⁸ "C'wealth praises peaceful election," *Dawn*, February 23, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/23/top8.htm>

²⁹ Anwar Iqbal, "Musharraf has a role in new set-up: US," *Dawn*, February 23, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/23/top2.htm>

³⁰ Raja Asghar, "Pressure on Asif, Nawaz to work with president," *Dawn*, February 23, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/23/top1.htm>

³¹ "Peace agreement revived in North Waziristan," *Dawn*, February 18, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/18/top3.htm>

BANGLADESH

- *Bangladesh Army Chief visits India; AL urges government to lift emergency by March 2008*

Gen. Moeen U Ahmed started a six-day visit to India on February 24 becoming the first Bangladesh army chief to visit India. Border security among other issues will be discussed during his visit seen an attempt to boost military-to-military ties between the two neighbours.³² Bangladesh Rifles on its part reported that the BSF had shot dead 5 Bangladeshi traders during the week at various places on the border.³³

In domestic developments, a Dhaka court rejected the bail petition of former premier Khaleda Zia on February 20 even as the Awami League (AL) urged the caretaker government to lift the emergency by March 2008 and also announce the date for the parliamentary elections.³⁴

In other developments, a 125-member contingent of Bangladesh police left for Congo on February 22 to join the UN peacekeeping mission in Monuc.³⁵

NEPAL

- *MJF not to participate in elections as its demand for a single Madhes province gets rejected; Indian Embassy denies a meeting was held between UMDF and the Nepali Congress*

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) decided to continue its agitation in response to a statement made by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala who had rejected the MJF'S demands for a single Madhes province and the right to self determination.³⁶ It also announced that it would not participate in the forthcoming elections. The United Madhesi Democratic Front, which was formed to hold talks with the government on the rights of the minorities, has meanwhile decided to go for an indefinite strike as the situation in the Terai region continued to deteriorate. Fulfillment of the six points' demands was at the core of the agenda of the UMDF.³⁷

In a related development, India has been accused by the Seven Party Alliance of feeding money into the Terai region to aggravate the situation. The allegation has reportedly come from C.P. Mainali, president of the United Left Front who stated that the information was based on "personal communication

³² "Gen Moeen goes to India today on 6-day visit," *The Daily Star*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=24674>

³³ "BSF kills four on Thakurgaon Satkhira, borders," *The Daily Star*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=24679>

³⁴ "Khaleda denied bail," *The Daily Star*, February 21, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=24270>

³⁵ "125 policemen leave for Congo to join UN mission," *The Daily Star*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=24739>

³⁶ "MJF leader vows to continue agitation in Madhes," *Nepal News*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb18/news01.php>

³⁷ "Situation in Terai, east worsens as strike continues," *Nepal News*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb18/news04.php>

with the Indian consulate based in Birgunj.”³⁸ The Indian Embassy has however denied allegations of a meeting mediated by it between the UMDF and the Nepali Congress.³⁹

Prachanda has meanwhile called announced that alternative will be sought by the Seven Party Alliance if fruitful talks by the Seven Party Alliance fail to materialize.⁴⁰ Meanwhile the Madhesi Jana Dhikar Forum has announced publicly that it would not participate in the forthcoming elections unless their demand for a single Madhes province is realized.⁴¹

SRI LANKA

- *ICG blames LTTE and Colombo with human rights violations; Developmental aid package of Rs. 500 million for the East announced; Colombo: Kosovo secession could pose serious threat to international peace*

With fighting between the LTTE and the government forces escalating, Defence spokesman Minister Keheliya Rambukkwella proposed an ‘escape gateway’ for the trapped civilians in the Wanni region.⁴² The International Crisis Group meanwhile in a recent report has blamed the LTTE for the failure of the ceasefire agreement.⁴³ It has also accused both the Sri Lankan government as well as the LTTE for human rights violations, stating that the “government’s desire to defeat the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] and end the war definitively is understandable. But by failing to protect human rights or share power with moderate, unarmed Tamil and Muslim political forces, its military approach have strengthened extremists on both sides in an escalating cycle of violence.”⁴⁴ The government announced an aid package for the eastern part of the country worth Rs. 500 million for livelihood-based development activities, the biggest amount ever allocated to the region.⁴⁵

UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Angela Kane visited the country during the week. She met with leaders of the All Party

³⁸ “India shelling out big money to intensify Terai agitation: Mainali”, *Nepal News*, February 24, 2008, at: <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb24/news12.php>

³⁹ “Indian embassy ‘mediates’ talks between NC leaders and UDMF,” *Nepal News*, February 21, 2008, at: <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb21/news04.php>

⁴⁰ “Prachanda says parties will consider alternatives if talks fail to resolve Terai crisis,” *Nepal News*, February 20, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb20/news14.php>

⁴¹ “Madhesi parties again snub EC’s deadline to submit closed list of candidates,” *Nepal News*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/feb/feb24/news09.php>

⁴² “Sri Lanka government to open an escape route for civilians fleeing from Wanni,” *ColomboPage*, February 19, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/February1950448JV.html

⁴³ “International Crisis Group says Sri Lanka pushed towards war due to LTTE violence,” *Colombo Page* February 20, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/February2145425JV.html

⁴⁴ “LTTE to blame, says NGO,” *The Hindu*, 21 February, 2008, at: <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/21/stories/2008022155771500.htm>

⁴⁵ “Sri Lanka government allocates 500 million rupees to develop Eastern region,” *Colombo Page*, February 18, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/February18122848CH.html

Representative's Committee (APRC) and reviewed the work of the UN Country Team.⁴⁶

In other developments, Sri Lanka has refused to endorse the secession of Kosovo from Serbia maintaining that it could pose a serious threat to international peace. Colombo stated that the action by Kosovo was "a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States."⁴⁷

2. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- *India-IAEA hold another round of negotiations on India-specific safeguards; Kakodkar: India will go ahead with nuclear deal regardless of regime change in the US; India-Russia draft civil nuclear cooperation agreement drawn up*

Developments on the Indo-US nuclear deal front heated up again with India and the IAEA deciding to hold another round of negotiations on India-specific safeguards from February 25, 2008. Reports indicated that Indian negotiators have so far been unsuccessful in getting the IAEA to agree for an uninterrupted fuel supply guarantee. The current round of negotiations was expected to go on till the end of February.⁴⁸

In other developments, several Indian officials have tried to play down the statements from US officials regarding the need to speed up the process of operationalising the Indo-US nuclear deal. Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy for instance stated that "efforts to ensure success of the Indo-US nuclear deal would go on regardless of regime change in the US."⁴⁹ Dr. Kakodkar also noted that as a safeguards agreement was being negotiated with the IAEA for the 'first time', several complex issues needed to be sorted out before negotiations could be concluded.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, a Russian Foreign Ministry official stated that a civil nuclear cooperation deal between Russia and India had been drawn up and could be signed in the near future. Earlier this month, both the countries had initialed an agreement to construct four reactors at Koodankulam nuclear power plant site.⁵¹

⁴⁶ "Top UN official arrives in Sri Lanka," *Colombo Page*, February 20, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/February20124758JV.html

⁴⁷ "Sri Lanka says secession of Kosovo regrettable," *Colombo Page*, February 18, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/February18125219CH.html

⁴⁸ "As US deadline nears, India to hold talks with IAEA today," *Economic Times*, February 25, 2008, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-2810874,prtpage-1.cms>

⁴⁹ "Regime change in US won't affect talks: Kakodkar," *Times of India*, February 19, 2008, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-2793274,prtpage-1.cms>

⁵⁰ "Nuke safeguards are complex issues: India," *The Hindu*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200802182042.htm>

⁵¹ "Russian-Indian nuclear deal ready for signing," *RIA Novosti*, February 21, 2008, at <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080221/99791896.html>

IRAN

- *IAEA Director General submits new report on Iran to the Board of Governors; Iran says that it has provided IAEA with data about the new IR-2 centrifuges at Natanz*

The IAEA Director General Mohammed ElBaradei submitted his report on Iran to the IAEA Board of Governors on February 22, positively noting that Iran had provided answers to several unresolved questions. It does note that there were still several sensitive questions relating to the alleged nuclear weapons programme that remain unresolved.⁵²

In other news, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad-Ali Hosseini asserted that Iran had provided the IAEA with data about the new generation of centrifuges at Natanz. He added that all of Iran's nuclear activities were within the framework of the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards.⁵³

NORTH KOREA

- *China makes efforts to take the stalled de-nuclearisation process forward; Hill meets North Korean nuclear envoy in Beijing; Pyongyang asks Tokyo to leave the Six-Party talks*

Efforts were made this week to take the stalled North Korean de-nuclearisation process forward. Wang Jiarui, Director of the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee met Korean leader Kim Jong-Il to press Pyongyang to resume the denuclearisation process in light of the forthcoming US elections.⁵⁴

Christopher Hill, the US envoy to the North Korean denuclearisation process stated that Pyongyang should provide the complete declaration of its activities for the process to move forward.⁵⁵ Ambassador Hill was speaking to reporters after his meeting in Beijing with Kim Kye Gwan, the North Korean nuclear envoy to the denuclearisation process.

In other developments, North Korea has indicated that it would need more aid before it moves forward on the denuclearisation process. This was disclosed to reporters by Siegfried Hecker, a Stanford University physicist, and Joel Wit, a former State Department expert who recently visited Pyongyang.⁵⁶

Pyongyang has also called on Japan to withdraw from the Six-Party talks, charging Tokyo for lacking the "political ability" to deal with the issue. The

⁵² "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," GOV/2008/4, February 22, 2008, at http://www.isis-online.org/publications/iran/IAEA_Iran_Report_22Feb2008.pdf

⁵³ "Iran provides IAEA with information on new centrifuges," IRNA, February 17, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/menu-234/0802174859121820.htm>

⁵⁴ "China urges N. Korea to resume nuke talks before US vote," *Channel News Asia*, February 17, 2008, at http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/329317/1/.html

⁵⁵ "N. Korea must provide complete declaration to revive nuke talks, US envoy says," *International Herald Tribune*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=10134970>

⁵⁶ Joe McDonald, "N. Korea Wants Aid Before Nuclear Report," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/16/AR2008021600674_pf.html

official Korean Central News Agency cited Minju Joson, a member of the North Korean cabinet as stating that Japan was “taking much pain to turn the Six-Party talks into a platform for confrontation.”⁵⁷

3. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

UNION HOME MINISTER SHIVRAJ PATIL: PRIVATE SECURITY AGENCIES HELP NEEDED TO CONTAIN TERROR

- *Private agencies and individuals need to augment government's efforts*

As India continues to face the terror threat, Minister Shivraj Patil on February 17 called for the cooperation of individuals and private security agencies to augment the government's efforts towards surveillance and protection. He also appreciated the role of private security agencies in providing security to many organizations across the country.⁵⁸

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- *Chief of Army Staff: Infiltration on decline but number of attempts up*

Army Chief Gen. Deepak Kapoor in an interview to CNN-IBN on February 23 noted that although infiltration of militants from across the Line of Control in J and K was on decline, the number of attempts had gone up in the recent past. General Kapoor also expressed concern about the use of the Army to handle internal insurgencies and communal disturbances, stating that it undermined the deterrence effect of the troops. He called for the Army to be used only “as a last resort and for a minimal period.”

Speaking on China, General Kapoor noted that the so-called ‘string of pearls’ may not necessarily be seen as an attempt to encircle India. He however noted the Chinese military build-up and admitted that there were incursions into China from the Indian side as well.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, reports indicated that nearly 3000 youths from different parts of J and K were undergoing training in various terrorist camps in the Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.⁶⁰

Elsewhere, a CRPF personal, Mudasir Yusuf, was arrested from Pulwama on February 20 for allegedly carrying hand grenades and IEDs for terrorists

⁵⁷ Ed Johnson, “North Korea Says Japan Should Quit Nuclear Talks,” *Bloomberg*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=akPkZnXiPgFE&refer=japan>

⁵⁸ “Private security agencies help needed to contain terror: Patil”, *Daily Excelsior*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb18/news.htm#1>

⁵⁹ “Infiltration on decline but attempts up: Army Chief”, *Daily Excelsior*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb24/news.htm#1>

⁶⁰ “Latram in command of Kashmir ultras in PoK”, *Daily Excelsior*, February 21, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08feb21/news.htm#6>

operating in the Kashmir Valley. He is suspected to have links with the Hizbul Mujahideen.⁶¹

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- *Six militants killed in Manipur encounter; NSA: Naga peace process has slowed down*

In Manipur, as many as six United National Liberation Front (UNLF) cadres were killed in an encounter with the security forces along the Indo-Myanmar border in Chandel district on February 23. This was one of the major successes achieved by the security forces after the flush-out operation in Somtali in Chandel district.⁶²

Meanwhile, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan, speaking at Kohima on February 18, admitted that the Naga peace process had slowed down. He stated that the parleys could only move forward if the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) agreed to accept a solution within the Constitution's broad parameters.⁶³

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- *20 Maoists gunned down in Orissa; Six CRPF personnel and 11 Maoist killed in Chattisgarh*

A day after some 600 Maoists stormed a local police training school, district armoury and three police stations in Orissa's Nayagarh district, as many as 20 Maoists were gunned down during the combing operation by the security forces in border area of Nayagarh-Ganjam-Kandhamal districts of Orissa, between February 16 and 17. Three policemen were also killed in the operation.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the Maoist attack in Nayagarh, policemen in Orissa demanded declaration of the entire state as Maoist-affected instead of identifying only some districts as prone to Maoist violence. Blaming the Orissa Government for the recent upsurge in Maoist violence, the Orissa Police Association (OPA) and the Orissa Havildar, Constable and Sepoys' Confederation demanded adequate fortification of police stations and armouries across the state.⁶⁵

⁶¹ "CRPF jawan arrested for terror links", *The Times of India*, February 22, 2008, at http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/CRPF_jawan_arrested_for_terror_links/articleshow/2802643.cms

⁶² "Six UNLF rebels killed in Manipur - Major success after Somtali flush-out" *Telegraph*, February 24, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080224/jsp/northeast/story_8939730.jsp

⁶³ "Naga peace process has slowed down: Narayanan", *Sentinel*, February 19, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁶⁴ "20 Maoists gunned down", *Hindu*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/18/stories/2008021859930100.htm>

⁶⁵ "Declare state Naxal-affected: Police association", *Indian Express*, February 18, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/274135.html>

Elsewhere in Chhattisgarh's Bastar forests, as many as six Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel and 11 Maoists were killed in two separate incidents of gun battles between security forces and extremists on February 18.⁶⁶

In West Bengal, The police arrested a top Maoist leader and the CPI-Maoist state secretary Somen alias Himadri Sen Roy, from Hridaypur railway station in North 24-Parganas on February 23. Since the formation of CPI-Maoist, Somen had been overseeing its Bengal operations.⁶⁷

The Bihar Police seized 6,000 kilograms of explosives, including 40,000 gelatine sticks and 8,640 detonators belonging to Maoist insurgents from a truck in the Nawada district on February 23.⁶⁸

ARREST OF BANGALORE-BASED SOFTWARE ENGINEER FOR SIMI LINKS

- *Suspected to be a top functionary of SIMI for 8 years*

A Bangalore-based software engineer, Mohammed Yahya Kammakutty alias Yahya Khan, who was arrested for his suspected terror links on February 21 was stated to be a top functionary of the proscribed Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) for the last eight years. Reports indicated that he came into contact with SIMI while he was studying at the Regional Engineering College in Kozhikode.⁶⁹

IV. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

IRANIAN COMPANY BIDS FOR TWO INDIAN OFFSHORE OIL BLOCKS

- *Projects worth \$1 billion each*

Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC) submitted bids for two offshore oil blocks in India. IOEC would be competing with companies from France, Italy, South Korea and the United States for the projects which were worth \$1.1 billion each.⁷⁰

LPG SHORTFALL IMPROVES

- *IOC to resume new connections from March 1 if situation continued to improve*

The ensuing LPG supply crisis seems to have abated as market leader Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) dramatically increased the supply of LPG cylinders. In the past few weeks, customers had to wait for around 10 days beyond the 21

⁶⁶ "11 Maoists, 6 CRPF jawans killed in Chhattisgarh gunbattles", *Hindu*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/19/stories/2008021960610100.htm>

⁶⁷ "Maoist top gun lands in net", *Telegraph*, February 24, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080224/jsp/frontpage/story_8942051.jsp

⁶⁸ "6,000 kg explosives seized in Bihar", *Hindu*, February 24, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/24/stories/2008022456980100.htm>

⁶⁹ "Arrested engineer is 'top SIMI functionary'", *Hindu*, February 23, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/23/stories/2008022360850100.htm>

⁷⁰ "Iran makes bid for two Indian oil tenders," *Tehran Times*, February 22, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=163760

days restriction period for refill supplies of LPG cylinders. Reports noted that the gap had now come down to 2-3 days beyond the mandatory three week period before the next filling. Senior officials in the company told the media that the company and its distributors were working even on Sundays to clear the backlog. They noted that the IOC would resume issuing of new connections from March 1 if the present situation continued to improve.⁷¹

CRUDE OIL CROSSES \$100

- *Third time oil prices crossed the \$100-a-barrel mark*

Reaching the psychological barrier, crude oil closed above \$100-a-barrel, which was an all-time record in nominal terms. The prices rose by \$4.51 to close at \$100.01 on the New York Mercantile Exchange, after going as high as \$100.10 in trading during the day, the third time in the year that oil prices crossed the \$100-a-barrel barrier during a trading day.⁷²

Reports indicated that the legal standoff between Hugo Chavez and Exxon Mobil during the last few weeks – with the former threatening to cut off oil exports of the US – was a factor in the price rise. An explosion in a refinery at Texas also brought back memories of the rise in the previous year after a similar incident. Other factors contributing to the price rise include burgeoning demand from China and India, production shortfalls in Nigeria and Iraq and fears of further production cut from the OPEC.

INDIA'S ANSWER TO THE BIO-FUEL CONUNDRUM: SWEET SORGHUM 'JOWAR'

- *ICRISAT promotes Sweet Sorghum as part of its Bio-Power Strategy*

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is promoting through its 'Bio-Power' strategy the 'smart crop' for bio-fuels production - Sweet sorghum or Jowar. Among its advantages being touted include the crop being used as both a food and a fuel source, its ability to grow in drier regions and tolerant to heat and drought. The crop was also stated to be carbon neutral as one hectare of sweet sorghum absorbs and emits about 45 tonnes of carbon.⁷³

⁷¹ N. Ravi Kumar, "Wait period for LPG refill comes down," *The Hindu*, February 23, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/02/23/stories/2008022357190100.htm>

⁷² Clifford Kraus, "Oil closes above \$100 for the first time," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/19/business/worldbusiness/19cnd-oil.html?_r=1&ex=1361163600&en=22a7c84f2672bbbd&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&oref=slogin

⁷³ "Indian research body promotes sweet sorghum as bio-fuel," February 18, 2008, at www.indiaedunews.net/Science/Indian_research_body_promotes_sweet_sorghum_as_bio-fuel_3455/