

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

March 31-April 13, 4(1-2), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- **Iraq dismisses 1,300 security force personnel for poor performance during Basra operations; Gates: Sadr not an enemy if he plays a 'peaceful' role in Iraqi politics; Gen. Petraeus: Iraq situation 'fragile and reversible'**

After 6 days of fighting which killed over 200 people and injured nearly 600, Moqtada Al-Sadr called on his followers to stop fighting the Iraqi and coalition forces in Basra on March 30. Reports noted that the suspension of the fighting was a blow to the authority of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki who had vowed not to stop the offensive until the militias were neutralized.¹ In return for the suspension, Sadr demanded a general amnesty to his followers and a release of members of his organization not convicted of crimes. The fighting in Basra, seen as an attempt by Mr. Maliki to rein in the Sadrists ahead of the provincial elections in October, once again exposed the rift between Iraq's major Shiite factions. It also showed the Iraqi security forces in poor light as the Iraqi government had to dismiss over 1,300 security personnel for their lack of performance or refusal to fight during the Basra offensive.²

PM Maliki threatened further raids against militias on April 4 but again went back on his decision "in order to give a chance to those who have repented and want to lay down their weapons."³ However, fighting in Sadr City on the outskirts of Baghdad between government forces and Sadr followers escalated after that leading to the death of over 80 people. The violence subsided later in the week. Sadr also called for a million-man march to protest against the American occupation on its fifth anniversary, a decision which he later did not carry out fearing attacks against his supporters from the American and Iraqi forces.⁴ US Defence Secretary Robert Gates on his part told reporters in Pentagon that Sadr will not be treated as an enemy of the United States if he chose to play a peaceful role in Iraqi politics.⁵

In other developments, Gen. David Petraeus, appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 8 termed the situation in Iraq as "fragile and reversible" and called for a decision on further troop withdrawals to be

¹ "Cleric Suspends Battle in Basra by Shiite Militia," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/31/world/middleeast/31iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

² "Iraq sacks 1,300 police and soldiers in south," *Reuters*, April 13, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080413/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-iraq-sacks-1-300-police-and-soldiers-2186892.html

³ "Iraqi Premier Suspends Government Raids on Militias," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/05/world/middleeast/05iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁴ "Militant Cleric Postpones Big Baghdad Protest," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁵ "Sadr not U.S. enemy if he sticks to politics: Gates," *Reuters*, April 12, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080412/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-sadr-not-u-s-enemy-if-he-sticks-to-p-2186892.html

delayed.⁶ President Bush on April 10 endorsed the recommendation of Gen. Petraeus of a 45-day freeze after the current troop drawdown before any further withdrawals were undertaken.⁷ Mr. Bush and the US Ambassador to Baghdad Ryan Crocker also called on Arab nations to be more pro-active in their engagement with Baghdad. President Bush sent diplomatic envoys to Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates urging them to follow the example of Bahrain which had recently opened its embassy in Baghdad.⁸

CHINA

- **Beijing criticizes US Senate resolution on Tibet; Taiwanese Vice-President meets Hu at the Baao Forum; FICCI: India and China should cooperate in agricultural research to fight rising food prices; UAE Prime Minister meets Wen**

The Chinese government strongly opposed the resolution passed by the US Senate which criticized the Chinese government's action over the Tibetan protests. Jiang Yu, the government spokeswoman charged that the resolution "persistently favored the Dalai clique and interfered with China's internal affairs."⁹ The Chinese government meanwhile released a 25-minute documentary portraying life of people in the autonomous region between 1951 and 1959, a period when Tibet was still under a feudal system.¹⁰ In a report the previous week, the *People's Daily*, quoting a Tibetan researcher with the Tibetan Academy of Social Science, Basang Wangdui, stated that the March 14 Lhasa riots had exposed the Dalai Lama's 'hypocrisy' in claiming peace and non-violence. Wangdui argued that the Dalai Lama's "activities were against China's Laws."¹¹ In a related development, the Chinese government announced that it will spend some 1.2 billion yuan (about \$160 million) in 2008 on a logistics centre for the Qinghai-Tibet railway.¹²

The newly-elected Taiwanese Vice-president Vincent Siew met the Chinese President Hu Jintao during the Boao Forum for Asia. Stating that the economic and trade exchanges between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan were at a historic opportunity, Hu expressed his happiness over the Nationalist Party's

⁶ "Petraeus Urges Halt in Weighing New Cut in Force," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/09/washington/09petraeus.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁷ "Bush halts Iraq troop cuts, says war 'not endless'," *Reuters*, April 11, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080411/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-bush-halts-iraq-troop-cuts-says-war-2186892.html

⁸ "Bush Dispatches Envoys to Arab Capitals as Part of Iraq Plan," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/11/washington/11terror.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁹ "FM spokeswoman: China strongly opposes U.S. Senate's Tibet resolution," *People's Daily*, April 14, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6392430.html>

¹⁰ "Documentary 'The past of Tibet' sheds new light on Tibet," *People's Daily*, April 14, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90002/93607/93701/6392300.html>

¹¹ "Dalai Lama has 'never done anything good'," *People's Daily*, April 4, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6386610.html>

¹² "China to spend 1.2 bln yuan on logistics hub for Tibet railway," *People's Daily*, April 9, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6389525.html>

(Kuomintang) victory in the recently concluded elections. Hu affirmed that Beijing would continue to promote cross-strait economic and cultural exchanges, make efforts to push forward negotiations on weekend charter flights and facilitate the mainland tourists' travel to Taiwan, apart from stepped up efforts to restart cross-Straits negotiations.¹³

In an interview to *Xinhua* during the Boao Forum for Asia, Amit Mitra, Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) called upon both the countries to “collaborate in agricultural research, agricultural extension and agricultural technologies” at a time of rising food prices and inflation.¹⁴

The Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum visited Beijing on April 3. After his meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the two countries agreed to expand their cooperation in both economic as well as in non-economic areas. Wen reiterated that the UAE was one of China's “most important economic partners in the Gulf region, serving as a transfer center for Chinese products to the Middle East and African markets.” Wen also hailed the UAE's ‘adherence’ to the ‘One China’ policy.¹⁵

The Chinese Premier also called on the US Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson to lift export restrictions that affected China negatively as well as reduce trade and investment barriers which hindered bilateral trade relations. Describing trade and economic cooperation as the basis of the Sino-American relationship, Wen stated that China had taken ‘active’ measures to address its trade imbalance with the United States and that these measures were already having “some positive effects.”¹⁶

JAPAN

- **Japan and ASEAN sign a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement; Australia, US, Japan to hold talks in Hawaii; Tokyo and Washington deny reviewing SOFA Agreement; PM Fukuda: Nuclear energy a ‘trump card’ in tackling global warming**

Japan signed a comprehensive free-trade agreement with ASEAN, the first time that Tokyo had signed such an agreement with a regional block. The agreement, known as “the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement” will come into force on the first day of the second month after Japan

¹³ “Straits ties face historic opportunity,” *People's Daily*, April 14, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6391760.html>

¹⁴ “Indian official: Immediate cooperation between India, China key to handling food prices,” *People's Daily*, April 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/6391212.html>

¹⁵ “China, UAE agree to boost ties for mutual benefit,” *People's Daily*, April 4, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6386517.html>

¹⁶ “China urges U.S. to lift export restrictions, reduce trade barriers,” *People's Daily*, April 4, 2008, at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6386516.html>

and at least a member country from ASEAN complete the domestic procedures, such as a parliamentary endorsement.¹⁷

Japan Today reported that Australia, the United States and Japan would hold senior working-level talks in Hawaii on April 18 to discuss various regional security issues, enhance understanding and strengthen mutual cooperation in international peacekeeping missions. It was also pointed out that the meeting was a good opportunity for Japan to develop ties with Australia, given the recent pro-Chinese stand taken by the Australian government on various security issues.¹⁸

Japan and the United States have meanwhile denied reviewing the Japan-US Status of Forces (SOFA) agreement in the wake of the arrest of a US Navy seaman on a murder charge. Earlier, the Democratic Party of Japan and two other opposition parties had handed over a petition to the government calling for a revision of the SOFA agreement. In that petition, the opposition parties had demanded to make it mandatory for the United States to hand over U.S. military personnel suspected of crimes. The Japanese Prime Minister has however denied such revisions and stressed that the current agreement would be improved “step by step and steadily.”¹⁹

In other developments, the Japanese government proposed to form a new subcommittee under Prime Minister Fukuda to look after key global warming issues like the emissions trading system and environmental taxes, among other issues.²⁰ Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, addressing a conference on nuclear energy, asserted that nuclear power was a ‘trump card’ in tackling global warming.²¹

MYANMAR

- **Vice Senior General Maunyg Ye visits New Delhi; May 10 set as the referendum date, NLD calls for a boycott**

Myanmar’s Vice Senior General Maung Aye, second in hierarchy to Senior General Than Shwe arrived in New Delhi for a four-day official visit on April 2. During his meetings with President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and EAM Pranab Mukherjee, Gen. Aye exchanged views on

¹⁷ “Japan, ASEAN finish signing FTA,” *The Japan Times*, April 15, 2008, at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nb20080415a1.html>

¹⁸ “Japan, U.S., Australia to hold security talks April 18 in Hawaii,” *Japan Today*, April 4, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/japan-us-australia-to-hold-security-talks-april-18-in-hawaii>

¹⁹ “Fukuda denies need to revise accord on U.S. forces over crimes,” *Japan Today*, April 3, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/fukuda-denies-need-to-revise-accord-on-us-forces-over-crimes>

²⁰ “Japan to set up climate change subcommittee,” *Japan Today*, April 4, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/japan-to-set-up-climate-change-subcommittee>

²¹ “Nuke power generation trump card in fighting global warming: Fukuda,” *Japan Today*, April 15, 2008, at <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/nuke-power-generation-trump-card-in-fighting-global-warming-fukuda>

the state of the bilateral relations between the two countries.²² Reports also noted that New Delhi had decided to undertake multimillion dollar investments to build a seaport as well as transportation systems in Myanmar to help improve India's access to the country and also to facilitate Myanmar's economic growth.²³

In domestic developments, even as reports indicated that May 10 has been set as the date for the nationwide referendum on a new constitution drafted by the government-formed State Constitution Drafting Commission, the National League for Democracy (NLD) requested the people to cast a 'NO' vote in the constitutional referendum. The NLD charged that the referendum favored the continuation of military rule.²⁴

Other reports noted that the almost 300 per cent hike in import duties levied on goods from China has greatly affected the border trade between the two countries.²⁵

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **NATO unveils a 'strategic vision' for Afghanistan; Australian PM: Greater effort from Pakistan needed to control the Taliban; Karzai expresses an interest in a second term; 2 Indian engineers killed in Nimroz province in a suicide attack**

NATO leaders meeting in Bucharest on April 3 unveiled a 'strategic vision' for Afghanistan vowing support to the Afghan leadership and called on the coalition forces to maintain a 'shared long-term commitment.' They also pledged to coordinate civilian and military efforts and increase cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbours, specifically Pakistan.²⁶ The document also called on NATO countries to show 'flexibility' in the use of their forces as well as contribute more troops. Even as France pledged 700 more troops to the coalition efforts, Australian PM Kevin Rudd called for greater burden-sharing by the NATO allies. He however reaffirmed his country's commitment to Afghanistan for the 'long haul' but stated that Canberra's support was not a "blank cheque."²⁷ Australia had about 1,000 troops operating in Oruzgan province. President Karzai on his part welcomed NATO's commitment to his country.

²² "Burma Army's number two man arrives in India," *Mizzima News*, April 2, 2008 at <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2008/April/08-April-2008.html>

²³ "India, Myanmar sign multimillion-dollar transport deal" *The Associated Press*, April 3, 2008 at <http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2008/04/03/asia/AS-GEN-India-Myanmar.php>

²⁴ "NLD urges people to cast a 'NO' vote on constitution" *Mizzima News*, April 3, 2008 at <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2008/April/10-April-2008.html>

²⁵ "Import duty hike creates stalemate on Sino-Burma border," *Mizzima News*, April 7, 2008 at <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2008/April/17-April-2008.html>

²⁶ "NATO unveils 'strategic vision' for Afghanistan," *IANS*, April 4, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080403/r_t_ians_wl_europe/twl-nato-unveils-strategic-vision-for-af-ef5d19c.html

²⁷ "Rudd raises eyebrows with salute to Bush," *ANI*, April 4, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/ani/20080404/r_t_ani_wl_asia/twl-rudd-raises-eyebrows-with-salute-to-774093f.html

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Schloesser meanwhile took over as commander of US-led coalition forces and pledged to carry out his duties in support of Afghan national security forces.²⁸ Secretary of Defence Robert Gates told reporters after attending the NATO Summit that the US would send more troops to Afghanistan in 2009. Reports noted that the out-going US commander Gen. McNeill saw the need for 10,000 more troops, including for training purposes.²⁹

Reports also noted that the Australian PM Rudd told Pakistan's President Musharraf that a greater effort was required from Pakistan to control the Taliban within its borders to stabilize the situation inside Afghanistan. Both the leaders met on April 11 at the Baao Forum in southern China.³⁰

Among other developments, President Karzai, talking to reporters in Kabul on April 6 expressed an interest in seeking a second term of office after the expiry of the present term in 2009.³¹

Meanwhile, suicide attacks continued across the country, especially in southern Afghanistan. An attack in Kandahar province on a NATO convoy killed 8 civilians on April 10 while an attack on a road crew in Zabul province bordering Pakistan killed 18 people on April 8. 2 Indian road engineers working on a project in the southwestern province of Nimroz were killed in a suicide attack on April 12.³²

PAKISTAN

- **Law Minister: Deposed judges to be reinstated within 30 days; PM: Democracy threatened by dictatorship; Jirga system to be revived in Swat to tackle the Taliban resurgence; Bush expresses apprehensions about attacks on US by Pakistan-based terrorists**

The newly-appointed Federal Minister of Law, Farroq H. Naek made it clear that the deposed judges would be reinstated within a period of 30 days as had been decided in the Muree Declaration of March.³³ The Ministry of Law also submitted its report to the Prime Minister Gilani on the amendment of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and restoration of judiciary.³⁴

²⁸ "New US commander in Afghanistan vows to stabilize security," IANS, April 10, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080410/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-new-us-commander-in-afghanistan-vows-d5d6288.html

²⁹ "Bush Pledges More Troops to Afghanistan, Gates Says," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/05/world/asia/05gates.html?ref=todayspaper>

³⁰ "Pak control of Taliban key to winning war on terror in Afghanistan, says Aussie PM," ANI, April 12, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/ani/20080412/r_t_ani_wl_asia/twl-pak-control-of-taliban-key-to-winnin-774093f.html

³¹ "Afghan President Hints He'll Run for Re-election," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/world/asia/07afghan.html?ref=todayspaper>

³² "Suicide blast kills 2 Indians in Afghanistan - governor," Reuters, April 12, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080412/r_t_rtrs_nl_general/tnl-suicide-blast-kills-2-indians-in-afg-223dd93.html

³³ Mansoor Mirani, "Judges' reinstatement in 30 days: Naek," *Dawn*, April 5, 2008 at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/05/top2.htm>

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile expressed concerns over the possible threat posed from dictatorship to the newly-elected democratic government.³⁵ Gilani was speaking in the backdrop of a violent incident in Karachi as a result of a conflict involving two groups of lawyers in which at least nine people were killed and several injured.³⁶ The co-chairman of the PPP, Asif Zardari addressing a joint press conference in Lahore asserted that the Parliament would determine the future course of the relationship between the elected government and President Musharraf.³⁷

Amidst reports indicating the resurgence of the Taliban in Swat, the NWFP government decided to revive the Jirga system in order to amicably resolve the problem of militancy in the region.³⁸

In other developments, the NATO Summit in Bucharest called for direct talks between Pakistan and the coalition forces in Afghanistan.³⁹ President Bush in a television interview also expressed fears over the possibility of attacks on the US by terrorists located in Pakistan.⁴⁰

NEPAL

- **Maoists win majority in polls; New Delhi expresses its willingness to work with the Maoists; MJF demands resignation of Koirala, CPN(UML) withdraws from interim government**

In the parliamentary elections held on April 10, the Maoists gained a clear majority in the first-past-the-post-system. Of the 200 seats for which the results were declared, Maoists won 110, with the Nepali Congress and CPI (UML) bagging 32 and 27 respectively.⁴¹ In the proportional representation system, the Maoists again received around 37.42 percent of the votes polled. The CPN (UML) stood at second place with 27.9 percent, followed by the Nepali Congress at 26.86 percent.⁴²

As the Maoists continued to remain on the US terrorist watch list, Ambassadors of the United States and the United Kingdom met the Nepalese

³⁴ Nasir Iqbal, "Proposals for committees on FCR, judges submitted to PM," *Dawn*, April 2, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/02/top1.htm>

³⁵ Zulfiqar Ghuman, "Dictatorship is threatening democracy: PM," *Daily Times*, April 11, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\04\11\story_11-4-2008_pg1_1

³⁶ Faraz Khan, "Lawyers clash, riots kill 9 in Karachi," *Daily Times*, April 10, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\04\10\story_10-4-2008_pg1_140

³⁷ "Parliament to determine ties with president: Zardari," *Daily Times*, March 31, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\03\31\story_31-3-2008_pg1_2

³⁸ Zulfiqar Ali, "NWFP sets up committee for dialogue with Swat militants," *Dawn*, April 9, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/09/top4.htm>

³⁹ "Nato seeks direct talks with Pakistan," *Dawn*, April 3, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/03/top7.htm>

⁴⁰ "Bush fears attack by 'terrorists hiding in Pakistan'," *Daily Times*, April 13, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\04\13\story_13-4-2008_pg1_1

⁴¹ "Maoists win 110 seats," *The Hindu*, April 15, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/04/15/stories/2008041560871500.htm>

⁴² "Maoists leading in PR count also; UML stands second," *Nepal News*, April 15, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/apr/apr15/news14.php>

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to discuss the post election scenario. India on its part has expressed its willingness to work with the Maoists and stated that it would actively work with the government.⁴³ Maoist Chairman Prachanda has however stated that Kathmandu would be equidistant from both India and China.⁴⁴

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) and Terai Madhes Democratic Party bagged 23 seats in the direct elections and the coordinator of the MJF, Upendra Yadav demanded the resignation of the Mr. Koirala.⁴⁵ In another turn of events, the CPN-UML has decided to withdraw from the interim government citing the electoral verdict as the main reason for its decision.⁴⁶

In other domestic developments, Kathmandu expedited the formation of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, which would be responsible for the Peace and Conflict Management Committee.⁴⁷ The committee in turn would be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the comprehensive peace pact.

BANGLADESH

- **Foreign Adviser Chowdhury visits Brussels, calls for greater access to European market; Food and developmental aid earmarked to Dhaka by USAID, World Bank, IMF, German development bank; BSF, BDR to jointly tackle cross-border crimes**

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury on an official visit to Brussels met the European External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pottering. During his meetings, the status of the bilateral, political and economic relations between Bangladesh and the European Union were reviewed. Chowdhury on his part stressed the need for greater market access of Bangladeshi manufactures to the European market.⁴⁸

Reports noted the large amounts of food and developmental aid being pledged to Bangladesh by various agencies. For instance, USAID earmarked approximately 90,000 metric tons of food aid worth \$67.8 million for the current

⁴³ "India says it is ready work with Maoists," *Nepal News*, April 13, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/apr/apr13/news10.php>

⁴⁴ "Back this Republican portent in Nepal," *The Times of India*, April 15, 2008, at http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Editorials/Back_this_Republican_portent_in_Nepal/articleshow/2951892.cms

⁴⁵ "MJF Chief Yadav Asks PM to Quit," *The Himalayan Times*, April 15, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0va3qzpc2a9a4qa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080415>

⁴⁶ "CPN-UML ministers to tender their resignation by evening Tuesday," April 15, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/apr/apr15/news07.php>

⁴⁷ "Peace and conflict management committee formed," *Nepal News*, April 4, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/apr/apr04/news02.php>

⁴⁸ "Dhaka urges EU to allow greater access of its goods," *The Daily Star*, April 5, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=30849>

year.⁴⁹ The World Bank will be providing \$250 million in credit to Bangladesh for renovation works in transport sector while the IMF will be providing Bangladesh with a \$217.7 million loan to stave off pressure on its balance of payments (BoP) from high import prices.⁵⁰ The German development bank KfW will also be providing €31.4 million for the Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd (DPDC) to help improve power supply in the capital.⁵¹

In other developments, the Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), after six days of deliberations, signed an agreement on April 12 to jointly tackle cross-border crimes like arms smuggling and trafficking of women and children by sharing timely and actionable information.⁵² Stephen Nicholas Evans was appointed as the next British High Commissioner to Bangladesh while the newly-appointed US Ambassador James Francis Moriarty arrived in Bangladesh on April 10. Also, Bangladeshi troops serving with the international peacekeeping force in Ivory Coast were decorated with the UN's peacekeeping medal.⁵³

SRI LANKA

- **Rajapakse visits Beijing; Colombo seeks emergency arms from Islamabad; SLMC joins UNP, JVP splits; IIGEP to terminate Sri Lanka operations**

The Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse visited Beijing from April 7-11 during which China assured Sri Lanka of its support in the fight against terrorism. Rajapakse on his part expressed appreciation of the generous support provided by China to the Norochcholai coal power project, the Hambantota port and the Performing arts theatre in Colombo. Chinese Wen Jiabao stated that Sri Lanka's acknowledgement of China's 'One China Policy' was an indicator of the nature of the good relations between the two countries.⁵⁴

The battle in the north continued with the Tigers appealing to Norway to help end the 'military assault' on the Madu church in Mannar district, which they alleged was being targeted by the government. Colombo has however denied any such targeted attacks by the Sri Lankan army.⁵⁵ Reports also noted

⁴⁹ "US to provide 90,000 MT food aid," *The Daily Star* April 2, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=30387>

⁵⁰ "WB to provide \$250m for transport sector renovation," *The Daily Star*, April 2, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=30411>; "Govt to take \$217.7m from IMF to offset pressure on BoP," *The Daily Star*, April 4, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=30710>

⁵¹ "German bank to provide 31.4m for power supply improvement," *The Daily Star*, April 7, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=31170>

⁵² "BDR, BSF deal to combat cross-border crimes," *The Daily Star*, April 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=32006>

⁵³ "Bangladeshi peacekeepers get UN medal" *The Daily Star*, March 31, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=30075>

⁵⁴ "China will stand by Sri Lanka against terrorism," *Daily News*, April 11, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/04/11/news01.asp>

⁵⁵ "Weerawansa refutes charge of indiscipline," *The Hindu*, April 9, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/04/09/stories/2008040959911800.htm>

that the government had ordered military equipment from Pakistan on an emergency basis.⁵⁶

In domestic political developments, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) joined hands with the UNP to jointly contest the forthcoming provincial council elections in the East. As per the deal signed, the portfolio of the chief-ministerial candidate would be given to the party with highest number of seats.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the split in the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - with the secretary and MP Wimal Weerawansa quitting the party along with ten parliamentarians, surprised political observers. The JVP was the only party which had survived in the Sri Lanka polity without any splits.⁵⁸ The UNP blamed the government as being the main catalyst for triggering the split and that it was "a ploy of the government to deny the democratic rights of the people by destroying political parties."⁵⁹

In other developments, the human rights monitoring agency, the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) decided to terminate its operations in Sri Lanka due to the reported indifference of the Sri Lankan government to the substantive suggestions made by the IIGEP.⁶⁰ Colombo on its part announced that it intended to participate in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to be held in Geneva. Under the UPR system, states are objectively assessed on their human rights record and improvements are suggested of their human rights obligations and commitments along with a review of challenges faced by the country in that regard.⁶¹

⁵⁶ "Pakistan to send emergency military hardware to Sri Lanka", *Colombo Page*, April 3, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/April3113811JV.html

⁵⁷ "Sri Lanka opposition to contest Eastern Polls jointly with Muslim Congress," *Colombo Page*, April 1, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/April1183521JV.html

⁵⁸ "Weerawansa refutes charge of indiscipline," *The Hindu*, April 9, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/04/09/stories/2008040959911800.htm>

⁵⁹ "Main opposition says Sri Lankan government behind Marxist party split," *Colombo Page*, April 12, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/April1245517JR.html

⁶⁰ "IIGEP wraps up operations in Sri Lanka," *Colombo Page*, March 31, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/March31164456JV.html

⁶¹ "Sri Lanka Human Rights Minister to attend the UN Universal Periodic Review," *Colombo Page*, April 4, 2008, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/April443210CH.html

II. PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED KASHMIR REVIEW

- **POK cabinet expanded; Constitutional package for Gilgit and Baltistan soon; PDP: Division of Kashmir along religious lines not acceptable; Increase in frequency of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service likely**

The cabinet of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) was expanded by the prime minister of the region Sardar Atiqyue Ahmed khan with the induction of nine ministers and a reshuffling of the portfolios of the existing ministers.⁶²

Meanwhile, the newly appointed Federal Minister of Northern Areas and Kashmir affairs, Qamqr-uz-Zaman promised to introduce a constitutional package for Gilgit and Baltistan. Reports stated that the local people would be consulted before any final decision was taken.⁶³ Similarly, another report called for fulfilling the demands of the people of Kashmir in congruence with the steps that were initiated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto during his tenure.⁶⁴

Addressing a gathering organized by the South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA) in Islamabad, the chairperson of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Mehbooba Mufti stated that the division of Kashmir along religious lines was not acceptable. She further called for the withdrawal of forces from both Indian and Pakistani sides and the restoration of human rights of the people of Kashmir.⁶⁵

A two-day conference on Gilgit Baltistan was held in Brussels on April 9 which focused on the drawbacks of the political and administrative arrangements in the POK. In other developments, it was reported that India and Pakistan may consider the proposal to run the bus service between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad on a weekly basis rather than on a fortnightly basis.⁶⁶

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Farooq Abdullah: Autonomy alone can restore peace in Jammu and Kashmir; Mehbooba Mufti proposes Regional Council; Salahuddin: HM to review its armed struggle if New Delhi agrees for tri-partite talks**

Addressing a public meeting at Dharhal in Rajouri district on April 2, former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah asserted that autonomy was the only viable solution to the Kashmir problem. He however added that his party was open for discussion on the issue even if any solution better than autonomy was put forth. Dr Abdullah further stated that the National Conference wanted Jammu and

⁶² Tariq Naqash, "AJK cabinet expanded," *Dawn*, April 1, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/01/nat6.htm>

⁶³ "Kaira promises people friendly package," *Weekly Bange-e-shahar*, April 5-11, 2008.

⁶⁴ "Time to fulfill Bhutto's promises," *Weekly Bange-e-shahar*, April 5-11, 2008.

⁶⁵ "Kashmir's division on religious lines rejected," *Weekly Bange-e-shahar*, April 5-11, 2008

⁶⁶ "LoC bus may run every week," *Daily Times*, April 13, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\04\13\story_13-4-2008_pg7_3

Kashmir to remain as a single entity and that it would never allow for the division of the state on the basis of ethnical or regional identity.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Mehbooba Mufti, the president of the PDP proposed the setting up of a Regional Council comprising members of assemblies of both parts of Kashmir. Delivering a lecture organised by the SAFMA in Islamabad, she emphasised the need for the new Pakistan government to accord the same priority to the Kashmir issue as the previous governments.⁶⁸

Kashmir Times reported that Syed Salahuddin, the chief of the Hizbul Mujahiddin (HM), the largest armed groups in the Kashmir valley, had stated that his group might consider reviewing its armed struggle in the Valley if India agrees for tripartite talks on the Kashmir issue. He warned that Kashmiris would not accept any other solution on the issue except that of self-determination as mandated by the UN resolutions. Salahuddin added that though HM wanted Kashmir to accede to Pakistan, it was up to people of Kashmir whether they wanted to do so, or remain independent or continue to live with India.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, a joint team of police and army gunned down four dreaded HM militants including the outfit's chief commander Badshah Khan in a fierce four hour-long encounter at Arital in Reasi district on April 9.⁷⁰

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- **Centre rejects UPDS demand for a Karbi state; 234 Islamic militants lodged in various Assam jails**

The *Telegraph* reported that the central government on April 11 rejected the United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) demand for a Karbi state. Sources indicated that the government rejected the demand as there was "no policy at present for the creation of a new state," either under Article 3 or Article 244-A of the Constitution. In the meantime, the UPDS has threatened to join hands with the Nunisa-led-Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) to prepare a common set of demands. While the UPDS was demanding statehood in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District, the DHD was demanding a Dimaraji state, comprising parts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts as well as Nagaland.⁷¹

Meanwhile, Rockybul Hussain, the Assam Minister for Forests and Environment told the State Assembly on April 1, that altogether 234 militants belonging to various Islamic militant groups were currently lodged in different jails in the state. Among them, as many as 150 belonged to the Muslim United

⁶⁷ "Autonomy alone can restore peace: Farooq," *Daily Excelsior*, April 3, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08apr03/news.htm#4>

⁶⁸ "Mehbooba for joint council on Kashmir," *Daily Excelsior*, April 3, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08apr03/news.htm#4>

⁶⁹ "Hizb ready to put down the gun if India agrees to tripartite talks: Salahuddin," *Kashmir Times*, April 2, 2008, at <http://kashmirtimes.com/jktoday.htm>

⁷⁰ "Badshah Khan among 4 ultras killed in Reasi," *Daily Excelsior*, April 10, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08apr10/news.htm#1>

⁷¹ "Delhi no to UPDS plea on self-rule," *Telegraph*, April 12, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080412/jsp/northeast/story_9128646.jsp

Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA), 50 to the Harkat-ul-Muzahideen (HuM), and seven were ISI operatives. These groups reportedly recruited young boys from the districts of Dhubri, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Karimganj, Cachar, Hailakandi, Nalbari, Nagaon and Darrang and send them out for training in Bangladesh and Pakistan.⁷²

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Maoists kill 15 persons in Jharkhand and Bihar; SF kill eight Maoists**

As many as nine persons, including three women and a child, were killed when unidentified Maoists fired at them and set afire their vehicle near Gumla town in Jharkhand on April 8. Among the victims were Bhado Singh, the leader of the Shanti Sena (Peace Force), a police backed resistance force to combat Maoist activities, and his family members.⁷³ On April 10, unidentified Maoists shot dead six persons belonging to the Sashastra People's Morcha (SSM) in Bihar's Rohtas district. The slain persons were former members of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) and had formed the SSM to assist the police.⁷⁴

Earlier on March 31, eight Maoists were killed in an encounter with the CRPF personnel in Jharkhand's Garwah district. As many as eight rifles, one SLR, one double-barrel gun, a pistol, 400 cartridges and a quintal of gelatin were recovered from the site of the encounter.⁷⁵

INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW – OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **SIMI possesses a full-fledged syllabus on terrorism**

Indian Express reported that the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) had full-fledged literature to run a thorough training programme on terrorism. The report stated that a well-documented 'syllabus' on terrorism was recovered from the SIMI leaders arrested recently, which had several modules and levels of training. The document also called for the establishment of an Islamic state freed from western cultural influences.⁷⁶ The report noted that SIMI was the only outfit in India, outside of those operating in Jammu and Kashmir that had a literature-based military training programme.

⁷² "234 ultras from Muslim groups in Assam jails," *Indian Express*, April 2, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/291315.html>

⁷³ "Nine persons killed and two injured in Maoist attack in Jharkhand," *SATP*, April 9, 2008, at http://satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news3.asp?date3=2008%2F4%2F9&image2.x=7&image2.y=8#2

⁷⁴ "Maoists kill six former extremists in Bihar," *SATP*, April 11, 2008, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news3.asp?date3=2008%2F4%2F11&image2.x=14&image2.y=7#3

⁷⁵ "Eight naxalites killed in encounter in Jharkhand," *The Hindu*, April 1, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200804011040.htm>

⁷⁶ "Terror 'syllabus' seized from SIMI men," *Indian Express*, April 1, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/290853.html>

IV. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- **Left continues its opposition to the Indo-US nuclear deal**

The Left opposition to the Indo-US nuclear deal continued unabated. In the recently held party congress, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat reminded his audience about his party's successful opposition to the nuclear agreement and asserted that "the struggle to disentangle India from the 'strategic embrace' of the U.S." would continue.⁷⁷ Karat however clarified that it was not the objective of the Left parties to destabilise the government but only to stop the nuclear deal.⁷⁸

IRAN

- **CIA Director says he believes Iran continues to pursue a nuclear bomb; Iran begins installing improved centrifuges at Natanz**

The Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stated that he believed Iran was still pursuing a nuclear bomb, even though the U.S. intelligence community, including his own agency, reached a consensus judgment last year that Tehran had halted its nuclear weapons work in 2003. Speaking to the NBC, Michael Hayden added that his conviction "stemmed largely from Iran's willingness to endure international sanctions rather than comply with demands for nuclear inspections and abandon its efforts to develop technologies that can produce fissile material."⁷⁹

In other developments, Iran began installing advanced centrifuges at the Natanz enrichment facility. It is widely known that Iran had launched a programme for industrial scale enrichment last year by installing 3,000 centrifuges at the facility. Recently, Iran has assembled more than 300 centrifuges divided into two cascades to expand beyond 3,000 centrifuges.⁸⁰

NORTH KOREA

- **US and North Korean nuclear envoys meet in Singapore, differences narrowed down; State Department officials to visit North Korea soon**

Top nuclear envoys of the US and North Korea met in Singapore in a bid to kick start the stalled Six-Party negotiations. Following the meeting, US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill stated that some progress had been made to narrow the differences between the two parties. The meeting generated

⁷⁷ K. V. Prasad, "Military pact with U.S. must go: Karat," *The Hindu*, March 30, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/30/stories/2008033060060800.htm>

⁷⁸ V.S. Palaniappan, "We are not for destabilisation, we only want to stop nuclear deal, says Yechury," *The Hindu*, April 2, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/04/02/stories/2008040260711700.htm>

⁷⁹ Greg Miller, "CIA chief asserts Iran nuclear threat," *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 2008, at <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/washingtondc/la-fg-hayden31mar31,1,7265658.story>

⁸⁰ Mark Heinrich, "Iran installs advanced nuclear centrifuges," *Reuters*, April 4, 2008, at <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-32837720080403http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-32837720080403>

hopes that North Korea would make a declaration on its nuclear activities very soon.⁸¹

In other developments, officials from the US State Department are expected to visit North Korea or a final round of negotiations meant to resolve a dispute that has stalled any progress on North Korean nuclear disarmament. The date and the venue of the meeting are however yet to be finalised.⁸²

PAKISTAN

- **Afghan Minister says Pakistan dumped nuclear waste during Taliban regime; A.Q. Khan says he took the entire blame of the proliferation network to "save his country"; Pakistan announces that there would be no change to the National Command Authority (NCA); Pervez Musharraf to discuss expansion of Sino-Pakistani civil nuclear cooperation**

Afghanistan's Parliamentary Affairs Minister Faruq Wardag, speaking to the BBC, charged that nuclear waste from Pakistan was dumped in Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban. Wardag asserted that the waste was buried in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand. He however stated that he did not have information as to how much waste was dumped or for how long the practice had gone on.⁸³

Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan has stated that he took the blame for passing atomic secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya in order to "save his country." He added that the new Pakistani government had not contacted him about his release.⁸⁴

Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mohammad Sadiq announced that there would be no change to the National Command Authority (NCA) under the new government. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is overseen by the NCA headed by the president and with the prime minister as its vice chairman. Key cabinet ministers and the heads of the army, navy and air force are also members of the NCA, which controls all aspects of the country's nuclear program. However, the military manages and controls the nuclear weapons on behalf of the NCA.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Melanie Lee and Daryl Loo, "Nuclear talks with North Korea make progress, U.S. says," Washington Post, April 8, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/08/AR2008040801043_pf.html

⁸² "US sending diplomats to North Korea to nudge deal," *The New York Times*, April 16, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/us/AP-US-Koreas-Nuclear.html?_r=1&sq=nuclear&st=nyt&oref=slogin&scp=28&pagewanted=print

⁸³ Martin Vennard, "Pakistan dumped nuclear waste," BBC, April 1, 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7323920.stm

⁸⁴ "Nuclear scientist says he confessed to 'save' Pakistan," AFP, April 7, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hKZQFrI-rPtBKl4GfHYs4eg3eKkQ>

⁸⁵ "Pakistan's Nuclear Command Stays Unchanged: Official," *New York Times*, April 8, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/news/news-pakistan-nuclear.html?sq=nuclear&st=nyt&scp=20&pagewanted=print>

In other developments, reports noted that President Pervez Musharraf was expected to call on his Chinese counterpart on the sidelines of the Boao Forum for Asia being held in China from April 11-15, 2008. The two sides were widely expected to discuss further expansion of civil nuclear cooperation.⁸⁶

V. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

IRAN PAKISTAN INDIA GAS PIPELINE

- **Deora: Trilateral meeting on IPI pipeline on April 23**

The stalled negotiations over the India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline are set to gather pace once again as the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Murli Deora will be meeting Pakistani and Iranian officials later this month to discuss the project. In a press conference on April 5, Mr. Deora stated that there would be a bilateral meeting between India and Pakistan followed by one involving all three countries on April 23. He also added that the transport tariff issue would be on the agenda for discussion.⁸⁷

EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

- **Algeria's Sonatrach announces discovery of 4 new wells; USGS: 3-4.3 billion barrels of oil could be extracted from Bakken formation in Montana**

Africa's largest oil and gas producer - Algeria's Sonatrach has announced the discovery of four new oil and a gas wells on April 12, taking its total of discoveries this year to five. The first and second discoveries were made in partnership with Medex while the third and fourth discoveries were made by Sonatrach alone.⁸⁸

The United States Geological survey meanwhile, in an assessment released on April 17 revealed that an area in North Dakota and Montana called the Bakken formation was estimated to hold 3-4.3 billion barrels of oil and that it could be extracted using current technology. Geologist and industry officials however have cautioned that the discovery would be economically feasible only if the current prices of oil prevailed.

⁸⁶ "Pakistan's Musharraf to hold nuclear talks in China," *Asia Pacific News*, April 10, 2008, at http://news.monstersandcritics.com/asiapacific/news/article_1399290.php/Pakistans_Musharraf_to_hold_nuclear_talks_in_China__Roundup_

⁸⁷ "India to meet Pakistan, Iran over gas pipeline project later this month," *CNBC*, April 4, 2008, at <http://www.cnbc.com/id/23991989>

⁸⁸ "Algeria's Sonatrach announces four oil-gas finds," *Reuters*, April 12, 2008, at www.africa.reuters.com/nbc/DZ

AGREEMENTS AND JOINT VENTURES

- **An undersea pipeline from Oman to Gujarat being explored; India-Kazakhstan and India-Venezuela to deepen cooperation in the oil and gas sector**

Reports noted that India and Oman were exploring the possibility of an undersea gas pipeline from Oman as part of the sub-Arabian Sea Project. The project involved linking Ras Al Jifan in Oman to Gujarat. South Asia Gas Enterprise, an engineering and construction firm estimates that the project would cost between \$2.1-\$3.4 billion. The firm was holding 'high-level' talks with state and private companies in India to further explore the feasibility of such a venture.⁸⁹

India and Kazakhstan are set to deepen their cooperation in the oil and gas field. The agreement was reached between President of Kazakhstan Nursultan nazarbayev and Vice-President Hamid Ansari during a meeting in Astana on April 8.⁹⁰

India is also set to have closer oil and gas cooperation with Venezuela. The Venezuelan Oil and Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez told reporters that the two countries have signed a five year, \$400 million joint venture to drill oil and gas in Venezuela's oil-rich Orinoco region.⁹¹

Note 1: Due to logistical issues involved in the change of the Institute's internet service provider, last week's Review could not be sent. This issue contains a review of developments over the previous two weeks, except the US Election Review, which will be covered in the next issue.

⁸⁹ "India keen on undersea gas pipeline," *UPI*, April 7, 2008, at www.upi.com/International_Security/Energy/Analysis/2008/04/07/analysis_oil_and_gas_pipeline_watch/4174

⁹⁰ "Kazakhstan and India show willingness to deepen cooperation in oil and gas field," *Kazakhstan Business*, April 8, 2004, at www.kazakhstan-business.com/index.php?lang=eng

⁹¹ "Venezuela, India sign joint venture in oil-gas rich Orinoco," *Yahoo News*, April 10, 2008, at http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080408/wl_sthasia_afp/venezuelaindiaoil