

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

May 12-18, 5(3), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

IRAQ

- **Clashes continue in Sadr City despite ceasefire; Maliki: Crackdown on Shiite militias shows he is not sectarian; Iran shells Kurdish positions in Northern Iraq**

Clashes broke out between the Iraqi security forces and the Shiite militias on May 18, casting doubts on the strength of the ceasefire reached with the militias in the previous week. Attacks on US troops and Iraqi forces occurred in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire also. 11 people were killed on May 13, a day after the ceasefire came into existence.¹ Militants also fired a surface-to-air missile on an American Apache helicopter flying over Sadr City on May 13, in the first such instance since fighting erupted in March. Reports noted that the wall/barrier that the US military was building in Sadr City to prevent insurgent attacks, 80 per cent of which was complete, was especially being targeted.²

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has meanwhile asserted that the crackdown on Shiite militias in Sadr City and in Basra is proof of the fact that he was not following a sectarian agenda.³ Reports also noted that the operation in Basra, launched on March 24, was showing signs of progress with most of the city having stabilised.⁴ Over 33,000 Iraqi security forces were operating in the city which provided nearly 40 per cent of the country's oil revenues. Maliki later in the week also offered amnesty and cash to Sunni insurgents in the northern city of Mosul to lay down their arms. He had made a similar offer to the Basra insurgents before the start of the military offensive.⁵

In other developments, Iran shelled Kurdish positions in northern Iraq's Kurdish Autonomous Region, targeting the rebels of the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK). The PJAK was engaged in an armed struggle for autonomy and rights for the Kurdish minorities in Iran and Turkey.⁶

¹ "Shi'ite gunmen in Baghdad ignore truce," *Reuters*, May 13, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080513/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-shi-ite-gunmen-in-baghdad-ignore-tru-2186892.html

² "War Over Wall Persists in Sadr City Despite Truce," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/15/world/middleeast/15wall.html?ref=todayspaper>

³ "Iraqi PM says crackdown shows he's not sectarian," *Reuters*, May 12, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/reuters_ids_new/20080512/r_t_rtrs_wl/twl-iraqi-pm-says-crackdown-shows-he-s-n-2186892.html

⁴ "Drive in Basra by Iraqi Army Makes Gains," *The New York Times*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/12/world/middleeast/12basra.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁵ "Sunni Insurgents in Mosul Offered Amnesty and Cash," *The New York Times*, May 17, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/17/world/middleeast/17iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁶ "Iranian military shells rebel positions in northern Iraq," *IANS*, May 13, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080513/r_t_ians_wl_meast/twl-iranian-military-shells-rebel-positi-ec7dfa8.html

CHINA

- **Over 30,000 people dead in massive earthquake; Beijing to cooperate with EU to promote Africa's development; SCO Defence Ministers for a defence cooperation pact among member countries**

Over 30,000 people died in the May 12 earthquake that struck Sichuan province. The quake measured 8.0 on the Richter scale. While rescue efforts and relief operations were speeded up, China declared a three-day national mourning in memory of the people who died in the disaster.⁷

China's Ambassador to the European Union (EU), Song Zhe meanwhile has expressed Beijing's willingness to cooperate with the EU in an "open" and "constructive" manner to promote Africa's development. Addressing the Brussels University of Freedom, Song pointed out that China and the EU had established high-level consultation systems on Africa.⁸

In other developments, SCO defence ministers met the Chinese Defence Minister Liang Guanglie during the week. The meeting was intended to enhance the defence cooperation among the member countries who also expressed an interest to sign a defence cooperation pact. Kazakh Defence Minister Daniyal Akhmetov noted that the signing of the defence cooperation pact would not only provide the legal basis for their multilateral defence cooperation but also promote bilateral ties.⁹

MYANMAR

- **77,700 people dead and nearly 56,000 missing in cyclone; Government: Over 90 per cent supported referendum**

The Commission for Holding Nationwide Referendum revealed that the constitution was ratified with over 92 per cent of the population supporting it. The Commission noted that 278 townships were covered in the initial phase of the referendum, including five remote townships in Yangon division and 19 townships in the Ayeyawaddy division. The referendum in the remaining 40 townships in Yangon division and 7 townships in the Ayeyawaddy division would held on May 24.¹⁰

Meanwhile, international efforts to help victims of the devastating cyclone intensified with UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon calling for an immediate meeting on May 14 of Myanmar neighbours as well as of important donors to the relief effort. Reports noted that of the 100 visas that the UN staff had applied for, about 40 were granted. Another 46 visas were obtained by non-governmental

⁷ "China earthquake death toll rises by one to 34,074," *People's Daily*, May 20, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6414820.html>

⁸ "Diplomat: China willing to cooperate with EU on Africa in 'constructive' manner," *People's Daily*, May 17, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6412764.html>

⁹ "Chinese defense minister meets SCO counterparts on cooperative ties," *People's Daily*, May 17, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6412760.html>

¹⁰ "Myanmar new constitution ratified," *Xinhua*, May 15, 2008, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-05/15/content_8176920.htm

agencies while Myanmar's neighbours – including Thailand, Bangladesh, India and China have been allowed to send in over 150 humanitarian workers.¹¹ The state television reported that over 77,700 people had died and that nearly 56,000 people were missing.¹²

US ELECTION REVIEW

- **Senator Clinton wins the West Virginia Primary by a huge margin, but makes little dent in Senator Obama's delegate count; Obama releases plan to help redress grievances of American manufacturing sector; McCain reveals his global warming plan, envisions most US troops out of Iraq by January 2013**

Senator Hilary Clinton routed Senator Barack Obama in the West Virginia Primary, reaffirming her strong following among white working-class older voters. She vowed to continue the fight into Kentucky and the Oregon primaries scheduled for May 20. In a surprise, she also won the majority of votes among younger population in West Virginia.

In the aftermath of her win, questions were raised about Sen. Obama's ability to stand up to Sen. McCain in the national elections as he would need to draw support from the key swing states such as West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio, all which he has lost to Clinton. Clinton on her part asserted that no contender had been able to secure the presidency without winning the swing states. Sen. Clinton however still lags far behind Obama in the delegates count. Reports indicated that she was unlikely to be able to catch up in the later part of the campaign to secure the democratic nomination.¹³

Sen. Obama on his part released a plan to redress the grievances of the American manufacturing sector. Among other measures, he called for federal government partnership with the private sector to spur innovation, greater investments to improve the skills of the American workers, the need to enhance high-productivity manufacturing capacity, and to stand up against competition from countries like China.¹⁴

On the Republican side, Sen. McCain unveiled his plan to address the challenges posed by global warming while addressing a gathering in Portland, Oregon on May 12.¹⁵ His proposals included a cap and trade system to change

¹¹ "UN chief convening donors to get aid to Myanmar," *Associated Press*, May 15, 2008, at <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5g907A02ngcVfjUOCC7V1fYR45EowD90LL0I00>

¹² "Myanmar says more than 133,000 dead, missing in cyclone," *The Age*, May 17, 2008, at <http://news.theage.com.au/world/myanmar-says-more-than-133000-dead-missing-in-cyclone-20080517-2fa4.html>

¹³ Patrick Healy, "Clinton Beats Obama Handily in West Virginia," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/05/14/us/politics/14dems.html?partner=rssnyt

¹⁴ "Barack Obama: Strengthen domestic manufacturing to create jobs and meet the challenges of the 21st century," *Barack Obama.com*, May 14, 2008, at www.barackobama.com/2008/05/14/barack_obama_unveils_manufactu.php

¹⁵ "Excerpts of McCain's Speech on Climate Change in Portland, Oregon," *The Time*, May 12, 2008, at thepage.time.com/excerpts-of-mccains-speech-on-climate-change-in-portland-oregon/

the dynamics of the energy economy. Automakers, coal companies, power plants, and every other enterprise would be encouraged to reduce their respective carbon emissions and can then sell the extra limits for cash, which it is hoped would act as an incentive to reduce carbon emissions.

Speaking in Ohio on May 15, McCain also noted that most of the US troops could return from Iraq by January 2013, by which time he held the country would be a functioning democracy. He also added that by 2013, Osama bin Laden would have been either dead or captured, and that the threat from the Taliban would have been “greatly reduced.”¹⁶

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **NATO attack in Pakistan’s Bajaur district kills 14; Pak Army launches a formal complaint; Indian national kidnapped on April 21 freed; Pentagon planning a huge military base in Kabul**

A NATO attack in Pakistan’s border region of Damadola, Bajaur district killed 14 people on May 14.¹⁷ The Pakistan Army on its part launched a formal complaint against the NATO action carried out on its territory. The missile attack came hours after militants and the Pakistani government agreed for an exchange of prisoners with security personnel ahead of a formal peace deal in South Waziristan. As part of the deal, Pakistan’s ambassador to Afghanistan, Tariq Azizuddin, kidnapped three months ago, was also released on May 16.¹⁸

Meanwhile, an Indian national Sarang Mohammed Naeem, and K.B. Gurung of Nepal were released on May 17. Both of them working for a Dubai-based logistics firm were kidnapped on April 21 while traveling from Herat. Reports noted that the Taliban militia was behind most attacks on Indian nationals working on the crucial Zaranj-Delaram road link. The road would reduce Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for overland access to Central Asia as well as provide an alternative route for Indian goods. The latest kidnapping however was not blamed on the Taliban but on a 'criminal gang'.¹⁹

In other developments, a suicide bomber attacked a convoy of police vehicles in south-western Afghanistan’s Frah province on May 14 killing 16 people while another suicide attack on a police patrol in Musa Qula in the southern province of Helmand on May 18 killed 4 people. The Taliban on their part claimed responsibility for shooting at a NATO helicopter in Musa Qula

¹⁶ “McCain Vision Has Most G.I.’s Out of Iraq by 2013,” *The New York Times*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/us/politics/16mccain.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹⁷ “NATO missile attack kills 15 in Pakistan's tribal region,” *IANS*, May 15, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080515/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-nato-missile-attack-kills-15-in-paki-d5d6288.html

¹⁸ “Militants Free Ambassador of Pakistan in Exchange,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/world/asia/18pstan.html?ref=todayspaper>

¹⁹ “Kidnapped Indian released in Afghanistan, family happy,” *IANS*, May 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080518/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-kidnapped-indian-released-in-afghani-d5d6288.html

during the week. No casualties were however reported due to the attack. The town was captured from the Taliban in December 2007.²⁰

Reports during the week also indicated that the US was planning to construct a huge new prison complex spread over 40 acres at the Bagram military base north of Kabul, to accommodate about 600-1000 prisoners. The Pentagon's plan, analysts believe was proof that the US intended to make its overseas detention facilities permanent.²¹

PAKISTAN

- **Restoration of judiciary unresolved after negotiations in London fail; PML-N walks out of federal cabinet; Deposed judges reject undertaking fresh oaths; Several killed in US missile strikes in Bajaur**

Negotiations between the PPP and the PML-N to resolve the issue of judiciary could not be resolved even after the US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher reportedly made an intervention to facilitate reconciliation.²² The PML-N on its part registered its protest by walking out of the federal cabinet. The announcement to this effect was made by PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif on May 12 in Islamabad. Sharif has however clarified that the PML-N would continue to support the government to sustain democracy.²³ Soon after the PML-N pullout, the leader of the PPP in the Senate, Raza Rabbani assured the Upper House that the judges would be reinstated even though the talks had failed.²⁴

In a related development, the government made a proposal to reappoint the deposed judges of the provincial High Courts by asking them to undertake fresh oaths.²⁵ The arrangement reportedly could not materialize as the new offer would make these judges junior to their colleagues who had earlier accepted to function within the PCO in November 2007.²⁶

In other developments, reports noted that missile strikes from US spy planes killed at least 14 people in Damadola village in Bajaur region during the week.²⁷ The US refused to comment on the incident. Washington has meanwhile

²⁰ "Taliban says it shot down NATO helicopter," *IANS*, May 18, 2008, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080518/r_t_ians_wl_asia/twl-taliban-says-it-shot-down-nato-helic-d5d6288.html

²¹ "US Planning Big New Prison in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, May 17, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/17/world/asia/17detain.html?ref=todayspaper>

²² M. Ziauddin, "Judges' reinstatement hopes shattered: London talks collapse despite Boucher's last-minute intervention," *Dawn*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/12/top1.htm>

²³ Amir Wasim, "PML-N walks out after hitting brick wall: Judges issue splits coalition; ministers to quit federal cabinet today," *Dawn*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/13/top1.htm>

²⁴ Raja Asghar, "Judges will be reinstated, Senate assured," *Dawn*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/13/top5.htm>

²⁵ Ansar Abbasi, "Govt makes offer to reappoint deposed judges," *The News*, May 14, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

²⁶ Wajih Ahmad Sheikh, "Fresh oath rejected," *The News*, May 14, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

²⁷ Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Dozens dead as missiles hit Bajaur village," *The News*, May 15, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

toughened its stance on the ongoing talks that the Pakistani government was conducting with the militants and called for concrete results from the negotiations.²⁸ As a result of the peace talks with Baitullah Mehsud, the Taliban released Tariq Azizuddin, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan on May 17, after 97 days of captivity.²⁹

NEPAL

- **NSP stays out of first CA meeting; Confusion about key portfolios remain; Maoists warn of forceful eviction if King des not quit voluntarily; Rakesh Sood calls on Maoists to develop consensus**

The Nepal Sadbhavna Party stayed out of the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly (CA) due to 'internal party wrangling.' Sources indicated that the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) and the other Terai-centric parties would participate in future meetings. The first gathering discussed politically substantive matters like power sharing in the new government, declaration of the country as a republic and nominating 26 CA members.³⁰ Confusion about key portfolios however persisted in political circles. While Prachanda has claimed the leadership as head of the state and executive prime minister, Koirala is being presented as the ceremonial president in the future government.³¹

The Maoist chairman has meanwhile stated that no condition be put on the demands of Madhesi of 'One Madhes One Province.'³² Madhesi leader Upendra Yadav has however stuck to his stand on the removal of the prime-minister through a simple majority.³³

In other developments, the Maoists have warned the king of "forceful eviction" if he refused to quit voluntarily.³⁴ Prachanda, stating that May 28, 2008 would mark an end to the monarchy, has also warned of a counter-revolution in the country.³⁵

²⁸ Anwar Iqbal, "US toughens stance on govt's talks with militants," *Dawn*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/16/top2.htm>

²⁹ Ismail Khan, "Azizuddin is home after 97 days," *Dawn*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/18/top1.htm>

³⁰ "Top leaders agree to call CA meeting in a fortnight," *Nepal News*, May 9, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may09/news10.php>

³¹ "PM starts consultation with coalition partners and others," *Nepal News*, May 10, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may10/news05.php>; "PM Koirala meets leaders of MJF, other Terai centric parties," *Nepal News*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may12/news07.php>

³² "PM starts consultation with coalition partners and others," *Nepal News*, May 10, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may10/news05.php>.

³³ "PM Koirala meets leaders of MJF, other Terai centric parties," *Nepal News*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may12/news07.php>

³⁴ "King told to leave palace by May 27," *Nepal News*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may13/news09.php>

³⁵ "There's possibility of counter-revolution in the country, says Prachanda," *Nepal News*, May 17, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may17/news10.php>

Meanwhile Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood has called on the Maoists to take “position of responsibility and develop consensus” to form the government.³⁶

BHUTAN

- **Dr. Singh visits Bhutan; Expresses support for its democratic elections; Bilateral trade to reach Rs. 100 billion in five years**

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Bhutan for a two-day visit during which he expressed solidarity with the country’s democratic moves and assured his hosts that India would support Bhutan in its economic endeavors.³⁷ New Delhi has also committed Nu 100 billion for Bhutan’s 10th Five Year Plan. Dr. Singh also announced that the bilateral engagement between the two countries over the next five years would increase to the tune of Rs. 100 billion.³⁸

BANGLADESH

- **Parliamentary elections to be held in the third week of December; Bangladesh Navy successfully test fires a C-802 missile, upgraded with Chinese assistance**

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed announced on May 12 that the 9th Parliamentary elections would be held in the third week of December. The final date has however not been decided yet. Stating that a formal dialogue with all the political parties would begin on May 22, Ahmed asserted that the government would either suspend or relax relevant provisions of the emergency power rules to create a conducive environment for the elections.³⁹ Most of the political parties, except the pro-Saifur faction of the BNP, have expressed their unhappiness over the announcement.⁴⁰

Reports also noted that the government had called on 19 political parties to participate in the electoral reform dialogue.⁴¹ While BNP has demanded the immediate release of Khaleda Zia and withdrawal of cases filed against her, the Awami League (AL) has also asserted that it would participate in the dialogue if Sheikh Hasina was freed.⁴² In other domestic developments, after the separation

³⁶ “Indian ambassador stresses on govt of national unity,” *Nepal News*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/may/may15/news10.php>

³⁷ “India will support accelerated development of Bhutan,” *kuenselonline.com*, May 17, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=10403>

³⁸ “India commits Nu 100 billion to Bhutan,” *kuenselonline.com*, May 19, 2008, at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=10419>

³⁹ “JS polls in 3rd week of Dec CA says in his address to nation,” *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36307>

⁴⁰ “Most parties unhappy over CA’s address,” *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36314>

⁴¹ “Electoral Reform Dialogue AL, BNP factions, 11 other parties invited,” *The Daily Star*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36601>

⁴² “Khaleda’s release demanded,” *The Daily Star*, May 17, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36944>; “AL, BNP factions, 11 other parties invited,” *The Daily Star*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36601>

of the Judiciary, 390 assistant judges and judicial magistrates were appointed in courts across the country.⁴³

Reports also noted that the Bangladesh Navy has successfully test-fired a C-802 missile in the Bay of Bengal on May 12. The missile was upgraded with Chinese assistance.⁴⁴

SRI LANKA

- **UPFA obtains 15 seats in the provincial council elections; Rajapakse terms the elections as an important milestone; Reports of forced recruitment of children by the LTTE; Congress in Tamil Nadu demands ban on all pro-LTTE organisations**

In the first provincial council elections held in the Eastern province, the United People's Freedom Alliance received an 'emphatic' victory obtaining 42.38 per cent of the total valid votes and thereby getting 15 seats. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the Tamil Democratic National Alliance secured one seat each.⁴⁵ President Rajapakse termed the first Eastern Provincial Council elections as an "important milestone" in the government's policy of restoring democratic rights to the people. He has been categorical in stating that the elections represented the 'will of the people.'⁴⁶

Reports also noted instances of forcible recruitment of school children who failed in their G.C.E.O/L examination. Sources indicated that such recruitment patterns have also been observed in the past, when families were forced to surrender one member of their families to the LTTE, so that their children could go for higher studies abroad.⁴⁷

Meanwhile in Tamil Nadu, the Congress party has demanded a ban on all pro-LTTE organizations in the state. D Sudarshanam, a senior leader of the party stated that terrorism of "any kind, whether it be from Sri Lanka or within the state (Maoists) or communal, should be dealt with an iron hand."⁴⁸ The Union government had in the previous week announced an extension of the ban on the LTTE until May 2010. Reports noted that the security agencies in India have also strengthened monitoring of the twenty-one small and uninhabited islands located between the Tamil Nadu coast and Sri Lanka. The area is seen as an

⁴³ "390 judicial magistrates appointed," *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36341>

⁴⁴ "Bangladesh Navy successfully test fires long range missile," *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=36354>

⁴⁵ "UPFA victorious in East," *Daily News*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/05/12/pol01.asp>

⁴⁶ "A mandate for ending terror, restoring peace - President," *Daily News*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/05/12/pol02.asp>

⁴⁷ "Tigers target O/L repeaters for recruitment," *Daily News*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/05/15/sec01.asp>

⁴⁸ "Ban pro-LTTE outfits - Congress," *Daily News*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/05/13/sec01.asp>

important base for smugglers, militants as well as boat operators ferrying Tamil refugees.⁴⁹

MALDIVES

- **Maldivian Information Minister: Non-Muslims risk losing the citizenship; Maldivian Embassy opened in Riyadh**

The Maldivian Information Minister, Mohamed Nasheed has acknowledged on his personal blog that Maldivians who convert away from Islam, or who are children of Maldivians married to non-Muslims, risk losing their citizenship of the country.⁵⁰

In other developments, the Saudi Arabian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Nizar Madani and the Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid formally opened the Maldivian Embassy in Riyadh on May 12. It was also proposed that negotiations should begin over the possibility of direct flights between the two countries.⁵¹

II. PAKISTAN-OCUPIED KASHMIR REVIEW

- **Ghulam Nabi Azad urges trade across the Line of Control; Diamer Bhasha Dam to affect agricultural land and heritage sites; AJK PPP demands international intervention in the J&K elections; Pakistan Army claims it is blocking funds to militants in Kashmir**

The Chief Minister of J & K Ghulam Nabi Azad, addressing a public rally in Uri on May 12, blamed the Pakistani government for delaying the process of initiating trade across the Line of Control in Kashmir. Report noted that Azad conveyed similar concerns to Richard Stagg, the visiting British High Commissioner.⁵²

Meanwhile, the PPP leader of the POK, Chaudhary Abdul Majeed Advocate reiterated the need for 'international intervention' in the upcoming Assembly elections in the J&K to ensure free and fair polls. Speaking in Muzaffarabad, Majeed questioned the legitimacy of the electoral process in J&K which according to him had failed to preserve the right of self-determination of the people in Kashmir.⁵³

⁴⁹ "India extends LTTE ban; raises vigilance," *Daily News*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/05/16/sec01.asp>

⁵⁰ "Non-Muslims To Lose Citizenship Under New Constitution," *Minivan News*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.minivannews.com/news/news.php?id=4484>

⁵¹ "Maldives' First Embassy in Mideast Opens in Riyadh," *Arab News*, May 14, 2008, at <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=109876&d=14&m=5&y=2008&pix=kingdom.jpg&category=Kingdom>

⁵² Iftikhar Gilani, "Pak's indecisive affects cross-LoC trade," *Daily Times*, May 13, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C05%5C13%5Cstory_13-5-2008

⁵³ "PPP AJK seeks Int'l cooperation," *The Frontier Post*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thefrontierpost.com/News.aspx?ncat=hn&nid=988&ad=13-05-2008>

The Pakistani Army on its part has claimed that it has curbed the flow of funds to militants across the Line of Control which was allegedly facilitated by the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Reports noted that the army seized cash valued at over one lakh from one of the POK passengers, money which was intended for funding militants in the Kashmir valley.⁵⁴

In other developments, the construction of the Diamer Bhasha Dam continued to generate criticism for posing a threat to nearly 7,000 hectares of agricultural land and to archaeological assets in its adjoining areas, including on the Karakoram highway.⁵⁵

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

SERIAL BOMB BLASTS ROCK JAIPUR

- **Series bomb blasts rock Jaipur, 63 killed; Dr. Singh: No co-relation between POTA and terror strikes**

Over 60 people were killed and 150 others wounded in a series of bomb blasts in Jaipur on May 13. Nine blasts took place within a space of 15 minutes at six crowded locations of the city. Reports noted that blasts were similar to the ones that rocked Varanasi, Faizabad, Ajmer and Hyderabad in the recent past. Sources in the Union Home Ministry stated that the needle of suspicion pointed to the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), the Harkat-ul-Jihadi Islami (HuJI) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).⁵⁶ However, a mysterious email by an outfit known as Indian Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Defence Investiture Ceremony in New Delhi on May 14, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterated that there was “no lack of firmness in the Government’s resolve against terror.” Dr. Singh also clarified that there was no co-relation between POTA and terror strikes. Asserting that there was no dearth of laws against terror in the country, Dr. Singh noted that terrorist attacks in the past on Parliament, the Akshardham temple and Raghunath temple had taken place when POTA was in force.⁵⁷ Speaking in Vadodara on May 17, PM Singh charged that the terrorists wanted to prevent the normalization of Indo-Pak relations and called for an effective strategy to defeat such ‘nefarious designs.’⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “Army: Funds for separatists blocked,” at http://howrah.org/india_news/12242.html

⁵⁵ Amina R Ali, “Dam threatens heritage sites,” *The National Newspaper*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20080513/FOREIGN/663393102/1103/NEWS&Profile=>

⁵⁶ “Similar to Hyderabad, Varanasi blasts: Jaiswal,” *The Hindu*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/15/stories/2008051557180100.htm>

⁵⁷ “PM: no link between POTA repeal and terror strikes,” *Indian Express*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/309708.html>

⁵⁸ “Terrorists want to prevent normalisation of ties: PM,” *Daily Excelsior*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08may18/news.htm#1>

JAMMU AND KASHMIR DEVELOPMENTS

- **PM Manmohan Singh: Unprovoked firing by Pak troops worrisome; UJC ruled out any cease fire by militants in near future; Abdullah calls for autonomy to be restored in J&K**

For the second time in less than a week, Pakistani troops opened unprovoked fire on an Indian border post at Tangdhar in Northern Kashmir in a development which was described as 'worrisome' by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Dr. Singh expressed concern over the firing while talking to reporters on the sidelines of the Defence Investiture Ceremony in New Delhi on May 14. Reports noted that the Pakistani troops used heavy machine guns and mortars. This was the first major violation of the ceasefire in force since December 2003 by the Pakistani troops on the LoC, which has been in force since December 2003.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Syed Salahudin, the chairman of the United Jihad Council (UJC) has ruled out any cease fire by militants in near future. In an interview to the local news agency KNS on May 14, Syed charged that the Government of India was not sincere in resolving the Kashmir issue.⁶⁰

Former J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has called on the Government of India to restore autonomy to J and K as in his opinion that was the only viable solution to the Kashmir imbroglio. Addressing public meetings in Rajouri on May 17, Abdullah noted that almost all the road maps given by some think tanks and political parties revolved around the autonomy question.⁶¹

Meanwhile, as many as six Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants were killed in an 18-hour long gunbattle with the security forces in the hilly terrain of Laru Jageer in Tral of South Kashmir on May 17. Militants killed in the gunbattle included the self-styled District Commander of JeM, Waseem Hassan Ahanger alias Qari Asif.⁶²

Elsewhere, the Doda police on May 15 arrested eight persons including two Special Police Officers (SPOs) for their links with militants of the LeT and HM. Police suspected that the arrested persons were helping the militants to carry out their activities by transporting arms, ammunition and explosives for them, besides providing food, shelter, items of daily use and important information about movement of militants and security forces.⁶³

⁵⁹ "Unprovoked firing by Pak troops worrisome: PM," *Daily Excelsior*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08may15/news.htm#1>

⁶⁰ "UJC rules out ceasefire", *Kashmir Times*, May 15, 2008, at <http://kashmirtimes.com/jktoday.htm>

⁶¹ "All road maps revolve around autonomy: Farooq," *Daily Excelsior*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08may18/news.htm#1>

⁶² "6-member Jaish group wiped out in Tral," *Daily Excelsior*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08may18/news.htm#1>

⁶³ "Two SPOs among 8 held for LeT links," *Daily Excelsior*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08may16/news.htm#3>

NORTH-EAST INSURGENCY

- **Factional clashes claim 16 in Nagaland; DHD steps up violence, attacks carried out in Assam's NC Hills district**

As many as 14 Naga insurgents and two civilian were killed in three separate factional clashes between the rival groups of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) near Dimapur town of Nagaland state on May 16.⁶⁴ The NSCN-IM and NSCN-U are currently engaged in a war with both blaming each other for the deteriorating situation in and around Dimapur town. In the wake of the escalation of the internecine clash between the Naga factions, the state government has asked police and paramilitary forces to enforce strict ceasefire rules on the ground. The state government, after an emergency Cabinet meeting at capital Kohima on May 16, directed the police, CRPF and Assam Rifles to enforce the 'Standard Operation Procedure' issued by the Union Home Ministry which empowered the police and security forces to take action against violators of the agreed truce.⁶⁵

In other developments, insurgents of the Jewel Gordosa faction of the Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) gunned down at least 11 people in two separate incidents in Assam's NC Hills district on May 15, taking the toll of those killed since May 10 to 22.⁶⁶ On May 11, the insurgent group had killed eight labourers engaged in construction of railway quarters in the area. The outfit had issued a diktat to stop all work on the East-West corridor and on the broad gauge conversion projects. Work on the East-West corridor in the Mahur-Maibong section was stopped following the diktat.⁶⁷

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Six Maoists killed along the Bihar-Jharkhand border**

Six Maoists were killed and four policemen wounded in an encounter at Nawada on the Bihar-Jharkhand border on May 14.⁶⁸

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- **Union Government extends ban on LTTE**

The Union Government has extended the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as an unlawful association for another two years on May 14. It noted that the LTTE continued to be an 'extremely potent, most lethal and well organised terrorist force in Sri Lanka and has strong connections in Tamil Nadu

⁶⁴ "14 killed as Naga factions clash - Residents die in protest attack," *Telegraph*, May 17, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080517/jsp/frontpage/story_9282747.jsp

⁶⁵ "Security forces to enforce ceasefire," *The Hindu*, May 18, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/18/stories/2008051857210100.htm>

⁶⁶ "DHD(J) kills 11 more in NC Hills," *Sentinel*, May 16, 2008, at http://sentinelassam.com/sentinel_en/main%20news.htm

⁶⁷ "8 die in Jewel revenge strike," *Telegraph*, May 12, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080512/jsp/frontpage/story_9258388.jsp

⁶⁸ "6 Maoists killed, 4 cops hurt," *Telegraph*, May 15, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080515/jsp/frontpage/story_9271793.jsp

and certain other pockets of southern India.’ The act that the group continued to use Tamil Nadu as the base for carrying out smuggling of essential items like petrol and diesel besides drugs to Sri Lanka was also pointed out.⁶⁹

IV. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- **Kakodkar: India to launch massive programme to explore domestic sources of uranium;; UPA tries to sell the ElBardei card to the Left parties**

Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Secretary, DAE stated that India was making large-scale investments in uranium exploration (Rs.600-700 crores) in order to reduce its dependence on foreign supplies, in the light of the imponderables surrounding the Indo-US nuclear deal. Commenting on the deal, Dr. Kakodkar noted that India had already discussed the issue with other countries as well as with the IAEA. He added that technical deliberations were over and that a decision was now before the political leadership.⁷⁰

In a bid to gain the Left parties’ support over the nuclear deal, the UPA on its part told the Left parties that the deal needs to be finalised before July as the term of the current IAEA Director-General, Dr. Mohammed el-Baradei would end. With the likely possibility that the next head of the IAEA would be from Japan, reports noted that the Indian government saw a possible shift in the positive stance that the international atomic agency had been taking towards the deal.⁷¹

IRAN

- **Iran-IAEA hold third round of expert level technical talks; US calls its envoy to IAEA to discuss Iran issue; Iran delivers package of proposals to UN chief**

Iran and the IAEA held the third round of talks about Iran’s disputed nuclear programme during the week on May 12.⁷² The IAEA delegation was headed by Herman Nackaerts, director for regional department of Safeguards Operation, while Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran’s permanent envoy to IAEA, headed the Iranian team.⁷³

⁶⁹ “LTTE still uses Tamil Nadu as supply base,” *The Hindu*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/16/stories/2008051661321200.htm>

⁷⁰ “India to undertake massive uranium exploration: Kakodkar,” *Sify*, May 12, 2008, at <http://sify.com/news/fullstory.php?id=14671201>

⁷¹ Saubhadra Chatterji, “N-deal: Govt plays El Baradei card with Left,” *Business Standard*, May 17, 2008, at http://www.business-standard.com/common/news_article.php?autono=323242&leftnm=3&subLeft=0&chkFlg=

⁷² “U.N. and Iran hold talks on disputed nuclear work,” *Reuters*, May 12, 2008, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSHAF24208920080512?sp=true>

⁷³ “3rd Iran-IAEA technical talks ends,” *IRNA*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-17/0805157494002132.htm>

In other developments, Gregory Schulte, the US envoy to the IAEA has been called back to Washington for consultations with the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and the National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley about Iran and the IAEA's upcoming report.⁷⁴

Tehran meanwhile delivered to the UN chief Ban ki-Moon a package of proposals aimed at solving global challenges, including the nuclear issue. The "incentives package" was handed over after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated that Tehran was ready to talk to the world powers about global problems but ruled out any negotiations over Tehran's nuclear "rights". Several countries assume that the recent Iranian proposal could be a "counteroffensive" by Iran to a package of incentives drawn up by world powers to try to persuade Tehran to halt its controversial nuclear work.⁷⁵

NORTH KOREA

- **US House passes measure requiring Presidential certification before Pyongyang is taken off the terrorism blacklist; South Korean envoy hopes talks would resume in June**

U.S. House of Representatives has passed a measure that would require the US President George W. Bush to certify that North Korea was not transferring nuclear technology to Iran and Syria before Pyongyang is taken off the U.S. terrorism blacklist. Though the measure was still a long way from becoming law, it could hinder the Bush administration's push to settle a nuclear disarmament deal with Pyongyang. Under the measure, President Bush would also have to certify that North Korea has provided a "complete, correct and verifiable" declaration of all its nuclear programs.⁷⁶

South Korean chief nuclear envoy, Kim Sook meanwhile has hinted that the long-stalled international negotiations on the North Korean denuclearisation programme would resume in the coming month. The US and North Korea have made considerable progress in recent months, with North Korea handing over substantial quantities of documents to the US in order to enable it to verify the North Korean declaration and production of fissile material.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ "US summons IAEA envoy over Iran," *Press TV*, May 13, 2008, at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=55439§ionid=351020104>

⁷⁵ "Iran delivers proposals on global problems to UN," *AFP*, May 14, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hECtKMVpidfAKLbM9BkfPMNz9M7Q>

⁷⁶ "US House passes measure requiring Bush to certify NKorean nuclear progress," *International Herald Tribune*, May 15, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=12940899>

⁷⁷ "SKorea expects NKorea nuclear talks to resume next month," *International Herald Tribune*, May 16, 2008, at <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=12946175>

V. ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

BIO-FUELS

- **Report: Food prices to continue on their upward trend**

The global agriculture report by the Kuwait Finance House has noted that food stock prices are set to see an upward trend well into 2009. The warning would add further pressure to halt the aggressive embrace of bio-fuels championed by the US and the EU.⁷⁸

OIL PRICES

- **Rising militant attacks on oil assets in Nigeria lead to shutting down of capacity of over 164,000 bpd; OPEC refuses to heed Bush's call to increase oil production**

Militant attacks on oil facilities in the Niger delta continued during the week, which put further pressure on the oil prices. Royal Dutch Shell shut down more of its production following fresh attacks on oil wells and other valuable equipments. These attacks have led to the shutting down of a capacity of about 164,000 barrels-per-day by Shell.⁷⁹

Later during the week, a construction vehicle stuck an oil pipeline on the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, setting off an oil-fed inferno that spread to surrounding homes and a school killing 100 people.⁸⁰

Notwithstanding these developments however, oil prices eased with light crude selling at \$124.23 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange on May 13.⁸¹

President Bush's attempt to address the rising prices during his May 17-18 visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss the oil prices also turned futile.⁸² The OPEC has however refused to increase oil production.⁸³ Reports also questioned the ability of OPEC to affect global oil prices as their effective market share was only about 31.87 per cent of the global oil market.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ "Higher food prices trend to go into 2009," *The Star Online*, May 12, 2008, at biz.thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/5/12/business/21184720&sec=business

⁷⁹ "Shell Shuts Down Production After Militants Attack," *Leadership Nigeria*, May 17, 2008, at http://www.leadershipnigeria.com/product_info.php?products_id=27263,

⁸⁰ "100 Feared Dead in Nigerian Pipeline Fire," *International Herald Tribune*, May 16, 2008, at www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/16/africa/16nigeria.php

⁸¹ "Oil Prices Slide, and Wall Street Cheers," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/business/13stox.html

⁸² Jennifer Loven, "Saudis see no reason to raise oil production now," *Yahoo News*, May 16, 2008, at news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080516/ap_on_re_mi_ea/bush_mideast

⁸³ Jennifer Loven, "Bush, Saudis to discuss soaring gas prices," *Associate Press*, May 17, 2008, at <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hkf--m78S6F3LZAcz4sVHGQCQSTgD90MIM800>

⁸⁴ Sayed Rahid Husein, "Who Really Controls the Oil Market?," *ArabNews.com*, May 16, 2008, at revolutionradio.org/2008/05/16/who-really-controls-the-oil-market/

EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

- **Tullow Oil reports discovering oil and gas in the Lake Albert Rift Basin**

The London-based company exploring oil in western Uganda, Tullow Oil reported that oil and gas deposits have been found in the country. The company on its website noted that exploration at Taitai-1 well basin, located in Butiaba region in the Lake Albert Rift, encountered five meters of net gas pay and at least eight meters of net oil pay.⁸⁵ According to Aidan Heavey, Chief Executive of Tullow, the latest discovery reinforced the potential of the Lake Albert Rift Basin as a major emerging petroleum province.⁸⁶

GEOPOLITICS

- **Gazpromneft's bid to acquire 51 percent stake in NIS approved, would allow Serbia to join the South Stream gas pipeline**

Serbian cabinet ministers approved the Gazpromneft's bid to acquire 51 percent stake in Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS, Petroleum Industry of Serbia). The agreement between the two countries was signed on January 25. Final approval of the parliament would only be obtained after the elections on May 11. Among other things, the agreement allowed Serbia to join the South Stream gas pipeline project. The Serbian section of the future gas pipeline will enable Russia to supply its gas to the Balkans and other European countries through the Black Sea, Bulgaria and Serbia.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Net pay denotes the thickness of the productive portion of a reservoir.

⁸⁶ "More oil, natural gas discovered in W Uganda," *Xinhuanet.com*, May 13, 2008, at news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-05/13/content_8162150.htm

⁸⁷ "Serb govt approves oil and gas deal with Gazprom," *Forbes*, May 12, 2008, at www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2008/05/12/afx4997110.html