

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

July 07-13, 7(2), 2008

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **NSA blames ISI for July 7 suicide attack; Foreign Secretary visits Kabul; OIC condemns “criminal acts”; Obama: Indian Embassy attack an indication of the deteriorating security situation; ICRC: Over 250 civilians killed since July 4; Afghan govt launches \$404 m appeal for food aid**

National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan blamed Pakistan’s ISI for the deadly suicide bombing outside the Indian Embassy on July 7 which claimed over 40 lives, including that of the Defence Attache and a senior IFS officer.¹ Pakistan has however denied any involvement in the attack. The US, while condemning the attack, has declined to react to the charge of the Afghan authorities regarding Islamabad’s complicity in the blast. It has however extended all possible help to the Afghan and Indian authorities to determine the people responsible for the attack.² Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon also visited Kabul on July 13 to take stock of the situation and met President Hamid Karzai among others. Mr. Menon reiterated India’s commitment to the “partnership with Afghanistan.”³

Condemnation of the blast continued to pour from various countries and organisations. OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu noted on July 8 that such “criminal acts” ran counter to the teachings of Islam and called on the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.⁴ US Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama expressed his condolences to the bereaved families and noted that the blast was “one more indication of the severe deterioration” in the security situation in Afghanistan.⁵

Reports noted that the July 7 incident was the latest in a series of attacks that Indian interests in the country were subjected to over the past year. In 2007 for instance, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) came under 30 rocket attacks. The BRO was involved in building the 124-mile road across Nimroz Province that would link Afghanistan to a seaport in Iran.⁶

¹ “India blames Pakistan for Kabul embassy attack,” *IANS*, July 13, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20080713/736/tnl-india-blames-pakistan-for-kabul-emba.html>

² “US offers help in finding Kabul Indian mission attackers,” *IANS*, July 07, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080707/890/twl-us-offers-help-in-finding-kabul-indi.html>

³ “Foreign secretary in Kabul, NSA warns of more attacks,” *IANS*, July 13, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080713/812/tnl-foreign-secretary-in-kabul-nsa-warns.html>

⁴ “OIC condemns attack on Indian embassy in Kabul,” *IANS*, July 08, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080708/896/twl-oic-condemns-attack-on-indian-embass.html>

⁵ “Attack on Indian mission indicates worsening Afghanistan situation: Obama,” *IANS*, July 09, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080709/890/twl-attack-on-indian-mission-indicates-w.html>

⁶ “Afghan Bombing Sends Stark Message to India,” *The New York Times*, July 09, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/world/asia/09india.html?ref=todayspaper>

Meanwhile, reports indicated that 47 civilians were indeed killed in a US-led air strike in the eastern province of Nangarhar on July 6. A team comprising of representatives of the Afghan parliament, the provincial council, and the interior and defence ministries investigating the attack also noted that “there was no evidence of Taliban or Al Qaeda insurgents present near the area where the incident took place.”⁷ The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also condemned the rising civilian casualties in the country. It pointed out that over 250 civilians had been killed since July 4, including the 44 killed in the Indian Embassy attack.⁸

In other developments, even as the Afghan government launched a \$404 million appeal to feed nearly 5 million Afghans facing starvation due to high food prices, drought and poor harvests, UN Special Envoy Kai Eide called on the international community to live up to its commitments for Afghanistan.⁹

PAKISTAN

- **Serial bomb blasts in Karachi; Suicide bomb attack kills 15 policemen in Islamabad; Spate of violent incidents across country; UN agrees to probe the assassination of Benazir Bhutto**

At least 50 people were reportedly injured in series of bomb blasts that hit parts of Karachi on July 7. No casualties were however reported in the blasts described as ‘low intensity.’¹⁰ Earlier on July 6, a suicide bomb attack killed 15 police men and two civilians in Islamabad near the venue of a conference organized to commemorate the anniversary of the Lal Masjid incident.¹¹

In continuing incidents of violence across the country, at least 4 paramilitary troops were killed by militants at Landi Kotal in the Khyber Agency on July 8, a day before the initiation of the peace deal by the tribal Jirga.¹² The Taliban also attacked a convoy of the security forces in Hangu district on July 12, killing 17 personnel belonging to the Frontier Constabulary and four civilians.¹³ In another incident, nine soldiers died in a NATO air raid in Angoor Adda town near the Pak-Afghan border on July 11.¹⁴

⁷ “47 civilians killed in US airstrike in Afghanistan,” *IANS*, July 11, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080711/876/twl-47-civilians-killed-in-us-airstrike.html>

⁸ “Civilian deaths in Afghanistan soars: Red Cross,” *IANS*, July 09, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080709/876/twl-civilian-deaths-in-afghanistan-soars.html>

⁹ “World has failed to meet Afghanistan's needs: UN,” *IANS*, July 10, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080710/890/twl-world-has-failed-to-meet-afghanistan.html>

¹⁰ “Series of blasts rock Karachi,” *Daily Times*, July 08, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\07\08\story_8-7-2008_pg1_1

¹¹ Syed Irfan Raza & Munawer Azeem, “Suicide bomber avenges Lal Masjid crackdown; 15 policemen killed,” *Dawn*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/07/07/top1.htm>

¹² Ibrahim Shinwari, “Militants barred from Bara under peace deal,” *Dawn*, July 10, 2008, at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/07/10/top6.htm>

¹³ Mushtaq Yusufzai & Saiful Islam, “17 FC men among 25 killed in convoy ambush,” *The News*, July 13, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

¹⁴ Mushtaq Yusufzai, “Nine soldiers hurt as Nato planes bomb Angoor Adda,” *The News*, July 12, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

In other developments, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, addressing the UNSC on July 10, had asserted that Islamabad will not allow operations by foreign troops within its territory.¹⁵ Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on his part agreed to the conduct of a UN probe into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. He was addressing a press conference with Mr. Qureshi on July 11 after formalizing the details of the independent enquiry commission.¹⁶

NEPAL

- **CA passes the Fifth Amendment Bill, Madhesi parties boycott the meeting; Delay in government formation affecting quality of governance; Food and fuel crisis intensifies; UNMIN closes Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi offices**

Despite the boycott of the Constituent Assembly (CA) meeting by the Madhesi political parties (Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Tarai Madhes Democratic Party, Sadbhavana Party and Dalit Janajati party), the CA on July 13 passed the Fifth Amendment bill on the 18-month-old Interim statute, paving the way for the election of the president, the prime minister and the CA chairman. 442 members out of the 601-member assembly voted for the bill. The Madhesi parties, who wanted an autonomous Madhes state as well as proportional representation of Madhesis in the Nepal Army, were protesting against the government's failure to table a bill in tune with the agreement signed on February 18.

As per the bill, the president, vice president and prime minister would be elected through consensus among parties. If such a consensus was not reached, a majority of the existing members of the CA would elect the head of state and government. Among other provisions of the bill include the removal of the prime minister through simple majority of the CA, while the removal of the president and the vice-president would require a two-thirds majority. The bill also provides for the opposition leader to be a member in the constitutional council, which makes recommendations on important appointments. The CA also passed a bill pledging autonomous status to all provinces as desired by people from different communities including Madhesis.¹⁷

Delay in the formation of the new government was also affecting the quality of governance in Nepal. The fuel crisis intensified on July 11 as the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) cut fuel supplies by 67 per cent as the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) failed to make payments to the IOC. As a result, oil imports

¹⁵ "Pakistan won't allow foreign troops: Qureshi," *Daily Times*, July 11, 2008, at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008\07\11\story_11-7-2008_pg1_1

¹⁶ "UN agrees to probe Benazir's murder," *The News*, July 12, 2008, at http://thenews.jang.com.pk/arc_default.asp

¹⁷ "CA passes Fifth Amendment bill," *kantipuronline.com*, July 13, 2008, at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=153437>

went down to 1,000 KL per day as against the national daily requirement of over 3,000 KL per a day.¹⁸

Meanwhile, a BBC report citing UN sources revealed that rising food prices and destroyed crop harvests were hitting the country very hard. The report noted that several hundred thousand needed urgent food assistance, especially in the remote mountainous parts of the country, which were mostly inaccessible by road.¹⁹ Moreover, reports noted that food shortages continued to plague 25 VDCs of the Bhaisole area, seven VDCs of Chhabis area and 11 VDCs of the Pandrabis area of Achham district. These shortages persisted as there was no depot of the Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) in these areas.²⁰

In other developments, UNMIN chief Ian Martin stated that UNMIN offices in Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi have been closed as its mandate had now been limited to monitoring of Maoist combatants and weapons. Following a decision of the seven-party alliance, the government had recently decided to ask the UN to extend UNMIN's term by another six months.²¹

BANGLADESH

- **J-e-I files writ petition against Aug 4 elections; Khaleda Zia calls on political parties to work together to overcome current crisis; Government eases emergency restrictions to permit some trade union activities**

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Jasim Uddin Sarker, filed a writ petition with the High Court on July 6 demanding a stay order on the August 4 elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities. The dates for these elections were announced on June 20.²²

Meanwhile, the BNP blamed the government for following the 'minus-two' formula, for having banished the chiefs of the two ruling parties.²³ The government has on its part indicated that it could release BNP chief Khaleda Zia, in the similar manner that Shiekh Hasina was released.²⁴ Khaleda Zia reasserted her demand that the parliamentary polls should be held before the local

¹⁸ "Short supply fuels oil crisis in Nepal," *The Economics Times*, July 12, 2008, at http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/Short_supply_fuels_oil_crisis_in_Nepal/articleshow/3226571.cms

¹⁹ "Food shortages grow in rural Nepal," July 10, 2008, at *BBC News*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7498300.stm

²⁰ "Food Crisis Continues to Plague Achham," *The Himalayan Times*, July 11, 2008, at <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0va2qzpc7Qa4qa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20080711>

²¹ "UNMIN closes its offices in far and mid-western regions," *Nepalnews.com*, July 11, 2008, at <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/jul/jul11/news04.php>

²² "Jamaat leader seeks stay on Aug 4 polls schedule," *The Daily Star*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44626>

²³ "Govt still working on 'minus-2' formula: Delwar," *The Daily Star*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44639>

²⁴ "Khaleda can be released the way Hasina freed: CA tells Bangladeshi community in KL," *The Daily Star*, July 08, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44797>

government polls and that the caretaker government should set a timeline for the elected government to conduct the polls.²⁵ She also stressed that the political parties should work together to overcome the ongoing political crisis.²⁶

Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine announced the names of its mayoral candidates for the scheduled August 4 polls to four city corporations on July 9.²⁷ On the other hand, the BNP announced that it would take stern action against candidates contesting the polls.²⁸ The government also decided to ease emergency measures in order to permit some amount of trade union activities.²⁹

In other developments, Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury attended the D8 Summit held in Kuala Lumpur on July 8.³⁰ He proposed a five-point agenda for effective cooperation among the member-states on issues concerning energy, food, trade, climate change and migration.³¹ The member states also approved a 10-year road map for economic cooperation.³² The Foreign Affairs Adviser, commenting on the issue of transit of goods to India, categorically stated on July 12 that the government would never agree to any arrangement which was contrary to Bangladesh's sovereign national interest.³³

SRI LANKA

- **SLAF claims targeting LTTE gathering point; Colombo insists on participation of all political parties in future peace talks, LTTE says it is a tactic to avoid peace talks; Sri Lankan Navy: Indian fishermen venturing into Sri Lankan waters are a major security threat; LTTE urges Karunanidhi to assist in establishment of Tamil Eelam; Karuna to remain leader of TMVP**

Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) on July 6 claimed to have launched “precision air strikes at a high-profile LTTE gathering point” in Vaddakachchi in the Kilinochchi district. A statement by the Defence Ministry noted that the raid was

²⁵ “Khaleda's new formula for local govt polls: Asks CG to hold JS elections first,” *The Daily Star*, July 08, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44738>

²⁶ “Work together to overcome crisis: Khaleda asks all parties,” *The Daily Star*, July 10, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=45058>

²⁷ “14-party picks mayoral candidates for 4 cities,” *The Daily Star*, July 10, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=45201>

²⁸ “BNP to take action against party aspirants,” *The Daily Star*, July 12, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=45371>

²⁹ “Govt to allow limited scale trade union activities,” *The Daily Star*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44627>

³⁰ “CA leaves for KL today,” *The Daily Star*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44629>

³¹ “CA proposes funds for food, energy at D8 meet,” *The Daily Star*, July 09, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44919>

³² “D8 chalks out 10-yr economic roadmap,” *The Daily Star*, July 09, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=44930>

³³ “No agreement against national interest: Says foreign adviser on transit issue,” *The Daily Star*, July 13, 2008, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=45485>

conducted based on real-time information. Vaddakachchi, located approximately 8 kms northeast of the Iranamadu Tank, is a part of the Kilinochchi district, which is still under LTTE control.³⁴ The pro-LTTE *Tamil Net* alleged that 4 civilians were wounded and six houses were damaged at Vaddakkachchi, along the Paranthan Mullaiththeevu road when two SLAF bombers attacked a residential area.

Colombo on its part insisted that any future peace talks would take place with the participation of all Tamil political parties in the country and not solely with the LTTE. The LTTE however ruled out such a possibility stating that it would enter negotiations with only the government, through the facilitation of the Norwegians and not with the presence of any other political party in the country. LTTE's military spokesperson Rasiah Ilanthirayan stated that the insistence on the participation of other political parties was "just another tactic to evade peace talks."³⁵

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Navy contended that the massive daily intrusion of Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan waters near Mannar and Jaffna was posing a major security threat to the northern part of the country. A navy spokesman, Commodore D.K.P. Dassanayake, noted that between June 2007 – July 2008, as many as 6,839 Indian fishing boats were seen off the north Sri Lankan coast, especially near Thalaimannar, Pesalai and Delft island. He charged that these fishermen not only "poach fish, but smuggle in fuel and other war-like material for the LTTE."³⁶ Tamil Nadu's fishermen however on their part complain that the Sri Lankan Navy was aggressively preventing them from exercising their 'traditional right' to fish in the Palk Strait, especially around Katchchativu Island, which was ceded to Sri Lanka in the 1970s.

The LTTE also urged the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi to come forward and assist them in their struggle to establish a Tamil Eelam state. In an interview to '*Kumudam*,' a popular Tamil weekly from Chennai, P. Nadesan, Political Head of the LTTE called on Karunanidhi to "turn into a supporter of our struggle."³⁷ He also categorically denied that the Tamil Tigers have been weakened, claiming that such statements were a vicious propaganda campaign put forward by Colombo. Nadesan also expressed "regret" that India was providing help to the Sri Lankan Government when "80

³⁴ "Sri Lanka strikes at LTTE gathering point," July 07, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/07/07/stories/2008070755471200.htm>

³⁵ Jamila Najmuddin, "Govt. insists talks should include all Tamil parties," July 08, 2008, at http://www.dailymirror.wijeya.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=19866

³⁶ P.K. Balachandran, "TN fishermen helping LTTE: Lanka," July 09, 2008, at <http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IET20080708161917&Page=T&Title=Southern+News+-+Tamil+Nadu&Topic=0>

³⁷ "Is LTTE Weak: Nadesan interview," *Kumudam*, July 10, 2008, at <http://www.kumudam.com/magazine/Kumudam/2008-07-09/pg27.php>

million Tamil people living in the world understand the atrocities of the Sinhalese Army.”³⁸

In other developments, TMVP spokesperson Azath Moulana stated that Karuna, who had returned from the UK, would remain as the leader of the TMVP, while Pillayan would be his deputy. He added that the “functions of Karuna Amman and the functions of other members following his return would be decided at our politburo meeting this week.”³⁹ The Controller-General of Immigration and Emigration (I&E) P.B. Abeykoon on his part denied reports that Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan alias Karuna had returned to the country from UK under a fake name. He noted that Karuna arrived under his original name with an Emergency Certificate issued by the British authorities.⁴⁰

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **Six-Party talks in Beijing agree on North Korean verification mechanism; Beijing: Political dialogue “only correct path” for resolution of Zimbabwe issue; China and Mexico establish strategic dialogue mechanism**

The chief delegates to the Six-Party Talks on the Korean nuclear issue met in Beijing during the week. The head of the Chinese delegation, Wu Dawei announced the verification mechanism for North Korean disarmament to be made up of experts from six nations, and included such measures as visits to facilities, review of documents and interviews with technical personnel. A monitoring mechanism would also be set up to ensure fulfillment of the respective commitments of each nation on non-proliferation as well as on economic and energy assistance to the DPRK.⁴¹

Commenting on the ongoing political crisis in Zimbabwe, the Chinese government stated that “political dialogue and negotiation” was the “only correct path” to solve the problem. Liu Jianchao, the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry called on the parties concerned to seek compromise and cooperation via dialogue and negotiation. China, along with Russia, South Africa, Libya and Vietnam vetoed a US-draft resolution in the UN Security Council which was intended to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe due to the controversies generated in the aftermath of the country’s presidential elections.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Arthur Wamanan, “Karuna assumes TMVP leadership,” *The Sunday Leader*, July 07, 2008, at <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/20080706/NEWS.HTM>

⁴⁰ Sunil Jayasiri, “I & E Chief denies Karuna arrived with false name,” July 07, 2008, at http://www.dailymirror.wijeya.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=19722

⁴¹ “Korean Peninsular nuclear talks end with verification agreement,” *People’s Daily*, July 13, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6449001.html>

⁴² “China defends veto on Zimbabwe issue, saying political dialogue ‘the only correct path’,” *People’s Daily*, July 12, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6448901.html>

The Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo, in his interactions with Mostafa Osman Ismail, the foreign affairs secretary and presidential advisor of the National Congress Party (NCP) of Sudan, promised to continue cooperation with the country. Ismail on his part expressed his gratitude for the China's 'constructive' efforts in pushing for a settlement of the Darfur issue.⁴³

The Chinese government meanwhile, before the Olympics, was expanding its anti-terror training programmes with allied countries. Special troops from Thailand participated in 'Strike-2008' exercises in Thailand's northern province of Chiang Mai. The previous exercises were conducted in Guangzhou province of China in 2007.⁴⁴

In other developments, China and Mexico announced the establishment of a strategic dialogue mechanism after a meeting between Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Mexican counterpart Felipe Calderon Hinojosa. Hu put forth a four-point proposal to cement Sino-Mexican relations. These included the strengthening of political dialogue, boosting economic cooperation, increased personnel exchanges in the fields of culture, education, medicine and social developments, and greater cooperation on multilateral issues.⁴⁵

MYANMAR

- **UN appeals for \$482 m in cyclone aid; Yangon approves 1500 more visas for aid workers; State media: 1990 election results no longer valid**

The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes appealed for an additional \$482 million in aid for Myanmar to support 103 aid projects covering food supplies, agriculture, water and sanitation, health, schooling and shelter.⁴⁶ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has also stated that even after two months since cyclone Nargis, over 1 million victims had yet to receive any kind of assistance.⁴⁷ The UN also established an emergency communications network in Yangon for better access to disaster relief and expedite restoration works.⁴⁸ Reports also noted that the authorities approved more than 1500 visas for aid workers.⁴⁹

⁴³ "China to continue coordination with Sudan on Darfur issue, says state councillor," *People's Daily*, July 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6448765.html>

⁴⁴ "Thai-Chinese special forces launch anti-terror combined training," *People's Daily*, July 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6448786.html>

⁴⁵ "China, Mexico establish strategic dialogue mechanism," *People's Daily*, July 11, 2008, at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6448760.html>

⁴⁶ "UN appeals for \$482 mln for cyclone recovery in Myanmar," *Xinhua*, July 11, 2008, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-07/11/content_8525936.htm

⁴⁷ "Food shortage threatens Burmese survivors," *Upiasialonline*, July 8, 2008, at http://upiasialonline.com/Human_Rights/2008/07/08/food_shortage_threatens_burmese_survivors/7550/

⁴⁸ "U.N. sets up emergency telecommunication center in Myanmar," *Xinhua*, July 7, 2008, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-07/07/content_8503945.htm

⁴⁹ "Myanmar: 1500 visas issued after cyclone," *Associated Foreign Press*, July 8, 2008, at <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5greyFH3qkj9mc9oagSoulgjN4KHgD91PER5O0>

In other developments, the state media on July 6 reported that the 1990 election results were no longer valid and that Aung San Suu Kyi should accept the results of the recently-held referendum and prepare for the 2010 elections.⁵⁰

C. WEST ASIA

IRAQ

- **Maliki: Baghdad in favour of a short-term security pact with US; Gates: More US troops to be withdrawn from Iraq and deployed to Afghanistan; US Gen.: Combat operations by US troops to cease by middle of 2009; Erdogan visits Baghdad; Gen. Petraeus new Centcom chief**

Imponderables still surrounded the security pact being negotiated by the US with the Iraqi government with Baghdad insisting on a specific timetable for the withdrawal of US troops from the country. National Security Adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie asserted that Iraq would “not accept a memorandum of understanding without having timeline horizons for the cessation of combat operations as well as the departure of all the combat brigades.”⁵¹ Prime Minister al-Maliki a day earlier on also stated on July 7 that his government was in favour of a short-term pact governing the status of US forces rather than a broad, long-term agreement.⁵² Iraqi Vice-President Adel Abdel-Mahdi told an Arab daily that foreign troops have to be under Iraqi control, adding that Iraq, as one of the founding members of the UN, “cannot be placed under occupation.”⁵³

US Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama cited Maliki’s statements on a withdrawal timetable to justify his own position on the issue. Obama noted that such a deadline was essential to not only “relieve pressure on our military, but also to deal with deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and to put more pressure on the Iraqi government.”⁵⁴ US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates on his part on July 8 stated that more US troops would be withdrawn as Iraqi forces gained greater control over the provinces. Most of these troops, Gates indicated, would be deployed to Afghanistan, which was witnessing increasing levels of violence.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, senior US army officer in charge of training Iraqi forces, Lt. Gen. James Dubik told the U.S. House of Representatives Armed

⁵⁰ “Suu Kyi vote win ‘no longer legal’: Myanmar state media,” *Associated Foreign Press*, July 6, 2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jcuVGMX9cvwpRzQ83X5b0i-6racQ>

⁵¹ “Iraqi Officials Still Insisting on Withdrawal Timetable,” *The New York Times*, July 09, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁵² “Iraqi Favors Short Security Pact With U.S.,” *The New York Times*, July 08, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/world/middleeast/08iraq.html?ref=todayspaper>

⁵³ “US sovereign rights over Iraq unacceptable,” *IANS*, July 10, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/43/20080710/896/twl-us-sovereign-rights-over-iraq-unacce.html>

⁵⁴ “Obama says U.S. troop withdrawal backed by Iraqi govt,” *IANS*, July 13, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20080713/362/twl-obama-says-u-s-troop-withdrawal-back.html>

⁵⁵ “U.S. Considers Increasing Pace of Iraq Pullout,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/washington/13military.html?ref=todayspaper>

Services Committee on July 9 that US troops could cease combat operations by the middle of 2009.⁵⁶

In other developments, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Baghdad during the week for talks on security and economic cooperation. Reports noted that both sides envisaged taking the volume of their bilateral trade to more than \$20 billion in another 2 years, from the 2007 levels of about \$3.5 billion.⁵⁷ Kuwait also announced that it would restore diplomatic ties with Iraq, thus becoming the third country after the UAE and Bahrain to do so.

The US Senate meanwhile confirmed Gen. David Petraeus as the chief of the US Central Command, overseeing the theatres of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Lt. Gen. David Odierno as the new commander of US forces in Iraq.

IRAN

- **Ahmadinejad discusses economic reform plan with senior experts; Tehran warns of hitting Tel Aviv; Iran test-fires long and medium-range surface-to-surface missiles**

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad discussed the government's economic reform plan with over 100 experts and urged them to stand in solidarity with the administration in the implementation of the plan. The plan, which was released in the previous month, calls for eliminating energy and bread subsidies, delivering funds directly to low-income families, and reforming the customs, tax, and insurance systems. With inflation close to 26 percent, the economists advised the administration to spend subsidies in a proper way, slow down the implementation of infrastructure projects, employ highly efficient economic advisors, tackle financial corruption, strengthen the private sector among other measures to revitalize the country's ailing economy. Ahmadinejad on his part disputed allegations that his economic policy was unscientific and impractical.⁵⁸

In other developments, an aide to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned of hitting Tel Aviv, US shipping in the Gulf and American interests around the world if Iran was attacked over its disputed nuclear activities. The aide, Shirazi, was a mid-level cleric and a representative of Ali Khamenei to the Revolutionary Guards. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mark Regev declined to comment on the warning.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ "U.S. ground troops mostly done in Iraq in '09": General," *IANS*, July 09, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20080709/362/twl-u-s-ground-troops-mostly-done-in-ira.html>

⁵⁷ "Turk PM in Baghdad to boost ties," *IANS*, July 10, 2008, at <http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20080710/362/twl-turk-pm-in-baghdad-to-boost-ties.html>

⁵⁸ "Ahmadinejad confers with experts on economic reform plan," *Tehran Times*, July 6, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=172526

⁵⁹ "Iran to 'hit Tel Aviv, US ships' if attacked," *Khaleej Times*, July 8, 2008, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2008/July/middleeast_July189.xml§ion=middleeast

Iran meanwhile test-fired 9 long and medium-range surface-to-surface missiles, including the upgraded version of the Shahab-3. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Air Force Commander Hossein Salami pointed out that the exercise was aimed at demonstrating the country's might and perseverance against the enemies, who he charged of having threatened Iran with 'harsh rhetoric.' The missiles tested included the Zelzal and Fat'h, with ranges of 400 km and 170 km respectively. Iran has also threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz, through which about 40 percent of the global oil supplies moved, if attacked.⁶⁰

D. US ELECTION REVIEW

- **Obama to visit France, Britain, Germany, Israel and Jordan in July end; Obama draws flak for his support to the Senate Wire Tapping Bill; Obama and McCain support strengthened Iran sanctions; McCain camp facing internal squabbles**

After having announced late last month that Sen. Obama would be traveling to France, Britain, Germany, Israel and Jordan, the Obama camp tightly guarded the exact itinerary of the Senator's foreign trip. However, reports in these countries noted that the impending visit would take place at the end of this month. According to the Israeli daily *Yediot Achronot*, Obama was expected to arrive either on July 22 or July 23 for a two-or three-day visit, during which he would meet Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. The senator was also expected to meet French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Elysee Palace on July 25, according to the French news agency *Agence France-Presse*. However, it was not clear if his travel plans included trips to Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶¹

Meanwhile, Sen. Obama's 'yes' vote for the Senate Wire Tapping bill which had an easy passage during the week, drew strong ire from the McCain camp as well as protests from his left-wing supporters. The legislation approved on July 9 proposes to strengthen government eavesdropping rules in terrorism and espionage cases and effectively grants immunity to telecommunications companies that participated in a secret domestic spying program. Obama's support to the bill represented a significant departure from his previous stand of opposing the immunity provision in earlier versions of the wiretapping bill. While the Obama camp asserted that the Senator supported the bill as it alleviated his concerns, the McCain campaign accused the Democratic contender of 'flip-flopping.'⁶² Sen. McCain on his part, in his traditional 'pro-national security stand,' supported the bill.

⁶⁰ "Iran test-fires upgraded Shahab-3," *Tehran Times*, July 10, 2008, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=172829

⁶¹ Mark Dorning, "Obama foreign trip details emerge," *Swamp Politics*, July 07, 2008, at http://www.swamppolitics.com/news/politics/blog/2008/07/obama_foreign_trip_details_eme.html

⁶² Shailay Murray, "Senate easily passes wiretap bill," *Washington Post*, July 10, 2008, at <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/10/MN3H11ME7C.DTL>

Sen. Obama was also being targeted from his 'progressive' support base for other positions he has taken during the last few weeks. The Illinois Senator for instance recently expressed his approval of a Supreme Court decision overturning a District of Columbia ban on handguns. In response to another Supreme Court ruling, he spoke in favor of the death penalty for child rapists. He has also endorsed a role for religious organizations in delivering social services. This, many critics fear, would blur the line between the church and the state.

In response to these allegations, Sen. Obama put forth a forceful exposition of his larger political philosophy while addressing a gathering in an Atlanta suburb on July 8, countering accusations of having moved to the 'centre' rather too quickly. Obama reiterated that while he believed in personal responsibility, he also believed in faith and that he has been holding the same positions on the issues in contention for very long. He also stressed that his position on the Iraq war was clear and that he would bring an end to the war once he assumed office.⁶³

In the wake of the recent missile tests by Iran, Sen. Obama in a statement called for the imposition of tighter sanctions.⁶⁴ During the primary contest, he had stated he would be open to talks with Iran without preconditions, a stand he later on changed to talks without "preconditions" but with "preparations." While being supportive of sanctions against Tehran, he had criticized President Bush for the "saber rattling about sanctions" when the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) stated that Iran was not building nuclear weapons. Sen. McCain on his part also supported "meaningful and impactful" sanctions against the Islamic Republic. He had also expressed his skepticism that Iran had stopped the nuclear program as argued by the NIE report of December 2007.⁶⁵

The McCain camp meanwhile was facing increasing internal squabbles. Sen. McCain was being accused of consulting with former campaign advisers without alerting the current staff, thus causing disquiet among them. The appointment of Steve Schmidt for instance as the senior advisor to the presidential campaign two weeks ago put him in charge of all campaign affairs. The move, which dislodged Rick Davis, had raised eyebrows as Schmidt, a veteran of President Bush's re-election campaign in 2004, was known to have close ties with Karl Rove. Reports also noted that Mike Murphy, who was Mr.

⁶³ Michael Powell, "Obama Says His Critics Haven't Been Listening," *The New York Times*, July 09, 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/us/politics/09campaign.html?_r=1&th=&oref=login&emc=th&pagewanted=print

⁶⁴ Angela Balakrishnan, "Barack Obama calls for tougher Iran sanctions after missile tests," *The Guardian*, July 09, 2008, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/09/iran.usa>

⁶⁵ Susan Davis, "McCain Calls for Sanctions on Iran," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2008, at <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2008/07/10/mccain-calls-for-sanctions-on-iran/>

McCain's strategist in the 2000 presidential race, was about to formally assist the campaign.⁶⁶

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Governor's rule imposed in J&K; Lt. Gen/ Sinha accuses PDP of being a pawn in hands of terrorists backed by Pakistan**

Four days after Ghulam Nabi Azad resigned as chief minister before facing the vote of confidence on the floor of the state assembly, Jammu and Kashmir was brought under Governor's rule and the state assembly dissolved on July 9.⁶⁷ The term of the current assembly thus ended about four months before its tenure.

Former J&K Governor Lt. Gen. S.K. Sinha, in an interaction with reporters in New Delhi on July 7, charged the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of being a pawn in the hands of fundamentalist forces and terrorists backed by Pakistan. Sinha stated that the PDP was using the issue of forest land allotment to Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) as a tool to further its interest. He added that "...Kashmiriat was the right tool to take on fundamentalist forces."⁶⁸

MAOIST INSURGENCY

- **Maoists kill JD(U) MLA in Jharkhand; Chhattisgarh Home Minister: Casualties due to Maoist violence in Chhattisgarh over 1,000 since 2004, Bastar region most affected**

Unidentified Maoists shot dead the former Jharkhand minister and the Janata Dal (United) legislature party leader in Jharkhand assembly, Ramesh Singh Munda and three others including his two bodyguards at Baruhatu village in Ranchi district on July 9. Munda was at a prize distribution function at a school when the gunmen started firing indiscriminately. The 53-year-old Munda represented Tamar assembly constituency in the state assembly since 2000.⁶⁹

Suspected Maoists also blew up railway tracks and a portion of a government complex housing the office of Block Development Officer (BDO) in Bihar's Jamui district on July 10.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the Chhattisgarh Home Minister Ram Vichar Netam, speaking on the floor of the state assembly on July 11, stated that the Maoist

⁶⁶ Adam Nagourney, "Internal Politics Heat Up at McCain Campaign," *The New York Times*, July 08, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/us/politics/08mccain.html?th=&emc=th&pagewanted=print>

⁶⁷ "Governor's rule imposed in J&K," *The Hindu*, July 11, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/07/11/stories/2008071158380100.htm>

⁶⁸ "PDP playing in hands of terrorists: Sinha," *Daily Excelsior*, July 8, 2008, at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/web1/08july08/news.htm#1>

⁶⁹ "Maoists gun down JD(U) MLA in Jharkhand," *Times of India*, July 10, 2008, at http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Maoists_gun_down_JDU_MLA_in_Jharkhand_/articleshow/3216533.cms

⁷⁰ "Maoists blow up tracks, BDO's office in Bihar," *The Hindu*, July 11, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200807110922.htm>

insurgency had resulted in the death of 1,093 people since 2004. Netam revealed that the state witnessed 2,784 incidents of Maoist violence in the period January 1, 2004 - June 20, 2008. He further stated that 726 civilians were killed, apart from 243 police personnel and 124 special police officers (SPOs). More than 90 per cent of the incidents and casualties were reported from the Bastar region which comprised the five districts of Dantewada, Bijapur, Narayanpur, Kanker and Bastar. The Maoists were most active in 2006, with 812 incidents of violence.⁷¹

NORTHEAST INSURGENCY

- **ULFA expels three pro-talks leaders; KYKL and UNLF vow to target villagers of Heirok in Thoubal district for decision to accept arms**

The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) expelled three pro-talks leaders of its 28th battalion for their alleged anti-organisational activities. In a statement, ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa stated that Mrinal Hazarika, Moon Borah alias Jiten Dutta and Joon Sonowal alias Joon Bhuyan have been expelled from the primary membership of the organisation from July 7. The statement further stated that all the activities carried on by the pro-talks leaders in the name of ULFA were 'illegal and unconstitutional.' The ULFA chairman was however silent on the other members of the outfit who have also joined the pro-talks group.⁷²

Meanwhile, surrendered ULFA members of Upper Assam on July 6 extended their support for the peace initiative taken by a section of the outfit, and urged both the government and the ULFA leadership to shed all pre-conditions for talks. Nearly 150 former militants of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia gathered at Chabua on July 6 and urged the central and Assam governments as well as the ULFA leadership to "look beyond their respective rigid stands and simply come forward for direct talks."⁷³

In Manipur, the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) announced that they would target all the villagers of Heirok in Thoubal district unless the public relented and retreated from the decision to accept arms under the special police officers (SPOs). In a joint statement on July 6, the two outfits warned that the residents of Heirok, including students, would not be allowed go beyond their localities. The two organisations vowed to target any violators with immediate effect.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Maoist violence casualty in Chhattisgarh crosses 1,000 since 2004," *New Indian Express*, July 12, 2008, at <http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IEH20080711125214&Title=Top+Stories&rLink=0>

⁷² "ULFA expels three pro-talks leaders," *Telegraph*, July 08, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080708/jsp/frontpage/story_9519093.jsp

⁷³ "Ulfa group gets Sulfa support - Former rebels urge both sides to shed rigid stand," *Telegraph*, July 07, 2008, at http://telegraphindia.com/1080707/jsp/northeast/story_9512969.jsp

⁷⁴ "UNLF, KYKL declare they would starve Heirok into submission," *Imphal free Press*, July 07, 2008, at http://kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=headline&newsid=42636&typeid=1&Idoc_Session=e0896758d7d37a5c2214aeecec0db0edd

III. NUCLEAR REVIEW

INDIA

- **Left parties withdraw support to UPA Government; UPA to seek trust vote on July 21-22; India-IAEA safeguards agreement released; IAEA Board to consider India safeguards on August 1, 2008; Obama not to seek any changes in nuclear agreement with India**

The Left parties withdrew their support to the UPA government on the issue of the Indo-US nuclear deal. The disagreements between the two sides had been growing over the past couple of weeks with the Manmohan Singh government wanting to go ahead with the deal and the Left consistently opposing any move forward.

The government meanwhile released the safeguards agreement and sent it to the IAEA Board for approval. The move was attacked by the Left parties which portrayed it as a betrayal of the government's moral commitment that it would seek a trust vote before going ahead with the deal.⁷⁵ The IAEA Board of Governors was expected to meet on August 1, 2008 to consider the India-specific safeguards agreement.⁷⁶

In other developments, Barack Obama, the US Democratic presidential candidate stated that he would not seek changes in the Indo-US nuclear deal and hoped that it would be finalised by the end of the year. Sen. Obama noted that the existing agreement "effectively balanced a range of important issues from our strategic relationship with India to our non-proliferation concerns to India's energy needs."⁷⁷

The US administration on its part has also asserted that it would do everything in its power to expedite the deal through the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, with time running out due to the US elections in November. Gregory Schulte, US envoy to the IAEA praised "India's willingness to move forward with this historic initiative, which is part of the strategic partnership envisioned by President (George W.) Bush and Prime Minister (Manmohan) Singh."

IRAN

- **Iranian nuclear crisis deepens; Reports: US probably plans covert operations against Tehran**

The crisis surrounding Tehran's alleged nuclear weapons programme deepened with reports mentioning an American and an Israeli plan to attack

⁷⁵ Vinay Kumar, "Shocking betrayal of moral commitment, says Karat," *The Hindu*, July 11, 2008, at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/07/11/stories/2008071150130100.htm>

⁷⁶ Mark Heinrich, "IAEA to consider India atom inspections plan Aug.1," *Reuters*, July 15, 2008, at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL1427004720080714>

⁷⁷ "Obama will not change nuclear deal with India: report," *AFP*, July 12, 2008, at http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iuUMdyu_IDC3Kl1gmvaqhJkMtw4w

its nuclear infrastructure. Seymour Hersh, writing in the *New Yorker* pointed out that in late 2007, Congress had approved a Bush administration proposal to fund a major escalation of covert operations against Iran.⁷⁸

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki meanwhile cautioned the US and Israel against getting “entangled in a new Middle East crisis and attack the Islamic Republic over its nuclear program.” The comments by the Iranian minister came a few days after Iranian missile tests heightened regional tension and helped send world oil prices to new record levels. Mottaki told the official IRNA news agency that Iran's response would be “firm and pounding” if its two arch-foes launched strikes against the country.⁷⁹

NORTH KOREA

- **Blueprint for verification of North Korean nuclear facilities agreed upon in Beijing talks; US moves to remove North Korea off terror list**

The Six-Party talks on the North Korean disablement, which had been stalled since October 2007, resumed in Beijing during the week. The US on its part eased some trade sanctions and began the process of taking Kim Jong-Il's regime off its list of state sponsors of terrorism.⁸⁰ A joint communiqué was issued by China after the talks which noted that the parties agreed on a blueprint for verifying North Korea's nuclear disarmament as part of a deal under which it would disable its main Yongbyon nuclear weapons complex by the end of October 2008 in exchange for energy and economic aid.⁸¹

International inspectors would be allowed to visit North Korean nuclear facilities, review documents and interview technical personnel also. In addition, the IAEA would be allowed to participate in the verification process. These broad steps however did not define the specifics of the verification process or note the leeway that would be granted to inspectors visiting nuclear sites.

Note: This issue does not contain the Energy Security Review section.

⁷⁸ Seymour M. Hersh, “Preparing the Battlefield,” *The New Yorker*, July 07, 2008, at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/07/080707fa_fact_hersh/?currentPage=all

⁷⁹ “Iran expects no U.S. or Israeli attack: minister,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 2008, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/12/AR2008071200207_pf.html

⁸⁰ “US envoy says North Korean talks off to ‘good start’,” *Channel News Asia*, July 11, 2008, at http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/359661/1/.html

⁸¹ Jim Yardley and Jake Hooker, “Deal on Verifying North Korean Disarmament,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/world/asia/13nuke.html?pagewanted=print>