

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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Editor: Sanjeev Kumar Shrivastav

Contributors

Anwasha Roy Chaudhuri

Gujan Singh

Joyce Sabina Lobo

Amit Kumar

Shristi Pukhrem

Afghanistan, Pakistan

China

Central Asia

Defence Review

Internal Security Review

Review Adviser: S. Kalyanaraman

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010
Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

- **At least 22 people including an MP killed in a suicide attack in Takhar province of North East Afghanistan; Afghanistan-China sign major oil deal**

According to reports, in a deadly suicide attack at a funeral in Takhar province of North East Afghanistan, at least 22 people have been killed including a prominent MP. Local MP Mutalib Beg, who was a former commander in the Western-backed Northern Alliance, died at the scene. According to official sources, suicide attack took place at about 12:00 (07:30 GMT), as people gathered for the funeral of a government official in Taloqan. The interior ministry said most of the casualties were civilians. Takhar province has seen a series of high-profile attacks over the last year.¹

In another development, reports noted that Afghanistan has signed an oil deal with China which could earn the war-torn country \$7 billion over 25 years. Afghanistan's first major oil exploration contract will see state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation develop three oil fields in the relatively peaceful north of the country along the Amu Darya river. Under the deal, signed in Kabul by Afghan mining minister Waheedullah Shahrani and CNPC president Lu Gong Xun, Afghanistan will take 70 per cent of the net profits, and the Chinese oil giant will pay 15 per cent corporation tax. "This will have enormous benefits for Afghanistan," Shahrani told reporters after the signing. China outbid four other companies to bag this deal.²

Pakistan

- **Indian and Pakistan resume bilateral dialogue on conventional and nuclear weapons; Reports: US-Pakistan counter terrorism cooperation can survive only in limited form; Chinese Foreign Ministry: China would continue to develop its strategic partnership with Pakistan**

Reports noted that Indian and Pakistan officials resumed the bilateral dialogue on conventional and nuclear weapons in Islamabad on December 26, 2011. The two-day talks mark the beginning of a new phase of discussions on confidence-building measures (CBM) between the neighbours. According to diplomatic sources, a 10-member Indian delegation is attending the dialogue being

¹ "Deadly suicide attack on Afghanistan funeral in Takhar", *Dawn*, December 25, 2011 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16329156>

² "Afghanistan signs first major oil deal with China", *Dawn*, December 28, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/12/28/afghanistan-signs-first-major-oil-deal-with-china.html>

held at the Foreign Office. The Indian delegation is headed by Y.K. Sinha and Venkatesh Verma. Munawar Saeed Bhatti, additional secretary in Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Ministry, will be heading the Pakistani delegation for both expert groups. According to reports, India and Pakistan are scheduled to exchange lists of nuclear installations and facilities under an accord signed in 1988 by both countries.³

In another development, according to reports, US officials believe their country's relationship with Pakistan has been seriously damaged and a counter terrorism alliance can survive only in a limited form, The New York Times reported. Citing unnamed US and Pakistani officials, the newspaper said officials acknowledge this deterioration will complicate the ability to launch attacks against extremists based in Pakistan and move supplies into Afghanistan. It would be worth noting that US-Pakistani relations took a serious hit last month after a series of US air strikes killed 24 Pakistani soldiers near the border with Afghanistan. A joint US-NATO investigation concluded that a disastrous spate of errors and botched communications led to the deaths. Pakistan has rejected the findings.⁴

Meanwhile, according to reports, China would continue to develop its strategic partnership with Pakistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said on December 26, 2011. He stated, "No matter how the international situation changes, this policy will not be shaken," Hong noted that China firmly supported Pakistan's efforts to safeguard its sovereignty, security, independence and territorial integrity and also its endeavours to improve the lives of its people. He also pointed out that China was ready to launch joint initiatives with Pakistan to improve the already good bilateral relations, strengthen cooperation in international and regional issues and promote their comprehensive strategic partnership.⁵

B. East Asia

China

- **China to launch Shenzhou IX, Shenzhou X spacecraft in 2012; President Hu meets Japanese PM and discuss bilateral ties**

According to reports, China has announced that it will launch the Shenzhou IX and Shenzhou X spacecraft in the year 2012 for docking mission with Tiangong-1 vehicle.⁶

³ "India Pakistan resumes bilateral talks", *Dawn*, December 26, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/12/26/india-pakistan-resume-bilateral-talks.html>

⁴ "US gears up for limited relationship with Pakistan: Report", *Dawn*, December 26, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/12/26/us-gears-up-for-limited-relationship-with-pakistan-report.html>

⁵ "Partnership with Pakistan to be enhanced: China", *Dawn*, December 27, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/12/27/partnership-with-pakistan-to-be-enhanced-says-china.html>

⁶ "China to launch Shenzhou IX, Shenzhou X in 2012" *China Daily*, December 29, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-12/29/content_14352962.htm

In another development, Chinese President Hu Jintao met with the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda. The two sides have agreed to create new momentum for strategic and mutually beneficial relations.⁷

C. Central Asia

- **Kyrgyz President calls for Manas air base to be converted into civilian airport by 2014; France to retain military forces in Afghanistan; Chinese senior official to visit five ex-Soviet Central Asian nations; Astana assures India that recent violence will not affect Satpayev deal; Turkmen Central Election Commission names fourteen candidates for presidential election**

According to reports, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev considered the U.S. military base near Bishkek as “very dangerous” for Kyrgyzstan and therefore stressed that it must be converted into a civilian airport by 2014.⁸ “Either the Americans leave in 2014 or, jointly with Russia, they make Manas into a joint civilian transport airport,” Atambayev said in his first news conference since becoming the president.⁹

In a related development, Defense Minister Gerard Longuet made the announcement in the Tajik capital Dushanbe that France will retain a military force in Afghanistan after NATO coalition troops leave the country in 2014. Dushanbe hosts a French air force unit of some 100 soldiers which is providing support services for the NATO-led coalition over its southern border.¹⁰

Reports noted that Chinese President Hu Jintao is sending a senior official to Central Asia to boost relations with all five countries between from January 5-14, 2012. Chen Zhili, Vice Chairwoman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), will attend events celebrating the 20th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and the five ex-Soviet nations. Currently, China is the region’s third-largest economic trade partner, after Russia and Europe.¹¹

In the meanwhile, Tajikistan and China have agreed to keep their main border crossing open all year round to boost trade. Tajik Minister of Transport Nizomiddin Hakimov and China’s Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong penned the protocol in Dushanbe to encourage two-

⁷ “President Hu meets Japanese PM on bilateral ties” *China Daily*, December 26, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-12/26/content_14329885.htm

⁸ “Manas is ‘very dangerous’ for Kyrgyzstan, Atambayev says”, *Universal Newswires*, December 29, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11039>

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ “French troops to stay in Afghanistan post-2014”, *Universal Newswires*, January 02, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11058>

¹¹ “Chinese presidential envoy to visit all 5 Central Asian states”, *Universal Newswires*, December 30, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11050>

way trade and passage between their countries by assigning international crossing status to the Kulma-Qarasou border control station and agreed it should stay open through all seasons.¹²

According to reports, the Kyrgyz government assured that the recent violence in Zhanaozen will not impact its tripartite deal with India to sell it a 25 percent stake in the Caspian offshore Satpayev exploration block. The officials assured New Delhi that the Kazakh government is keen to maintain stability in the area by addressing the crisis which erupted in mid-December when protests by laid-off KMG oil workers in the Caspian oil city of Zhanaozen turned violent.¹³ Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev attributed the disturbances in Zhanaozen on December 16 were organized by criminal gangs and also to the faulty management of the long-simmering labor dispute by Government officials and managers of sovereign wealth fund or *Samruk-Kazyna*, and all who were in charge of settling labor conflicts.¹⁴

In the meanwhile, Russian hydrocarbons firm Lukoil announced last week that it has begun its first gas extraction from Uzbekistan's Gissar field.¹⁵

In other developments, reports noted that in the upcoming Turkmen presidential elections set for February 12, 2012, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov will face fourteen opponents. Berdimuhamedov had recently extended invitations to the opposition in exile to return and challenge him in the polls wherein many of these had been convicted in absentia for a variety of crimes as "traitors".¹⁶

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report indicts Army management for poor ration quality; First indigenous aircraft carrier of Indian Navy floated out**

According to reports, the Indian Army troops have been supplied rations whose original Estimated Storage Life (ESL) had expired, a report of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) tabled on December 28, 2011 in Parliament, has concluded. Finding "glaring deficiencies and inadequacies" in the supply chain management of rations in the Indian Army,

¹² "China, Tajikistan to keep border crossing open year-round", *Universal Newswires*, December 30, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11053>

¹³ "Kazakhstan assures India over Caspian oil deal following clashes", *Universal Newswires*, December 30 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11049>

¹⁴ "Nazarbayev blames Zhanaozen riots on criminal gangs", *Universal Newswires*, December 27, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kazakhstan/viewstory.aspx?id=11023>

¹⁵ "Lukoil extracts first gas from Uzbekistan's Gissar field", *Universal Newswires*, December 29, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/uzbekistan/viewstory.aspx?id=11046>

¹⁶ "Turkmen state agencies name presidential candidates", *Universal Newswires*, December 00, 2011 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/turkmenistan/viewstory.aspx?id=11017>

the PAC also found that there was “highly non-competitive procurement procedure for fresh rations and deviation from the laid down norms of the tendering process”. In an indictment of the Army management, the PAC report noted, “The Committee’s examination of the subject has revealed ... poor satisfaction level of troops regarding quality, quantity and taste of rations and insufficient number of defence food labs for checking the quality of rations.” Meanwhile, in another report of the PAC on the Canteen Stores Department (CSD), the Committee noted that it was dismayed that the audit was denied access to the records of the unit-run canteens by the Army headquarters despite the issue of directions of the ministry of defence.¹⁷

In another development, reports noted that the first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) of the Navy was floated out at the Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), at an event attended by senior shipping and naval officers including the Union Shipping Secretary K. Mohandas; Rear Admiral K.N. Vaidyanathan, Director General, Naval Design; and Commodore K. Subramaniam, Chairman and Managing Director of CSL. The floating ceremony was followed by a meeting to review the progress in the work being done on the aircraft carrier, a 40,000-tonne fleet air defence platform of the Navy, which will be named after the legendary INS Vikrant. After facing initial hiccups due to paucity of supply of steel, the carrier project got the much-required thrust with the Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory (DMRL) and the Steel Authority of India (SAIL) fashioning carrier-grade steel indigenously.¹⁸

International

- **Pakistan Military on the Transparency International’s corruption list; US announces \$29.4 billion sale of Boeing-made F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia**

According to reports, corruption watchdog Transparency International for the first time has included Pakistan’s military in an annual survey, listing it as a notch more corrupt than the country’s education department. The army, feared and admired in almost equal measure, is widely considered perhaps the most professional institution in Pakistan. Transparency International advisor Adil Gilani said the military had been included “to dispel the impression that our surveys are biased”. “This time, we have ranked the military according to popular response about corruption in it. Next time we will have more comprehensive details,” he said. “It is public perception that others are more corrupt than the armed forces,” Gilani said.¹⁹

In another development, according to reports, the U.S. State Department announced on December 29, 2011 that it finalized a \$29.4 billion sale of Boeing-made F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia. “The United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have signed a government-to-government agreement under the Foreign Military Sales program to provide advanced F-15SA combat aircraft

¹⁷ “Army is poorly fed and managed: PAC report,” Deccan Chronicle, December 29, 2011, at <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/channels/nation/north/army-poorly-fed-and-managed-pac-report-232>

¹⁸ “Navy floats out first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier,” *The Hindu*, December 30, 2011, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2758985.ece>

¹⁹ “Pakistan Military Debuts on Graft List,” *AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE*, December 29, 2011, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=8692365&&s=TOP>

to the Royal Saudi Air Force,” White House spokesman Joshua Earnest said in a statement. The agreement was signed December 24, 2011, according to the State Department. The sale reinforces “the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a strong Saudi defense capability as a key component to regional security,” the White House spokesman said. With this sale, the two countries’ air forces will become more interoperable, especially because they will train together on the aircraft, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy James Miller said during a news conference. According to the State Department, the deal will lead to 50,000 American jobs in the aerospace and manufacturing sectors. Boeing, the prime contractor, will work with over 600 suppliers in 44 states. According to a recent report from the Congressional Research Service, Saudi Arabia has remained one of the top three purchasers of U.S. defense articles and services since 2003. Since 2007-10, the United States signed \$13.8 billion worth in government-to-government sales agreements with Saudi Arabia.²⁰

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah claims that AFSPA will be removed during his tenure; Reports: Home Minister Chidambaram is ready for talks with the separatists**

According to reports, reiterating that people of Jammu and Kashmir should reap benefits of the peace prevailing in the state, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that laws like AFSPA and DAA would be revoked by his Government if the situation remains calm. The Chief Minister alleged that opposition PDP was politicking on the issue of AFSPA, speaking three different languages at Srinagar, Jammu and New Delhi.²¹

Meanwhile, according to reports, Central government said that channels of communication with some of the separatist groups in Jammu and Kashmir were open and there was a possibility of negotiation with them in the New Year if they came forward for dialogue. Home Minister P. Chidambaram noted that as far as talks with the separatists groups in Jammu and Kashmir are concerned, the Centre is always open to talk to them. It is not that the channels of communication with some of them have entirely cut off. These channels are still open and it is possible that some of them will agree to come forward for talks in 2012. If they are ready for talks, the Centre is ready for talks.²²

²⁰ “U.S., Saudi Arabia Finalize F-15 Fighter Deal,” *Defence News*, December 29, 2011, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=8693117&&s=TOP>

²¹ “AFSPA will go in my tenure: Omar”, *Greater Kashmir*, December 29, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Dec/30/afspa-will-go-in-my-tenure-omar-73.asp>

²² “Ready for talks with Separatists: PC”, *Greater Kashmir*, December 30, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Dec/31/ready-for-talks-with-separatists-pc-33.asp>

North East India

- **Tripura Police to receive President's honour; Anti-talk ULFA faction call to oppose construction of mega dams; Five houses of the militant group KCP of Manipur were pulled down by mob**

Reports noted that Tripura Police, a force that has earned distinction for battling four decades of terrorism, will add another feather to its cap next month when they will be conferred the President's Colours – the Fourth police force to receive the honour. Vice President Hamid Ansari will confer the President's Colours at a ceremonial function on January 12, 2012. The ceremony will be held at the Arundhutinagar parade ground on the outskirts of the State capital.²³

In another development, reports noted that the hard line faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) appealed to all sections of people of Assam to come out to the streets to register their protests against construction of mega dams. In a press release, the publicity in-charge of the ULFA faction, Arunodoi Dohotiya, strongly condemned the police atrocities on the anti-mega dam protestors in Lakhimpur district and said that all sections of people of the State should come out to the streets in protest against such actions by the Government.²⁴

In other developments, according to reports, five houses belonging to militants of the banned KCP of Kesho group were pulled down by an irate mob in Chanam Santrok village of Imphal East district for their alleged involvement in the abduction of a chowkidar and his son, who were subsequently shot dead over a ransom. The families of the five accused have also been forced out from their localities forever as a severe treatment awarded for their act of brutality against the chowkidar of Iribung Water Supply Scheme and his son.²⁵

²³ "Tripura Police set to get President's honour", *The Assam Tribune*, December 27, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2711/at045>

²⁴ "Anti-talk ULFA call to oppose mega dams", *The Assam Tribune*, December 26, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2711/state06>

²⁵ "5 houses of militants pulled down by mob", *The Assam Tribune*, December 29, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec3011/oth07>