

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **Afghan Judge: NATO cannot win war against Afghanistan's heroin trade only with military might ; A British soldier killed in a roadside bomb blast in Southern Afghanistan**

NATO's will never win the war against Afghanistan's heroin trade with military might alone, an Afghan judge has noted. Hayatullah Ahadyar, one of the six judges who sit on the court that oversees big drug busts, has urged the alliance to put more energy into weaning farmers off opium poppy crops. It would be worth mentioning that Afghanistan's primary court of counter narcotics in Kabul has handled more than 2,000 cases in the past four years.¹ Meanwhile, reports noted that a British soldier has been killed in southern Afghanistan in a roadside bomb blast.²

PAKISTAN

- **Foreign Secretary level dialogue held between India and Pakistan in Thimphu; Two former police officials sent on judicial remand in connection with the Benazir Bhutto assassination case; The United States calls for release of American Diplomat accused of killing two Pakistanis**

In a significant development, India's Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir held discussion in Bhutanese capital Thimphu and agreed for a constructive dialogue between the two countries to resolve all outstanding issues. At their meeting, two foreign secretaries affirmed the need to carry forward the dialogue process. According to a press release, the meeting was held in "pursuance of the mandate given by the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, following their meeting in Thimphu in April 2010, and the meeting of the minister of external affairs of India and minister of foreign affairs of Pakistan in July 2010."³

¹ "Afghan drug war to be won with crops, not jails: judge", Dawn, February 2 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/01/afghan-drug-war-to-be-won-with-crops-not-jails-judge.html>

² "British soldier killed in Afghanistan", Dawn, February 6 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12374964>

³ "Foreign Secretaries meet in Thimphu", Dawn, February 7 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/07/foreign-secretaries-meet-in-thimphu.html>

Reports noted that the Anti-Terrorist Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi sent two former police officers of Rawalpindi's city police named Saud Aziz and SP Khurram Shahzad, on a 14-day judicial remand in connection with the Benazir Bhutto assassination case. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto was assassinated three years ago in a gun and suicide attack after addressing an election campaign rally in Rawalpindi, on December 27, 2007.⁴

Meanwhile, the United States has once again called for the release of an American diplomat accused of killing two Pakistanis, saying that he acted in legitimate self-defense. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said that the diplomat cannot be lawfully arrested or detained in accordance with the Vienna Convention".⁵

BANGLADESH

- **Commerce Minister of Bangladesh visited India's North-east; Bangladesh hands over three ULFA Cadres to BSF; Foreign aid in Bangladesh fell by 45 per cent; Bangladesh claims legitimate authority over 450 nautical miles from the coastline in the bay of Bengal; 71 Bangladeshi Workers deported from the UAE**

A high-powered Bangladesh delegation, led by Commerce Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan, visited North East of India and met Chief Ministers and top officials of Assam and Meghalaya and discussed ways of improving Indo-Bangladesh trade. Mr. Khan told that Bangladesh was looking forward to increase business ties with the North-eastern India for an overall development of the region.⁶

Meanwhile, reports noted that Bangladesh security agencies has handed over three ULFA cadres, who were arrested in Dhaka on December 13, 2010, to BSF on February 5 at Dawki near Indo-Bangla border in Meghalaya. BSF has handed them over to Assam Police.⁷

Reports noted that foreign aid in Bangladesh fell by 45 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year compared to the same period of the previous

⁴ "Benazir case: Aziz, Shahzad sent to jail on 14-day remand", *Dawn*, February 2 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/01/saud-aziz-khurram-shahzad-sent-on-14-day-judicial-remand-2.html>

⁵ "US defends 'diplomat' accused of killing two in Pakistan", *Dawn*, February 1, at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/01/us-defends-diplomat-accused-of-killing-two-in-pakistan.html>

⁶ "Business in mind, Bangladesh commerce minister meets Gogoi", *The Times of India*, Feb 5, 2011 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/7433748.cms?prtpage=1>; "Task force to promote Meghalaya-Bangla trade", *The Times of India*, Feb 6, 2011 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/7438553.cms?prtpage=1>.

⁷ "Bangladesh hands over Ulfa men to BSF", *Hindustan Times*, February 5, 2011 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/658959.aspx>.

fiscal year due to a delay by government agencies in implementing foreign-aided projects as well as curtailed budget support. As the foreign aid flow fell, the overall balance deficit in the first six months of the current fiscal year was \$584 million, which was a \$2.16 billion surplus in the same period of the previous fiscal year.⁸

The Bangladeshi cabinet has approved Bangladesh's 'position paper' which claimed legitimate authority over 450 nautical miles from the coastline in the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh is scheduled to submit a memorandum to the UN body claiming its legitimate authority over its territorial waters adjacent to India and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal by May 31 and July 1, 2011 respectively.⁹

In other developments, seventy one Bangladeshi workers were deported from the United Arab Emirates on charges of instigating a strike demanding a pay hike by their employer, Arabtec, a construction company in Dubai.¹⁰

SRI LANKA

- **Foreign Secretary of India visits Sri Lanka; Ninety One Sri Lankan fishermen released by India; Sri Lanka receives US\$ 1.5 billion from IMF on account of the Stand By Arrangement facility; Collaboration between Sabaragamuwa province and Kerala Agricultural University; Flood relief assistance from Japanese NGO and Sri Lankan expatriate community in Russia; Sri Lanka temporarily bans on migrant workers visiting Egypt**

India's Foreign Secretary Ms Nirupama Rao visited Sri Lanka and met President Mahindra Rajapaksa and Minister of External Affairs G.L. Peiris. She discussed the recent incident of the death of two fishermen at the waters between India and Sri Lanka as well as attack Sri-Lankan visitors at Maha-Bodhi Temple in Chennai. The two sides agreed that use of force can not be justified under any circumstances. Two days after her visit to Sri Lanka, on February 2, ninety one Sri Lankan fishermen who were in the custody of Indian authorities were released along with seventeen of their fishing craft. There are nine other fishermen and four vessels yet to be released.¹¹

⁸ "Foreign Aid Declines 45pc", *The Daily Star*, February 2, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=172467>

⁹ "Dhaka to claim 450 nautical miles in Bay", *New Age*, February 3, 2011 at <http://newagebd.com/newspaper1/frontpage/7465.html>

¹⁰ "UAE Deports 71 Bangladeshi Workers", *The Daily star*, February 2, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=172541>

¹¹ "India releases 91 fishermen", *Daily Mirror*, February 4, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/34869.html>

Reports noted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released the sixth tranche of the Stand By Arrangement Facility with Sri Lanka to the value of US dollars 216.6 million after a successful fifth review of the facility. With this disbursement, a total of US dollars 1.5 billion has been received thus far by Sri Lanka on account of the Stand By Arrangement facility that was approved in July 2009.¹²

According to reports, Sabaragamuwa, one of Sri Lanka's nine provinces, plans to collaborate with the Kerala Agricultural University in transfer of technology and farming knowledge. Details of the possible tie-up would be discussed in April when Sabaragamuwa Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister were expected to visit Kerala.¹³

As far as flood relief aid to Sri Lanka is concerned, five Japanese NGOs affiliated to the Japan Platform (JPF) which are: the Association for Aid and Relief Japan, Peace Winds Japan, PARC Interpeople's Cooperation, Save the Children Japan and World Vision Japan, are providing relief assistance worth 47.2 million Japanese Yen (over SL Rs. 62 million) to flood victims with funding from the Government of Japan.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Embassy in Russia has collected a sum of US \$ 15,700 from the Sri Lankan expatriates for the flood victims in Sri Lanka.¹⁵

In other developments, Sri Lankan government has decided to impose a temporary stoppage of migrant workers going to Egypt.¹⁶

MALDIVES

(January 24-30, 2011)

- **India and Maldives sign agreement on IT assistance; Maldives establishes diplomatic relations with Liechtenstein; Maldives criticises Myanmar's human rights record; President Nasheed supports Egypt's democratic reform movement; Meeting between President Nasheed and US Deputy Secretary of State held; President meets Indonesian Minister**

¹² "IMF releases sixth tranche", *Daily Mirror*, February 4, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/front-page-news/34860.html>

¹³ "Sabaragamuwa province to collaborate with KAU", *Daily Mirror*, February 4, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/34851.html>

¹⁴ "Japanese NGOs Assist Flood Victims", *Daily Mirror*, February 4, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/34846.html>

¹⁵ "Flood relief from Lankans in Russia", *Daily Mirror*, February 3, 2011 <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/34715.html>

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka to suspend migration to Egypt", February 2, 2011 at http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/news/story/2011/02/110202_egypsrilankans.shtml

of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries; Minister of Education of Bangladesh paid a courtesy call to Vice President of the Maldives

India and the Maldives signed a US\$5.7 million agreement on IT assistance to the Maldives. Furthermore, the Indian government is providing US\$240,000 worth of medical supplies and sports equipment worth US\$155,000 to the Maldives.¹⁷

Maldives has formally established diplomatic relations with the Principality of Liechtenstein through the United Nations' permanent missions of the two countries. Liechtenstein is the 156th country to establish diplomatic relations with Maldives.¹⁸

The Maldives Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Iruthisham Adam has criticised Myanmar's human rights track record at the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Burma (Myanmar), and called for substantial and transparent reforms.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed has extended his support for the democratic movement in Egypt.²⁰

President Mohamed Nasheed met with United States Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg at the official residence of the President, Mulee-aage and discussed various bilateral and regional issues including commerce, consolidation of democracy in the Maldives and threat of Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean.²¹

Indonesian Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Dr Fadel Muhammad paid a courtesy call on President Mohamed Nasheed on January 29 at the President's Official Residence. Their discussion was focused on the importance of promoting relations and cooperation in the field of fishing, aquaculture and mariculture between private sector organizations of both countries.²²

However, Minister of Education of Bangladesh Nurul Islam Nahid paid a courtesy call to Vice President Dr Mohamed Waheed on January 24 and

¹⁷ "India to Provide IT Assistance, Medical Supplies and Sports Equipment", *Minivan News*, January 24, 2011 at <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/india-to-provide-it-assistance-medical-supplies-and-sports-equipment-15421>

¹⁸ "Maldives Creates Diplomatic Ties with Liechtenstein", *Haveeru Online*, January 30, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/34532>

¹⁹ "Maldives Condemns Burma's Rights Record at UNHRC Review", *Haveeru Online*, January 30, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/34516>

²⁰ "Maldives Pledges Support to Egypt's Democratic Reform", *Haveeru Online*, January 30, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/34512>

²¹ "President Meets the US Deputy Secretary of State", January 29, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4614>

²² "Indonesian Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Calls on the President", January 29, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4616>

discussed on increasing collaboration in the education sector, especially in higher education, between the Maldives and Bangladesh. Discussions between the two leaders also highlighted potential areas for collaboration between both countries including climate change, technology sharing, and tourism development and training.²³

(January 31-February 6, 2011)

- **Maldives supports a democratic Egypt; Maldivian nationals in Egypt were brought back to Maldives with Indian assistance; \$40 million sewer development project to control groundwater in 15 Maldivian Islands; India's NTPC conducts feasibility study for solar projects in the Maldives**

President Mohamed Nasheed has called on embattled Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, to step down and "heed the will of the Egyptian people." President Nasheed said that Egypt needed an "interim arrangement" without Mubarak, that leads to free and fair, multi-party elections. He urged the Western powers not to fear a democratic Egypt, which was the best guarantor of fundamental liberties and human rights.²⁴ Meanwhile, government of Maldives with the help of India, and India's GMR Infrastructure brought the Maldivian nationals in Egypt safely to their homeland.²⁵

In other developments, Canadian water management system provider, Clearford Industries Inc, has signed a \$40 million sewer development project to begin building infrastructure controlling groundwater in 15 Maldivian islands.²⁶ Meanwhile, India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is currently conducting a feasibility study for solar projects in the Maldives.²⁷

²³ "Bangladeshi Education Minister Calls on the Vice President", January 24, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4567>

²⁴ "President Nasheed Calls on Mubarak to Step Down", February 2, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4659>

²⁵ "Maldivian students in Egypt return amid chaos", *Haveeru Online*, February 3, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/34625>

²⁶ Stephens, David, "Canadian Company Clearford Strikes Sewer Deal with Maldives", February 1, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/34561>

²⁷ "NTPC Examines Maldives' Solar Power Potential", *Minivan News*, February 2, 2011 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **China closely watches the developments in Egypt; China denies reports of its ship having been hijacked in the waters off Yemen**

Commenting on the developments in Egypt, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei China expressed hope that Egypt would be able to restore social stability and normal order soon. He further commented that Egypt was a friendly country and China had been closely watching the development of the situation in Egypt.²⁸

Recently, some media reports had noted that the Somali pirates had hijacked a Chinese-flagged commercial ship off Yemen's western city port of al- Hudaida in the Red Sea. The Chinese military attaché to Yemen was also reported to have confirmed this news²⁹ However, the China Maritime Search and Rescue Center (MSA), later, clarified, that no such incident ever occurred. "Tien Hau", the ship which was claimed to have been hijacked, and its 22-member crew, were safe.³⁰

JAPAN

- **Japan, United States to work out road map to prevent nuclear terrorism, Japan, U.S. aim at boosting cooperation over space, cyberspace, Public opinion survey: 56 per cent say Ozawa should resign from Diet; Russian Minister visits Kunashiri Island off Hokkaido**

In a significant development, the United States and Japan have agreed to work out a road map to prevent nuclear terrorism ahead of the second nuclear security summit to be held in Seoul in 2012.³¹ Similarly, according to reports, both the nations are also working towards strengthening their cooperation toward stable use of space and cyberspace as their new common strategic goals. It is expected that both governments will codify cooperation in information gathering,

²⁸ "China hopes Egypt restores stability, order soon", *China Daily*, 31 January 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2011-01/31/content_11942317.htm

²⁹ "Somali pirates hijack Chinese-flagged ship", *China Daily*, 6 February 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-02/06/content_11960079.htm

³⁰ "Chinese-flagged ship not hijacked off Yemen", *China Daily*, 6 February 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-02/06/content_11960905.htm

³¹ "Japan, U.S. to work out road map to prevent nuclear terrorism+" *Associated Press*, February 4, 2011 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9L5VCTO0&show_article=1

surveillance activities and reconnaissance missions when the "two-plus-two" meeting involving their foreign and defense leaders convenes.³²

On the domestic front, reports noted that fifty-six percent of people believe that former Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa should resign from the House of Representatives. This was the result of the survey conducted by the Yomiuri Shimbun.³³

In developments in the region, a Russian government delegation led by Regional Development Minister Victor Basargin visited Kunashiri Island. This island is one of four islands off Hokkaido claimed by Japan which are under Russian control. It is believed that the delegation is expected to inspect infrastructure developments there and plans to visit Etorufu Island, another of the four islands.³⁴

C. CENTRAL ASIA & RUSSIA

CENTRAL ASIA

- **Kazakhstan to host SCO tenth anniversary; Kazakh presidential election to be held in April 2011; Seventh Asian Winter Games held in Astana-Almaty; Turkish PM Erdogan visits Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan to introduce E-Voting system; Tajikistan's energy sector companies hold meeting in Dushanbe; Representatives of German companies visit Ashgabat; Uzbekistan to build third line of Kazakh-China pipeline; Uzbek-Chinese trade center to open in Eastern Uzbekistan**

The 10th anniversary jubilee summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will be held on June 15, 2011 in Kazakhstan's capital city Astana. This was announced by Kazak foreign affairs ministry on 1st February. It would be worth noting that Kazakhstan has been chairing the major security grouping since summer 2010.³⁵

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev have signed a decree on February 4, calling early presidential elections on April 3, 2011 which was to

³² "Japan, U.S. eye boosting cooperation over space, cyberspace+" *Associated Press*, February 4, 2011 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9L633500&show_article=1

³³ "Survey: 56% say Ozawa should resign from Diet" *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 4, 2011 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110203005766.htm>

³⁴ "Russian minister visits Kunashiri Island off Hokkaido" *Associated Press*, January 31, 2011 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9L34CI00&show_article=1

³⁵ 'Astana to host Shanghai Cooperation Organization 10th anniversary', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 01, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Astana-to-host-Shanghai-Cooperation-Organization-10th-anniversary/viewstory.aspx?id=3136>

be originally held in 2012. The Kazakh President has rejected the referendum proposal to extend his term up to 2020. In response to Nazarbayev's proposal to call early polls, the two houses of parliament convened two days early to make the necessary constitutional amendments, which have been passed.³⁶

Meanwhile, the 7th Asian Winter Games were held from January 31 to February 6 in two cities of Astana and Almaty. Astana has spent \$1.5 billion preparing for the games, the first sporting event of its size in Central Asia. 26 countries participated in 69 events. Kazakhstan finished on top of the medals table with 70 out of 207 medals. Japan and Korea reached second and third places respectively. Sapporo, a city of Japan will host the next games in 2017.³⁷

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was on a two day visit to Kyrgyzstan from February 1-2 Feb, 2011. During the visit, he met with his Kyrgyz counterpart Almazbek Atambayev. At a joint press conference the two sides had agreed to lift 90-day visa requirements in both countries and create a joint council to facilitate economic cooperation.³⁸ The leaders plan to lift all visa requirements for Turkish and Kyrgyz nationals by the end of 2011. Erdogan announced additional \$15 million in assistance to Kyrgyzstan, to the \$10 million given in 2010, to help Bishkek recover from political tumult.³⁹ Both leaders announced the implementation of a Strategic High-Level Cooperation Council, to be held in March, to further economic ties. Erdogan also said he supported more tripartite cooperation between Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and Russia that would make investments in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁰ Turkish Defense minister Vecdi Gonul—who accompanied Erdogan as part of the delegation—announced this week that his country will give the Kyrgyz army \$1 million in additional to the \$8.5 million in funds and supplies it has given the Central Asian country's armed forces since 1991.⁴¹ Turkey will also support the construction of a new military training center in the southern province of Osh, which will be part of the Military Institute of the Kyrgyz forces.⁴²

³⁶ 'Early Kazakh presidential election to be April 3', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 04, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Early-Kazakh-presidential-election-to-be-April-3/viewstory.aspx?id=3173>

³⁷ 'President Nazarbayev closes 7th AWG', *Olympic Council of Asia*, February 06, 2011 at <http://www.ocasia.org/News/IndexNewsRM.aspx?redirect=1711&NT=G>

³⁸ 'Turkish state visit to Kyrgyzstan produces visa, economic agreements', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 02, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Turkish-state-visit-to-Kyrgyzstan-produces-visa-economic-agreements/viewstory.aspx?id=3151>

³⁹ -ibid-

⁴⁰ Ibid-

⁴¹ 'Turkey to give Kyrgyz army financial, technical assistance', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 03, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Turkey-to-give-Kyrgyz-army-financial-technical-assistance/viewstory.aspx?id=3167>

⁴² -ibid-

Tajikistan will partially introduce an electronic voting system in time for its 2015 parliamentary elections as per the financial conditions of the country. The country's Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) said it plans to set up the system in the regional administrative centers and cities of Dushanbe, Khorog, Khujand, Kulob, Qurghon-Teppa and Tursunzoda. The e-voting systems technology can permit voting via telephones, private computer networks and the internet, making it easier for distant or disabled voters to cast their ballots.⁴³ The other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that have already implemented this system are Kazakhstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Key players in Tajikistan's energy sector held a meeting in Dushanbe to discuss the development of renewable energies. The seminar was called to discuss a law passed in late December 2010 meant to protect the environment in light of Tajikistan's increased renewable energy development.⁴⁴ This law provides for obtaining electricity from other sources, in particular, small hydro, solar, wind power and other sources.⁴⁵

Turkmenistan government officials welcomed representatives from two dozen German companies to discuss economic cooperation and development. The discussions were held on continuing cooperation in economic sectors, including oil and gas, transport and agriculture. Representatives from the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technologies were also part of the delegation. German representatives expressed keen interest in participating in the development of various sectors of Turkmenistan economy as well as in initiating new projects within Turkmenistan.⁴⁶

Reports noted that plans are at work in Uzbekistan to add a third line to the Kazakhstan-China pipeline. The third line is part of a list of projects presented by Uzbek planners and approved by Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov. The \$2.2 billion project is slated to be completed by the end of 2013 and will receive funding assistance from the China State Development Bank and the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC). The new pipeline will transport 25 billion

⁴³ 'Tajikistan to introduce electronic voting for 2015 elections', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 03, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajikistan-to-introduce-electronic-voting-for-2015-elections/viewstory.aspx?id=3154>

⁴⁴ 'Dushanbe hosts renewable energy conference', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 01, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Dushanbe-hosts-renewable-energy-conference/viewstory.aspx?id=3131>

⁴⁵ -ibid-

⁴⁶ 'German companies explore Turkmen business opportunities', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 03, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/German-companies-explore-Turkmen-business-opportunities/viewstory.aspx?id=3164>

cubic meters (bcm) of gas each year.⁴⁷ The current pipelines run through the Uzbek regions of Bukhara, Kashkadarya and Navoi, and then connect with Kazakhstan's gas transportation system.⁴⁸

In other developments, reports noted that to further spur economic cooperation with China, Uzbek authorities are opening a trade house in eastern Uzbekistan. An opening ceremony for the regional office took place on February 3, 2011. The Uzbek-China Trading House will be located in Namangan province which has strong ties with China, having exported \$1.5 million worth of products.⁴⁹ The other Uzbek-Chinese Trade House is located in the Uzbek capital Tashkent.

RUSSIA

- **Russia-US formally inaugurate new START treaty; Russian Defence Minister visits disputed South Kuril Islands; Japan terms the development as "extremely regrettable"; Medvedev allows an expert panel to reexamine the Khodorkovsky conviction; Russian airport bomber identified as a 20 year old Caucasus man; Manhunt for associates continues**

After two years of intense negotiations, Russia and the United States have formally launched the new START nuclear arms treaty. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton exchanged the final ratification papers for the New START treaty in Munich on February 5 while attending an annual security conference. The START treaty has been at the center of Washington's effort to improve ties with Moscow, which hit a low with Russia's 2008 war against the pro-western Georgia and were further strained by disagreements on trade and U.S. concerns over Russia's record on human rights and free speech.⁵⁰

The START treaty commits the two nations, with 95 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, to a ceiling of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads in seven years, up to 30 percent lower than in the 2002 Moscow treaty. It is hoped that the pact will pave the way for a better security climate in the Euro-Atlantic area. The

⁴⁷ 'Uzbekistan to Build Third Line of Kazakh-China Pipeline', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 01, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbekistan-to-build-third-line-of-Kazakh-China-pipeline/viewstory.aspx?id=3128>

⁴⁸ -ibid-

⁴⁹ 'Uzbek-Chinese Trade Center to Open in Eastern Uzbekistan', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 03, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbek-Chinese-trade-center-to-open-in-eastern-Uzbekistan/viewstory.aspx?id=3163>

⁵⁰ "Russia-US Formally Inaugurate New START Treaty", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, February 7, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/new_start_treaty_inauguration_munich/2298301.html

two countries will initiate the process of exchanging information about the status of their nuclear forces and, within weeks, hold the first on-site inspections of each other's nuclear arsenals in nearly two years.⁵¹

Russian Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov has inspected military facilities in the disputed South Kuril Islands. This has evoked sharp criticism from Japan which has claimed territorial rights to the island which have been occupied by Russian troops since the end of the Second World War. Serdyukov arrived on the islands to check the troop's combat readiness and inspect the military hardware stationed there. Japan has termed the development as "extremely regrettable". The issue of the territorial rights continues to be a source of political tension and distrust between the two states even though economic relations have improved in the recent past.⁵²

The visit of the Defence Minister comes in the backdrop of Russian President Medvedev becoming the first Russian President to visit the islands. Japan's reaction at that time had been described as 'furious' with the Japanese government recalling its ambassador to Russia and issuing a strict warning against future visits. The importance of the Kuril Islands lies in the prevalence of a rich fish catchment area and more importantly off shore oil and natural gas reserves apart from gold and silver deposits.⁵³

Reports noted that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has unexpectedly decided to let an expert panel reexamine the sentencing of billionaire anti-government activist Mikhail Khodorkovsky for laundering state oil and its proceeds. A committee set up for the promotion of human rights and civil society will now produce a report on the conviction, which drew international criticism. Civil rights activists had earlier demanded presidential pardon for Khodorkovsky.⁵⁴

Khodorkovsky, who was nearing the end of an eight-year sentence for tax evasion, received a second sentence in December 2010. The expert panel will not dispute Khodorkovsky's sentence but will speak about systemic problems linked to such cases and legal deficiencies. The experts will also look into other high-profile court cases which include cases related to child rights, the detention of opposition activists, last summer's disastrous wildfires, and police and judicial reforms.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² "Defence Minister visits South Kurils", The Moscow Times, February 7, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/defense-minister-visits-south-kurils/430459.html>

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ "Medvedev to Let Experts Study Khodorkovsky Case", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 2, 2011 at http://www.rferl.org/content/russia_khodorkovsky/2294985.html

⁵⁵ Ibid

According to the Russian investigators, the suicide bomber who killed 35 people and injured 180 at Moscow's Domodedovo airport was a 20 year old man from the North Caucasus. Security forces have launched a manhunt for two residents of Russia's Ingushetia (predominantly Muslim) region who are believed to have played a significant role in the massacre. It would be worth noting that a decade after security forces drove separatists out of power in the second of two wars in Chechnya, the North Caucasus is still plagued by violence. The bombing was the worst in the Russian capital since last March when a double suicide bombing killed at least 40 people in the Moscow subway. Two women responsible for those attacks were from Dagestan.⁵⁶

D. WEST ASIA

IRAN

• India and Iran resolve oil payment issue; Iranian supreme leader and two hundred fourteen Iran parliamentarians support Egyptian uprising

Reports noted that resolving the payment issue for oil, India has decided to pay for Iranian crude oil in euro through a German bank based in Hamburg. The final decision was taken at a high level meeting chaired by India's National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon. An official of India's Finance ministry noted, "State Bank of India (SBI) has been instructed to clear over \$ 2 billion of backlog payment beginning this evening." SBI will route euro payments to National Iranian Oil Co's account in the Hamburg-based Europch-Iranische Handelsbank AG (EIH Bank). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) disallowed payments for Iranian crude using a long-standing clearing house system, run by the central banks of nine countries which include India and Iran- dubbed as the Asian Clearing Union. India imports 12 million barrels of crude oil every month from Iran. Iran accounts for 12 percent of India's supplies and is its second-largest supplier behind Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷

Two Hundred Fourteen parliamentarian of Iran have issued a statement backing the Egyptian people's uprising against the government of Hosni Mubarak. The MPs called the move an auspicious step to "revive" Egypt's glorious past. The statement by the Iranian parliament came as thousands gathered at Tahrir Square in Cairo for a planned "march of a million people." The Iranian Supreme

⁵⁶ "Russian airport bomber named; manhunt for helpers", Reuters, February 6, 2011, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/02/06/idINIndia-54693920110206>

⁵⁷ "India to allow payment for Iranian crude through German bank," *Tehran Times*, February 1, 2011, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=235161

Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini also strongly supported the protesters. He said that “do not back down until the implementation of a popular regime based on religion.” However, Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit condemned the Khomeini statement calling Iran to mind its own business.⁵⁸

IRAQ

- **12 people killed in bomb attacks in Iraq**

Reports noted that a car bomb blast followed by a suicide attack in the western Iraqi city of Ramadi killed at least eight people, including five policemen, as part of nationwide violence that left 12 dead. Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province has often been the target of attacks in recent months, despite a drop in violence across Iraq since its peak in 2006 and 2007. An interior ministry official said a roadside bomb along a main road in the Ghadeer neighbourhood of central Baghdad also killed two people and wounded three others including a traffic policeman. The apparent surge in attacks came after Maliki formed a government in December, ending nine months of political deadlock following parliamentary elections in March.⁵⁹

EGYPT, JORDON & YEMEN

- **Egypt protests enter 14th day; Muslim Brotherhood joins talks; Protests in Jordan, Yemen and Iraq**

Egypt's Vice-President, Omar Suleiman, held unprecedented talks on February 6 with the banned Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition groups in an effort to chart a way forward for Egypt as the protests entered in to its thirteenth day. The protesters marked a "Day of Martyrs" for the people killed in clashes in the past two weeks. But even after the talks the Muslim Brotherhood does not look fully satisfied.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Vice President Suleiman has said the government was mapping out a peaceful transition of power and called on people to stop protesting and return to their jobs and everyday life.⁶¹

⁵⁸ “Iranian parliament backs Egyptian people’s movement,” *Mehr News*, February 1, 2011, at <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1244256>

⁵⁹ “Twin attacks rock west Iraq, 12 dead nationwide,” *Khaleej Times*, February 3, 2011, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast_February98.xml§ion=middleeast

⁶⁰ “Banned Muslim Brotherhood joins Egypt government talks”, *The National*, February 7, 2011, available at, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/banned-muslim-brotherhood-joins-egypt-government-talks?pageCount=0>

⁶¹ Ibid

Earlier on February 5, senior members of the ruling party, National Democratic Party (NDP), including Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal resigned from their posts. Hossam Badrawi will take over as NDP Secretary General and political bureau chief. But protesters have rejected this by saying it a meaningless gesture that showed the regime was in trouble.⁶²

Reports noted that several protesters in Amman have come out to the streets demanding greater economic and political reforms in the country. Protesters from leftist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood marched from the prime minister's office to the Egyptian embassy on February 4 calling for change in their country. They have also expressed their support for the protesters in Egypt. The king has replaced his Prime Minister with Maruf Bakhit and asked him to form a new government. He instructed the new Prime Minister to "take practical, quick and tangible steps to launch true political reforms."⁶³ Meanwhile, the King has met with the opposition leaders and has assured them of meeting their demands and undertaking reforms in the country.

In another reports, thousands of anti-government protesters have taken to the streets of Yemen in a planned "day of rage" against the President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a day after he offered to step down in two years time. Around 20,000 people gathered in the capital Sanaa, on February 3 demanding President Saleh to step down. There was also a rally by the pro-government protesters in Sanaa leading to small scuffles between the two groups. There are also reports of security forces firing tear gas and live ammunition to break up demonstrators in Aden.⁶⁴ To defuse anti-government protests in the country, President Saleh, on February 2 had announced that he would not seek re-election for presidency after his current term ends in 2013, and also said that nor will his son contest the presidential elections. He also vowed to postpone controversial April elections in the country.

Meanwhile, several protesters in Iraq have also come out to the streets against their government. Angry residents in Hamza in Diwaniya province have taken to the streets protesting over shortages of power, food and jobs, as well as political corruption. There was a crackdown by the security forces on February 3 in which four protesters were injured. The protesters reportedly blocked the main road between Hamza and Diwaniya city and stormed government buildings and a

⁶² "Mubarak party leaders quit", *The Saudi Gazette*, February 6, 2011, available at, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2011020693044>

⁶³ "Rallies for reform held in Jordan", *Al Jazeera*, February 4, 2011, available at, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/201124141624836763.html>

⁶⁴ "Opposing protesters rally in Yemen", *Al Jazeera*, February 3, 2011, available at, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/201123105140512715.html>

police station.⁶⁵ Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki has announced that he would give up half his salary cabinet and return it to the state treasury. Maliki said that the move was intended to “reduce the differences between the salaries of employees of state institutions, and to help reduce differences in all of society.”⁶⁶ He has also announced that he does not intend to run for a third term and supports efforts to seek a constitutional reform that would place a two-term limit on the office of prime minister.

E. USA

- **The new START treaty activated; United States responds cautiously to the West Asian crisis**

The New Start Treaty was formally activated on Saturday February 5 as the two sides, USA and Russia, exchanged the relevant documents. The new Start Treaty limits the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550, and the number of launchers and heavy bombers to 800. According to treaty, the United States and Russia, within 45 days, must share details on the number, location and technical characteristics of their arsenals. Sixty days from now, the inspectors will be permitted to investigate the nuclear sites of both the country.

This could be possible after an intense lobbying campaign President Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when it was passed before Christmas. The Duma, the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament had also voted to approve the treaty a month later.⁶⁷

On Egyptian uprising, reports noted that the United States has applauded the negotiations in Egypt. John Kerry, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called the talks 'extraordinary'. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Sunday reinforced the views of the Obama administration on political reform in the West Asia and rejected comments by a U.S. envoy that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak should remain in power.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, reports noted that a meeting of the quartet comprising of - United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations was held. The

⁶⁵ “Iraqis step up protest in job and food crisis” *The National*, February 6, 2011, available at, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/iraqis-step-up-protest-in-job-and-food-crisis?pageCount=0>

⁶⁶ “Iraq PM takes big pay cut as Mideast protests rage”, *The Khaleej Times*, February 5, 2011, available at, http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast_February_151.xml§ion=middleeast&col=

⁶⁷ Mark Lander and Steven Erlanger. *U.S. And Russia Activate the New Start Treaty*. New York Times. February 5, 2011.

⁶⁸ Don Lee and Ken Dilanian. *U.S. Reaction: Applause for Negotiations in Egypt*. Los Angeles Times. February 6, 2011.

principle objective of this meeting was to reaffirm support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, even amid the turmoil in Egypt and the Arab world. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton deflected a question about how the turmoil in Egypt and other Arab countries would affect Israel or the peace process. To be cautious and play it safe Clinton sided with Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, who said: "It is better not to talk about Israel-Palestine now. It is better to separate these issues." ⁶⁹ These developments hint towards a cautious America which is closely following the events in West Asia.

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

- **Defence Ministry likely to fully utilise its capital outlays; IAF inducts the first C-130J Super Hercules**

The Ministry of Defence is likely to fully spend Rs 60,000 crores provided under the head of Capital Expenditure in the defence budget 2010-11. The utilisation of capital outlays comes in the wake of Ministry's success in signing a host of big-ticket items, including US-made C-130J transport planes, India-Russian fifth generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) and Akash missile defence systems. In past the MoD had difficult in utilising its Capital Expenditure, which is primarily meant for modernisation of the armed forces.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force has inducted into its fleet the first of the six C-130J Super Hercules tactical airlift transport aircraft. The US-based Lockheed Martin-made aircraft will join IAF's newly raised 77 squadron (named 'Veiled Vipers') at Hindan airbase, located in Ghaziabad northwest of New Delhi. Reports noted that the aircraft is capable of airdropping personnel and material even in complete darkness, as it is equipped with night vision imaging. It can also land on unprepared or semi-prepared landing strips and has self-protection to operate in hostile environments. It is capable of undertaking low-level air-to-air refuelling that enhances the aircrafts range and rapid forward basing of personnel and equipment in emergent situations.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Defence Ministry to spend full budget quota", January 06, 2011, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/defence-ministry-to-spend-full-budget-quota/142565-3.html>

⁷¹ "IAF inducts the C130J aircraft into its fleet", *The Hindu*, February 05, 2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1159199.ece>