

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEW

### A. SOUTH ASIA

#### AFGHANISTAN

- **US forces begin pull out from Pech valley in Afghanistan**

Reports noted that the United States is withdrawing its forces from Pech valley in the Kunar province of Afghanistan, after years of fighting for the control of the region which was once called as vital for campaign against Taliban and Al Qaeda. The withdrawal formally began on February 15. According to military sources, the withdrawal will take about two months which is a part of a shift of western forces to the Kunar province's more populated areas. However, Afghan units will remain in the Pech valley.<sup>1</sup>

#### PAKISTAN

- **Britain softens its visa policy for Pakistan nationals; Japanese Emperor lauds Pakistan's anti-terror efforts; India proposes dates for Home secretary level dialogue; Reports: US revives diplomatic and military contacts with Pakistan**

According to reports, the British government has softened its visa policy for Pakistan aimed at giving more opportunities to Pakistani nationals and businessmen to visit the United Kingdom. British Minister for Immigration Damian Green said that business visas would be issued in five days and normal visas would be granted between eight and 10 days.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Japanese Emperor Akihito has praised Pakistan's role in the war on terror and acknowledged the sacrifices rendered by its security forces and people. Talking to the visiting Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari in Tokyo, Emperor noted that Japan accords great importance to its ties with Pakistan. This was President Zardari's second meeting with the Japanese emperor. They had met in April 2009, when the President Zardari visited Japan while leading a Pakistani delegation.<sup>3</sup>

India has proposed two sets of dates i.e. March 21-22, 2011 and March 28-29, 2011 to Pakistan for Home secretary-level talks between the two nations. According to

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<sup>1</sup> "US forces pulling out of Pech valley in Afghanistan", *Dawn*, February 26, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/26/us-forces-pulling-out-of-pech-valley-in-afghanistan.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Visa policy softened for Pakistanis", *Dawn*, February 23, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/23/visa-policy-softened-for-pakistanis-uk-minister.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Pakistan's anti-terror efforts lauded", *Dawn*, February 24, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/24/pakistans-anti-terror-efforts-lauded.html>

reports India's Home Secretary Gopal K. Pillai extended the invitation to Pakistan Interior Secretary Chaudhry Qamar Zaman last week and a response from Islamabad was awaited.<sup>4</sup>

In other developments, diplomatic sources noted that the United States has revived high-level diplomatic and military contacts with Pakistan, indicating a desire to put behind the bitterness created by the arrest of a CIA contractor Raymond Davis in Lahore. In this regard, the US and Pakistani military chiefs held a day-long meeting in Oman. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani was invited to the State Department for a formal meeting with Marc Grossman, the new US Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

## BANGLADESH

- **Russia to install Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant; Bangladesh makes efforts to evacuate its citizens from Libya; Malaysian minister for Science, Technology and Innovation visits Bangladesh; Bangladesh submits its claim over the extended continental shelf to the UN**

In a significant development, Russia has signed a deal with Bangladesh on February 24 for installing a 2,000 megawatt nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. This would be the Bangladesh's first nuclear power project which is expected to be complete by 2017-18 with a cost of \$1.5 to 2 billion.<sup>6</sup>

However, reports noted that there are estimated 60,000 Bangladesh nationals in Libya at present. So far Bangladesh government is relying on the employers to move its citizens to safer places. It is also seeking support of international agencies for their shelter and food. Bangladesh is also trying to contact diplomats of other Asian countries to seek their help in evacuation of its nationals.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Malaysian Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili met Bangladesh Minister of Science and Information and Communication Technology Yeafesh Osman on February 24, 2011 and offered Malaysia's expertise to develop and manage the Kaliakoir High Tech Park in Bangladesh. Dr Ongkili and his delegation also met with the officials of

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<sup>4</sup> "India gives dates for home secretaries talks", *Dawn*, February 22, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/22/india-gives-dates-for-home-secretaries-talks.html>

<sup>5</sup> "US 'ready to mend Pakistan ties', *Dawn*, February 25, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/25/us-ready-to-mend-pakistan-ties.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Russian team visits N-site", *The Daily Star*, February 27, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=175692>

<sup>7</sup> "Chinese co taking 804 Bangladeshis to Greece", *The Daily Star*, February 27, 2011 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=175690>

Bangladesh Computer Council as well as Bangladesh High Tech Park Authority.<sup>8</sup>

In other developments, Bangladesh submitted its claim over the extended continental shelf to the United Nations in New York on February 25, 2011. The continental shelf ranges from 400 to 460 nautical miles in the sea bed of the Bay of Bengal. Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr Dipu Moni presented the claim well ahead of the claim submission deadline of July 26, 2011.<sup>9</sup>

## SRI LANKA

- **European Union re-lists LTTE as a terrorist organization; Sri Lankan fishermen released by Indian authorities; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office meets with External Affairs Minister of Sri Lanka; ICRC closes its office in Jaffna; India to evacuate 1200 Sri Lankans from Libya; 171 Sri Lankans applies for refugee status in Japan; Norwegian companies looking for joint ventures in Sri Lanka**

Reports noted that the European Union has re-listed the LTTE as a terror group.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, sixteen Sri Lankan fishermen and three boats seized in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and in Tamilnadu for encroaching into Indian waters, were released on February 23, 2011.<sup>11</sup>

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Alistair Burt met External Affairs Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris at the Ministry of External Affairs on February 23, 2011. During the meeting, both the leaders agreed to further strengthen Sri Lanka - UK bilateral relations in a number of areas, particularly in the field of trade and business.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) closed its office in Jaffna on February 24, 2011 after 21 years of service there.<sup>13</sup> Reports noted that

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<sup>8</sup> "Malaysia offers to help Bangladesh set up High Tech Park", February 27, 2011 at <http://www.mmail.com.my/content/64981-malaysia-offers-help-bangladesh-set-high-tech-park>

<sup>9</sup> "Bangladesh lodges claim with UN", *Financial Express*, February 27, 2011 at [http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news\\_id=127434&date=2011-02-27](http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=127434&date=2011-02-27)

<sup>10</sup> "EU re-lists LTTE as terror group", *Daily Mirror*, February 24, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/front-page-news/36570.html>

<sup>11</sup> "Lankan fishermen released in TN", *Daily Mirror*, February 24, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/36565.html>

<sup>12</sup> "UK/Lanka bilateral relations to be strengthened further", *Daily Mirror*, February 24, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/36568.html>

<sup>13</sup> "ICRC Jaffna office closes after 21 years", *Daily Mirror*, February 25, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/36660.html>

India has agreed to facilitate the evacuation of some 1200 stranded Sri Lankan citizens in Libya.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Japanese Justice Ministry sources, a total of 171 Sri Lankans have applied for refugee status in Japan in 2010.<sup>15</sup> In other developments, a group of Norwegian companies working with fisheries and fish related industries visited Sri Lanka to identify possible partners for joint ventures between the two countries.<sup>16</sup>

## BHUTAN

- **Three nation hub established at Sherpur; Suspected NDFB militants (anti-talks) ambush Bhutanese policemen; Thinley denies presence of militants on Bhutanese soil**

Reports noted that a three-nation hub has been established in Sherpur district of Bangladesh with its land port finally linked with Bhutan, Nepal and India. Bhutan is 200km away from Sherpur and a Sherpur-Bhutan transit road would be constructed soon.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile in a violent incident in south Bhutan, four Bhutanese personnel were injured when suspected NDFB militants (anti-talks) ambushed a Bhutan police party between Sarpang and Gelephu road in Bhutan's Sarpang district bordering Kokrajhar district of Assam.<sup>18</sup> In response to these attacks, Prime Minister Jigme Y Thinley underlined the urgency to contain such activities. Thinley has asserted that Bhutan will never allow any militant group to set up camps on its soil and announced that there were no North East militant hideouts in the country since 2003.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "India to evacuate Lankans in Libya", *Daily Mirror*, February 26, 2011 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/10022-india-to-evacuate-lankans-in-libya.html>

<sup>15</sup> "Lankan refugees in Japan", *Daily Mirror*, February 26, 2011 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/10021-lankan-refugees-in-japan.html>

<sup>16</sup> Murshideen, B.M., "Norway-SL explore more avenues of business", *Daily Mirror*, February 26, 2011 at <http://print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/36772.html>

<sup>17</sup> "Land port establishes tri-nation connectivity," *Gulf Times*, February 21, 2011, at [http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=417434&version=1&template\\_id=44&parent\\_id=24](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=417434&version=1&template_id=44&parent_id=24)

<sup>18</sup> "NDFB militants strike in Bhutan," *Times of India*, February 20, 2011, at <http://Timesofindia.Indiatimes.Com/City/Guwahati/Ndfb-Militants-Strike-In-Bhutan/Articleshow/7535965.Cms>

<sup>19</sup> "PM denies militants in Bhutan," *South Asian News Agency*, February 26, 2011, at <http://www.sananews.net/english/2011/02/26/pm-denies-militants-in-bhutan/>

## MALDIVES

- **President Mohamed Nasheed visits India and Sri Lanka; Maldives is against the use of violence against pro-democracy campaigners in Libya; New Ambassador of Poland to the Maldives; European Parliament's delegation visits Maldives; President's expresses sympathy for quake hit New Zealand; President holds meeting with World Bank Country Director for the Maldives and Sri Lanka; President meets with Interpol President**

President Mohamed Nasheed visited India to attend world conference on "Recreating South Asia: Democracy, Social Justice and Sustainable Development" organized by South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS). During the visit, President also held talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, President of ruling Congress party Sonia Gandhi, India's Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh and Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna and National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon.<sup>20</sup>

President Nasheed also visited Sri Lanka on February 26, 2011 on transit after the India visit and met Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and other senior Government officials for high level discussions.<sup>21</sup>

President Mohamed Nasheed has called on Western, African and Arab countries as well as the African Union to urge the Libyan government to immediately cease the use of violence against pro-democracy campaigners.<sup>22</sup> New Ambassador of Poland accredited to the Maldives, Professor Piotr Klodkowski, has presented his letter of credence to President Mohamed Nasheed on Feb 21, 2011.<sup>23</sup>

However, the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South Asia, met with President Mohamed Nasheed on February 21, 2011 at the President's office. Focus of the discussion was on EU's long standing engagement with the Maldives and democratic process, women's empowerment,

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<sup>20</sup> "President Nasheed Departs for India", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 23, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4819>; "President Meets Senior Officials of the Indian Government", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 24, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4826>

<sup>21</sup> "Maldives President meets Sri Lankan counterpart", *Haveeru*, February 26, 2011 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/english/details/35029>

<sup>22</sup> "President Nasheed Expresses Concern over the Situation in Libya, Calls for International Action", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 22, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4800>

<sup>23</sup> "New Polish Ambassador Presents Credentials to the President", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 21, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4791>

expansion of the role of media, transparency as well as consolidating the role of parliament in the Maldives.<sup>24</sup>

President Mohamed Nasheed conveyed a message of sympathy to Prime Minister of New Zealand John Key following the loss of lives and destruction caused by the earthquake that hit the New Zealand city of Christchurch.<sup>25</sup>

President Mohamed Nasheed met with newly appointed World Bank Country Director for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, Diarietoy Gaye. During the meeting between President and WB Country Director, discussions were focused on increasing the impact and the effectiveness of the World Bank funded projects in the Maldives.<sup>26</sup>

In other developments, Interpol President Khoo Boon Hui has paid a courtesy call on President Mohamed Nasheed on February 23, 2011.<sup>27</sup>

## B. EAST ASIA

### CHINA

(February 14-20, 2011)

- **China and France willing to enhance defence cooperation; Indonesian Vice-minister and Polish defence delegation visit China; Beijing Military Area Command tests its readiness in hostile weather; A Chinese peacekeeping contingent sent to Southern Lebanon; Chinese scientists test new type of submarine engine**

The Director of the Regional Affairs Department of the Defense Staff Headquarters of France Philip Guney led a delegation to China to attend the annual work conference of Sino-French general staff headquarters and met with Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 11 February 2011. On this occasion, Ma Xiaotian remarked that the two countries enjoy a high degree of political mutual trust, and the bilateral economic and trade cooperation between them is rapidly expanding. He further

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<sup>24</sup> "President Meets the European Parliament Delegation", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 21, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4793>

<sup>25</sup> "President Sends Sympathy to the New Zealand PM", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 22, 2011, at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4803>

<sup>26</sup> "President Meets the World Bank Country Director", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 23, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4820>

<sup>27</sup> "Interpol President Calls on the President", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 23, 2011 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=4812>



said that the Chinese side was willing to work together with French to develop the Sino-French comprehensive strategic partnership. Guney also reiterated that France and China shared common views on many aspects. The French military attaches importance to developing friendly relations with the Chinese military and expects to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the Chinese military.<sup>28</sup>

The visiting Indonesian Vice Minister of Defense Sjafrie Sjamsoedin met with Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie on Friday, 18 February 2011. On this occasion, the two senior leaders pledged to promote bilateral defense cooperation. Liang said that China had attached great importance to developing friendly ties with Indonesia and had been ready to promote the strategic partnership for greater development. Sjafrie also underscored the rapid growth of defense cooperation between Indonesia and China. He also said that his country had been ready to work with China to promote cooperation in defense and regional security affairs.<sup>29</sup>

A Polish delegation headed by Jerzy Niemc, Director of the Military Foreign Affairs Department, visited China and met with their Chinese counterparts last week on 18 February 2011. On this occasion, Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army highlighted the maturing dialogue mechanism between the two countries. He said that the dialogue mechanism had become a good channel for the two sides to exchange views frankly, reach consensus and boost cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

Reports noted that an artillery brigade and a motorized infantry regiment had conducted an all-weather and actual-combat drill with all their troops and equipment under information-based conditions in the end of the last month. This training was held in the Zhurihe Training Base under the Beijing Military Area Command (MAC) in the northern part of China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. To test and maintain its combat readiness, the Beijing MAC took the winter training as the first major military activity of all the troop units of the MAC and chose the coldest period in the vast desert beyond the Great Wall to organize this actual-combat drill. The drill focused on how to carry out long-range rapid maneuver in multiple ways, actual-troop and live-shell exercise. During the training, efficiency of various firearms under frigid climate conditions and combat operations were tested.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Ma Xiaotian meets French guests", *PLA Daily* (Online), 14 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/14/content\\_4384639.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/14/content_4384639.htm)

<sup>29</sup> "China, Indonesia to step up defense cooperation: ministers", *PLA Daily* (Online), 19 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/19/content\\_4387435.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/19/content_4387435.htm)

<sup>30</sup> "China, Poland pledge to boost military ties", *PLA Daily* (Online), 19 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/19/content\\_4387434.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/19/content_4387434.htm)

<sup>31</sup> "Beijing MAC conducts all-weather and actual-combat drill", *PLA Daily* (Online), 15 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/15/content\\_4385183.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/15/content_4385183.htm)

A 160 Chinese peacekeeping contingent left for UN peace mission in Southern Lebanon on Saturday, 19 February. The contingent includes 130 engineering and 30 medical troops. It is the first batch of the eighth Chinese peacekeeping detachment that is going to be posted in Lebanon. This contingent is mandated to conduct mine clearing, road construction, and humanitarian tasks. China dispatched its first detachment of peacekeepers to Lebanon in March 2006.<sup>32</sup>

In other developments, an AC-DC integrated dual-winding generator system with fully independent intellectual property right that is able to simultaneously provide high-quality AC and DC power supply for new-type submarines has won the first prize of the 2010 National Scientific and Technological Progress Award. This system has been developed by Ma Weiming, academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE) and professor of the Naval University of Engineering of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>33</sup>

(February 21-27, 2011)

- **China and Pakistan hold 8<sup>th</sup> Defence and Security talks; The Kazakh Defence Minister meets with his Chinese counterpart; The Inner Mongolia Military Command improves border infrastructure tremendously; New-type of transport helicopter introduced; The PLA Air Force opens up a new university; The PLA emphasizes on legal works**

Recently, General Khalid Shameem Wynne, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan visited China to attend the 8th Sino-Pakistani Defense and Security Talks. The talks were held on February 23, 2011. On this occasion, he met with Chen Bingde, the Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). During the meeting, Bingde reiterated that China attached great importance and was devoted to pushing forward relations between the two militaries. On this occasion, the two countries pledged to enhance strategic communication and cooperation between their militaries. The First China-Pakistan Defense and Security talks were held in March 2002.<sup>34</sup> During his visit, he told the media persons that Pakistan and China would hold two joint military exercises in 2011. The two exercises – one army drill and one air force one – will be held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment

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<sup>32</sup> “Chinese peacekeepers leave for Lebanon”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 20 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/20/content\\_4387689.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/20/content_4387689.htm).

<sup>33</sup> “New generator system developed for new-type submarines”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 14 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/14/content\\_4384591.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/14/content_4384591.htm)

<sup>34</sup> “China, Pakistan pledge to enhance military co-op”, *PLA Daily* (Online), 24 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/24/content\\_4389806\\_2.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/24/content_4389806_2.htm)

of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and China. In fact, Wynne himself led a joint anti-terrorism drill between Pakistan and China in Qingtongxia in northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region In July 2010.<sup>35</sup>

Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, Defense Minister of Kazakhstan who is accompanying his President Nursultan Nazarbayev on a visit to China, met with Liang Guanglie, State Councilor and Defense Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on February 21. On this occasion, Liang Guanglie reiterated that Kazakhstan was China's friendly neighbor and strategic partner. He said that in the past years, the high-level contacts between the two countries had been very close, the political mutual trust deepening, the pragmatic cooperation in various fields increasingly expanding, and the Sino-Kazakh strategic partnership developing. The Kazakh Defence Minister Dzhaksybekov also reiterated that Kazakhstan was willing to work together with China to continue to expand the cooperation fields of the two militaries.<sup>36</sup>

The Inner Mongolia Military Command (MC) of the PLA has improved its frontier defense facilities and border management. The reports noted that the Inner Mongolia MC had built a 3,000-km-long frontier defense patrol road and a 4,000-km-long border wire netting, and renovated all the comprehensive training grounds of the frontline companies, greatly improving the duty-performance and training conditions of its troops. The Inner Mongolia MC has also laid 7,000-odd kilometers of frontier defense optic cable, realizing interconnection among remote units at the level of frontier Defense Company and above as well as some sentry posts. It has also installed 24-hour monitoring facilities at frontier ports, main passages and sensitive areas, greatly strengthening the capability of its troops in managing and controlling the border with science and technology. The MC has also improved the military-police-civilian joint defense system, established the reliable intelligence and information network and regularly carries out military-police-civilian joint operation, effectively safeguarding the peace and stability of the border areas.<sup>37</sup>

Reports noted that in last mid-February that China's first batch of new-type military transport helicopters had made their first flight successfully after they entered service. According to the Army Aviation Department of the General Staff Headquarters (GSH) of the PLA, the new-type helicopter is a medium-size transport helicopter with great improvements in controlling, mobility, flight

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<sup>35</sup> "Pakistan, China to hold joint military exercises in 2011: Pakistani senior military leader", *Xinhua* (Online), 23 February 2011 at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-02/22/c\\_13744506.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-02/22/c_13744506.htm)

<sup>36</sup> "Liang Guanglie meets Kazakhstan counterpart", *PLA Daily* (Online), 22 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content\\_4389090.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content_4389090.htm).

<sup>37</sup> "Inner Mongolia MC develops comprehensive frontier defense capability", *PLA Daily* (Online), 22 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content\\_4389082.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content_4389082.htm).

distance and flight speed comparing with the existing similar transport helicopters. These new-type transport helicopters have fully adopted computerized control system with more means for navigation and the capability of environmental monitoring. It is claimed that the use of this transport helicopter will greatly enhance the capability of the PLA Army Aviation Force in performing diversified military tasks.<sup>38</sup>

However, another report noted that the PLA Air Force had established a further education platform with the characteristics of its own after two years of efforts. The PLA Air Force established the Military Vocational University in June 2008. This is an open university for all the officers, noncommissioned officers and compulsory service people of the PLA Air Force with military post education as the main while giving consideration to credential education. The Military Vocational University of the PLA Air Force has set up 400-odd courses for officers' training and 420-odd courses for soldiers' training based on 33 professional systems.<sup>39</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, in the closing year of the 11th Five-Year Plan period (2006-2010), the military legislative work of China made great achievements and the military legal system with Chinese characteristics basically took shape. It was noted that the military legal system with Chinese characteristics had basically introduced various relevant laws and regulations and is basically covering all fields of national defense and army building.<sup>40</sup>

## JAPAN

- **Japan to boost cabinet capability over national security; DPJ's frustration over Kan grows; Kan alludes to lower house dissolution / snap election aimed at countering DPJ rebels as well as to seek tax mandate; Japan to sell military parts to U.S. forces; Reports: Deadlock in Russia-Japan islands row hard to break; Japan to closely watch North Korea amid reports on finished missile tower**

On the domestic front, the Japanese government has decided to create a team to discuss ways to boost the capability of the cabinet to collect information

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<sup>38</sup> "New-type military transport helicopter makes successful maiden flight", *PLA Daily* (Online), 22 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content\\_4389015.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/22/content_4389015.htm).

<sup>39</sup> "PLA Air Force establishes further education platform", *PLA Daily* (Online), 21 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/21/content\\_4388445.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/21/content_4388445.htm).

<sup>40</sup> "Military legal system with Chinese characteristics formulated", *PLA Daily* (Online), 25 February 2011 at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/25/content\\_4390677.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-02/25/content_4390677.htm)

pertaining to national security.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Naoto Kan is facing increasing pressure from inside his Democratic Party of Japan over stalled debates in the Diet on bills related to the budget and party executives' decision to punish former DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, in a bid to counter intraparty moves calling for his resignation, he has also hinted that he may dissolve the House of Representatives for a snap election.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile reports noted that in response to a secret U.S. request, Japanese government has decided to sell propellers from Maritime Self-Defense Force which will help rescue planes to the U.S. forces. These propellers will be used in transport planes which are to be given to the Afghan air force.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, there are reports which suggest that the Russia-Japan deadlock over four disputed Pacific islands is unlikely to end in the near future, with neither side apparently willing to budge.<sup>45</sup>

In other developments, Japan has stated that it will keep monitoring developments in North Korea. Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano said that Japan has been gathering and analyzing information on North Korea's movements "with grave concern" and will continue to do so.<sup>46</sup>

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **ASEAN holds emergency meeting on Thai-Cambodian border dispute; Indonesia to send 30 observers to Thai- Cambodia border areas; Cambodia, US hold joint maritime exercise; Congress dates announced in Laos; 143 per cent annual increase in Brunei- China trade; 50,000 tonnes Indian corn, soy meal rejected by Vietnam; Detained Malaysian Indians freed**

The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN held a meeting on 22 February 2011 to discuss the possible solutions to the Thai-Cambodian border conflict. The meeting was convened at the request of UNSC. The UNSC members have already had a

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<sup>41</sup> "Japan to boost Cabinet capability over national security+" *Associated Press*, February 24, 2011 at [http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9LJHD301&show\\_article=1](http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9LJHD301&show_article=1)

<sup>42</sup> "DPJ frustration over Kan grows" *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 24, 2011 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110223005504.htm>

<sup>43</sup> "Kan alludes to lower house dissolution / Snap election would counter DPJ rebels, seek tax Mandate" *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 21, 2011 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110220003736.htm>

<sup>44</sup> "Govt to sell military parts to U.S. forces" *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 23, 2011 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110222003670.htm>

<sup>45</sup> "Deadlock in Russia-Japan islands row hard to break" *Xinhua*, February 22, 2011 at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-02/22/c\\_13744160.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-02/22/c_13744160.htm)

<sup>46</sup> "Japan to closely watch N. Korea amid reports on finished missile tower" *Associated Press*, February 21, 2011 at [http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9LGU2B00&show\\_article=1](http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9LGU2B00&show_article=1)

meeting regarding the issue in which they advised the two countries to pursue a peaceful solution to the conflict within the ASEAN framework.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile reports noted that 30 Indonesian observers will be dispatched soon to the border areas near the Preah Vihear temple in order to monitor the ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand. The decision is considered as an outcome of the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting held earlier.<sup>48</sup>

Cambodia and the United States began a four day joint maritime exercise off the Cambodian coast on 27 February 2011. The stated objective of the exercise is building capacity to deal with regional humanitarian disasters.<sup>49</sup>

The Laos communist party has paved the way for the five yearly Congress as the dates have been announced. The three day congress will choose the members of the country's ruling politburo and endorse a five year plan among other things.<sup>50</sup>

According to the Chinese officials, the bilateral trade between Brunei and China has jumped up by 143 percent since last year. The bilateral trade figures were revealed by Wang Jia Xin on 24 February 2011.<sup>51</sup>

Vietnam has insisted that the owners of 50,000 tonnes of Indian corn and soymeal re-export the cargoes, which were found to be infested with insects. Indian traders, however, still hope some last minute reversion of the decision, which seems highly unlikely.<sup>52</sup>

In other developments in the region, over 100 Malaysian protesters were arrested as they tried to assemble to protest against the government's policies on the issue of Malaysian-Indians. The protest was planned to take place on 27 February

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<sup>47</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meet on Tha-Cambodian Dispute, *VOA NEWS*, 22 February 2011, <http://blogs.voanews.com/breaking-news/2011/02/21/asean-foreign-ministers-meet-on-tha-cambodian-dispute/>

<sup>48</sup> 30 Observers to be sent to Cambodia-Thai border dispute areas, *Xinhua*, 23 February 2011, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-02/23/c\\_13746411.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-02/23/c_13746411.htm)

<sup>49</sup> Cambodia, US hold maritime exercise off Cambodian coast, *Malaysia Sun*, 27 February 2011, <http://story.malaysiasun.com/index.php/ct/9/cid/303b19022816233b/id/43335678/ht/Cambodia-US-hold-maritime-exercise-off-Cambodian-coast/>

<sup>50</sup> Laos govt announces Congress date, *Radio Australia*, 24 February 2011, <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/connectasia/stories/201102/s3147683.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Brunei-China Trade Increases 143 Per Cent, *Bru Direct*, 25 February 2011, <http://brudirect.com/index.php/2011022440884/Fourth-Stories/brunei-china-trade-increases-143-per-cent.html>

<sup>52</sup> Vietnam rejects 50,000-tonne Indian corn, soymeal cargoes, *Times of India*, 24 February 2011, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Vietnam-rejects-50000-tonne-Indian-corn-soymeal-cargoes/articleshow/7560688.cms>

2011, but it couldn't as most of the protestors were arrested. However, they were released by the police later.<sup>53</sup>

### C. CENTRAL ASIA & RUSSIA

#### CENTRAL ASIA

- CSTO hopes to implement automated border patrol system in Central Asia; Kazakhstan, South Korea to develop "Green Economy" techniques; Drugs Control Official: Drug smuggling in Kyrgyzstan is being taken over by large cartels; Russia to widen anti-Drug operations in Central Asia; Kazakhstan and South Korea agrees to work together to develop "green economy" techniques; Kyrgyzstan's PM seeks international financial assistance; Formation of shadow government in Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan to seek Russian help to bring its 21 citizens in Libya to safety; India to help its investors in developing Tajikistan's tea industry; Visiting Iranian trade delegation urges for the creation of a Turkmen-Iran trade council; Uzbekistan proposes free-trade agreement with Turkmenistan

The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a regional security group, hopes to implement an automated system to better patrol borders between its members—Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Armenia and Belarus. This would include modern technical means of verification of identification documents for all CSTO states and will help member states combat organized crime, trafficking and illegal migration.<sup>54</sup>

Kazakhstan and South Korea have agreed to work together to develop "green economy" techniques that strive for growth while safeguarding the environment, According to a memo signed in Almaty on February 25, Kazakhstan aims at embracing environmentally-conscious business developments into their own economy, while incorporating ecological concerns into professional education. Kazakhstan will take part in the UN held' Rio+20' session in 2012, Brazil where program documents regarding the green economy will be adopted.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Detained Malaysian Indians freed, *The Hindu*, 27 February 2011, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1495169.ece>

<sup>54</sup> 'CSTO seeks automated border patrol system', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 25, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Regional/CSTO-seeks-automated-border-patrol-system/viewstory.aspx?id=3388>

<sup>55</sup> 'Kazakhstan, Korea to develop 'green economy' techniques', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 25, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-Korea-to-develop-lsquoogreen-economyrsquo-techniques/viewstory.aspx?id=3389>

Deputy chief of staff for the State Service for Drugs Control, Urmat Abrybekov said that drug smuggling in Kyrgyzstan is being taken over by large cartels with international connections which further aggravated due to the political unrest of last year. Kyrgyzstan had eliminated the drug control agency in October 2009 while it was still under the control of former ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev, who many believe profited from the illicit drug trade.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, Russia, whose forces are currently training and arming drug law enforcers in Afghanistan, will widen anti-drug operations in Central Asia and Afghanistan as part of a five-year plan to "liquidate" the Afghan drug threat. Reports noted that Moscow will provide targeted help for Kyrgyzstan which is a major traffic route for Afghan heroin and opium that finds markets in Russia and Europe, to fight against the drug trade with technical and financial assistance.<sup>57</sup>

Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister on February 21 called on international donor organizations to provide badly needed financial assistance to reduce the national budget deficit where he said that the "assistance strategy to Kyrgyzstan, which was developed by international organizations in 2010, helped Kyrgyzstan. We hope that the next strategy will also be based on the priorities of the Kyrgyz Republic." Official Kyrgyz government statistics forecast the national 2011 budget deficit at around \$445 million.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, political parties who did not clear the 5 percent vote hurdle required to gain seats in Kyrgyzstan's new parliament have banded together to create a shadow government under the banner of the 'National Congress of Political Parties' to provide opposition to the official government. Serving as the shadow government's PM, Akiykat party leader, Alikbek Djekshenkulov said "In order to avoid the role of passive observers, we decided to take active political actions. On February 20, we decided to create alternative government and parliament."<sup>59</sup>

Reports noted that Tajikistan to seek Russia's help to bring its 21 citizens in Libya, including 14 students, to safety. It may be noted that Tajikistan does not

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<sup>56</sup> 'Internationally-linked drug cartels take root in Kyrgyzstan', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 22, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Internationally-linked-drug-cartels-take-root-in-Kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=3340>

<sup>57</sup> 'Russia expands Central Asian anti-drug operations', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 22, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Regional/Russia-expands-Central-Asian-anti-drug-operations/viewstory.aspx?id=3338>

<sup>58</sup> 'Kyrgyzstan seeks int'l assistance to reduce budget deficit', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 21, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Kyrgyzstannbspseeks-int39lnbspassistance-to-reduce-budget-deficit/viewstory.aspx?id=3329>

<sup>59</sup> 'Independent Kyrgyz parties form shadow government', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 24, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Independent-Kyrgyz-parties-form-shadow-government/viewstory.aspx?id=3368>



have a diplomatic presence in Libya. Russia has already evacuated more than 560 of its own citizens and will subsequently send in a passenger ship to evacuate Russian, Serbian and Turkish nationals working with a Russian state company in two other Libyan cities.<sup>60</sup> However, Kyrgyz students in the Libyan capital of Tripoli have refused to be evacuated from the strife-torn country.<sup>61</sup>

India's Ambassador to Tajikistan Asith Kumar Bhattacharjee said that he is interested in helping Indian investors develop Tajikistan's tea industry. He made these remarks during a meeting with Tajik Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) leader Said Sharif on February 21. However, Sharif emphasized the need of investors who are ready to cooperate in the sphere of light and processing industries, construction, tourism and training of business personal. Sharif also emphasized that the resumption of regular flights between Dushanbe and the Indian capital New Delhi to improve business relations between the two states. He agreed to visit India in April to meet with Indian business entrepreneurs and potential investors for joint ventures in Tajikistan.<sup>62</sup>

An Iranian trade delegation visiting Ashgabat has urged for the creation of a Turkmen-Iran trade council to speed up the development of economic ties. Iranian Minister of Commerce Mehdi Ghazanfari made the proposal at a session of trade officials from both countries that explored bilateral cooperation in technical and engineering services and construction, as well as fish farming and forestation. "Iran is a gate for Turkmenistan's access to the high-seas and Turkmenistan is a gate for Iran's access to the Central Asia," Ghazanfari added."<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, reports noted that Uzbekistan officials proposed the creation of a 'full-fledged' free trade regime with Turkmenistan. The proposal came on Tuesday in Tashkent during the sixth session of the Uzbek-Turkmen Commission on Trade-economic, Scientific-Technical and Cultural Cooperation. Both countries have growing economies as a result of their massive hydrocarbon energy reserves and are developing international trade relationships.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> 'Tajikistan seeks Russian help evacuating Tajiks from Libya', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 23, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajikistan-seeks-Russian-helpnbspevacuating-Tajiks-from-Libya/viewstory.aspx?id=3347>

<sup>61</sup> 'Kyrgyz students refuse to leave Libya', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 25, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kyrgyzstan/Kyrgyz-students-refuse-to-leave-Libya/viewstory.aspx?id=3378>

<sup>62</sup> 'India interested in Tajik tea industry', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 22, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/India-interested-in-Tajik-tea-industry/viewstory.aspx?id=3344>

<sup>63</sup> 'Iran seeks creation of Turkmen-Iran trade council', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 23, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/Iran-seeks-creation-of-Turkmen-Iran-trade-council/viewstory.aspx?id=3351>

<sup>64</sup> 'Uzbekistan proposes free-trade agreement with Turkmenistan', *Central Asia Newswire*, February 23, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Regional/Uzbekistan-proposes-free-tradenbspagreement-with-Turkmenistan/viewstory.aspx?id=3356>

## RUSSIA

- **Russian and Armenian Presidents meet in St. Petersburg; Russian Parliament ratifies the military transit deal with the USA; Reports: Russia launches navigation system satellite, India to benefit; Russia backs UNSC sanctions against Libya; Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov re-nominated for elections**

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sarkisian met in St. Petersburg to discuss a range of regional issues which included the dispute over the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>65</sup> Discussions on the economic agenda figured prominently in the talks with Russia's involvement in Yerevan's ambitious plan to build a new nuclear power plant. The two leaders also discussed the Russia's oil major Gazprom's intentions to further raise the price of its natural gas for Armenia this year. Medvedev is due to host fresh talks between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the southern Russian city of Sochi on March 5, in an attempt to solve their long standing regional dispute.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, Russia's parliament has approved a deal with the United States to allow transit for military equipment and personnel across Russia to the NATO force in Afghanistan. This will help to reduce the over-dependence of NATO on Pakistan as a transit route. The transit agreement was signed during a trip by President Barack Obama to Russia in 2009 in an effort to 'reset' bilateral relations that had been strained the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008. The Duma voted 347-95 in favour of the 2009 deal, which has already been implemented pending ratification.<sup>67</sup>

At present about 80 percent of NATO's supplies cross through Pakistan. But NATO has been trying to reduce its dependence on convoy routes through Pakistan where they are routinely subjected to Islamist militant attacks. Russian officials had said last year the deal could also be expanded to allow vehicles in need of repair and refurbishment to be sent back to NATO countries. However, the transit deal does not allow the Russian route to be used for transporting weapons for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Russia's NATO envoy has said

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<sup>65</sup> "Armenia, Russian Presidents hold private talks", *News Armenia*, February 25, 2011 at <http://news.am/eng/news/49361.html>

<sup>66</sup> "Russian, Armenian Presidents Meet In St. Petersburg", *Radio Liberty*, February 28, 2011 at [http://www.rferl.org/content/russian\\_armenian\\_presidents\\_meet\\_in\\_st\\_petersburg/2321505.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/russian_armenian_presidents_meet_in_st_petersburg/2321505.html)

<sup>67</sup> "Duma ratifies military transit deal with U.S.", *The Moscow Times*, February 28, 2011 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/duma-ratifies-military-transit-deal-with-us/431708.html>

the deal would not allow NATO to ship tanks or combat-ready armored personnel carriers through Russian territory.<sup>68</sup> It would be worth noting that Russia has struck similar deals with Germany, France and Spain and has touted them as a key contribution to the international effort to stabilize Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup>

Reports noted that Russia has launched one of the last set of satellites needed to complete a space-based navigation system, which Moscow hopes will compete with the American Global Positioning System (GPS), a global market leader. After the embarrassing loss of three satellites last year, two more are expected to be launched in 2011 to complete the \$2 billion project that according to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, will give Russia "satellite navigation sovereignty". However, under a 2007 agreement signed between India and Russia, India will be the only country to have access to the military segment of the Glonass system, which will enable the Indian military to greatly improve the accuracy of its land-, sea-, air and space-launched weapon systems. In September 2010, the two countries signed a deal to jointly manufacture Glonass/GPS twin system receivers and other navigational equipment.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, Russia has backed a stringent United Nations Security Council Resolution sanction against the incumbent regime of Libya even though the financial ramifications for the Russian economy will be immense.<sup>71</sup> Russia will have to forfeit arms sales worth 4 billion US\$ once the resolution comes into effect. Russia has termed the use of military force by the ruling regime on unarmed civilians as totally unacceptable and called for a solution to the problem through political means. Libya had placed orders worth \$2 billion and negotiations were under way for contracts worth another \$1.8 billion. Moreover, Tatneft which is Tatarstan's main oil company and the sixth largest in Russia will lose around 200 million US\$ oil-related equipment that it exports to Libya and unfulfilled contracts signed between the Russian republic's Tatneft company and the Libyan government<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> "Russia ratifies military transit deal with U.S.", *Reuters*, February 25, 2011 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/25/us-russia-usa-transit-idUSTRE71O4GH20110225>

<sup>69</sup> "Russian parliament ratifies US Afghan transit deal", *Kansas City*, February 25, 2011 at [http://www.kansascity.com/2011/02/25/2681258\\_russian-parliament-mulls-us-afghan.html](http://www.kansascity.com/2011/02/25/2681258_russian-parliament-mulls-us-afghan.html)

<sup>70</sup> "Russia launches Glonass satellite, a boost for India", *The Hindu*, February 27, 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1492915.ece>

<sup>71</sup> "UN Sanctions on Libya May Cost Russia \$4Bln", *The Moscow Times*, February 28, 2011 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/un-sanctions-on-libya-may-cost-russia-4bln/431720.html>

<sup>72</sup> "Official: Tatarstan could lose \$200 million in Libya", *Radio Free Europe*, February 27, 2011 at [http://www.rferl.org/content/tatarstan\\_could\\_lose\\_200m\\_in\\_libya/2322584.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/tatarstan_could_lose_200m_in_libya/2322584.html)

In other developments, reports noted that in an apparent sign of united Russia flexing its teeth in Chechnya, the incumbent ruler of Chechnya, Kadyrov has been nominated by the ruling party for a second five year term. Although it is not mandatory for the Russian President Medvedev to accept the nomination, analysts believe that his signature is a mere formality and till the time Kadyrov is able to control all armed formations in the country, his rule in Chechnya will continue. Kadyrov's strength was challenged last year when rebels staged two high-profile attacks in the republic.<sup>73</sup>

## D. WEST ASIA

### IRAN

- **Opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi's son arrested by Iranian security forces; UN nuclear watchdog worried over new information discovered regarding Iran's nuclear programme**

Iranian security forces have arrested a son of opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi, one week after his supporters took to the streets. Sahamnews website said that "last night security forces entered the house of Ali Karoubi and arrested him and his wife, Nafiseh Panahi" Panahi was later released but there was no further news of Ali Karoubi. Website also said that there were concerns for Mehdi Karoubi himself after security forces raided his house and confiscated documents and books. Mehdi Karoubi has been under house arrest for more than a week after calling for supporters of his reformist Green movement to hold a rally on February 14, the first event of its kind since December 2009. However, the government denied the allegation and accusing the Green movement of trying to overthrow the Islamic system with the support of Iran's foreign enemies.<sup>74</sup>

However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it has received new information on "possible military dimensions" to Iran's nuclear development programme and raised further concern. IAEA insisted Tehran to co-operate fully with its investigations in alleged weapons experiments as it had not done since 2008. IAEA also indicated that Iran was not engaging with the IAEA on

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<sup>73</sup> "Kadyrov nominated again", *The St. Petersburg Times*, February 22, 2011 at [http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action\\_id=2&story\\_id=33598](http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=33598)

<sup>74</sup> "Son of Iran opposition leader Karoubi arrested," *Khaleej Times*, February 22, 2011, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast\\_February718.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast_February718.xml&section=middleeast)

allegations that it was developing a nuclear payload for its missiles. However, Iran says its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.<sup>75</sup>

## IRAQ

- **Top military leader of Al-Qaeda group killed by Iraqi security forces**

Reports noted that Iraqi security forces have killed the top military leader of an Al-Qaeda front group. An Iraqi military spokesman, Major General Qassim al-Moussawi stated that the slain militant, al-Nasser Lideen Allah Abu Suleiman, was the so-called war minister of the Islamic State of Iraq, an al-Qaeda front group accountable for bombings and suicide attacks across Iraq. Iraqi officials had picked up Suleiman's trace while investigating a suicide bombing in the city of Ramadi. In that attack, an assailant blew himself up near a convoy carrying the deputy governor of Anbar province which had killed eleven people including seven policemen and a bodyguard. It was not immediately clear whether Suleiman played a direct role in the suicide bombing or what led authorities to his hideout.<sup>76</sup>

## OMAN, BAHRAIN

- **Two anti-government protesters killed in Oman; Bahrain protesters block access to Parliament**

Two people were killed in Omani city of Sohar on February 27 after police fired rubber bullets into the crowd of hundreds of protestors who staged a demonstration demanding political reforms in the country. The protestors had gathered for a second straight day in a main square in Sohar before police tried to disperse them with tear gas and batons. Earlier, on February 26, about 500 protestors caused a huge traffic jam at the Globe roundabout, chanting slogans, "we want jobs," "we want end to corruption", "we want long-serving ministers to go." Most of the protestors in Sohar are believed to be jobless or lowly paid workers.<sup>77</sup> Protests were also taking place in the southern town of Salalah where demonstrators have been camping near the office of a provincial governor.

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<sup>75</sup> "Iran nuclear plans: UN concern over 'military angle,'" *BBC News*, February 25, 2011, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12584146>

<sup>76</sup> "Iraqi forces kill al-Qaeda 'war minister' in raid," *Khaleej Times*, February 25, 2011, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast\\_February763.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/February/middleeast_February763.xml&section=middleeast)

<sup>77</sup> "Two killed as riot rage engulfs Sohar", *Times of Oman*, February 28, 2011 at <http://www.timesofoman.com/echoice.asp?detail=41836&rand=PC4wU4s4NEK9w3McN3f4K5bX2m>

Meanwhile, hundreds of anti-government protesters have blocked access to Bahrain's parliament and forced officials to cancel a meeting of the upper chamber which is appointed by the ruler. The protesters are holding rallies at sensitive locations in the capital Manama to boost pressure on the monarchy following two weeks of protests and clashes. The session of the upper chamber was eventually called off after protesters formed a human chain to block the entrance. Bahrain's monarchy is appealing for talks with opposition groups to try to end the crisis.<sup>78</sup> Earlier on February 26, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain reshuffled his cabinet by dropping four ministers, taking in two new ministers and changing the portfolios of a few others.

## E. USA

- **Reports: United States is in consultation with its European allies to impose a no-fly zone over Libya**

Reports noted that the United States is in consultation with its European allies to impose a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent further killings of civilians by forces loyal to Col. Quaddafi. White House, State Department and Pentagon officials held talks with their European and NATO partners and counterparts about how to proceed in imposing flight restrictions over Libya. A senior administration official noted that no decision had been made, and expressed caution that any decision on a no-fly zone would have to be made in consultations with allies. US officials said on Sunday that there was discussion on whether the American military could disrupt communications to stop Colonel Qaddafi from broadcasting in Libya. In addition, the administration was looking at whether the military could be used to set up a corridor in neighboring Tunisia or Egypt to assist refugees.<sup>79</sup> Incidentally, India has supported the UNSC resolution against Libya.

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<sup>78</sup> "Bahrain protesters block parliament", *Arab News*, February 28, 2011 at <http://arabnews.com/middleeast/article290255.ece>

<sup>79</sup> "U.S. and Allies Weigh Libya No – Fly Zone", *The New York Times*, February 27, 2011 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/world/europe/28military.html>