

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

### A. South Asia

#### Afghanistan

(February 6-12)

- **Seven people killed in car bomb attack on the Southern Afghan city of Kandahar; US Admiral Bill McRaven: Special operations forces in Afghanistan are preparing for a possible expanded role as American forces begin to withdraw after a decade of war**

According to reports, seven people were killed in a suicide car bomb attack on police headquarters in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on February 5, 2012. Three policemen and four civilians died in the blast in the car park, the ministry said in a statement, while nine other people were injured.<sup>1</sup>

In another development, according to reports, a US admiral Adm. Bill McRaven has said that special operations forces in Afghanistan are preparing for a possible expanded role as American forces begin to withdraw after a decade of war. Adm. McRaven, the special operations commander who led last year's Navy commando raid against Osama bin Laden, confirmed special operations forces would be the last to leave under the Obama administration's current plan, and that the Pentagon is considering handing more of the Afghan war responsibility over to a senior special operations officer as part of that evolution. He said special operations would combine targeting and training operations this summer to prepare for a smaller overall US footprint, however, he stressed that no final decisions had been made.<sup>2</sup>

#### Pakistan

(February 6-12)

- **Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar: Pakistan would be willing to push the Afghan militant groups like the Haqqani network and the Taliban to make peace if asked to do so by the Afghan government; Pakistan and Qatar to collaborate on energy and trade; Pakistan and Russia agreed to enhance cooperation in trade and energy and people-to-people contacts**

According to reports, Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar has said that Pakistan would be willing to push the Afghan militant groups like the Haqqani network and the Taliban to

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<sup>1</sup> "Seven dead in attack on Afghan police building: official", *Dawn*, February 5, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/02/05/seven-dead-in-attack-on-afghan-police-building-official.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Afghan special operations to expand: US Admiral", *Dawn*, February 7, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/02/07/afghan-special-operations-to-expand-us-admiral.html>

make peace if asked to do so by the Afghan government, an action seen as key to the reconciliation process. Ms Khar was speaking to reporters after a trip to Kabul. She said “lots of ill will” between the two countries, whose ties have been strained in recent months, had faded. She pointed out that Pakistan’s role is vital because Taliban leaders are thought to be based in the country. But there are also limits to what Islamabad can accomplish since the Taliban have been difficult to control and are wary of Pakistani influence. The peace process has picked up momentum in recent months with the Taliban’s decision to set up a political office in Qatar to facilitate negotiations. But progress has been limited, hampered by distrust between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In another development, according to reports, Pakistan and Qatar have agreed to collaborate in diverse areas mainly energy, trade, agriculture and infrastructure development. Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabar Al Thani discussed ways to further promote trade and investment ties compatible to their bilateral relations in a meeting held at the Amiri Diwan – the office of Qatar’s Prime Minister. The two sides discussed diverse issues, including joint development of hydropower sector, identification of sources of financing, exploration of investment opportunities in energy sector, rehabilitation of existing hydropower plants and infrastructure development.<sup>4</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, Pakistan and Russia have agreed on to enhance cooperation in trade and energy and people-to-people contacts. Addressing a press conference along with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said that various aspects of improving cooperation had been discussed during her meeting with Lavrov. Khar is on a four-day visit to the Russian Federation at the invitation of her Russian counterpart. The foreign ministers exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and means of enhancing cooperation in energy, infrastructure development, agriculture and science and technology.<sup>5</sup>

## Bangladesh

- **India agrees to nearly double the annual maintenance fees it pays to Bangladesh for using waterways facilities; US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake emphasises increased engagement of Bangladesh with Afghanistan; Bangladesh seeks Thai support in becoming member of ASEM**

According to reports, India has agreed to nearly double the annual maintenance fees it pays to Bangladesh for using waterways facilities under a protocol between the two countries. Currently, India pays Tk 5.50 crore in fees. New Delhi’s consent to raise the fees to Tk 10 crore came at a

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<sup>3</sup> “Haqqani network may enter talks: Khar”, *Dawn*, February 3, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/02/03/haqqani-network-may-enter-talks-khar.html>

<sup>4</sup> “Pakistan, Qatar agree on cooperation in energy and trade”, *Dawn*, February 6, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/02/06/pakistan-qatar-agree-on-cooperation-in-energy-and-trade.html>

<sup>5</sup> “Accord with Russia to boost trade”, *Dawn*, February 9, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/02/09/accord-reached-with-russia-to-boost-trade.html>

meeting between officials of the two sides in Dhaka on February 13, 2012. The decision will be finalised at the secretary-level meeting on renewal of the waterways protocol within next month.<sup>6</sup>

In another development, according to reports, US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake has emphasised increased engagement of Bangladesh with Afghanistan as that would be very helpful for the ongoing reconstruction process in Afghanistan. He made these remarks when he called on Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at her office on February 16, 2012.<sup>7</sup>

In other developments, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Dipu Moni sought Thai support in Bangladesh's initiatives in becoming a member of Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM). She urged this when the outgoing Thai Ambassador Tasanawadee Miancharoen paid a farewell call on her at her office.<sup>8</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **President Rajapaksa visits Singapore; Japanese grant to improve healthcare services in Sri Lanka; Sri Lankan Army appoints a court of inquiry; Iran ensures uninterrupted oil supply to Sri Lanka at reasonable price**

According to reports, President Mahinda Rajapaksa undertook a state visit to Singapore from 15 - 17 February, 2012, at the invitation of President of Singapore Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam. During his visit to Singapore, President Rajapaksa held talks with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. A memorandum of understanding on investment cooperation between the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka and the Singapore Business Federation was signed during President's visit.<sup>9</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the Government of Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has agreed to grant Sri Lanka approximately US\$ 33 million to improve healthcare services in the country.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, Sri Lanka Army has appointed a Court of Inquiry (COI) to probe the allegations of civilian casualties noted in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report and in the Britain's Channel-4 video footage regardless of its authenticity. The Army Commander Lieutenant General Jagath Jayasuriya has appointed the

<sup>6</sup> Byron, Rejaul Karim, "Waterways Protocol: India agrees to double upkeep fee", *The Daily Star*, February 14, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=222363>

<sup>7</sup> "Afghanistan Reconstruction: Blake for Bangladesh's engagement", *The Daily Star*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=222734>

<sup>8</sup> "Dipu Moni seeks Thai support", *The Daily Star*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=222810>

<sup>9</sup> "President to visit Singapore", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, February 14, 2012 at [http://www.priu.gov.lk/news\\_update/Current\\_Affairs/ca201202/20120214president\\_visit\\_singapore.htm](http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201202/20120214president_visit_singapore.htm)

<sup>10</sup> "Japan grants US\$ 33 million to improve healthcare", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, February 15, 2012 at [http://www.priu.gov.lk/news\\_update/Current\\_Affairs/ca201202/20120215japan\\_grants\\_improve\\_healthcare.htm](http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201202/20120215japan_grants_improve_healthcare.htm)

five-member Court of Inquiry chaired by Major General Chrishantha De Silva, the present Commander of the Security Forces Headquarters, Kilinochchi.<sup>11</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, Iran said that regardless of various threats and pressures being applied by America, it would ensure that Sri Lanka gets an uninterrupted oil supply at reasonable prices.<sup>12</sup>

## Maldives

- **Indian Foreign Secretary visits Maldives; US working closely with India to resolve the political crisis in the Maldives; Commonwealth Ministerial Mission visits Maldives; China makes its first official statement regarding the recent political development in Maldives; President Waheed met EU delegation and Inter Parliamentary Union's Director of Programmes**

Reports noted that new Maldives President Dr Mohamed Waheed met with Indian Foreign Secretary Shri Ranjan Mathai on February 15, 2012 at the President's Office. The President briefed the Foreign Secretary on measures being taken to find an amicable solution to the political problem.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States has said that it is "working closely with India" to resolve the political crisis in the Maldives. "Our understanding is that we are pretty well in lockstep with India in terms of calling for unity and calling for a democratic, peaceful path forward," said State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake recently travelled to the Maldives to assess the situation.<sup>14</sup>

In another development, according to reports, a Commonwealth ministerial mission visited Maldives capital, Malé, to gain a better understanding of recent events. The ministerial mission was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Communications of Trinidad and Tobago, Surujrattan Rambachan. He is accompanied by Dr Dipu Moni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, and Dennis Richardson AO, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia.<sup>15</sup>

According to reports, nearly one week later after the dramatic regime change in the Maldives, China made its first official statement regarding policies towards the new government on

<sup>11</sup> "Army appoints Court of Inquiry to probe war crime allegations", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, February 16, 2012 at [http://www.priu.gov.lk/news\\_update/Current\\_Affairs/ca201202/20120216army\\_appoints\\_court\\_inquiry.htm](http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201202/20120216army_appoints_court_inquiry.htm).

<sup>12</sup> Jabbar, Zacki, "Iran assures SLoF oil supply despite US threats", *The Island*, February 13, 2012 at [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=45217](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=45217)

<sup>13</sup> "President meets Indian Foreign Secretary", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=6812>.

<sup>14</sup> "US "working closely" with India to resolve political crisis", *Minivan News*, February 18, 2012 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>

<sup>15</sup> "Commonwealth ministerial mission arrives in Maldives", *Minivan News*, February 18, 2012 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>



February 13. “As a friendly neighbor of the Maldives, China respects the Maldivian people’s independent choice, and sincerely hopes that the country can realise national stability, social harmony and economic development at an early date,” China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Weiming said in Beijing.<sup>16</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, President Dr Mohamed Waheed met with the delegates from European Union on February 13, 2012 at the President’s Office. Discussions at the meeting were focused on the current political climate in the country.<sup>17</sup> President Dr Mohamed Waheed also met with Mr Martine Chungong, Inter Parliamentary Union’s Director of Programmes. Explaining the purpose of his visit, Mr Chungong said his visit was to gather information on the current situation and to identify ways the IPU could assist the Maldives.<sup>18</sup>

## B. East Asia

### South East Asia

- **Vietnam- China to boost diplomatic exchanges; Bomb blasts rock Thailand; Thai opposition warns of the situation in Southern Thailand; India appreciates reforms in Myanmar; EU begins lifting sanctions imposed on Myanmar**

According to reports, during the three-day visit of the Vietnamese foreign minister, Vietnam and China agreed to promote high- level diplomatic exchanges. His visit started on February 12 at the invitation of Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi. On the boundary issue they appreciated the developments on the matter. They also agreed to urge the relevant agencies to work on inking an agreement to facilitate free travel of ships at the Bac Luan river and tap its tourism and resource potential.<sup>19</sup>

In another development, according to reports, on February 14, 2012, three bomb blasts rock the Thai capital Bangkok. The bomb blasts were targeted at foreign nationals. The blasts injured five people including one of the bomb suspects, who also got bruised in the incident. Apparently, just a day before the Bangkok blast, similar attacks happened in India and Georgia also. It is widely believed that these attacks are connected in some ways, probably in terms of the agencies involved in the incident.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “China respects Maldivians’ “independent choice” following transfer of power”, *Minivan News*, February 14, 2012 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>

<sup>17</sup> “President meets EU Mission”, *The President’s Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 13, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=6783>.

<sup>18</sup> “President meets IPU Director of Programmes”, *The President’s Office, Republic of Maldives*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=6813>.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Vietnam, China boost diplomatic exchanges’, *Saigon Daily*, 13 February 2012 at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/en/politics/18745/vietnam—china-boost-diplomatic-exchanges.html>

<sup>20</sup> ‘Three bomb blasts rock city’, *Bangkok Post*, 15 February 2012, <http://www.saigon-gpdaily.com.vn/National/2012/2/99764/> <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/279849/three-bomb-blasts-rock-city>

Meanwhile, according to reports, showing concerns about the ongoing situation in Southern Thailand, the leader of opposition Abhisit Vejjajiva, on 13 February 2012, said that the government should be more consistent in its policy on the turbulent region. He criticized the Shinawatra government for not keeping the promise of providing compensation to the victims. He added that the government appointed committee had agreed to pay up to 7.5 million baht in compensation for the casualties in Southern Thailand during the past eight years. He added that cabinet's indecision on the resolution has led to confusion and might aggravate the situation by creating discontent.<sup>21</sup>

According to reports, the Indian foreign secretary Ranjan Mathai on 14 February 2012 said that the ongoing reforms in Myanmar have been seen positively. He added that the new path taken by the Thein Sein government would help strengthen ties between the two countries. That, he opined, would also help in increasing the Indian investment in Myanmar.<sup>22</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, the European Union lifted travel sanctions against Myanmar President Thein Sein and other top officials on February 17, 2012. It is widely believed that by April this year, the EU as an organization and its member countries individually, will review their sanctions policy towards Myanmar. That would, of course, depend on the outcome of the by-elections due in April 2012.<sup>23</sup>

## C. Central Asia

- **Berdimuhamedov sworn in as Turkmen president for second time; Turkmenistan forges deal with Russia for T-90C war tanks; Atambayev to seek compensation from Kremlin for Kyrgyz military facilities; Kyrgyz republic to sharply reduce its external debts; Uzbek and Indian telecom firms sign joint venture agreement; Kazakhstan ready to provide nuclear fuel to India; Tajik-Uzbek governments resume talks on border issues**

According to reports, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the incumbent president, who won the Turkmen presidential election of 12 February, 2012 with landslide support of more than 97% of the vote wherein 96.28 % of the voting population polled.<sup>24</sup> This is the second term for Berdimuhamedov who took over from President Saparmurat Niyazov in 2006. Although there were officially seven candidates challenging, the reality was that his opponents are all government officials, endorsing his leadership.<sup>25</sup> He was sworn in as Turkmenistan's president on February 17, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> 'Abhisit warns South conflict is escalating', *Bangkok Post*, 14 February 2012, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/279687/abhisit-warns-south-conflict-is-escalating>

<sup>22</sup> 'India says Myanmar's democratic path will strengthen bilateral ties', 15 February 2012, *The Economic Times*

<sup>23</sup> 'EU starts lifting Myanmar sanctions, rewards reforms', *The Star*, 17 February 2012, [http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/2/17/worldupdates/2012-02-17T125844Z\\_1\\_TRE81G0QD\\_RTROPTT\\_0\\_UK-EU-MYANMAR&sec=Worldupdates](http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/2/17/worldupdates/2012-02-17T125844Z_1_TRE81G0QD_RTROPTT_0_UK-EU-MYANMAR&sec=Worldupdates)

<sup>24</sup> "Berdimuhamedov retains Turkmen leadership in show election", *Universal Newswires*, February 13, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/turkmenistan/viewstory.aspx?id=11362>

<sup>25</sup> "Turkmenistan holds presidential election", *The Telegraph*, February 12, 2012 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/turkmenistan/9077486/Turkmenistan-holds-presidential-election.html>



In the meanwhile, according to reports, Turkmenistan forged a deal last summer to acquire 30 T-90C war tanks from Russia, the Moscow-based newspaper Vedomosti revealed on February 14, 2012, while the Kazakh government is currently negotiating the purchase of T-90s from Rosoboronexport.<sup>26</sup>

According to reports, President Almazbek Atambayev has said, in his speech at Osh University that he will seek compensation due from the Kremlin, during his upcoming visit to Moscow.<sup>27</sup> During his speech he also highlighted that Kyrgyzstan must overcome the obstacles of corruption and nationalism, 'mankurtism' – or the russification of Kyrgyz elites and also warned of the dangers of nationalism in the unstable state.<sup>28</sup>

According to reports, Uzbekistan's national telecom operator Uzbektelecom signed a joint venture agreement with Indian firm OliveTelecommunication to assemble smart phones and related high-tech products.<sup>29</sup> Also Uzbek media reported last week that negotiations between upper-level Uzbek officials and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have resulted in a \$508 million agreement in loans – to electrify Uzbek railroads and support the development of urban housing.<sup>30</sup> In preparation to the imminent 2014 pullout of U.S. and NATO forces, the U.S. and Uzbek governments recently held talks on how to further limit the spread of Afghan drugs throughout Central Asia and emphasized the need to create a reliable shield against drug trafficking from Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup>

Reports noted that Kazakh Ambassador to India, Doulat Kuanyshev has said recently that Kazakhstan is ready to provide India, one of the world's fastest growing economies, with greater amounts of nuclear fuel for its civilian power stations.<sup>32</sup> Kazakhstan's atomic power company Kazatomprom has an agreement running to 2014 to provide uranium to the Nuclear Power Corporation of India wherein the former will deliver its next batch of fuel for India's nuclear power plants in 2013.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> "Turkmenistan buys 30 Russian tanks in secret deal", *Universal Newswires*, February 14, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kazakhstan/viewstory.aspx?id=11375>

<sup>27</sup> "Atambayev to demand Kremlin pay military base rents", *Universal Newswires*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11411>

<sup>28</sup> "Atambayev declares 'merciless war' on corruption", *Universal Newswires*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=11405>

<sup>29</sup> "Uzbektelecom, Indian firm launch JV for smartphone production", *Universal Newswires*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11409>

<sup>30</sup> "ADB confirms \$500M in loans to Uzbekistan", *Universal Newswires*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11415>

<sup>31</sup> "US, Uzbekistan discuss Afghan drug trafficking", *Universal Newswires*, February 20, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11425>

<sup>32</sup> "India can benefit from closer nuclear ties, Kazakh diplomat says", *Universal Newswires*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kazakhstan/viewstory.aspx?id=11400>

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*

In other developments, representatives from the Tajik and Uzbek governments this week, will resume talks on contentious border issues after a three-year break. Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov will lead a delegation to Dushanbe for negotiations on the delimitation and demarcation of disputed stretches of their 700-mile border.<sup>34</sup> The Tajik delegation will be headed by Tajik Secretary of the Security Council, Abdulrahim Kakhkharov.

## D. West Asia

### Iran

- **Israel warns Iran for attacks in Delhi, Bangkok and Georgia; Loyalists of Khamenei look set to triumph in Iran's parliamentary elections; Ahmadinejad visits Pakistan**

According to reports, Israeli official stated that Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia are planning to carry out new anti-Israeli attacks around the world. Israel has been on high alert following bomb incidents in India, Thailand and Georgia. Top Israeli officials have openly accused Iran of being responsible and have also implicated Iran's Lebanese Shiite ally Hezbollah in several other foiled attempts to harm Israelis in Thailand and Azerbaijan since the start of the year. Thailand has arrested two Iranians in connection with a series of blasts in Bangkok earlier this week, and police said they are looking for an Iranian woman who is thought to have fled the kingdom. Official also reiterated that Egypt's Sinai Peninsula was still considered to be the "the most exposed place" for Israelis and cautioned against travel there.<sup>35</sup>

In another development, according to reports, loyalists of Iran's supreme leader, who is implacably hostile to the West and its drive to curb Tehran's nuclear work, look set to triumph in Iran's parliamentary poll at the expense of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a contest among hardliners. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei turned against the man he backed in a disputed presidential vote in 2009 after Ahmadinejad challenged his authority over top government posts. But Khamenei remains in the driving seat and the outcome of the March 2 election is unlikely alter Iran's defiance of the West over its nuclear programme, despite ever harsher sanctions and the possibility of an eventual military confrontation. An alliance of clerics, elite Revolutionary Guards and influential bazaar merchants has made sure many pro-Ahmadinejad politicians cannot register to run for the assembly. The Guardian Council has barred many Ahmadinejad supporters, forcing him to pick younger political unknowns. "They had no public link to Ahmadinejad's camp, but the Council was wise enough to spot them and around 45 percent of his supporters have been disqualified," said one official involved in the

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<sup>34</sup> "Tajik-Uzbek frontier talks resume after 3-year break", *Universal Newswires*, February 20, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11423>

<sup>35</sup> "Iran, Hezbollah plotting new anti-Israeli attacks," *Khaleej Times*, February 17, 2012, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.aspx?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast\\_February525.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.aspx?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast_February525.xml&section=middleeast)

multi-layered vetting process. Meanwhile, a list of qualified candidates will be announced on February 21.<sup>36</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, President Ahmadinejad who is on a tour of Pakistan, has offered to boost bilateral trade with Islamabad to \$10 billion within two months. The offer came as Islamabad is hosting a trilateral summit involving the presidents of the three neighbouring countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Iranian president held separate meetings with Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. President Zardari stressed the need for enhancing economic cooperation with Iran and make joint efforts to promote regional peace and security. Zardari proposed encouraging barter and trading in local currencies besides removing tariff and non-tariff barriers.<sup>37</sup>

## Iraq

### ● At least twenty people killed in suicide bombing in Iraqi Police Academy in Baghdad

According to reports, a suicide bomber detonated his car as a group of police recruits left their academy in Baghdad, killing 20 in the latest strike on security officials. Police said the suicide bomber was waiting on the street outside the fortified academy near the Interior Ministry headquarters in an eastern neighborhood in the Iraqi capital. As the crowd of recruits exited the compound's security barriers and walked into the road, the bomber drove toward them and blew up his car. Five policemen were among the dead; the rest were recruits. Another 28 recruits and policemen were wounded. Iraq's police are generally considered to be the weakest element of the country's security forces, which are attacked in bombings and drive-by shooting almost every day. The last big assault on police came in October, when 25 people were killed in a string of attacks that included two bombers slamming explosives-packed cars into police stations. Shiite lawmaker Hakim al-Zamili, who sits on parliament's security and defense committee, said the academy's officials should have been more careful about letting the recruits go at the same time every day. He said that was a pattern that insurgents easily noted. Al-Zamili blamed al-Qaida for launching the attack.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Ahmadinejad seen big loser in Iran election," *Khaleej Times*, February, 17, 2012, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast\\_February522.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast_February522.xml&section=middleeast)

<sup>37</sup> "Iran-Pakistan trade can reach \$10 billion: Ahmadinejad," *Mehr News*, February 17, 2012, at <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1536167>

<sup>38</sup> "20 people killed in Iraqi police academy blast," *Khaleej Times*, February 19, 2012, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle11.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast\\_February559.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle11.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/February/middleeast_February559.xml&section=middleeast)

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

### Jammu & Kashmir

- **Khanyar police station in North Kashmir attacked; Home Minister P. Chidambaram claims Country's security as a joint responsibility; Jammu and Kashmir joins opposed groups on NCTC; Youth shot dead in Sopore, North Kashmir**

According to reports, unknown persons hurled a grenade at Khanyar police station in old city. According to Superintendent of Police North, Showkat Shah the device was hurled towards the police station but it exploded with a bang near the gate. However, no one was injured in the attack. This is the first attack on police in Srinagar city this year.<sup>39</sup>

In another development, according to reports, faced with strong opposition from non-Congress Chief Ministers over setting up of an anti-terror body, the Centre reached out to the states saying security of the country is a shared responsibility and without coordination among States the war against terror cannot be won. Inaugurating an NSG hub in Badu, about 50 kms from Kolkata, Home Minister P Chidambaram said the Constitution assigns law and order to the State government and also to the Centre to protect the country against external aggression or internal disturbance.<sup>40</sup>

Reports noted that while Jammu and Kashmir Government has maintained conspicuous silence over the proposed setting of the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC), the political parties of the state have joined chorus against the formation of the powerful "anti-terror" agency with some legal experts saying that the agency will have also jurisdiction here as the Central Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)-1967 is also in force in the state.<sup>41</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, unidentified gunmen shot dead a youth in the Sopore town of north Kashmir. A police officer said the gunmen fired upon Umar Rasool Kaboo, 20, near Arampora. Kaboo was rushed to the hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. The gunmen managed to escape after carrying out the attack.<sup>42</sup>

### North East India

- **Former Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai remarks that the Centre is unlikely to accede to Garoland; NDFB (P) urges Centre to expedite talks; Ban on Manipur rail project lifted**

<sup>39</sup> "Khanyar Police Station attacked", *Greater Kashmir*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Feb/17/khanyar-police-station-attacked-54.asp>

<sup>40</sup> "Country's security a joint responsibility: Chidambaram", *Greater Kashmir*, February 18, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Feb/19/country-s-security-a-joint-responsibility-chidambaram-44.asp>

<sup>41</sup> "JK joins anti-NCTC chorus", *Greater Kashmir*, February 19, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Feb/20/jk-joins-anti-nctc-chorus-41.asp>

<sup>42</sup> "Youth shot dead", *Greater Kashmir*, February 19, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Feb/20/youth-shot-dead-46.asp>

### **temporarily; Manipuri militant arrested in Guwahati, Assam; NLFT leader nabbed in Bangladesh**

According to former Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai, the Central government was unlikely to accede to the Garo National Liberation Army's (GNLA) demand for a separate state for Garo tribals in western part of Meghalaya. The GNLA, which is headed by police officer-turned outlaw Champion R. Sangma, is fighting for Garoland in the three impoverished districts of Garo Hills to be carved out of Meghalaya.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, upset with the slow progress of political dialogue, NDFB (P) has urged the Centre to expedite the ongoing peace talks. A delegation of the Bodo militant outfit led by its general secretary Govinda Basumatary called on Joint Secretary (North-east), Shambhu Singh to urge to him to speed up the pace of the political negotiations. The NDFB (P) has also expressed its wish to meet Union Home Minister, P Chidambaram. The NDFB (P) Delhi tour comes in the backdrop of news report that some cadres of the NDFB (P) had deserted the organisation's designated camps with arms recently. The NDFB (P) has described the reports as false and baseless without any substance. The cadres of the NDFB (P) are very much comfortably huddled in three designated camps waiting patiently the positive gesture of the Government of India.<sup>44</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the construction work of the Rs 2,492 crore Manipur railway line is likely to be resumed tomorrow following a temporary suspension of the ban on its construction. The United Naga Council (UNC) had banned the construction works on the railway project in protest against the alleged lack of political will on the part of the government to address the demand for an alternative arrangement for the Nagas in Manipur. The UNC, however, decided to temporarily suspend the ban on construction work on the Trans-Asian Railway line after lapse of the specified two months period ending February 15.<sup>45</sup>

Reports noted that Police have arrested a member of the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) from a rented house at Lachit Nagar area of Guwahati. The cadre, identified as Yumlembam Inao Singh, is the publicity secretary of the KCP, a militant outfit based in Manipur. Police said that some incriminating documents and photographs were recovered from his possession. Police said that the cadre was arrested during a joint operation carried out by army intelligence, CRPF, Manipur police and Guwahati police.<sup>46</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, Bangladesh Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has arrested one of the top rebel leaders of National Liberation Front of Tripura from Khagaracherri.

<sup>43</sup> "Centre unlikely to accede to Garoland, says G.K. Pillai", *The Assam Tribune*, February 14, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1412/at0152>

<sup>44</sup> "NDFB (P) urges Centre to expedite peace talks", *The Assam Tribune*, February 15, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1612/at08>

<sup>45</sup> "Ban on Manipur rail project lifted temporarily", *The Assam Tribune*, February 15, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1612/oth05>

<sup>46</sup> "Manipuri militant nabbed", *The Assam Tribune*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1712/at046>



Based on intelligence inputs from BSF, a team of RAB, special force of Bangladesh carried out a raid at Khagracherri in Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) and apprehended Subir Debbarma, the self-styled vice president of the outfit. Later, he was taken to Dhaka for interrogation. The move assumes significance keeping in mind of Union Home Minister's proposed visit to the State though the visit is aimed at breaking the ice centering Reang refugees.<sup>47</sup>

### III. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **India votes against Syria's Assad regime in UNGA; Mandate of panel of experts on Sudan sanctions extended; Security Council alarmed at malnutrition levels in Sudan; Security Council delegation visits Haiti; UN General Assembly president meets Indian PM; India discusses post-2020 climate regime with BASIC counterparts**

According to reports, India was among the 137 nations that voted in favour of a UN general Assembly draft resolution that urged the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down. The resolution backed by the Arab League condemned human rights violations and called for an end to the violence. Russia and China were among the 12 nations that voted against the resolution. While condemning the wide-spread violations of human rights in the nation, the resolution also expressed full support to the League's plan of halting the crackdown on anti-Assad demonstrators and urged the UN Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy to Syria.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, the mandate of the panel of experts monitoring sanctions imposed on Sudan related to the Darfur conflict was extended by the UN Security Council for another year. The extension was due to the violence perpetrated by individuals associated with the Government against civilians and for impeding the peace process.<sup>49</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the Security Council expressed alarm at the rising levels of malnutrition and food shortages in parts of Sothern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Sudan which could deteriorate further if access is denied to international humanitarian aid. The 15-member body also called on the Sudanese government to give UN humanitarian personnel immediate access to the affected areas. It also encouraged the UN to strengthen engagement with the African Union (AU) and League of Arab States to address the humanitarian crisis. The Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North were urged to resume peace talks to address conflictual issues.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "NLFT top leader nabbed in Bangladesh", *The Assam Tribune*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1812/oth06>

<sup>48</sup> "India votes in favour of UN resolution on Syria", *IBNLive*, February 17, 2012 at <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/india-votes-in-favour-of-un-resolution-on-syria/230985-2.html>

<sup>49</sup> "Sudan: Security Council extends mandate of panel on Darfur-related sanctions", *UN News Centre*, February 17, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41279&Cr=darfur&Cr1=>

<sup>50</sup> "Sudan: Security Council alarmed by humanitarian crisis in conflict-hit states", *UN News Centre*, February 14, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41237&Cr=sudan&Cr1=>



In the interim, reports noted that a Security Council delegation went on a four-day visit to Haiti, a country that has begun its transition towards reconstruction, job creation and capacity building post the 2010 devastating earthquake. The delegation assessed the implementation of relevant resolutions concerning MINUSTAH, the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti and to also discuss the situation in the country with the stakeholders.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, in his official visit to India, UN General Assembly President, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser discussed reform and revitalization of the UN with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. Other issues that were discussed included the forthcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), developments in Syria and state of world economy.<sup>52</sup>

In other development, reports noted that as the world negotiates a post-2020 climate regime, India took a clear stand on 'equity' and the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. The prime Minister also said that India would work closely with the BASIC countries and group of 77+China. The meeting of the four BASIC countries was crucial as all of them are expected to submit their notes to the UN on how talks under the 'Durban Platform' for the post-2020 climate regime should be framed.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "Security Council ambassadors begin official visit to Haiti", *UN News Centre*, February 13, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41226&Cr=haiti&Cr1=>

<sup>52</sup> "General Assembly President discusses global issues with Indian Prime Minister", *UN News Centre*, February 16, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41266&Cr=nasser&Cr1=>

<sup>53</sup> "Equity remains central plank of Indian climate stance: PM", *The Times of India*, February 17, 2012 at [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-17/developmental-issues/31070614\\_1\\_durban-platform-climate-talks-targets-for-emission-reductions](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-17/developmental-issues/31070614_1_durban-platform-climate-talks-targets-for-emission-reductions)