

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

March 19-25, 3(4), 2012

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

- **President Karzai: International community will subsidise Afghan security forces by more than \$4 billion a year for a decade after end of combat mission in Afghanistan in 2014; Kandahar massacre victims receive compensation from U.S. authorities**

According to reports, on March 22, 2012, President Hamid Karzai said that the international community will subsidise Afghan security forces by more than \$4 billion a year for a decade after US-led combat forces leave Afghanistan in 2014. Meanwhile, western officials told that no final agreement had been reached.¹

In another development, reports noted that the U.S. authorities have given cash compensation to the families of Afghans killed in a shooting rampage allegedly carried out by an American soldier in Kandahar province, a family member and a tribal elder said. The families received around \$50,000 for each person killed and about \$10,000 for each wounded in the shootings in two villages in Panjwai district earlier this month. Afghan officials say 16 people, including nine children and women, were killed in the attacks.²

Pakistan

- **Pakistan Parliament meets to review Pakistan- US ties; World Bank approves \$1 bn for projects; Pakistan political leaders show support for Iran gas pipeline; Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce: As many as 1209 items have been included in the negative list and would not be importable from India to Pakistan; India proposes natural gas supply to Pakistan**

According to reports, Pakistan parliament will meet on a joint session of National Assembly and Senate on March 20, 2012 to review Pakistan's ties with the United States. This comes after a long wait after the relations have been under strain over killing of Osama and NATO killing of Pakistani soldiers. The outcome of the meeting is anxiously awaited both in Pakistan and the United States because of its potential impact on the US-led war on terror at a time when Washington is preparing to draw down troops fighting Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan.³

Meanwhile, according to reports, the World Bank said on March 20, 2012 that it would fund two projects totaling \$1.09 billion, in energy and irrigation, aimed at supporting Pakistan's growth

¹ "Afghan military to get \$ 4 bn a year subsidy: Karzai", *Dawn*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/22/afghan-military-to-get-4-bn-a-year-subsidy-karzai.html>

² "Afghan gun massacre families paid compensation", *Reuters*, March 25, 2012 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/25/us-afghanistan-shooting-idUSBRE82O0BA20120325>

³ "Joint sitting on US ties begins today", *Dawn*, March 20, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/20/joint-sitting-on-us-ties-begins-today.html>

agenda for reducing poverty. The World Bank's executive board approved the projects, the development lender said in a statement. The \$840 million Tarbela IV Extension Hydropower Project will add power generation capacity of 1,410 megawatts, contributing a crucial source of electricity for the economic growth and development of Pakistan, the World Bank said. The Bank noted that only 15 per cent of Pakistan's vast hydropower potential has been developed.⁴

In another development, Pakistani government leaders and senior opposition figures have urged the government to implement the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, saying the project is a must for the country's energy requirements. "We should go ahead with the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project", he said to a question. Answering a query about the pressure on Iran's peaceful nuclear programme the governor said, 'If the west can have nuclear technology then why not Iran.' Pakistan's Defense Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar speaking to IRNA said 'We have very strong relations with Iran and we are trying to take our relations at the highest level.'⁵

According to reports, Pakistan's ministry of commerce said on March 21, 2012 that it has issued the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) for switching over to negative list regime to trade with India. According to the notification as many as 1209 items have been included in the negative list and would not be importable from India to Pakistan. Talking to APP, an official in the ministry said, of total importable items from India under the SRO, 137 items would be importable from India to Pakistan through land route from Wahgah.⁶

In other developments, according to reports, India's state owned oil and gas company GAIL has offered Pakistan a deal to import natural gas from India at a time when Pakistan is going through a gas crisis. GAIL proposing to extend to Lahore a natural gas pipeline it has recently installed from the west coast to Bhatinda in Indian Punjab, sources told Times of India. Bhatinda is around 25-km away from the India-Pakistan border. The company has plans to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) at one of its import terminals in Gujrat move this gas through the Dahej-Vijaipu - Dadri-Bawana-Nangal-Bhatinda pipeline to Punjab and then into Pakistan. According to a State Bank of Pakistan report from last year, Pakistan may experience its worst gas crisis in 2016 when the deficit is expected to hit 3.021 bcfd (billion cubic feet per day) as supply-demand gap increases.⁷

Bangladesh

- **PM Hasina to India: "Include Bangladeshi experts in any study group on the proposed Tipaimukh dam Project"; Bangladesh Railway inked a Tk 60-crore deal with Indian company; ruled out any possibility of withdrawing Bangladesh's maritime boundary case against India; Chief of Air Staff of India meets President Zillur Rahman; Coordinated**

⁴ "World Bank approves \$1bn for projects in Pakistan", *Dawn*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/21/world-bank-approves-1-bn-for-projects-in-pakistan.html>

⁵ "Political leaders voice support for Iran-Pakistan gas project", *March* 21, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/21/pakistani-leaders-support-iran-pakistan-gas-project.html>

⁶ "Pakistan switches over to negative list regime for India trade", *Dawn*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/21/pakistan-switches-over-to-negative-list-regime-for-india-trade.html>

⁷ "India offers to supply natural gas to Pakistan", *Dawn*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.dawn.com/2012/03/22/india-offers-to-supply-natural-gas-to-pakistan.html>

border management plan between India and Bangladesh; Dipu Moni on five day visit to Saudi Arabia

According to reports, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked India to conclude the water-sharing treaty over Teesta river and include Bangladeshi experts in any study group on the proposed Tipaimukh dam project. She also urged India to reciprocate with the steps taken by Bangladesh for improving relations between the two neighbouring countries.⁸

Meanwhile, reports noted that Bangladesh Railway inked a Tk 60-crore deal with Indian company Texmaco Rail and Engineering Ltd on March 18, 2012 to purchase 81 broad-gauge oil tank wagons and three brake vans in 12 months. Additional Director General (Rolling Stock) of Bangladesh Railway Md Khalilur Rahman and Vice President of Taxmaco P Guha signed the agreement at Railway Bhaban in the city. This is the fourth contract signed under a project of India's \$1 billion credit to Bangladesh.⁹

According to reports, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni ruled out any possibility of withdrawing Bangladesh's maritime boundary case against India, but said bilateral negotiations could take place alongside the arbitration on the basis of the principles set by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).¹⁰

Reports noted that Air Chief Marshal NAK Browne, the chief of Air Staff of India, called on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban in the city.¹¹

According to reports, India and Bangladesh have put in place mechanisms, including a coordinated border management plan, to address the issue of illegal migration and enhance cooperation between border guarding forces, Indian government told the Rajya Sabha on March 22, 2012.¹²

In other developments, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, went to Saudi Arabia on March 20, 2012 for a five-day official visit.¹³

Sri Lanka

- **The United States sponsored resolution on Sri Lanka adopted at the 19th session of UNHRC; Indian PM Manmohan Singh writes to Mahinda Rajapaksa; US eases restrictions on defence**

⁸ "PM pushes for Teesta water deal: Asks India to involve Bangladeshi experts in Tipaimukh study", *The Daily Star*, March 19, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=226857>.

⁹ "Bangladesh Railway signs Tk 60cr deal with Indian firm", *The Daily Star*, March 19, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=226828>.

¹⁰ "Sea Limit with India: Arbitration with UN to continue", *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=227029>.

¹¹ "Indian air chief meets president", *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=226969>.

¹² Bhattacharya, Pallab, "Mechanisms in place to address illegal migration: India", *The Daily Star*, March 23, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=227438>.

¹³ "Dipu Moni reaches Saudi Arabia", *The Daily Star*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=227137>.

sales to Sri Lanka; Japan extends US\$ 93,177 in grant aid to Sri Lanka; Saudi Kingdom offers financial aid worth SR225 million for the upgrading of road networks in Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka inks agreement with Oman to buy oil; Sri Lanka donates 10,000 metric tons of rice to Ethiopia; Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee was on Sri Lanka on five day official visit

In an important development, the United States sponsored resolution on Sri Lanka was adopted at the 19th session of United Nations Human Rights Council on March 22, 2012. Twenty Four countries including India voted for the resolution while fifteen voted against including Sri Lanka. Eight members abstained from voting. The resolution tabled by the US calling for the speedy implementation of the recommendations made by Sri Lanka's domestic Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and the investigation of the allegations of international humanitarian law violations. Ambassador Tamara Kunanayakam addressing the Council at the conclusion of the 19th session of UNHRC said the resolution "reflects a blatant case of politicization that takes the Council hostage to the hidden agendas of the mighty."¹⁴

Meanwhile, in a gesture of peace and friendship with its closest neighbor, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on March 24, 2012 explaining India's decision to support the United States-sponsored resolution against Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council.¹⁵

According to reports, the US announced that it has eased restrictions on defense sales to Sri Lanka to allow exports of equipment for aerial and maritime surveillance. The State Department enacted the changes with effect from March 22, 2012. The new exceptions allow exports, on a case-by-case basis, of equipment such as, light aircraft, cameras, and related components.¹⁶

In another development, the Government of Japan has extended US\$ 93,177 in grant aid to Sri Lanka for a project to improve agriculture activities in the North Central Province. The aid given under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects scheme (GGP) is to be used for the rehabilitation of the Weliwewa Tank in Mihinthale Divisional Secretary Division of Anuradhapura district. Rajarata Janasahana Foundation will implement the project, which aims to improve agricultural activities and livelihood of approximately 300 families who are engaging in agriculture around the area.¹⁷

In a similar development, the Saudi Kingdom has offered financial aid worth SR225 million for the upgrading of road networks in Sri Lanka. The draft agreement for the financial assistance was finalized in Riyadh on March 19, 2012 during a meeting between the Vice Chairman of the

¹⁴ "Sri Lanka warns US resolution against country sets a negative precedent at the UNHRC", *Colombo Page*, March 24, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/Mar24_1332601148CH.php.

¹⁵ "Indian PM offers olive branch to Sri Lanka President over the UN resolution", *Colombo Page*, March 24, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/Mar24_1332603535CH.php.

¹⁶ US eases restrictions on defense sales to SL, *Daily Mirror*, March 23, 2012 AT <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/17601-us-eases-restrictions-on-defense-sales-to-sl.html>.

¹⁷ "Japan grants Rs. 12 million to improve agriculture in Sri Lanka", *Colombo page*, March 20, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/Mar20_1332256616CH.php.

Saudi Fund For Development (SFD) Yusuf Al-Bassam and Dr. P.B. Jayasundera, Secretary to the Ministry of Finance and Planning, at the SFD headquarters in Riyadh.¹⁸

According to reports, Sri Lanka, affected by the sanctions imposed by the United State on Iranian oil, has entered into an agreement with Oman to buy oil from that country way ahead of the US deadline.¹⁹

Reports noted that Sri Lanka on March 20, donated 10,000 metric tons of rice to the World Food Programme which will be sent to Ethiopia, where tens of thousands of refugees have fled, after devastating drought contributed to famine in Somalia last year.²⁰

In other developments, according to reports, Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Khalid Shameem Wynne called on President Mahinda Rajapaksa on March 19, 2012 at Temple Trees. General Wynne is in Sri Lanka on a five-day official visit from 18th to 22nd March on the invitation of Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Roshan Goonetilleke.²¹

Maldives

- **EU High Representative stresses on the need to facilitate political reconciliation; Former President Mohamed Nasheed departs to Sri Lanka; MBC to hold meetings with the Indian High Commission in response to reports that Television Maldives has been labelled a threat to Indian national security; UNHRC renews the mandate of Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, for another year**

According to reports, the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton stressed on the importance to facilitate a process that will lead to political reconciliation and democratic elections is agreed at the earliest in Maldives.²²

Meanwhile, according to reports, former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed departed to Sri Lanka on March 22, 2012 on a mission to give information to the international community on "how the Maldives government was changed in a coup" on February 7. This is Nasheed's first trip abroad since his controversial resignation, which the party claims was forced in an opposition backed coup that was aided by rogue security forces.²³

¹⁸ "Saudi offers financial assistance to upgrade road network", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, March 21, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201203/20120321saudi_offers_financial_assistance.htm.

¹⁹ "Sri Lanka to buy oil from Vietnam and Oman", *Colombo Page*, March 23, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/Mar23_1332448537CH.php.

²⁰ "Sri Lanka donates rice to refugees in Horn of Africa", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, March 20, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201203/20120320sl_donates_rice_refugees_horn_africa.htm

²¹ "Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee calls on President", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, March 20, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201203/20120320pakistans_chairman_joint_chiefs_staff_committee.htm.

²² Visham, Mohamed, "The European Union said yesterday that it remains concerned over continued political unrest in the Maldives", *The Heveeru*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/40949>.

²³ "Nasheed departs to Lanka to talk about coup", *Minivan News*, March 22, 2012 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>.

In another development, reports noted that the Maldives Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) is to hold meetings with the Indian High Commission in response to reports that Television Maldives (TVM), the Maldivian state broadcaster, has been labelled a threat to Indian national security on the website indiantelevision.com. According to the website in question, the issue has been filed with the Indian Parliament and relates to the content broadcast on TVM. TVM Chief Executive Mohamed “Mondhu” Asif has denied that the channel broadcasts content that could harm Indian security. It has been alleged that 24 other TV stations were receiving similar treatment from the Indian government.²⁴

In other developments, reports noted that United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has renewed the mandate of Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, for another year.²⁵

B. East Asia

South East Asia

- **China detains Vietnamese fishermen; Bomb blast near Indonesia’s Paris embassy; Myanmar invites countries to observe its April 1 elections; US welcomes the invitation from Myanmar; Myanmar postpones by-elections in restive North; Singapore- Thailand- US trilateral air exercise concluded**

According to reports, On 22 March 2012, China announced that it had detained twenty-one Vietnamese fishermen for illegally fishing in the disputed zones of South China Sea. However, Vietnam claimed that fishermen were detained by China in Vietnamese territory and therefore should be released unconditionally. The fishermen issue has once again flared up the disagreement between China and Vietnam on the South China Sea issue.²⁶

In another development, on 21 March 2012, a bomb exploded outside the Indonesian embassy in Paris. However, no one is reported to have been hurt in the incident. Authorities are yet to find out the motive and the persons involved in the attack.²⁷

Reports noted that Myanmar has invited teams from twenty-five countries and the European Union to monitor the special elections for forth-eight seats in the six-hundred- sixty-four member

²⁴ “MBC to hold talks after TVM appears on list of threats to Indian national security”, *Minivan News*, March 25, 2012 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief>

²⁵ “UN renews Dr Shaheed’s mandate as Iran human rights investigator”, *Haveeru*, March 25, 2012 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/41044>

²⁶ ‘China detains Vietnamese fishermen in disputed South China Sea’, *Times of India*, 22 March, 2012 at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-22/china/31224746_1_luong-thanh-nghi-vietnamese-fishermen-spratly

²⁷ ‘Bomb explodes near Indonesia’s Paris embassy; no casualties’, *DNA India*, 21 March 2011 at http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_bomb-explodes-near-indonesia-s-paris-embassy-no-casualties_1665359

parliament. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki- Moon commended Myanmar's leaders for allowing international election observers and offered assistance to provide a credible outcome.²⁸

Meanwhile, Myanmar government has sent invites for two election representatives and three journalists to be a witness to the 1 April elections in Myanmar. Appreciating Myanmar's steps towards greater political reforms, the US authorities have welcomed the invitation.²⁹

According to reports, due to security concerns, Myanmar authorities have postponed voting in three out of forty-eight constituencies where elections are scheduled for 1 April 2012. All three constituencies are in the Kachin province in northern Myanmar.³⁰

In other developments, according to reports, Exercise Cope Tiger- the annual trilateral air exercise by Singapore, Thailand and the US was concluded on 23 March 2012. The exercise was held from March 12 to March 23, 2012 at the Korat Air Base, Thailand.³¹

China

- **Hu arrives in Seoul for Nuclear Security Summit; Xi stresses stronger ties with Moscow; China hopes to boost China-India ties; China, EU sign deal to enhance resource cooperation; China, Germany to promote military ties; China concerns over DPRK's satellite plans; China's parliament adopts 2012 budget; China's parliament concludes annual session; Wen willing to visit Taiwan after retirement**

Reports noted that Chinese President Hu Jintao reached Seoul for the Nuclear Security Summit. Leaders from more than 50 countries are participating in this Summit.³²

Meanwhile China has announced that it will be working towards boosting relations with Russia. Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping stated this during his meeting with Vladislav Surkov, Russian Deputy Prime Minister.³³

Beijing has also expressed hope that China and India will improve their relations as a result of the meeting of both parties during the upcoming BRICS Summit in New Delhi.³⁴

²⁸ 'Myanmar Invites Nations to Observe By- Elections', *Business Week*, 22 March, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-03-22/u-dot-s-dot-welcomes-myanmar-invite-to-observe-suukyi-by-elections>

²⁹ 'US invited to send observers to Burma's elections', *The Nation*, 22 March 2012, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/US-invited-to-send-observers-to-Burmas-elections-30178501.html>

³⁰ 'Myanmar postpones by-election in restive north', *The Mainichi Daily News*, 24 March, 2012, <http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/international/news/20120324p2g00m0in048000c.html>

³¹ 'S'pore, Thailand and US conclude trilateral air exercise', *Asia One*, 24 March, 2012, <http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20120324-335397.html>

³² "Hu arrives in Seoul for Nuclear Security Summit" *China Daily*, March 25, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/photo/2012-03/25/content_14908256.htm

³³ "Xi stresses stronger ties with Moscow" *China Daily*, March 24, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/24/content_14903275.htm

³⁴ "China hopes to boost China-India ties" *China Daily*, March 22, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/22/content_14890517.htm

Also, China and the European Union have agreed to increase cooperation in water management.³⁵

Chinese Army has announced its desire to boost cooperation with Germany.³⁶

On the other hand, China has expressed grave concern over North Korea's announcement of the launch of a satellite in April 2012.³⁷

In another development, China's parliament the National People's Congress (NPC) adopted the country's budget³⁸ and also concluded its session on March 14, 2012.³⁹

In other developments, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has announced his desire to visit Taiwan post retirement as a tourist.⁴⁰

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

- **Report: Kazakhstan one of world's riskiest mining nations for investors; Pakistan rejects Kabul's demand over transit fees; Bishkek and Moscow disagree over Dastan torpedo facility; Naturalization of Kyrgyz citizens to be annulled in the Duma; Jund al-Khilafa of Kazakhstan claims responsibility for France shootings**

According to reports, U.S. mining business consultants Behre Dolbear, in their report released last week ranked Kazakhstan as one of the world's five riskiest mining nations for investors along with Russia, Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Papua New Guinea.⁴¹ Astana scored the lowest due to its incidence of corruption and poor economic system.

In another development, reports noted that Pakistan has rejected Afghanistan's demand that it pay transit fees with gas for receiving fuel through the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran (TAPI) pipeline.⁴²

³⁵ "China, EU sign deal to enhance resource cooperation" *China Daily*, March 15, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-03/15/content_14837163.htm

³⁶ "China, Germany to promote military ties" *China Daily*, March 14, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/14/content_14836382.htm

³⁷ "China concerns over DPRK's satellite plans" *China Daily*, March 17, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/17/content_14853253.htm

³⁸ "China's parliament adopts 2012 budget" *China Daily*, March 14, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/14/content_14831147.htm

³⁹ "China's parliament concludes annual session" *China Daily*, March 14, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/14/content_14830935.htm

⁴⁰ "Wen says willing to visit Taiwan after retirement" *China Daily*, March 14, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-03/14/content_14833099.htm

⁴¹ "Kazakhstan is risky nation for investment, US firm says", *Universal Newswires*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11633>

⁴² "Pakistan will not pay TAPI transit fees to Afghanistan in gas", *Universal Newswires*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11649>

According to reports, Bishkek and Moscow are digging in their heels over Russia's insistence on revising a deal to write off Kyrgyz debt in return for a stake in Kyrgyzstan's Dastan torpedo facility.⁴³ While Kyrgyzstan agreed in 2008 to swap a 48 percent stake in the plant for a write-off of his nation's \$180 million debt to Russia, the latter insists that it would write off the debt for no less than 75 percent ownership, arguing that the equipment there has depreciated in value.⁴⁴

In the meanwhile, a long-standing agreement between Russia and Kyrgyzstan on the swift naturalization of Kyrgyz citizens working in Russia is about to be canceled according to the chief of Russia's Federal Migration Service (FMS) last week.⁴⁵ Russian parliamentarians are reportedly angered by the overwhelming presence of non-Russian-speaking foreigners in the country, the FMS chief said.⁴⁶

In other developments, according to reports, Jund al-Khilafa (means "Army of the Caliphate"), a terror group which carried out a series of attacks in Kazakhstan last year, is claiming responsibility for the recent shooting deaths of soldiers and Jewish children in the south of France.⁴⁷

Russia

- **Medvedev to set forth Russian approach to ending violence in Syria; Russia may establish a cyber command in the future; State Duma ratifies the CIS free trade zone agreement; New comprehensive Eurasian Union treaty to be signed by January 2015; Russian gas deliveries to exceed pre-crisis level in 2012; Medvedev convinced that Russia and NATO can agree on missile defence; Russia is not defending the current regime in Syria but does not want the UN to take unrealistic decisions; Russia's will allocate over 2.5% of GDP for its defence expenditure till 2020**

According to reports, Russian President Medvedev will meet Kofi Annan, the U.N.-Arab League Joint Special Envoy for the Syrian settlement, to set forth Russia's approach to ending violence in Syria.⁴⁸

In another development, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said that Russia may form a cyber command in the near future.⁴⁹

⁴³ "Latest Kyrgyz-Russian clash concerns Dastan torpedo factory", *Universal Newswires*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11645>

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ "Russia to annul Kyrgyz naturalization pact, FMS chief says", *Universal Newswires*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=11631>

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ "Kazakh terror group claims responsibility for France shootings", *Universal Newswires*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=11641>

⁴⁸ "Medvedev to set forth Russian approach to ending violence in Syria", ITAR-TASS, March 25, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/374562.html>

⁴⁹ "Russia may form cyber command - Rogozin", ITAR-TASS, March 21, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/371569.html>

Meanwhile, the Duma has ratified the CIS free trade zone agreement signed by Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine in St. Petersburg on October 18, 2011. The agreement guarantees the non-discriminative application of non-tariff regulation norms and clear subsidizing rules based on the world practice.⁵⁰

Reports noted that President Dmitry Medvedev has said that he expects a new comprehensive Eurasian Union treaty to be signed by January 1, 2015. The Eurasian Economic Community consists of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Armenia is an observer.⁵¹

According to reports, President elect Putin has said that in 2012 Russia's domestic deliveries and export of gas will exceed the pre-crisis level 2007-08. Gazprom produced 549.7 billion cubic meters of gas in 2008 when the financial and economic crisis hit the world.⁵²

President Medvedev has said that he is convinced Russia and NATO will agree on missile defence since it will be mutually beneficial to all.⁵³

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia is not defending the regime of Bashar al-Assad, but will prevent the U.N. Security Council from taking unrealistic decisions.⁵⁴

In other developments, according to reports, Russia will allocate close to 2.8% of its GDP to meet its defence expenditure till 2020.⁵⁵

D. West Asia

Iran

- **New sanctions against Iran cause global recession; Iran, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan presidents hold joint meeting on Afghanistan in Dushanbe**

According to reports, the recent western sanctions against Iran have triggered an oil price spike that could trigger a global recession. Oil prices hit a record high in euro terms earlier this month and analysts now believe they may have already dragged the eurozone into recession. New

⁵⁰ "State Duma ratifies CIS free trade zone agreement", ITAR-TASS, March 20, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/370805.html>

⁵¹ "New comprehensive Eurasian Union treaty to be signed by January 1, 2015", ITAR-TASS, March 19, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/369871.html>

⁵² "Russian gas deliveries to exceed pre-crisis level in 2012 – Putin", ITAR-TASS, March 23, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/374030.html>

⁵³ "Medvedev convinced RF, NATO can agree on missile defence", ITAR-TASS, March 23, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/373635.html>

⁵⁴ "RF not defend regime of Bashar al-Assad – Lavrov", ITAR-TASS, March 21, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/371804.html>

⁵⁵ "Russia to Spend 2.8% GDP on Defense As 'Conflict Risk Rises", RIA Novosti, March 20, 2012, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120320/172280534.html

sanctions have ratcheted up tensions and the price of oil as traders worry about the risk of hostilities, including an attack by Israel on Iranian nuclear facilities. US President Barack Obama conceded that tensions over Iran were “adding a \$20 or \$30 premium to oil prices”, which are up some 20 percent since December. Earlier, IMF chief Christine Lagarde warned that any interruption in oil supplies from Iran could increase oil prices by a further 20 to 30 percent and cause an economic shock. “A sudden and brutal rise in the price of oil” from Brent crude’s current levels of around \$125 a barrel “would have serious consequences on the global economy” until other oil-exporting nations were able to bridge the gap, she added. Ernst & Young’s Eurozone Forecast warned a spike in oil prices to a sustained level of \$150 a barrel would cause a recession of 1.0 percent in the European Union this year, double the milder 0.5 percent contraction currently forecast.⁵⁶

In another development, according to reports, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad arrived in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe to attend the ancient Persian New Year (Noruz) festivities, which will be held on March 25, 2012. The Persian New Year started on March 20. Noruz, the ancient celebration of the Persian New Year that begins on the first day of spring, has been registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The presidents of Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan will attend a trilateral summit in Dushanbe. In addition, the three presidents will hold a joint meeting with the Pakistani president on the same day to discuss issues facing Afghanistan.⁵⁷

Iraq

- **Al Qaeda’s front group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for attacks in which 46 people were killed**

According to reports, Al Qaeda’s front group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for March 21, 2012 in which 46 people were killed and at least 200 people were injured across the country. The attacks struck Shia pilgrims in the holy city of Karbala, set cars on fire near a police headquarters in Kirkuk and targeted security forces and government officials in Baghdad. The statement by the Islamic State of Iraq, posted on a militant website, said its ‘Sunni lions’ targeted the plan of the ‘fool government preparing’ for the summit. However, the government vowed not to be scared off from hosting the Arab League summit – the first to take place in Iraq since 1990 and a chance to prove it is moving toward normalcy after years of war. The government said last week that Iraq would deploy an unprecedented number of security forces to protect the capital for the Arab League summit. An estimated 26,000 police and soldiers – including more than 4,000 from Iraq’s north and south – are expected to be deployed in Baghdad. But citizens and lawmakers have questioned whether Baghdad would be safe during the Arab meeting.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “Sanctions against Iran cloud global growth,” *Khaleej Times*, March 25, 2012, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/March/middleeast_March551.xml§ion=middleeast

⁵⁷ “Iranian, Tajik, Pakistani, Afghan presidents to meet in Dushanbe,” *Mehr News*, March 24, 2012, at <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1564113>

⁵⁸ “Al-Qaeda claims responsibility for Iraq attacks,” *Khaleej Times*, March 21, 2012, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/March/middleeast_March494.xml§ion=middleeast

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Scorpene submarines to be launched for sea trials in 2013; Chinese engineers and technical advisors spotted in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)**

According to a top official of the French firm DCNS, constructing the submarines, the first of the six Scorpene submarines ordered by the Indian Navy will be launched for sea trials in 2013. India had placed orders for six Scorpene submarines with French firm DCNS in 2005, of which the first is expected to be commissioned into the Navy by mid-2015 after a delay of around three years. "As per the schedule, the first Scorpene submarine would be 95 per cent ready towards end of 2013 after which it will be launched for sea trials," DCNS' India head Bernard G Buisson told. Expressing confidence that there would be no further delays in the programme, he said most of the issues causing delays in the submarine programme have been sorted out. The six Scorpenes are being constructed at the Mazagon Dockyards Limited (MDL) under Project-75 under technology transfer from French firm DCNS. The government approval for construction of the six submarines was accorded in September 2005 at a total cost of Rs 18,798 crore and the contract was signed in October that year. Commenting on the delays experienced in the project, Defence Minister A K Antony had recently told the Parliament that "Most of the teething problems have been resolved and various plans have been put in place to minimise delays."⁵⁹

In another development, according to reports, Chinese engineers and technical advisors have been spotted across Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), a senior army official General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 25 Infantry Division, Maj Gen K H Singh has said. He stated, "Chinese engineers have been spotted in areas across Line of Control (LoC) (in PoK)". "Till now, reports reveal about the presence of their engineers and technical advisors. There are a large number of other Chinese people working in civil clothes – whether they are civilians or army men – we cannot say", he added.⁶⁰

International

- **New head of the Pakistani Air Force assumes command; Senate Committee asks Pentagon to delay implementing any reductions to the military**

According to reports, the new head of the Pakistani Air Force assumed command on March 19, 2012 as Air Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt was promoted to Air Chief Marshal, replacing the retiring incumbent, Air Chief Marshal Rao Qamar Suleman. Air Marshal Butt assumes command of the air force at a time when major equipment programs put in place by some of his predecessors

⁵⁹ "Scorpene submarine sea trials in 2013," The Economic Times, March 22, 2012, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-03-22/news/31225029_1_scorpene-submarines-dcns-project-75

⁶⁰ "Chinese engineers spotted in PoK: Army," The Times of India, March 23, 2012, at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-23/india/31229744_1_chinese-engineers-infiltration-bids-rajouri-poonch-belt

will be coming to fruition, revitalizing the service. The F-16A/B upgrade, the JF-17 Thunder, FC-20 (a Pakistani specific variant of the Chinese Chengdu J-10B), Erieye AEW&C, Karakorum Eagle AEW&C, and aerial refueling tanker programs are all set to be either be completed or continue.⁶¹

In another development, according to reports, the leaders of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee have asked Defense Secretary Leon Panetta not to implement any reductions to the military until the congressional defense committees have the opportunity to respond to the Pentagon's 2013 budget request. A letter to Panetta signed by Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., stated "We request that you not take actions to implement decisions that would be difficult or impossible to reverse by anticipating congressional approval of what may turn out to be very contentious proposals before the committees have had an opportunity to propose bills reflecting their responses to the fiscal 2013 budget request,". Levin serves as the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, while McCain is the ranking member.⁶²

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Home Minister P. Chidambaram to visit J&K on April 10, 2012; One dead and Twenty One injured in Bijbehara Blast in South Kashmir; A militant killed in an encounter in Pattan in Baramulla district; Police and militants exchange fire in Bandipora, North Kashmir**

Reports noted that Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram will be visiting Jammu and Kashmir on April 10, 2012 to review the security situation in the state. The home minister will be holding discussions and taking a closer look at the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from some parts of JK, as announced by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in October last year.⁶³

According to reports, one person was killed and 21 others injured including which included three paramilitary personnel, in a massive car bomb explosion in the South Kashmir town. However, no militant outfit has so far claimed the responsibility for the blast.⁶⁴

In another development, according to reports, a Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant was killed in a gun-battle with police and army personnel in Baramulla district of north Kashmir. On a specific

⁶¹ "Pakistani Air Force Gets New Chief," March 19, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120319/DEFREG03/303190001/-1/7daysarchives/Pakistani-Air-Force-Gets-New-Chief>

⁶² "U.S. Senate Committee Asks Pentagon to Delay Budget Actions," March 19, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120319/DEFREG02/303190008/-1/7daysarchives/U-S-Senate-Committee-Asks-Pentagon-Delay-Budget-Actions>

⁶³ "Chidambaram to visit JK on April 10", *Greater Kashmir*, March 24, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Mar/25/chidambaram-to-visit-jk-on-april-10-63.asp>

⁶⁴ "1 Killed, 21 Injured in Bijbehara Blast", *Greater Kashmir*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Mar/23/1-killed-21-injured-in-bijbehara-blast-82.asp>

information, a joint operation was launched by Baramulla Police and 29 RR at village Chanderhama Pattan during which militants fired at forces which was retaliated which resulted in killing of a militant. Arms and ammunition was recovered from the possession of the slain militant.⁶⁵

In other developments, according to reports, a brief exchange of fire took place between militants and police in north Kashmir's Bandipora district but no one was injured. Police cordoned off Kota forest in Bandipora district, and launched searches.⁶⁶

North East India

- **Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Akhil Gogoi arrested; MPs from North-east raise influx and Brahmaputra issues in Parliament; Four National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants arrested; Home Minister P. Chidambaram claims Centre keeping a watch on Maoist in North-East of India; Militant of Manipur outfit KYKL apprehended in Guwahati; Two more Kuki militant outfits signed Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement**

According to reports, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Akhil Gogoi was arrested along with 30-odd supporters during a protest demonstration at Dispur Last Gate. The KMSS was taking out a mass rally along with several other organizations of the city demanding land settlement rights (land patta) for the people living in the hills. They were also demanding to make public the Kar Commission inquiry report into the violence-marred protest at Dispur Last Gate last year in which a child had died in police firing. The protesters later staged a procession to Basistha police station demanding release of Gogoi and 30-odd supporters detained there. They were subsequently released.⁶⁷

In another development, according to reports, China's bid to divert Brahmaputra river, unabated infiltration from across the border and the recent land transfer agreement with Bangladesh have been slammed by the MPs of the North-east. Participating in the ongoing debate on the President's Address, MPs particularly from Assam in both the Houses of the Parliament flagged issues that were left out in the address. Stating that they want better and peaceful relations with neighbouring countries, Baishya, who is also the general secretary of North East MPs' Forum said the Presidential Address forgot to mention two major issues faced by the North-Eastern Region regarding China.⁶⁸

Reports noted that the security forces of Goreswar Army camp of Red Horn Division and Baksa

⁶⁵ "Militant killed in Pattan encounter: Police", *Greater Kashmir*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Mar/23/militant-killed-in-pattan-encounter-police-81.asp>

⁶⁶ "Police, militants trade fire in Bandipora", *Greater Kashmir*, March 19, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Mar/20/police-militants-trade-fire-in-bandipora-78.asp>

⁶⁷ "Akhil Gogoi held for taking out rally", *The Assam Tribune*, March 19, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2012/at08>

⁶⁸ "ME MPs raise influx, Brahmaputra issues", *The Assam Tribune*, March 20, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2112/at06>

police jointly apprehended four NDFB (AT) militants from a hideout in Marigaon on March 13. The security forces recovered three 7.62 mm pistols with four magazines, eleven live rounds, three local made crude bombs, three mobile phones with four SIM cards, seven CD movies, one pocket diary mentioning amount extorted and two wallets from the militants.⁶⁹

According to reports, admitting to the involvement of insurgent outfits like ULFA, NDFB and NSCN in arms smuggling across the international border, Union Home Minister P Chidambaram did not rule out the possibility of Maoists indulging in similar gun running activities in the North-east once they are able to set up bases in the region. The Home Minister stated, "In the recent months, we have noticed minimal presence of Maoists in some parts of the North-east. We are watching the situation carefully. But no case of Maoists actually smuggling arms across the Bangladesh border or the Myanmar border has come to our notice."⁷⁰

Meanwhile, according to reports, Guwahati police arrested a member of the Manipur-based militant outfit Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) from Pub Sarania area under Chandmari police station. Police also recovered one laptop, two mobile phones and some incriminating documents from the possession of the militant. Earlier on March 20, 2012, a member of the Manipur-based militant outfit Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak) was arrested from Guwahati by the police.⁷¹

In other developments, according to reports, after 19 Kuki militant groups signed Suspension of Operation (SoO) with the State Government three years ago, two more Kuki militant groups United Tribal Liberation Army (UTLA) and Pakan Reunification Army (PRA) signed the SoO pact with the Manipur government. UTLA is based in Manipur's Jiribam sub-division bordering Assam, while Moreh town in Chandel district bordering Myanmar is said to be PRA's stronghold. Joint Secretary (North East) Sambhu Singh of Ministry of Home Affairs soon after signing the SoO at 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles said that altogether 95 UTLA and 22 PRA cadres will be housed in the existing designated camps.⁷²

IV. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **UNSC supports six-point proposal on Syria; India supports implementation of UNSC resolutions on Iranian nuclear issue; India votes for UNHRC resolution that criticizes Sri**

⁶⁹ "4 NDFB militants apprehended", *The Assam Tribune*, March 20, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2112/state07>

⁷⁰ "Centre keeping watch on Maoists in NE: PC", *The Assam Tribune*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2212/at06>

⁷¹ "Militant from Manipur outfit arrested in Guwahati", *The Assam Tribune*, March 25, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2512/at048>

⁷² "2 more Kuki outfits sign SoO agreement", *The Assam Tribune*, March 24, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2512/oth07>

Lanka; UN condemns rebellion against Malian government; UNSC extends mandate of UN mission in Afghanistan; UNHRC adopts resolution against Syrian government

Reports noted that voicing concern over the deteriorating situation in Syria, the UN Security Council called on the government and the opposition to immediately implement a plan proposed by the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. The Council fully supported the initial six-point proposal submitted by Mr. Kofi Annan during his visit to Damascus earlier this month. Separately, the Council issued a press statement in which it strongly condemned the terrorist attacks that occurred in Damascus that caused scores of deaths and injuries.⁷³

Meanwhile, India came out in full support of the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on the Iranian nuclear issue but also said that all efforts should be made to ensure that legitimate trade and economic activities do not suffer. India also asked Iran to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency to restore the confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.⁷⁴

In another development, India voted for a US-sponsored resolution at the UN Human Rights Council that censured Sri Lanka for alleged rights violations during the war against LTTE. The resolution was adopted after 24 members voted for the resolution. India decided to vote on the resolution after two changes were made in the draft to make it 'non-intrusive' and contribute to political reconciliation process in the country.⁷⁵

According to reports, the Security Council and other UN officials have condemned the rebellion by elements of the Malian armed forces which announced the dissolution of the Government and seized control of the country and called for a return to constitutional rule. The Council members also strongly condemned the 'forcible seizure of power' from the democratically-elected Government of Mali.⁷⁶

In the interim, the Security Council extended the mandate of the UN mission in Afghanistan until 23 March 2012 to continue supporting the country as it goes through the process of assuming full responsibility for its security, governance and development efforts.⁷⁷

⁷³ "Security Council calls for implementation of six-point plan to end crisis in Syria", *UN News Centre*, March 21, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41598&Cr=syria&Cr1=>

⁷⁴ "India backs UN resolutions on Iran nuclear issue", *The Economic Times*, March 22, 2012 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-03-22/news/31225094_1_nuclear-issue-exclusively-peaceful-nature-international-atomic-energy-agency

⁷⁵ "PM: Weighed pros, cons before voting against Sri Lanka at UNHRC", *The Indian Express*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/pm-weighted-pros-cons-before-voting-against-sri-lanka-at-unhrc/927000/0>

⁷⁶ "UN condemns political instability in Mali after armed rebellion", *UN News Centre*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41604&Cr=Tuareg&Cr1=>

⁷⁷ "Afghanistan: Security Council extends mandate of UN mission for another year", *UN News Centre*, March 22, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41615&Cr=afghan&Cr1=>

In other developments, reports note that the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that demanded the Syrian government to stop all violence, protect its people and put an end to widespread and systematic abuses such as killing and persecution of protestors. While 41 members voted for the resolution, three voted against and two abstained. In the same resolution, the mandate of the three-member commission of inquiry to probe alleged abuses on Syria last month was also extended.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ “UN Human Rights Council demands end to violence and widespread abuses in Syria”, *UN News Centre*, March 23, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41620&Cr=syria&Cr1=>