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Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



Academic Sessions of Delhi Dialogue VII, IDSA
Photo Courtesy : IDSA

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Centre Activities for March-April 2015

The months of March and April have been demanding for the policy makers in ASEAN as the 26th ASEAN Summit took place in Malaysia in the last week of April. The ASEAN leaders issued three declarations namely Kuala Lumpur Declaration on a People-Oriented, People-Centered ASEAN, Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates and the Declaration on Institutionalizing the Resilience of ASEAN and its Communities and People to Disasters and Climate Change. While the first statement reiterates ASEAN's commitment towards building a cohesive regional community by the end of 2015, the other two documents are equally significant as they signal ASEAN's strong dedication towards the contemporary world affairs including fight against religious and other forms of terrorism which needs immediate attention at all levels and the risk of natural disasters and our vulnerability in the face of it. The ASEAN Summit, hosted by country chair Malaysia, however was not vocal and constructive against China's massive land reclamation activities in South China Sea which again shows the internal differences played against each other within ASEAN. Our editorial team has presented a brief report on ASEAN Summit in this issue. March and April had been eventful for those who strongly demand for India's proactive role in ASEAN as well. While in March, we saw Delhi Dialogue VII happening at the Oberoi, New Delhi and IDSA, the month of April witnessed the inaugural ceremony of a dedicated Indian mission for ASEAN in Jakarta. By these, on the one hand, the private sectors from India and ASEAN got an opportunity to interact with the government representatives on ASEAN-India relationships and on the other hand, government proved to be willing as it came forward to inaugurate the mission in Jakarta. This issue has a detail report on Delhi Dialogue VII as IDSA hosted the academic sessions of the Dialogue. Besides these, we have tried covering a wide range of issues including defence and security pacts between various countries in ASEAN, the question of human rights as seen in Myanmar, Cambodia and Australia and visits by the state leaders to different countries in and around the region.

Besides the regular news briefs, this issue has a commentary on ancient India's historical association with Southeast Asia. We are thankful to PK Gautam for his continuous efforts towards establishing historical linkages between India and Southeast Asia.

This issue also has a book review on India-Singapore's bilateral relation and a country profile on Singapore. For Singapore, the month of March was mournful as Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the father of modern Singapore, died on March 23.

We hope our readers will enjoy reading this issue. Feedback and suggestions to improve *Insight Southeast Asia* are welcome.

Sampa Kundu

REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE



Capital: Singapore

Land and Geography: The Republic of Singapore is an island nation located in South East Asia between Malaysia and Indonesia.¹ The modern city-state is separated from Malaysia by the Straits of Johor to the north, and from Indonesia's Riau Islands by the Singapore Strait to the south. Singapore is the second smallest country in Asia, after Maldives, and consists of one diamond shape-island known as Singapore Island and several small islets. The country has been consistently

undertaking land reclamation projects to join these small islets to create functional units of land, these projects have resulted in an increase in land area from 581.5 km² in the 1960s to 718.3 km² in 2014.²

Population: The official estimate for the population of Singapore is 5,469,700 (Singapore Govt, 2014).³ Other estimates for its population are: 5,567,301 (CIA, 2014)⁴ and 5,303,000 (UN, 2012).⁵

Politics and Government: Singapore is a sovereign republic with three separate organs of state, namely, the executive, the legislative

¹ Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

² Latest Data, *Department of Statistics Singapore*, available at: <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#14>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

³ Latest Data, *Department of Statistics Singapore*, available at: <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest-data#14>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

⁴ Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

⁵ UN Data, available at: <https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SINGAPORE>, accessed on: April 6, 2015

and the judiciary.⁶ The President acts as the chief of state and is elected through the popular vote for a six-year term.⁷ The effective head of executive branch of the government is Prime Minister, who is appointed by the President, and is usually the leader of the majority party in the parliament. The executive branch also includes the cabinet, also appointed by the President. The Singaporean legislative wing comprises of unicameral parliament, which has 87 seats for directly elected members, nine seats for nominated members and up to nine seats for the non-constituency members of Parliament. Elections to the parliament are conducted every five years, last elections were held in May 2011, next are due by 2017.⁸ The current President of Singapore is Tony Tan and Prime Minister is Lee Hsien Loong. The judiciary's function is to independently administer justice. The judiciary is safeguarded by the constitution.⁹

Religious and Ethnic Composition:

Singapore's almost one-third population follows various forms of Buddhism, 14.3 per cent follow Islam, 11.3 per cent follow

Taoism, 7.1 per cent are Catholics, 11 per cent are Christians, 5.2 per cent are Hindus and approximately 17 per cent do not follow any religion.¹⁰ The majority population of the country is of Chinese descent (74.2 per cent), while Malay and Indian descent groups make up for 13.3 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively, along with 3.3 per cent others. The official languages of Singapore are English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil. While most popular languages remain English, Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew, Indian languages like Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati are also spoken by sizable populations.

Economy: Known as one of the four Asian Tigers, Singapore is a highly developed and successful free-market economy. Since its independence in 1965, the country's GDP has grown at an average rate of 7.7 per cent.¹¹ Globally, the nation is hailed for its remarkably open and corruption-free environment, stable prices and a per capita GDP higher than that of most developed countries.¹² The nation's economy heavily relies on trade. The major exports of Singapore are machinery and transport equipment, mineral fuels, lubricants and chemicals.¹³ The biggest trading partner of the country is its ASEAN neighbour Malaysia.

⁶ About the Singapore Government, *Singapore Government website*, available at: http://www.gov.sg/government/web/content/govsg/classic/about_us, accessed on: April 6, 2015

⁷ Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

⁸ Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

⁹ About the Singapore Government, *Singapore Government website*, available at: http://www.gov.sg/government/web/content/govsg/classic/about_us, accessed on: April 6, 2015

¹⁰ Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

¹¹ Singapore Overview, *World Bank*, available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/singapore/overview>, accessed on: April 6, 2015

¹² Singapore, *The CIA World Factbook*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>, accessed on: March 30, 2015

¹³ UN Data, available at: <https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SINGAPORE>, accessed on March 6, 2015.

Singapore has attracted major investments in pharmaceuticals and medical technology production from across the globe. As a result of its healthy fiscal position and consistent budget

surpluses over the years, the country has attained a high level of foreign reserves and the strongest sovereign credit rating for long-term foreign-currency debt in Asia.¹⁴

Major Economic Indicators¹⁵

GDP (million current US\$)	276520 (2012)
GDP per capita (current US\$)	52141.5 (2012)
Employment in industrial sector (per cent of employed)	21.8 (2010)
Employment in agricultural sector (per cent of employed)	1.1 (2010)
Tourist arrival at the national border (000)	11098 (2012)
Export (million US\$)	408393.0 (2012)
Import (million US\$)	379722.9 (2012)
Major Export Partners	Malaysia, China, Hong Kong SAR
Major Import Partners	Malaysia, China, United States

Defence: The military wing of Singapore's 'Total Defence', Singapore Armed Forces (SFP) is composed of the Singapore Army, the Republic of Singapore Air Force and the Republic of Singapore Navy.¹⁶ The SFP is headed by the Chief of Defence Force (CDF), who normally holds the rank of three-star General or Admiral. The forces are administered by the Armed Forces Council which includes CDF, chiefs of staff of various defence services, defence ministers, permanent defence secretary and four presidential appointees to the

council. The SFP heavily relies on compulsory conscription, which makes up for 80 per cent of recruitment at any time.¹⁷ The mandate of the Singapore Armed Forces is to enhance Singapore's peace and security through deterrence and diplomacy, and should these fail, to secure a swift and decisive victory over the aggressor.¹⁸

Foreign Relations: Singapore is a member of Non-Aligned Movement and maintains close ties with most of the major powers in the world. A key players in the regional front, the nation is one of the five founders of the Association of

¹⁴ The Singapore Economy, *Monetary Authority of Singapore*, available at: <http://www.sgs.gov.sg/The-SGS-Market/The-Singapore-Economy.aspx>, accessed on March 30, 2015

¹⁵ UN Data, available at: <https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=SINGAPORE>, accessed on March 6, 2015.

¹⁶ Organisation Structure, *MINDEF*, available at: http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/about_us/organisation_structure.html#.VSOfe9yUdKo, accessed on: March 30, 2015

¹⁷ Ministry of Defence, *MINDEF*, available at: http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/nsmatters/home.html, accessed on: March 30, 2015

¹⁸ Mission, *MINDEF*, available at: http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/about_us/mission.html, accessed on: March 30, 2015

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and is an active member in the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The forthcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was proposed by Singapore's Former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. The AEC, likely to be implemented by 2015, will create a common market place and a single production unit for the ASEAN community, making it a highly competitive economic region and fully integrated into the global economy.¹⁹ Except for a few water distribution and airspace disputes, the country maintains cordial economic, social and cultural relations with its neighbours Malaysia and Indonesia. In recent days, Malaysia has also expressed reservations towards Singapore's land reclamation projects, claiming it to be a hindrance for local biodiversity.

Singapore has strong economic, educational, health and strategic ties with the United States, China and Japan. United States is the biggest foreign investor in the country. Many US citizens chose to live in Singapore due to tax benefits and several Singaporeans live in US. The two nations have numerous education and research exchange programmes, which promote closer social and cultural ties.²⁰ Singapore is working

closely with Japan on maintaining the freedom and safety of navigation in the international sea lanes of communication in Southeast Asia and promoting regional dialogue mechanisms of the Asia-Pacific region.²¹ The two nations also conduct regular joint anti-piracy exercises between the coast guards and are also working together to combat diseases, such as SARS and avian influenza. Singapore also has multi-faceted ties with China. In 2009, the two countries signed free trade agreement and are currently each other's one of the top trading partners and investors. Singapore also maintains seven provincial business councils and two industrial parks in China.²² Singapore balances Chinese and US influences in an effective manner.

As an active member of United Nations, Singapore has participated in UN peacekeeping/observer missions in Kuwait, Angola, Namibia, Cambodia, and Timor-Leste. The country also supports two Provincial Reconstruction Teams and provides refuelling aircrafts in support of international efforts in Afghanistan.

Relations with India: India established diplomatic ties with Singapore soon after it got independence in 1965. A shared history, vast diaspora and continued engagements between two nations have translated their relations into a cordial one. Year 2015 marks the 50 years of the establishment of India-Singapore diplomatic relations. To mark the milestone, an exchange of state visits by the Heads of State of

¹⁹ ASEAN Economic Community, *ASEAN website*, available at: <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community>, accessed on April 6, 2015

²⁰ Singapore- Foreign Relations, *GlobalSecurity.Org*, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/singapore/forrel.htm>, accessed on April 9, 2015

²¹ Singapore- Foreign Relations, *GlobalSecurity.Org*, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/singapore/forrel.htm>, accessed on April 9, 2015

²² Singapore- Foreign Relations, *GlobalSecurity.Org*, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/singapore/forrel.htm>, accessed on April 9, 2015

both countries have been agreed upon. Singapore's President, Tony Tan Keng Yam, undertook a state visit to India on 8-11 February 2015 and also the two Prime Ministers met on the side lines of the East Asia Summit at Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014.²³

Singapore is one of the most responsive nation towards India's Look/Act East policies. It is also the eighth largest source of investment in India and the largest amongst ASEAN member nations. In June 2005, the two countries signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) which resulted in expansion of bilateral trade from US\$ 6.65 billion in 2004-05 to US\$ 25.2 billion in 2011-12. Major items of India's exports to Singapore include mineral oil, petroleum products, transport equipment, articles of jewellery and non-ferrous metals. Major items of import from Singapore include mineral oil, petroleum products, electronic goods, non-electrical machinery and organic chemicals.²⁴

Singapore is also one of the major FDI sources and destinations for India. In

2013-14, it emerged as the largest source of FDI into India with US\$ 5.98 billion, accounting for about 25% of FDI inflows in the year. Outward Indian FDI to Singapore increased from US \$351 million in 2004-05 to US \$33.76 billion (Nov 2014), making Singapore one of the top destinations for Indian investments.²⁵ Combined with an enabling environment, strong air connectivity and the presence of a large Indian community, Singapore has emerged as an offshore logistics and financial hub for Indian corporate houses. About 6,000 Indian companies are estimated to be registered in Singapore.²⁶

On the defence front, the two nations have consistently engaged in comprehensive defence exchanges since Singapore's independence. India has signed defence cooperation agreements with Singapore in 2003, 2007 and 2008.²⁷ The navies have been conducting joint naval exercises such as the SIMBEX and MILAN since 1993 in the Andaman Islands and conducted anti-submarine exercises in April 2007. The two navies continue with port visits, exchanges of naval professionals and related activities.²⁸ Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen visited India in August 2014 to meet his

²³ India - Singapore Relations, *High Commission of India, Singapore*, available at: <https://www.hcisingapore.gov.in/pages.php?id=68>, accessed on April 9, 2015

²⁴ India - Singapore Relations, *High Commission of India, Singapore*, available at: <https://www.hcisingapore.gov.in/pages.php?id=68>, accessed on April 9, 2015

²⁵ India - Singapore Relations, *High Commission of India, Singapore*, available at: <https://www.hcisingapore.gov.in/pages.php?id=68>, accessed on April 9, 2015

²⁶ India and Singapore: Defence Cooperation on the Upswing, *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, available at: <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/india-and-singapore-defence-cooperation-on-the-upswing-3987.html>, accessed on April 15, 2015

²⁷ India - Singapore Relations, *High Commission of India, Singapore*, available at: <https://www.hcisingapore.gov.in/pages.php?id=68>, accessed on April 9, 2015. India and Singapore: Defence Cooperation on the Upswing, *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, available at: <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/india-and-singapore-defence-cooperation-on-the-upswing-3987.html>, accessed on April 15, 2015

²⁸ Shankar, V. (2007), 'India-Singapore Relations: An Overview', *IPCS Special Report*, Vol. No. 41, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20070606205724/http://www.ipcs.org/IPCS-Special-Report-41.pdf>, accessed on April 15, 2015

counterpart to strengthen the defence ties with the new Indian Government. Singapore also supports India's bid for the permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.²⁹

Singapore, especially the Foreign Minister, George Yeo, also has keen interest in re-establishing the ancient Indian university, Nalanda University and has been providing seamless support for the project.³⁰

²⁹ Shankar, V. (2007), 'India-Singapore Relations: An Overview', *IPCS Special Report*, Vol. No. 41, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20070606205724/http://www.ipcs.org/IPCS-Special-Report-41.pdf>, accessed on April 15, 2015

³⁰ India – Singapore Relations, *High Commission of India*, Singapore, available at: <https://www.hcsingapore.gov.in/pages.php?id=68>, accessed on April 9, 2015

Shared Heritage of Ancient Statecraft between Southeast Asia and India



Pradeep Kumar Gautam

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In my photo essay ' The Shared Heritage of India and Southeast Asia' published in *Insight Southeast Asia*, Vol.2, No.3, July 2013 I had alluded to only the Indian classical manual of statecraft- the *Arthashastra* spreading to South East Asia. Once an idea is exported it develops a momentum of its own and evolves into its own in the receiving country and takes on its culture- specific uniqueness. The knowledge of this is one aspect of research that I find is missing. It is either in the silos of ancient historians and linguists or Indologists and as I create new term 'Southeastasianology'.

There is a general drop in the study of ancient past and the exchanges between civilizations. This trend is disquieting and needs to be remedied. Some more historical texts that I came across after my earlier article are noteworthy. For example, an inscription states that the 11th century Javanese king named Erlangga subverted his enemy's power "by the

application of the means taught by" the author of The *Arthashastra*, the most famous of all Indian treatises on the policies of a successful *mandala* manager. The *Arthashastra* also contains many precepts useful for a would-be conqueror."¹ And in the preface to the first edition of *The Nitisara of the Elements of Polity*, (1861) by Kamandaki and edited by Rajendralala Mitra it is mentioned that:

From a report submitted by Dr.Frederich to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences on the Sanskrit literature of Bali, it appears that the most popular work in the Island on Polity is Kamandakiya Nitisara, and all the Sanskrit books there extant are acknowledged to be the counterparts of purely Indian origin.²

As was mentioned by me in my previous photo essay, concepts such as *mandala* and other related ideas had traveled to Southeast Asia. Between 200BC and 500AD in Southeast Asia people first settled in large nucleated communities and organized themselves into small warring polities. *Mandala* to be sure means alliance based spheres of influence.³

¹ B.R. Chatterji, *History of Indonesia: Early and Medieval*, Meerut, Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967, p. 183, verse 29. The Inscription of Erlangga from Penang- Gungen(Surabaya) of Saka Year 963 inscribed in Sanskrit reads as follows:

" There in Saka Year 957 on the eight day of dark half of Kartik on Thursday, the king Vijaya was seized by his own troops through the application of the means(of statecraft) as taught by Vishnugupta(Chanakya) and died soon afterwards."

² Rajendralala Mitra(ed), *The Nitisara of the Elements of Polity* by Kamandaki, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1861, reprinted Calcutta, The Asitaic Society, 1982, p.i.

³ Miriam T. Stark, " Pre- Angkorian and Angkorian Cambodia, " in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood(Ed), *Southeast Asia: From prehistory to history*, London/New York, Routledge, 2004, p.96.

Guiding principles and concepts from Kautilya's *Arthashastra* also radiated to Thailand as the concept of *Cakravartin* or 'conqueror of the world'. In Thailand the concept of *Cakravartin* indicates that *cakra* or wheel (a symbol of sovereignty) of state chariot rolls everywhere without obstruction. It is believed that Mauryas developed the concept of *Cakravartin*, which was incorporated into Buddhist tradition.⁴

Early Indonesian societies which adopted either Buddhism or Hinduism shared fundamental assumption about ideal political structure. Inscriptions refer to kingdom as *mandalas*, a Sanskrit word with a wide range of meaning. Its simplest connotation is a circle.⁵ One founding inscription engraved at Palembang by the ruler of Srivijaya in around AD 680, refers to the outlying polities called *mandala* that he claimed to have brought under his control.⁶ In Alan Chong's explanation, "Prior to European colonisation of Southeast Asia, political authority was founded upon concertina-like patterns of religiously derived centres of virtues and majesty. Hindu and Buddhist beliefs partly

explained maritime empires such as Srivijaya and Mataram based on large swaths of present-day Malaysia and Indonesia".⁷

It is due to this phenomenon that Sheldon Pollock has coined the term "Sanskrit cosmopolis" referring to the enormous geographic sweep of Indic culture for centuries spreading not as movement of conquerors, but what I say as 'soft power'. Sheldon Pollock shows how ancient ideas in Sanskrit from India influenced regions beyond the subcontinental boundaries to Southeast Asia, but not by conquest.⁸ This concept of *cakravartin* has both political and religious meaning. At a deeper philosophic-religious level, the idea resonates in Buddhism. The historian Romila Thapar points out that according to Buddhist tradition, recurring violence was inimical to the interests of societies in a state system. The harshness of the state was ameliorated in the concept of *cakkavatti/cakravartin*, the universal ruler whose reign is synonymous with law, order and justice. Significantly it is the wheel of law which rolls across his domain and not the *danda* (rod or coercion) of chastizement.⁹ It is argued that the concept of *cakravartin* does suggest control over a vast territory. But the concept is not so much that of ruling a geographically vast

⁴ Phasook Indrawooth, " The Archaeology of Early Buddhist Kingdoms of Thailand" in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood(Ed), *Southeast Asia: From prehistory to history*, London/New York, Routledge, 2004, p.137.

⁵ John N. Miksic, " The Classical Cultures of Indonesia " in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood(Ed), *Southeast Asia: From prehistory to history*, London/New York, Routledge, 2004, p.239.

⁶ Pierre-Yves Manguin, " The Archaeology of Early Maritime Polities of Southeast Asia, " in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood(Ed), *Southeast Asia: From prehistory to history*, London/New York, Routledge, 2004, p.304.

⁷ Alan Chong, " A Society of the Weak, the Medium and the Great: Southeast Asia's Lessons in Building Soft Community among States", in Alexander Astrov(Ed), *The Great Power (mis)Management: The Russian- Georgia War and its Implications for Global Political Order*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2011, p.140.

⁸ Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2006, p. 16.

⁹ Romila Thapar, *History and Beyond, From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.151.

territory as of centring control, as it were, firmly and securely in a hub of power . The symbolism of the wheel does suggest a differentiation between power at the centre of the circle and at the rim. The domain need not be restricted to the political arena as in the Buddhist concept the spiritual domain is also open to the *cakkavatti*.¹⁰

It is necessary to know as to how concepts from India were absorbed and further improved upon and what Southeast Asia gave back to India in return. This is a good area of future studies across cultures This two –way feedback will be a new intellectual bridge between India and Southeast Asia . Why I say this is that although in my work I had mentioned and traced the roots of the concept of *mandala*, in a recent literature survey of a reputed western journal, I find that this knowledge of interaction between India and Southeast Asia is not well understood or realized. Iver B. Neuman, in his article¹¹ argues and quotes Alastair Iain Johnston’s understanding of *mandala*.¹² Johnston states that one example was the mandala system of premodern Southeast Asia whereby “kingdoms were defined by clusters of declared allegiances rather than territories. Within this system big men were distinguished in a hierarchy of kings, allies and vassals that was fluid.” Later in

the essay Iver B. Neuman shows a surprising lack of reference on tracing the idea of mandala to India when he writes : “... the systematic study of Chinese tribute system and South-East Asian mandala system would enrich our understanding of hegemony.”¹³

It is surprising that these Western authors have not attempted to track the concept of mandala to its Indic origins and tradition. It clearly shows that there is a need for scholarship from Southeast Asian scholars and also those from India now to contribute to enrich International Relations and International Studies with the rich experience both from India and from Southeast Asia. Rather Southeast Asian scholarship may even throw a more nuanced light on the evolution of the Indian mandala with the Sinic tributary system.

The moment is now ripe for scholars from various disciplines to engage with our (Southeast Asian and Indian) rich historical past and revisit concepts of statecraft that can enrich the knowledge and literature. Three maps reproduced from books written decades ago are given as one reference. Map1 is about Indianization but surely now there is a need to know the influence in reverse direction too. *The Cultural Heritage of India Volume 1: The Early Phase* published by Ramakrishna Mission mentions that in early history of pan- Indian cultural assimilation , the Newars and the Kirati of Nepal, the Bodo of northern and eastern Bengal and Assam, the Ahoms of Assam, the

¹⁰ Ibid,p.161.

¹¹ Iver B. Neuman , ‘International Relations as a Social Science’, *Millennium : Journal of International Studies* , Vol.43(1), 2014, 330-350 .

¹² Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘What (If Anything) Does East Asia Tell Us About International Relations Theory?’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2012, 15:53-78 .

¹³ Iver B. Neuman , ‘International Relations as a Social Science’, *Millennium : Journal of International Studies* , Vol.43(1), 2014, 330-350 .

Kuki- Chin, and other Mongoloid peoples did not play a prominent part . Their history still remains obscure. It divides the Mangloids(Kirats) in two groups. One is the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloids which include the Bodo-Naga group. The other is the Siamese- Chinese group represented by the Shans, a branch of which are the Ahoms who arrived in India in AD 1228. Map 2 also now needs to see the reverse

flow of ideas, influence and culture. Map 3 is about the spread of Islam. In a recently concluded conference at IDSA of ASEAN countries called Delhi Dialogue it was suggested that syncretic Islam now needs to be given focus. The links of Roman Catholicism in India since ancient times with the Philippines and other areas may also help researchers into the pioneering work of historical importance done by Jesuit priests in compiling and translation of local literature and traditions.

Map No. 1



INDIANIZED STATES OF THE 7TH TO 9TH CENTURIES

Delhi Dialogue VII- A Report

Compiled by Sampa Kundu*



Photo Courtesy: Government of India

Delhi Dialogue, since its inception in 2009, regarded as an important track 1.5 forum for discussions between India and the ASEAN. This year, the seventh edition of Delhi Dialogue VII was held on 11 and 12 March at Hotel Oberoi and Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and included Business Session, Inaugural and Academic Sessions. This year's theme was *ASEAN-India: Shaping the post 2015 Agenda*.

Inaugurated by the Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India, Smt. Sushma Swaraj on 11 March, 2015 Delhi Dialogue VII (DD VII) was unique and significant as it came in an year which is a milestone in the history of Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), as it moves

towards the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and secondly, it came at a time when India's own foreign policy has entered an era of new vigour and dynamism as our erstwhile 'Look East Policy' transforms into an 'Act East Policy'.

"The implementation of the Asean-India FTA in goods, signed in 2009, has elicited a positive response from the business community and translated into a significant increase in bilateral trade, which has risen from under \$44 billion in 2009-10 to over \$76 billion in 2013-14, having registered an average growth of 22% per annum over the past decade."... EAM, Sushma Swaraj, Delhi Dialogue VII, March 11, 2015, reported in The Financial Express, March 12, 2015

* Original session reports prepared by the rapporteurs from FICCI and IDSA. From IDSA, the team of rapporteurs included Ms. Gulbin Sultana, Ms. Aakriti Sethi, Ms. M S Prathibha, Mr. S Samuel C. Rajiv, Dr. Prashant Kumar Singh and Dr. Saroj Bishoyi

The Dialogue was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in partnership with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), the ASEAN-India Centre at RIS, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Institute of South Asian Studies, (ISAS), Singapore; SAEA Group Research, Singapore; Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta; ISIS, Malaysia; and ISIS, Thailand. The Associates who have joined for the first time are: All India Association of Industries; ASSOCHAM; Indian Chambers of Commerce; Confederation of Indian Industries and ICRIER. The Partners and Associates organized some run-up events prior to Delhi Dialogue VII.

Also, for the first time, Delhi Dialogue had a full-fledged Business Session, hosted and organized by FICCI in association with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The Business Session was divided into two panel discussions with a focus on ASEAN Economic Community: Benefits for the ASEAN and Indian Industry and Trade in Services as Driver for Future Economic Cooperation.

Few of the recommendations that came up from the panel discussions of the business session are as follows;

1. India should explore opportunities to enhance its relations with Myanmar as the country is placed at a strategic location and India should use it as a getaway to augment trade with ASEAN. Myanmar may act as the base to connect Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.
2. ASEAN is a land of good opportunities and India and ASEAN share similar cultures. Most of the ASEAN countries have their focus on infrastructure development and hence, India has the opportunity to bank on this region's rapidly growing market.
3. There is a need to plan an integrated energy policy with a focus on developing a transnational energy corridor. The potential of renewable energy is also huge and still untapped in the region.
4. Although emphasis is being given on free flow of goods, it is not feasible unless there is a policy of inclusive growth and a comprehensive roadmap to execute it. The 'Doing Business' meets should focus on the issues and try to find a solution. As an example it was mentioned that the ASEAN highway network which was physically in place could not function effectively due to lack of infrastructure and unclear policy decisions. Both the regions need to revamp the policy framework to ensure effectiveness.
5. The aviation industry may take the advantage of India's tier –II cities in exploring the *Corporate Aviation* sector. India enjoys the advantage of numbers as well as location and can be converted to a corporate aviation hub.
6. Tourism is one of the sectors with a huge potential and both the regions should strive to encourage people to people connect.
7. Approximately, 97 percent of the businesses in India and ASEAN are either SME's or SMIs and there is huge scope for facilitating trade between India and ASEAN in this regard.
8. It was also mentioned that foreign investors are looking forward to invest in Asia which is going to be the driver of economic growth for India and ASEAN.

Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa said India-ASEAN trade was well below potential, but the regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) pact — expected to conclude later this year — will help boost trade to \$ 200 billion by 2022...

The Economic Times, March 11, 2015

The academic sessions at IDSA were inaugurated by the Welcome remarks by Brig. Rumel Dahiya, Deputy Director General of the IDSA, followed by the keynote speech by Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The academic sessions were divided into four themes namely, **Geopolitical Issues** (covering Maritime Security and Cyber Security); **Social Cultural Issues** (covering Building Knowledge Societies and Economics: Education and Skill Development Including Mutual Recognition of Degrees and Strengthening Cultural Linkages and People-to-People Contacts); **Economic Issues** (covering Infrastructure and Connectivity, Energy and Integrating Regional Production Networks and Value Chains) and **The Way Forward**.

Few recommendations from the academic sessions are as follows;

1. The panelists emphasized on primary expectations from India which include greater cooperation in tackling transnational crime and environmental challenges, a more subtle strategic role in the Asia-Pacific and increasing military aid and assistance program to match states like Japan and Australia. It was

reiterated that India must impart greater substance to its Act East Policy by raising its security investment. Other expectations include building mechanisms for information sharing and maritime transparency, India's enhanced help in building capabilities of individual countries in the region, exchange programs between personnel of various countries, and greater importance to bilateral relations with countries like Vietnam.

2. On cyber security, it was suggested the formation of cyber security grid on the lines of NATO Cyber Defence can be considered. With the increasing use of social networking platforms, the speakers accentuated the need to take actions towards the spread of propaganda on these sites. The panelists also spoke about ASEAN's multi ethnicity as a great challenge with clear policies required dealing with it.
3. On socio-cultural issues, it was argued that there is a need to facilitate mobility of practices within ASEAN, exchange information and enhance cooperation. There is a need to recognise educational experience and mutual recognition of degrees are required in several fields including engineering, medicine and nursing. A working group should look after the new ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF).
4. In terms of cultural linkages, the speakers commented on the need for linkages in social, cultural and religious spectrum. There is a need for improving visa facilitation, consular issues, cultural education and tourism. There is a need to bridge the knowledge gap between India and South East Asian countries by increasing people-to-people contacts. Also, this could be achieved by developing India studies programme in South East Asia and South

East Asia studies programme in India. In addition, the participants recommended the need for Indian students to learn South East Asian languages, in particular Bahasa Indonesia and Malay. It was discussed that there is a need to increase student exchange programmes and scholarships, where the students are settled in top universities. There is also a need to examine how Islam developed into two different modes in the east of Indus (India and South East Asia) and west of Indus (Pakistan and West Asia). The role of Islam as a uniting factor in connecting communities in India and South East Asia should be further examined.

5. Recommendations regarding intra-country connectivity included redevelopment of Guwahati-Silchar highway, double-laning of roads linking all 95 district headquarters in the Northeast, broad-gauge railway lines between all state capitals by 2020, improvement in air connectivity among others. As regards regional linkages, it was mentioned that the quick completion of the Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit and Transport Project, development of a mega port on eastern seaboard, development of Moreh township, India-Myanmar-Bangladesh gas pipeline, among others are important.
6. The speakers of the economic session called for the development of regional value chains and the need to attract multi-national investors to develop transportation corridors. They noted that there were many opportunities for ASEAN-India energy cooperation and

the South Asian energy grids could evolve and potentially be connected with ASEAN grids.

Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh remarked that the opening of the border trade pact in Moreh had begun to restore bilateral trade between Manipur and Myanmar. Strategically situated in the eastern most corner of the country, Manipur is a natural corridor to Myanmar and to the rest of South East Asia.... *The Sangai Express, 11 March 2015*

In the last session, the panel deliberated on how to further improve the relations between India and ASEAN. It was noted that since India has been a late entrant in the region, it needs to take some significant initiatives to accelerate the pace of the improvement. Though India's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia and East Asia has evolved over the last two decades and currently paying greater priority to the region than its past record; however, it was suggested that India must further support ASEAN centrality both at the ASEAN framework and also at the international levels. In this regard, the panel viewed the necessity of India's active participation at the East Asia Summits and dialogues. On the other hand, the regional countries must also recognise India as a key strategic partner.

The issue of poor connectivity between India and ASEAN countries was identified as one of the major issue that requires priority. It was argued that India's connectivity efforts have been confined to its Northeastern region. It has ignored maritime connectivity between South Indian port cities and the port cities in the ASEAN region. Moreover, the status of connectivity between the Northeastern region and the ASEAN countries itself is far from satisfactory. It was also emphasized that the existing ideas and projects need to be executed on priority basis before taking up the new ones.

The absence of meaningful journalistic linkages between India and ASEAN countries was highlighted as a pointer of lingering mutual disinterest on the both sides. It was noted that lack of media representation and coverage on regional issues ignores the regional significance. The role of media in improving India-ASEAN relations was therefore emphasized to a great extent. In this regard, the panel suggested having a session on the role of media in the next India-ASEAN dialogue whenever it takes place. The panel also noted the role of diaspora and greater exchange of people to people contacts in improving relationship between the two sides.

As for Delhi Dialogue, it was noted that the event has been continuously organized for several years and it has acquired certain maturity. Ensuring more representation from civil-society, parliamentarians and Universities was advised in the dialogue. Particularly, engaging young scholars was underlined to get fresh ideas. It was noted that there was a need for promoting young scholar exchanges between the two sides. Indian participants urged that now a corresponding event to Delhi Dialogue from ASEAN's side should be introduced. It was proposed that in Delhi Dialogue discussion, business discussions deserve more attention to make the dialogue more relevant. On logistical level, it was suggested that its preparatory work should be spread throughout the year.

Singapore and India, Towards a Shared Future, ed. Amb. G. Pillai et al. Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore, 2015, 199 pp., ISBN 978-981-09-3445-3



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'*Singapore and India Towards a Shared Future*' is a commemorative volume published to celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore.

The book starts with the account of early arrival of the Indians in *Temasek* (as Singapore was called then) along with Sir Stamford Raffles and his Scott companion, Major William Harquhar, both working in the British East India Company, in 1819. The contribution made by different groups of Indians which included labourers, merchants, administrative staff, policemen, money-lenders (mainly Chettians), petty businessmen and many others in the formation of British Singapore has been highlighted in the beginning which gives the book a modest start. Many early Indians in Singapore went there as convicts who contributed to the infrastructural development of Singapore by offering labour. In fact, Indians in Singapore formed around 9 per cent of the island's total population by the advent of the 1900s. (p. 30) The book also tells the story of the Indian National Army's formation in Singapore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's charismatic leadership quality which motivated many Indian

settlers in Singapore to join his force and fight the British.

The authors rightly argues that inevitably, the shared history under British colonialism and the presence of the Indian migrant community in Singapore helped in forming and strengthening the bilateral relation between the two. Followed by the independence of India and Singapore, despite having interest in reassuring bilateral cooperation, it was India's primary defence concerns of being encircled by a possible Pakistan-China-US line-up which did not allow India to widen its naval presence into Southeast Asia. The book also points out the flaws made by the Indian side during the Cold War as it distanced itself from Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries. India's support to Vietnam-backed government in Cambodia and India's signing of the peace and friendship treaty with Soviet Union in 1971 made Singapore and other friendly nations in Southeast Asia little sceptical about India's interests and intentions in the region. The relationship between India and Singapore transformed into a cohesive one in early 1990s with the Rao government embarking on the Look East Policy. The book offers a detail about various visits by the Indian and Singaporean leaders to both countries and their implications on the bilateral relations between the two in a narrative manner. It also

sketches the trade and economic relations between India and Singapore in a structured way. Detail about investments flows between India and Singapore has also been discussed. How Singapore's former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and India's PM Atal Bihari Bajpayee introduced the concept of 'India Fever' amongst the Singaporean businessmen and investors and how this translated India-Singapore economic relations is certainly the highlight of chapter three of the book. The book also focuses on the cultural linkages between India and Singapore by presenting a brief view of Little India, the connection between Indian film industry and Singapore and other forums like literature festival which create enormous interest about Indian culture in Singapore. It proves that Indian cultural legacy is maintained in Singapore by its Indian-Singaporean community

itself. The Indian professionals in Singapore and the Non-resident Indians also play a major role in strengthening Singapore's affiliation with India.

Despite being a good-read, the book is mostly narrative in nature offering lesser analysis which could have been avoided. Also, whether the Government of India has been successful in exploiting the presence of a large number of Indians in Singapore has remained peripheral in the book. Finally, the book does not offer an insight into the problems faced by the Indian communities in Singapore, especially, those who are semi-professionals and unskilled.

Overall, the book is a humble starter for those who wish to work on Indian diaspora in Singapore and India's bilateral relations with Singapore as it has substantial information and sources on record. Furthermore, the rare pictures of historical importance make the book lively and useful.

Southeast Asia

ASEAN

26th ASEAN Summit concluded in Kuala Lumpur

The 26th ASEAN Summit concluded in Kuala Lumpur on April 27 with the adoption of three declarations, including the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on a People-Oriented, People-Centered ASEAN, which reiterates about formation of ASEAN community by the end of this year. The declaration spelled out ASEAN's specific commitments on the political, economic and socio-cultural pillars that will help create sustainable development in the region. The two other documents adopted were the Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates, which solidified ASEAN's recognition of and adherence to moderation as a tool for bridging differences and resolving disputes, and the Declaration on Institutionalizing the Resilience of ASEAN and its Communities and People to Disasters and Climate Change.

The Langkawi Declaration, an initiative championed by Malaysia over the past few years, promotes moderation as a tool for bridging differences. The Declaration was being viewed as one of ASEAN's contributions to global peace and security. The Declaration on Institutionalizing the Resilience of ASEAN and its Communities and People to Disasters and Climate Change is built on the ASEAN Joint

Statement on Climate Change 2014 adopted at last year's summit in Myanmar.¹

Malaysia also continues to use its ASEAN chairmanship year to strengthen regional cooperation against the Islamic state threat, which it has been busy countering at home including during the run-up to the summit itself. Malaysia was already set to convene a Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Radicalization and Extremism in October. But there are also reports suggesting a potential informal ministerial meeting between Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand next month as well.

Some of the expected measures which were not tabled or put off during the summit included a common ASEAN time zone. ASEAN currently has four different time zones; alignment to single time zone would facilitate business dealings and would help forge a more cohesive ASEAN Community expected by the end of 2015. The idea was originally proposed by Singapore back in 1995, but differences still remain within the grouping on the matter. Little progress has been done on the South China Sea issue. Despite efforts by Philippines, the country chair Malaysia was not ready to take up any concrete action in the form of a joint statement condemning China's assertive behavior on the South China Sea. This again shows the lack of togetherness amongst the ASEAN states on the issue. The draft statement mentioned that China's land reclamation efforts are destabilizing peace, security and stability; however, beyond these steps, little progress took place.²

¹ 3 declarations adopted in 26th ASEAN Summit, *Inter Aksyon*, available at: <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/109640/3-declarations-adopted-in-26th-asean-summit>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

² What Did the 26th ASEAN Summit Achieve?, *The Diplomat*, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/what-did-the-26th-asean-summit-achieve/>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

ISIS Attack Foiled on ASEAN Summit

Malaysian police, on April 26, arrested 12 people linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and seized explosives, foiling a plan to attack several locations in and around the capital city just one day before the country was set to host the ASEAN summit. The male accused, aged 17 to 41, were suspected of plotting attacks on strategic targets and governmental interests around the Klang Valley. The plans were in response to calls by ISIS to launch terrorist attacks on moderate Islamic countries seen as “enemies of ISIS”. Following the attacks, the Malaysian Police heightened the security for the ASEAN summit, but it was not confirmed whether the attack was linked to the summit. The Southeast Asian country has not seen any significant militant attacks but has arrested 92 citizens on suspicion of links to ISIS. Authorities have identified 39 Malaysians in Syria and Iraq.³

ASEAN Chief Justices Meet in Boracay

Philippine Chief Justice Maria Lourdes P. A. Sereno, on March 2, led the top jurists of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in a discussion on judicial concerns on trade, investments, services and facilities in the light of the economic integration of the region. A press statement issued by the Philippine Supreme Court said the justices shared their respective judiciaries’ best practices in the use of technology, legal education

and training in a meeting in Boracay, Aklan. Details of the discussion were not divulged in the press statement. The participating Chief Justices discussed the establishment of working groups to further strengthen ties, cooperation and coordination among the ASEAN judiciaries. They agreed to further enhance judicial cooperation in the ASEAN region.⁴

ASEAN defence ministers sign security declaration

Defence ministers from the 10 Southeast Asian countries inked a joint declaration on March 17. The declaration is focused on strengthening regional security on issues ranging from the Islamic State (IS) to the South China Sea. At the 9th ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) held in Langkawi, Malaysia, the ministers signed a joint declaration that reaffirmed their commitment to address common security challenges. In the statement, according to press, the South China Sea did get a mention, with all parties underscoring “the importance of freedom of navigation in, and over-flight above, the South China Sea as provided for by universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea.”

The ministers adopted the concept papers on the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as the establishment of the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine proposed by Thailand. Movement was also made in response to the request for informal engagements or meetings by ADMM-Plus nations, which include

³ Malaysia police say violent plot foiled ahead of Asean summit, *Strait Times*, available at: <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/12-people-armed-explosives-planning-causing-chaos-nabbed-malaysia-20#sthash.2TIOXtnk.dpuf>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁴ ASEAN chief justices meet in Boracay, *Manila Bulletin*, available at: <http://www.mb.com.ph/asean-chief-justices-meet-in-boracay/#7KhadfKOzifCTuTG.99>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

There was also mention of cooperation to counter the “imminent threat” of terrorist or extremist organisations and radical groups through information-sharing, surveillance and promoting public awareness. Local media reports said Malaysia’s defense minister Hishammuddin Hussein chose to highlight this as a priority and said there was unanimous agreement on the global and regional threat that IS poses.⁵

ASEAN Navies’ South China Sea patrols to be supported by USA

The head of U.S. naval forces in the Western Pacific said the U.S. would support an emerging plan to create multi-national patrols in the South China Sea that could bear similarities to anti-piracy patrols in the Strait of Malacca. During a meeting with naval leaders from Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), U.S. 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Robert Thomas said the U.S. would back a combined ASEAN maritime patrol in the hotly contested region. According to reports, the Pentagon welcomed collaborative efforts to bolster maritime security in the Asia-Pacific, including ASEAN-led efforts and insisted that close

cooperation between and among ASEAN member-states is critical to sustaining peace and prosperity in the region. Any maritime patrol force with U.S. involvement or approval would certainly raise eyebrows in China.⁶

ASEAN-India

China spies on India, Southeast Asia: Reports

Hackers, most likely from China, have been spying on governments and businesses in Southeast Asia and India uninterrupted for a decade, researchers at internet security company FireEye Inc said. In a report released on April 13, FireEye said the cyber espionage operations dated back to at least 2005 and focused on targets - government and commercial - who hold key political, economic and military information about the region. The report also speculated that such a sustained, planned development effort coupled with the (hacking) group’s regional targets and mission, indicate that this activity could be state-sponsored - most likely by the Chinese government. Bryce Boland, Chief Technology Officer for Asia Pacific at FireEye and co-author of the report said the attack was still ongoing, noting that the servers the attackers used were still operational, and that FireEye continued to see attacks against its customers, who number among the targets.⁷

⁵ ASEAN Defense Ministers Sign Security Declaration, *The Diplomat*, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/asean-defense-ministers-sign-security-declaration/>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁶ U.S. 7th Fleet Would Support ASEAN South China Sea Patrols, *USNI News*, available at: <http://news.usni.org/2015/03/20/u-s-7th-fleet-would-support-asean-south-china-sea-patrols>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁷ Chinese hackers target Southeast Asia, India, researchers say, *Reuters*, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/13/us-cybersecurity-fireeye-report-idUSKBNON40AD20150413>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Meanwhile China has denied the report and said that it “firmly bans” all forms of hacker attacks. A statement issued by Chinese foreign ministry stated that hacker attack was a problem faced by the international community and thus the international community should cooperate instead of making speculation and accusations against each other.⁸

India boosts ASEAN engagement with dedicated mission

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated a dedicated mission for the 10-member bloc in Jakarta on April 23. The mission helps India in expressing its readiness to bolster cooperation with ASEAN in collectively addressing the ‘traditional and non-traditional’ security challenges facing the region. Inaugurating the mission, the Minister said India is committed to match the expectations from its friends in the region to play a ‘more active role’. The event was also attended by ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Minh and Director General I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja.

Mrs Swaraj said the dedicated mission reflects India’s sincere commitment to intensify its engagement with ASEAN. She also informed media that Indian officials were also actively engaged in drafting the next five-year Action Plan for the period 2016-21 for furthering ASEAN-India Cooperation. The Minister said that ASEAN lies at the core of India’s Act East

policy, which focusses on reorienting partnership with East Asian countries in the 21st century context to make it more pragmatic, action driven and result oriented. Mrs Swaraj was in Jakarta on a five-day trip to attend Asian African conference.

The work, assigned to new mission, had been handled by the Indian embassy in Jakarta but with increasing engagement with South East Asia, it was decided in 2013 to have a separate and dedicated diplomatic mission to cater to the growing diplomatic needs. Last year, Suresh K Reddy, a veteran diplomat, was appointed as Ambassador to the Indian Mission to ASEAN, which is also headquartered in Jakarta.⁹

Northeast India-Look East Policy

LCS Inaugurated at Zawkhathar

Nirmala Sitharaman, India’s commerce and industry minister has inaugurated a Land Custom Station (LCS) at Zawkhathar in Champhai district, Mizoram to augment India-Myanmar border trade. During the inauguration ceremony, she said that government has adopted a mission mode approach for Northeast India’s connectivity and completion of the pending projects now. She also said that more *border haats* will be set up in Northeast India and the volume of border trade through the region will be increased to USD 3 billion in 2015-2016. She also pledged to open a State Bank of India’s branch in Zawkhathar and echoed the urgency to complete the Rhi-Tidim road as soon

⁸ China denies spying on networks in India, Southeast Asia, *India Today*, available at: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/china-hacking-spying-india-southeast-asia/1/429939.html>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁹ India boosts ASEAN engagement with dedicated mission, *Economic Times*, available at: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-23/news/61457697_1_indian-mission-asean-india-cooperation-act-east, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

as possible. The land custom station at Zawkhathar will increase border trade between the Mizo people residing across the borders of the two countries.¹⁰

Cultural Festival Inaugurated by the President

President Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the 'Songs and Dances of the North East' festival, organized by the Meghalaya Government and the North-East Council of India on April 11. During his speech, the President said, "The region has a crucial role to play in the implementation of the government's Act East Policy, which seeks to build closer bonds with the 10 countries of ASEAN which are amongst the fastest growing countries of the world". The festival was organized so that the cultural richness of the region can be showcased to people across the country and can benefit the region by attracting investments from industries including the Bollywood, mentioned Dr. Jitendra Singh, minister for the Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER).¹¹

New Flights for Northeast Announced

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr. Jitendra

Singh had announced that a direct flight between New Delhi and Dimapur in Nagaland would be operational from April 15. In addition, another flight would be operational between Kolkata and Silchar. The announcements were made at the 64th Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC). Dr. Singh also announced that three hangers have been constructed at Guwahati Airport so that it can serve as the regional hub for the aviation industry in the Northeast region. So far, air connectivity between Northeast and rest of India as well as Northeast and Southeast Asia has been a matter of concern for all stakeholders including the state and central governments.¹²

Singapore's Importance in Act East Policy Reiterated

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Singapore to pay tribute to Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and to attend his funeral. There, Mr. Modi announced that Singapore is the key pillar of India's Act East Policy. This was Mr. Modi's first visit to Singapore as the prime minister. India is seeking Singapore's help in building smart cities. Singapore is one of the few Southeast Asian countries which truly believes that India can balance China's increasing influence in the region. Modi also met the Deputy PM of Singapore and former PM Goh Chok Tong.¹³

¹⁰ Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates Land Customs Station at Indo-Myanmar border, The Economic Times, 25 March 2015, available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-25/news/60474926_1_indo-myanmar-border-border-trade-centre-industry-minister-nirmala-sitharaman, accessed on March 30, 2015.

¹¹ NE region crucial for Act East Policy: Prez, The Assam Tribune, April 11, 2015, available at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1215/at052>, accessed on April 22, 2015.

¹² "Delhi-Nagaland direct flight announced", NITI Central, April 10, 2015, available at <http://www.niticentral.com/2015/04/10/delhi-nagaland-direct-flight-announced-309374.html>, accessed on April 22, 2015.

¹³ Singapore prime focus of India's act east policy, says PM Modi, The Economic Times, March 30, 2015, available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-30/news/60644073_1_pm-narendra-modi-lee-kuan-yew-smart-cities, accessed on April 22, 2015.

Brunei

Brunei-Singapore Defence Ties

The Commander of the Royal Brunei Navy's (RBN) First Admiral (FADM) Dato Seri Pahlawan Abdul Aziz Haji Mohammad Tamit visited Singapore and met the Minister of Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen in the first week of March 2015 as a part of his farewell visit. He also met Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant-General Ng Chee Meng and Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral Lai Chung Han and inspected a Guard of Honour. The Ministry of Defence, Singapore issued a statement saying that the three day visit by the FADM underscored the importance of close bilateral defence ties between Brunei and Singapore which already share a vast range of interactions with each other including bilateral exercises, professional exchanges and cross-attendance of courses. The FADM, Brunei visited Singapore in 2014 as well.¹⁴ In the month of April Brunei and Singapore also held the 20th edition of the bilateral Exercise Maju Bersama.¹⁵

Proposal to Amend the Nationality Act Rejected

In a legislative council meeting in early March 2015, YB Pehin Dato Goh King Chin proposed to amend the existing Nationality Act and grant citizenship to

those who are aged 60 and above. Brunei's nationality act grants citizenship to the seven indigenous Malay races namely Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut and Tutong. YB Pehin Dato Goh King Chin mentioned that this makes many people stateless in Brunei. He also mentioned that neighbouring countries like Australia, Malaysia, Singapore which were under British administration at one point of time granted citizenships to all those who were citizens during the British administration. But in the case of Brunei, followed by its independence from the British, the country did not allow all residents to become its citizens. In response, the home minister, Yang Berhormat Pehin Udana Khatib Dato Paduka Seri Setia Ustaz Hj Awg Badaruddin Pengarah Dato Paduka Hj Awg Othman said that the independence of Brunei had no relation with the citizenships of the residents and the Nationality Act need not be changed.¹⁶

China's Maritime Silk Road Exhibition in Brunei

Quanzhou Maritime Museum and the Brunei Museums Department under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports organized an exhibition in Brunei to showcase ancient relationship between China and Brunei (located in Borneo) as a part of China's Maritime Silk Road connectivity project. Brunei's historical linkage with China dated back to the West Han dynasty of 202 BC. The traders from both countries used to visit each other and as a result

¹⁴ Commander of Royal Brunei Navy makes farewell visit to Singapore, Channel News Asia, March 4, 2015, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/commander-of-royal-brunei/1694216.html>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

¹⁵ Singapore and Brunei armies hold 20th bilateral military exercise, The Straits Times, May 5, 2015, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/singapore-and-brunei-armies-hold-20th-bilateral-military>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

¹⁶ Proposal to amend Brunei's law on citizenship turned down, Asia One, March 12, 2015, available at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/proposal-amend-bruneis-law-citizenship-turned-down>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

many Chinese artifacts have been found in Brunei. The exhibition had artifacts made of porcelain, gravestone, ship models, ancient coins, historical images and documents.¹⁷

Cambodia

New Bridge Constructed to Enhance Connectivity

The 2.2-km Tsubasa Bridge was inaugurated by the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on April 6 at Loeuk Dek District, Cambodia. The bridge will connect Phnom Penh with the provinces of Svay Rieng and Prey Veng as well as neighbouring country, Vietnam. The bridge was built with the financial assistance from Japan. The bridge is a part of a long road connectivity project between Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok via Phnom Penh and Poipet City, a segment of the ASEAN Highway 1. The Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA), which has funded the bridge, mentioned that the proposed highway is supposed to be completed by 2020.¹⁸

PM Hun Sen Supports China's Bilateral Approach to Resolve South China Sea Disputes

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, in a gathering of students at the National Institute of Education in Cambodia, said

that South China Sea disputes are not between ASEAN and China; rather, between the claimant states and China. Henceforth, he argued that the territorial disputes need to be resolved bilaterally between the claimant states. He also reiterated the importance of maintaining the Declaration of Conduct (DOC) and implementation of the Code of Conduct (COC). The remarks of Mr. Hun Sen ahead of the 26th ASEAN Summit, scheduled for 24-27 April 2015, gave significant signal. Many ASEAN countries are in favour of taking a unified stand as China's assertive behaviour in South China Sea is a warning bell for them. ASEAN, in general, supports multilateral approach which is contrary to China's bilateral approach to solve the disputes.¹⁹

Resettlement of Refugees in Cambodia Under Question

The question of asylum-seekers who are currently at Nauru Island still remains uncertain. In 2014, Australia and Cambodia signed a deal under which Cambodia agreed to resettle an unidentified number of refugees in return of a \$31 million aid package from Australia. Those refugees wanted to settle in Australia which was not acceptable to the later. Many of the asylum-seekers are from countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Iran. So far, only one Iranian agreed to resettle in Cambodia. Cambodia has been consistently advocating that it would resettle only those who are willing to stay in Cambodia. In such a situation, the fate of those asylum-seekers remains under

¹⁷ China's Quanzhou "Maritime Silk Road" exhibition opens in Brunei, Global Times, March 24, 2015, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/913708.shtml>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

¹⁸ At Bridge Opening, Hun Sen Praises Japan, Self, Ouch Sony and Matt Blomberg, The Cambodia Daily, April 7, 2015, available at <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/at-bridge-opening-hun-sen-praises-japan-self-81528/>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

¹⁹ S China Sea dispute not between ASEAN, China: Cambodian PM, Want China Times, 26 March 2015, available at <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150326000176&cid=1101>, accessed on March 30, 2015.

question.²⁰ Australia's Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's office did not specify when the first group will fly under the bilateral agreement signed by Cambodia and Australia last September. The intergovernmental International Organization for Migration sent an official to Nauru with an expectation of possible movements in the coming days, IOM's Bangkok-based spokesman Joe Lowry said. The deal with Cambodia will cost the Australian government more than 10 million Australian dollars (\$7.6 million) a year and has been condemned by human rights groups.²¹

East Timor

East Timor would not give up dispute on oil and maritime boundary with Australia

Timor-Leste's former leader Xanana Gusmao once again warned Australia that his fledgling nation will not back away from a dispute between the two countries over lucrative oil reserves below the Timor Sea. Australia and Timor-Leste are currently locked in a standoff over the maritime boundary between the two countries, which determines who is entitled to what share of that resource. In 2013 East Timor launched a case in The Hague alleging the Australia Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) covertly recorded Timorese ministers and officials

during oil and gas negotiations in Dili in 2004, allegedly giving Australia the upper hand. Late last year Australia and Timor-Leste agreed to suspend the International Court of Justice hearing into their bitter spy row in an effort to resolve their differences amicably.

But during a media interview in Canberra, Mr Gusmao reiterated his nation's determination to ensure its sovereignty is not compromised by the maritime boundary issue. He said building the oil sector was key to Timor-Leste's plans for future growth to ensure jobs and prosperous future for its people. A former resistance fighter, Ms Gusmao was prime minister of his country for seven years until February, when he stepped down to facilitate a generational leadership transition. He was his country's first president in 2002 after a 24-year struggle against Indonesian occupation.²²

Timor Leste hopeful about ASEAN membership

Timor Leste's recently elected government remains committed to the young nation's aspirations to join ASEAN and is now working hard on all fronts to ensure that it would be able to meet the requirements and future participation in ASEAN.

Timor Leste had applied to join ASEAN in 2011 under its Fourth Constitutional Government. The Fifth Constitutional Government took office on 8 August 2012. Timor Leste's application is currently being considered by the ASEAN Coordinating Council and its Working Group.

²⁰ Peter, Zsombor, "Asylum Seekers On Fast Track to Cambodia, Group Says", *The Cambodia Daily*, April 21, 2015, at <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/asylum-seekers-on-fast-track-to-cambodia-group-says-82208/>.

²¹ Australia Says Nauru Refugees Will Soon Be Sent to Cambodia, *ABC News*, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-nauru-refugees-cambodia-30353043>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²² Timor-Leste will not give up in dispute over oil, maritime boundary: former leader Xanana Gusmao, *ABC News*, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-17/timor-leste-will-not-give-up-dispute-over-oil-gusmao/6325332>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

This year marks an important milestone in the development of Timor Leste as an independent nation as it ceases to be an agenda of the United Nations Security Council and will see the full withdrawal of the UN from the country by year end.²³

Indonesia

Indonesia draws international ire for eight executions

Indonesian President Joko Widodo came under severe criticism meted out by global leaders, media and celebrities for not averting the death penalty of eight of the nine drug convicts. The two of these convicts were from Australia, four from Nigeria, one from Brazil and one from Indonesia. Another Filipino woman was spared last minute after her recruiter surrendered to the Indonesian authorities. The death of these convicts by firing squads escalated tensions between Indonesia and Australia, which resulted in Australia recalling its ambassador and heavily criticizing Indonesian actions at a global scale.²⁴

Australia has conducted a lengthy and intensive campaign to save the lives of its citizens and had proposed money and prisoner exchange as bargaining chips. But months of high-level diplomatic representations and high-profile

campaigns failed to sway the Indonesian president, also known as Jokowi, who has described narcotics as a “national emergency” and pledged to clear the country’s death row of drug offenders. Although official figures are not available, but according to media reports, it is estimated that around 33 foreigners remain on death row in Indonesia for drug crimes. The possible executions of these convicts are only likely to escalate tension between Indonesia and global leaders.²⁵

Indonesia rescues 300 slaves from remote island, mostly from Myanmar

Indonesia, on April 4, rescued more than 300 fishermen from forced labour and slavery in the remote island of Benjina. The group of fishermen, who mainly came from Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand, were freed following an investigation into claims of human trafficking by the Associated Press news agency. The exploited workers, who were trapped in forced labour for up to 10 years, say they were forced to work without pay, severely abused and locked up in cells. Asep Burhanudin, the director general of Indonesia’s Ministry of Fishery and Maritime Affairs, said the fishermen were given electroshocks and tortured if they complained of being ill and were treated inhumanely if they became sleepy during work. The International Organisation for Migration has reported that as many as 4,000 people in the areas surrounding Benjina have been exploited in the fishing industry.²⁶

²³ Timor Leste remains steadfast to ASEAN aspiration, *ASEAN website*, available at: <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/timor-leste-remains-steadfast-to-asean-aspiration>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²⁴ Indonesia executes drug convicts, sparks anger from Australia, Brazil, *Reuters*, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/28/us-indonesia-executions-idUSKBN0N12F820150428>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²⁵ Australia recalls ambassador after executions in Indonesia, *RTE News*, available at: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2015/0428/697219-indonesia-bali-nine/>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²⁶ More than 300 slave fishermen now safe on Indonesian island, *Yahoo News*, available at: <http://news.yahoo.com/ap-investigation-prompts-emergency-rescue-300-plus-slaves-052136674.html>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Indonesia military vows war on IS

The Indonesian military has vowed to wage war on followers of the extremist Islamic State group in Indonesia. According to reports, the Indonesian Military (TNI) believed that ISIS should not be given any opportunity to develop its ground in Indonesia or elsewhere. Speaking at the armed forces' headquarters in Cilangkap, East Jakarta, on March 30, TNI commander General Moeldoko said Indonesians currently in Syria and Iraq to join IS would likely try to spread at home what they have learned in the war-torn nations. "We cannot let this happen. That is why the TNI is conducting training there (in Poso). We're conducting large-scale quick-response strike force training there. It is to send [the militants] a message: 'don't even try to enter Poso,'" Moeldoko said. He added that the training was also in preparation of the military's planned anti-radicalism operations.²⁷

Indonesia protests beheading of migrant worker in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia executed an Indonesian domestic worker on April 16 just days after beheading another woman from the country, prompting the Indonesian foreign ministry to summon the kingdom's ambassador, Jakarta said. Karni binti Medi Tarsim, 37, was convicted of murdering a four-year-old girl in 2012,

according to a statement from the Indonesian foreign ministry. Her execution in Yanbu, western Saudi Arabia, came two days after another Indonesian helper, Siti Zainab, was beheaded for murder. In both cases, Jakarta expressed anger that it was not given advance notice of the execution.²⁸

Indonesian army chief makes introductory visit to Singapore

The Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army (TNI-AD), General Gatot Nurmantyo, was in Singapore for his introductory visit during April 14 to 16, the Singaporean Ministry of Defence (Mindef) announced in a press release on April 15. The visit by Gen Gatot underscores the strong and long-standing defence relationships between Singapore and Indonesia, said Mindef. The ministry added that the Singapore Army and the TNI-AD interact regularly through a range of activities including bilateral exercises, cross-attendance of courses and professional exchanges. These extensive interactions have strengthened interoperability as well as deepened mutual understanding between the two armies.²⁹

Indonesia eyes navy exercises with US in disputed waters

Indonesia wants to hold regular military exercises with the United States near the sparsely populated Natuna archipelago, an area of the South China Sea near China's claims, a navy spokesman said on April 13. Although

²⁷ Indonesia military vows war on IS as survey shows sympathy among students, *UCA News*, available at: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesia-military-vows-war-on-is-as-survey-shows-sympathy-among-students/73285>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²⁸ Saudi Arabia executes second Indonesia woman: Jakarta, *Strait Times*, available at: <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/saudi-arabia-executes-second-indonesia-woman-jakarta-20150416#sthash.ZIT3XH0Q.K7PW1dZr.dpuf>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

²⁹ Indonesian army chief makes introductory visit to Singapore, *Channel NewsAsia*, available at: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/indonesian-army-chief/1785294.html>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Indonesia is not a claimant in the South China Sea, the military has accused China of including parts of Natuna within its so called "Nine-Dash Line," the vague boundary used on Chinese maps to lay claim to about 90 per cent of the sea. The United States, which raised concerns in April about China's rapid reclamation of reefs in the area, held a joint military exercise over the weekend with Indonesia in Batam, about 300 miles (480 km) from Natuna. It was the second joint exercise Indonesia conducted with the United States in that area and according to reports the two nations are planning another one next year.³⁰

Laos

China's Investments in Laos for Rail Connectivity

China and Laos will sign a construction contract to build a high-speed railway to connect these two countries as well as Thailand. The cost of the project is estimated at \$7.2 billion. Laos's officials met their counterparts from Thailand on March 10 to identify the scope of cooperation as the railway line will be extended to Thailand. In August 2014, Laos, Thailand and China discussed the matter of the railway project in Myanmar on the sidelines of the regional forum

meeting. The original plan was supposed to be implemented by 2015; however, the Lao Parliament gave its green signal only in 2012. Besides this railway project, Laos is involved in two other railway projects; one aims to connect Laos with Thailand and Vietnam and the other one will connect Laos and Thailand. The landlocked country Laos wants to be connected with all neighbouring countries in the region in order to bring more investments and enhance trade.³¹

Laos Prime Minister Visited Japan

The Prime Minister of Laos Thongsing Thammavong visited Japan in the early days of March 2015. The prime minister announced that Laos has a goal to achieve a growth rate of more than 7.5% in the years to come and the country's potential includes rich natural resources, stable political and social life and low-risk of natural disasters. Laos has expressed its gratitude to Japan for its extensive support so far and expressed that the country would be requiring more assistance in terms of infrastructure and human resource development. Both the prime ministers met during a summit meeting and agreed to hold a security dialogue later this year.³²

Trade Ties between Laos and Vietnam

The Lao Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade replaced the 1998 trade agreement with a new

³⁰ Indonesia eyes navy exercises with US in disputed waters, *ABS CBN News*, available at: <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/world/04/13/15/indonesia-eyes-navy-exercises-us-disputed-waters>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

³¹ Laos and China Prepare to Sign Construction Contract for High-Speed Railway Project, 13 March 2015, *Radio Free Asia*, available at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-china-prepare-to-sign-railway-construction-contract-03132015135705.html>, accessed on 23 March 2015.

³² Laos' Thongsing meets with Abe, vows to deepen ties with Japan, *Japan Times*, March 6, 2015, available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/06/national/politics-diplomacy/laos-thongsing-meets-with-abe-vows-to-deepen-ties-with-japan/#.VUHmofBQ2Vo>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

one on March 3. Under this agreement Laos and Vietnam will eliminate tariffs from 95% of commodities originating from either of the countries. This agreement is likely to increase trade volume between Laos and Vietnam. Besides this agreement, the capitals of Laos and Vietnam have been involved in bilateral cooperation agreements on issues ranging from tourism, culture and budget and financial management.³³

Malaysia

Anti-Terrorism Bill Passed

Malaysia has passed an anti- terrorism bill which will reintroduce indefinite jail term without trial. The Malaysian prime minister said that this is important to fight the Islamic extremism. The new legislation will allow a board to punish the suspects for two years without trial. The judiciary will have lesser role in deciding the punishment. The bill is expected to get sanction from the Senate. In 2012, Malaysia revoked its Internal Security Act which permitted indefinite jail sentence for the suspects without trial as the public statements went against the act. The new bill, if implemented as a law or act will be a blow to the democracy in the country, mentioned an opposition law-maker.³⁴

Anwar Ibrahim's Jail Sentence Opposed by the White House

The White House has issued a statement which is critical of Anwar Ibrahim's jail

sentence in Malaysia. Before the statement from White House was released, *We The People*, an online platform, managed to get signatures from 100,000 people and filed a petition to the White House demanding US' prompt reaction against Anwar Ibrahim's jail term. Anwar Ibrahim's party, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat mentioned that they are happy with the statement released by the White House. Anwar Ibrahim was sent to jail in February 2015 on sodomy charges. Shockingly, the online petition was later taken down as many signatures were found to be fraud. The Malaysian government supporters are accusing US for being interfering in Malaysia's internal affairs and trying to create chaos in Malaysia. On the other hand, the PKR has decided to continue their protest for Anwar's freedom.³⁵ They argue that the judiciary in Malaysia has been used by the government as a machinery to unsettle the opposition.

Myanmar

Draft Peace Deal signed with 16 Ethnic Group Representatives amid Allegation of Human Rights Violation

Myanmar government and 16 representatives from various ethnic groups signed a draft ceasefire agreement in March 2015 with an aim to end decade-old ethnic violence in the country. President Thein Sein was hopeful as he expressed that within months the final agreement would be signed and the way for political dialogue would start. Though groups like Kachin Independence Army and Karen

³³ Vietnam ratifies trade agreement with Laos, Vietnam Net, March 3, 2015, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/127512/vietnam-ratifies-trade-agreement-with-laos.html>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

³⁴ Malaysia passes controversial anti-terror bill, BBC News, April 7, 2015, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32194636>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

³⁵ White House condemns Malaysian opposition leader Anwar's conviction, Sumisha Naidu, 13 March 2015, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/white-house-condemns/1714224.html>, accessed on 23 March 2015.

National Union signed the draft deal, the Kokang rebels are still not in the same frame and fighting between them and government appointed army is disrupting peace and stability in parts of Shan state, along China-Myanmar border. The leaders from the armed ethnic groups will now review the draft agreement before it gets finalized. The nominally civilian government in Myanmar will achieve significant recognition if the final peace deal can be signed before the coming election.³⁶ While the efforts for a nation-wide ceasefire agreement is going on, the question of human rights, students' rights and women rights is still vague and unclear in Myanmar. Even in March, the police brutally attacked some students who were marching against a proposed education bill which they say would jeopardize the freedom in academics.³⁷

President Thein Sein Holding Talks with Political Parties on various Issues before the Election

Few days ahead of the high-level six-party talk on constitutional reform, President Thein Sein hosted a discussion with representatives from 42 political parties including Daw Aung Saan Suu Kyi at his home in Nay Pyi Taw on April 8 to deliberate on matters relating to the nation-wide ceasefire agreement and upcoming presidential election. The chairman of the Union Election Commission was also present in the

meeting and he pledged to hold a free and fair election. Two days later, on April 10, the six-party talk was arranged where President Thein Sein, opposition leader Aung Saan Suu Kyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defence Service Min Aung Hlaing, Upper House Speaker Khin Aung Myint, lower house speaker Shwe Mann and Arakan National Party leader Aye Maung were present. The question of amendments to the 2008 Constitution which bars Suu Kyi from participating in the presidential election as her two sons are foreign nationals is still unclear. Lawmakers are of the opinion that the referendum may not take place in May 2015 as scheduled and without it, the amendment won't eventuate before this year's election. The other point of discussion was introduction of proportional representation system in the upcoming election. So far, 14 political parties have endorsed the system in a hearing concluded in the Upper House and they hoped that this system would end discrimination against smaller ethnic parties. But 16 political parties including the National League for Democracy (NLD) have rejected the idea. On the other hand, the ruling party, Union Solidarity and Development party (USDP) wants to introduce the proportional representation system as they fear a landslide victory by the NLD in the upcoming general election.³⁸

The Plight of the Kokang Continues in Myanmar

The Myanmar army continues to fight the Kokang rebels (the Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army – MNDAA) at China-

³⁶ Myanmar Signs Draft Peace Deal With Armed Ethnic Groups, S. Mahtani and Myo Myo, The Wall Street Journal, March 31, 2015, available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/myanmar-rebel-groups-sign-draft-cease-fire-deal-1427788232>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

³⁷ Dozens arrested in crackdown on Myanmar student protest, Manny Maung, CNN, March 11, 2015, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/10/world/myanmar-student-protest-crackdown/>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

³⁸ Myanmar's Thein Sein Holds Rare 42-Party Talks on Elections, Peace Pact, Radio Free Asia, April 8, 2015, available at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/talks-04082015144849.html>, accessed on April 16, 2015.

Myanmar border regions and the bombing from their side has injured many local residents. The Chinese soldiers, guarding the border, are not confronting the Myanmar army as they are afraid of getting injured by the shelling. The local residents complained that the Myanmar army has sent aircraft and they have control over the region. Before the intensification of shelling on April 20, the local residents also saw few Chinese aircrafts on the sky and they believed that China would rescue them. That did not happen though. Most of the residents of Laukkai (the regional capital of Kokang area) have fled to China to avoid persecution by the Myanmar army. A volunteer from a refugee camp, located in Yunnan, reported that near-about 60,000 Kokang refugees have sought shelter in the camp. The Myanmar government appointed Kokang Region Rehabilitation Support Committee is trying to help few Kokang residents who have fled their homes since the fight intensified between the Myanmar army and the MNDA.³⁹

Philippines

Philippines Air Force receives its first ever C-295 aircraft

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) formally received the first of three brand new C295s from Spanish firm Airbus Military on March 30. The other two are expected to be delivered by next year. The brand new

transport plane of the PAF is ready for deployment. It can transport humanitarian assistance and disaster relief requirements like rescue teams, medical teams, etc. The medium lift-fixed wing aircraft is the equivalent of the F-27 Fokker transport aircraft in the existing inventory of the PAF. But unlike the Fokker, the C295 has an open ramp at the backside to allow for easier loading and unloading of passengers and cargoes. According to reports, Filipino military would have preferred the C130s but the budget allocation can only afford medium lift aircraft.

The need for more cargo planes was recognized after the back-to-back disasters of 2013 – the Zamboanga siege, the Bohol earthquake, and Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan). The military only has 3 operational C130 cargo planes. In the aftermath of Yolanda, the Philippines relied on cargo planes provided by foreign militaries to transport relief goods into the typhoon-ravaged island provinces and evacuate people out of these areas. The C295 can carry up to 71 passengers, 50 paratroops, 24 stretchers with 5 to 7 attendants or up to about 20,000 pounds of cargoes. It is also capable of short field landing and takeoff.⁴⁰

Japan provides military assistance to Philippines, Vietnam

Japan is quietly forging security ties with the Philippines and Vietnam as both Southeast Asian nations try to cope with China's territorial ambitions. Tokyo is supplying maritime patrol boats to the two countries while it plans to hold its first naval exercises with the Philippines in

³⁹ "Kokang Border Conflict Intensifies, Myanmar Shells Fall in China: Residents", *Radio Free Asia*, April 20, 2015, at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/kokang-border-conflict-intensifies-04202015165745.html>.

⁴⁰ Airbus delivers first C-295 aircraft to Philippines Air Force, *airforce-technology.com*, available at: <http://www.airforce-technology.com/news/newsairbus-delivers-first-c-295-aircraft-to-philippines-air-force-4536812>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

the coming months. Japanese military doctors are even advising Vietnamese submariners on how to deal with decompression sickness. Japan is providing this help, and more, in a calibrated escalation of involvement to avoid a backlash from Beijing, said Japanese sources with knowledge of the assistance.

Manila and Hanoi are the two capitals most at odds with Beijing over the South China Sea. Japan itself is embroiled in a bitter row with China over uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, further to the north. Tokyo has no territorial claims in the South China Sea, but worried about becoming isolated should China dominate a waterway through which much of Japan's ship-borne trade passes.⁴¹

China's Air Force Conducts Exercise between Taiwan and Philippines

On March 30, China's air force held its first exercise in western Pacific Ocean airspace. As reported by the South China Morning Post, the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) carried out drills in the air over the Bashi Channel, the body of water between Taiwan and the Philippines archipelago, considered the rim of the first island chain. The purpose of the exercise was to boost the PLAAF's capability to carry out far-sea operations. Little is known about the specifics of the exercise.

Colonel Shen Jinke, the PLAAF spokesperson who was quoted by a Chinese military news outlet, gave little information about the number of aircraft involved or specific types.⁴²

Philippines, Vietnam hold defence policy dialogue

Deputy Defence Minister Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and his Philippine counterpart Honorio S Azcueta on April 13 met for the the first Vietnam- Philippines defence policy dialogue in Hanoi. At the dialogue, the two sides assessed the global and regional situation and issues of shared concerns; and reviewed the results of defence cooperation over recent years. They agreed that the Vietnam – Philippines defence cooperation continued to grow steadily across a variety of realms in a practical and effective manner. Regarding orientations for future cooperation, they consented to realize areas of cooperation under the framework of the bilateral defence cooperation agreement signed in October 2010. Accordingly, both sides pledged to continue intensifying all-level delegation exchanges, maintain and improve the efficiency of deputy-ministerial dialogue mechanisms aiming to build confidence and perception on international and regional matters and bilateral relations.⁴³

US to deploy equipment to Philippines

The United States is planning to deploy 'various advanced air and naval equipment' to the

⁴¹ Testing Beijing, Japan eyes growing role in South China Sea security, GMA News, available at: <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/450281/news/world/testing-beijing-japan-eyes-growing-role-in-south-china-sea-security>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁴² China's Air Force Conducts Exercise Between Taiwan and the Philippines, *The Diplomat*, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/chinas-air-force-conducts-exercise-between-taiwan-and-the-philippines/>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁴³ The Philippines, Vietnam hold defence policy dialogue, *Vietnam Net*, available at: <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/128092/the-philippines-vietnam-hold-defence-policy-dialogue.html>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Philippines in view of China's massive reclamation works in the South China Sea, Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario has said. In an interview to a news channel on April 15, Mr del Rosario said US Defence Secretary Ash Carter has 'outlined' this plan which was welcomed by Manila , Mr del Rosario said he would fly to Washington soon to meet Mr Carter and US State Secretary John Kerry to discuss the planned deployment. Commenting on the US plan to deploy air and naval assets to the Philippines, defence consultant Jose Custodio said 'these are practically useless'. He said he expects the US to deploy destroyers, littoral ships, submarines and surveillance aircraft 'only for knowing what the Chinese are doing'. Meanwhile, Beijing dismissed as 'groundless' President Benigno Aquino's warning on April 14 that China's actions in the South China Sea 'should engender fear for the rest of the world'.⁴⁴

Singapore

Founder of Modern Singapore Lee Kuan Yew Passed Away

The founder of independent Singapore and the country's first Prime Minister, Mr.

Lee Kuan Yew succumbed to his prolonged illness on March 23, 2015. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew ruled Singapore for three decades (1959-1990) and introduced the modern Singapore to the world. He was best known for his market-friendly policies which transformed Singapore into an international hub for business and a major port for global maritime trade. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew was also known for his population policy, cleanliness drive, making English medium education a tool to enhance Singaporeans' competitiveness at the global level, a much corruption-less government and so on. He was also criticised for restrictions on freedom of expression and media. He was born in 1923 in Singapore, then under the British rule and completed his education from the Cambridge University to come back to Singapore to re-write its history. US President Barack Obama described him as a 'true giant of history'. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned him as the 'torchbearer of hope' for Asia. World's most leaders attended Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's funeral on March 29, 2015. ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh wrote, "It was his (Lee Kuan Yew's)... distinct vision and commitment that contributed to the birth and rise of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for which he had left a lasting legacy, for which he will forever be remembered by the people of the ASEAN Community."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ US to deploy equipment to Philippines, *Strait Times*, available at: <http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/asia-report/south-china-sea/story/us-deploy-equipment-philippines-20150416>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁴⁵ Lee Kuan Yew, founding father of modern Singapore, dies at 91, Rujun Shen and Lee Rou Urn, Reuters, March 23, 2015, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/23/us-singapore-leequanyew-idUSKBNOMI08Y20150323>, accessed on March 30, 2015; Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015), Thomas Sowell, Townhall.com, March 25, 2015, available at <http://townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/2015/03/25/lee-kuan-yew-19232015-n1975140/page/full>, accessed on March 30, 2015; Mr Lee's final journey, The Straits Times, March 29, 2015, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/remembering-lee-kuan-yew-carry-forging-racial-harmony-20>, accessed on March 30, 2015; Lee Kuan Yew 'Was a Torchbearer of Hope', Writes India's Narendra Modi, The Wall Street Journal, March 29, 2015, available at <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/03/29/lee-kuan-yew-was-a-torchbearer-of-hope-writes-indias-narendra-modi/>, accessed on March 30, 2015; 'A great leader and statesman': ASEAN Secretary-General on Lee Kuan Yew, ChannelNewsAsia, March 26, 2015, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/a-great-leader-and/1742920.html>, accessed on March 30, 2015.

Singapore the Most Expensive City

Singapore is the most expensive city in the world, says a report published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Other most expensive cities are Paris, Oslo, Zurich and Sydney. The EIU survey is based on 133 cities and uses New York as the basis. Singapore is 11% more expensive than New York in basic groceries and 50% more expensive in clothes. The transportation cost in Singapore is almost three times higher than that of New York. Even last year Singapore was ranked as the most expensive city in the world, the same survey reveals.⁴⁶

Thailand

Thailand renews defence relations with India and China to rebalance foreign ties

Snubbed by the United States after the *Junta's* coup d'état, Thailand made separate moves to bolster defence cooperation with both India and China in a bid to rebalance foreign ties and look closer to home. Thai premier Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha, Foreign Minister General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister General Prawith Wongsuwan met Indian National Security Advisor to Prime Minister, Ajit Doval on April 3 in Bangkok and agreed to bolster their defence and strategic cooperation with India on maritime

security and counter-terrorism measures. According to reports, top Thai leaders strongly supported the Indian government's new "Act East" policy as well.⁴⁷

Later on April 24, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Xu Qiliang, vice-chairman of China's Central Military Commission, agreed to foster defence relations between their armed forces. The prime minister and ACM Xu explored ways to strengthen ties from intelligence cooperation to arms development, government spokesman said. Gen Prayut proposed the setting up of a hotline between Thai and Chinese armed forces leaders and pledged better safety measures for tourists from China and other countries visiting the country. ACM Xu, a powerful figure of the Chinese Communist Party, was in Thailand on his second trip in six months as Beijing and Bangkok have built up relations after the coup last year.⁴⁸

China is a potential seller of submarines to Thailand as the Royal Thai Navy has renewed a bid for a submarine or two. Other candidates include South Korea, Germany, Sweden and Russia.

Thailand to replace US weaponry with Russian as West shuns *Junta*

According to media reports, the recent procurement of Russian-made weapons by Thailand should be regarded as a complete replacement of the US-made weapons in the current military inventory. Thailand recently purchased a number of Russian-made weapons, including existing air-defence systems as well as a number of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft

⁴⁶ Singapore remains world's most expensive city, BBC News, March 2, 2015, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-31689124>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

⁴⁷ India, Thailand agree to bolster defence cooperation: Ajit Doval, *Economic Times*, available at: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-03/news/60787127_1_ajit-doval-thai-premier-thai-government, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁴⁸ Thailand, China deepen defence ties, *Bangkok Post*, available at: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/540599/thailand-china-deepen-defence-ties>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

missiles. Russian Commerce Minister Denis Manturov, a key member of the Russian delegation who accompanied Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to Thailand in the beginning of April, said deals on pipeline, rail services, military aircraft, and the sale of three Sukhoi Superjet transport planes to Thailand, with the shipment expected late next year were signed.

Russia is reportedly planning to buy at least 80,000 tonnes of rubber from Thailand early next year, four times what it had already agreed to buy, in a government-to-government deal that would benefit Russia's automotive-tyre industry. The intelligence services of Thailand and Russia will also collaborate to suppress international crimes and narcotics.⁴⁹

Vietnam

Russian PM Visited Vietnam

Dmitry Medvedev, the Prime Minister of Russia, visited Vietnam and Thailand on April 6-8. In Vietnam, Mr. Medvedev and his counter-part, Nguyen Tan Dung closed a deal that would facilitate Vietnam's entry into a Russia-led free trade bloc, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). EEU also includes Belarus and Kazakhstan. Very soon the trade pact would be signed and the Russian premier expressed his hope

of enhancing trade between Vietnam and Russia in the coming years. Last year, the bilateral trade was estimated at \$2.5 billion. Vietnam has also signed an oil and gas agreement with Russia which will enable the later to assist the former in oil exploration in East Sea (South China Sea).⁵⁰

Vietnam-Cambodia Bilateral Cooperation

Vietnam's state-run news agency, (Vietnam News Agency/VNA) reported that so far Vietnam has 128 projects in Cambodia totalling an amount of USD 49.6 million. Vietnamese Minister of Planning and Investment Bui Quang Vinh and his Cambodian counterpart Chhay Than met in Hanoi and later the VNA came up with the latest update. On the contrary, Cambodia has invested in three projects in Vietnam in areas like energy, hydro-power and rubber plantation. Both sides agreed that they should invest more on human resource development to handle statistics and Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle portal should be upgraded. Bilateral relations at the level of the ministers were also discussed.⁵¹

Vietnam's Prime Minister Recalled US Brutality during Civil War

Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said that US committed barbaric acts on Vietnam during the civil war causing much agony and pain in the people. He was speaking at the former Presidential Palace to mark the 40 years of the war which saw the fall of South by the communist North on April 30, 1975. The

⁴⁹ Arms deals with Russia in pipeline as West shuns junta, *The Nation*, available at: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Arms-deals-with-Russia-in-pipeline-as-West-shuns-j-30258142.html>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁵⁰ Medvedev: Vietnam Close to Deal With Russian-Led Trade Area, Tran Van Minh, abc News, April 6, 2015, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/medvedev-vietnam-close-deal-russian-led-trade-area-30113786>, accessed on April 16, 2015.

⁵¹ Vietnam has 128 investment projects in Cambodia to date, Global Times, 10 March 2014, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/911287.shtml>, accessed on 20 March 2015.

lasting effects of dioxin Agent Orange used by the US forces to weaken the communists hiding in the jungles have been disastrous for the Vietnamese population residing in those areas. The US backed South eventually was defeated by the North and reunification happened next year. However, at present, Vietnam and US share cordial diplomatic relations.⁵²

Vietnam-Australia Security Arrangement

Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visited Australia and agreement was signed with the Australian PM Tony Abott on cooperation on issues involving regional security. This agreement is complementary to the ongoing economic linkages between the two countries as well as a vital mechanism for Vietnam to enhance its security partnerships with countries around the region in view of China's growing assertiveness. The two countries also signed a pact to allow few Vietnamese defence personnel to train in Australia and hold joint military exercise. The previous labour government in Australia rejected the idea of entering into a regional security and defence pact with Vietnam. Henceforth, this new agreement is significant. US also wants Australia to take a prominent role in the Asia-pacific regional security environment.⁵³

Oceania

Australia

Leaders discuss US-Australia defence cooperation

Australian Assistant Minister for Defence Stuart Robert met United States Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work on April 27 at the Pentagon to discuss the deep bilateral defense cooperation between the US and Australia, according to a US Defense Department news release. During the 30-minute meeting, Work conveyed his gratitude for Australia's current and past contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The deputy secretary and assistant minister discussed opportunities for collaboration on the department's Defense Innovation Initiative, progress on Australia's 2015 Defence White Paper, and business reforms within their respective organizations. The two leaders also discussed progress implementing the U.S. force posture initiatives in Australia's Northern Territory. This was Work's first meeting with Robert, according to the release.⁵⁴

Australia to join US and Philippines in three-nation military exercises near South China Sea

Australia is set to join the three-nation military exercises in the South China Sea. The war games will push through amid fears in the Philippines

⁵² Vietnam PM: US 'committed barbarous crimes' during war, BBC News, April 30, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32527645>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

⁵³ Australia, Vietnam Boost Security Ties, Rob Taylor, The Wall Street Journal, March 18, 2015, available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/australia-vietnam-boost-security-ties-1426656923>, accessed on May 5, 2015.

⁵⁴ Leaders Discuss U.S.-Australia Defense Cooperation, *Official Wire*, available at: <http://www.officialwire.com/news/leaders-discuss-u-s-australia-defense-cooperation/>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

that China is seeking to gain control of the disputed territory. Both the United States and the Philippines have increased the size of their annual military exercises that would run for 10 days. The locations for the war games include a naval station in the Philippines located 220 kilometres from the Scarborough Shoal, a hotly disputed territory occupied by China since 2012.

More than 60 troops from the Australian army, navy, air force and Defence Science Technology Organisation will join the civil-humanitarian assistance operations on the islands of Palawan and Panay in the Philippines during the war games on April 20. The Philippines had denied that the exercises do not indicate a show of force against China. However, US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter warned against militarising territorial disputes in the South China Sea. When asked if the military exercises were a response to China's show of force, Carter said in his first Asian tour that the US and the Philippines had shared interests in the region. Both countries want to ensure that the status quo will not change by force.⁵⁵

ANZAC Day Celebration in Australia and New Zealand

Australia and New Zealand marked the centenary of sacrifices made by their deceased soldiers at the Gallipoli

Peninsula. The ANZAC Day as the commemoration is celebrated by Australia and New Zealand every year on April 25 when they pay tribute to their soldiers who died during World War I in Turkey. Australian Chief of Army David Morrison said at the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, "They loved and were loved in return, were prepared to fight for their beliefs, were, like us, prey to fears and human despair". In New Zealand also, another event was organised at the National War Memorial at Wellington. A week before the celebration, the Australian police cracked a terror plan by the Islamic State during ANZAC parade at Melbourne and that encouraged Australia to raise the level of security on April 25.⁵⁶ The World War II had a greater impact on the Pacific Island countries; however, little is known about Pacific Island countries' involvement in World War I. Soldiers from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Niue and Cook Islands fought for the British under the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and other commands.⁵⁷

Fiji

Indian Defence Attaché meets Fiji Police

India's Defence Advisor Captain Chetan Chandegave paid his first official visit to Fiji on April 15. Chandegave met the Acting Commissioner of Police Isikeli Vuniwaqa and discussed ways the two countries would be able to assist each other in strengthening the

⁵⁵ Australia Ready To Join US And Philippines In The Three-Nation War Games Near South China Sea, *International Business Times*, available at: <http://au.ibtimes.com/australia-ready-join-us-philippines-three-nation-war-games-near-south-china-sea-1437790>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁵⁶ Parry, Martin, "Record crowds as Australia and New Zealand mark Anzac Day", *Business Insider*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-record-crowds-as-australia-and-new-zealand-mark-anzac-day-2015-4?IR=T>.

⁵⁷ "Anzac Day 2015: Commemorations highlight Pacific's 'overlooked' role in World War One", *ABC.net*, April 25, 2015, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/anzac-commemorations-highlight-pacific-overlooked-role-in-wwi/6421016>.

implementation of the law effectively. Possible areas of assistance that the Fiji Police Force would benefit from, are, training in information technology, forensics, cybercrime and peace keeping as well as the attachment of officers to India. Chandegave is based in Canberra, Australia.⁵⁸

New Zealand

NZ soldiers train in Australia for attack on IS

Approximately 120 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel have departed Ohakea Air Force Base to conduct defence staff training with Australia prior to the forthcoming deployment to Iraq. According to local media, the contingent consisted of trainers, health, logistics and force protection personnel, as well as headquarters staff. NZDF said in a statement, "The group includes a large number of personnel who will deploy to Iraq in the Building Partner Capacity training mission, as well as exercise support staff." The three-day exercise at Enoggera military camp near Brisbane will include a series of scenarios designed to ensure the trainers in the Building Partner Capacity mission are ready, and to demonstrate to their senior commanders that they are fully prepared for the tasks and environment they will face in Iraq."

In February, the New Zealand Government confirmed plans to deploy 143 soldiers to Iraq by the end of May to train the local security forces to better fight the Islamic State militants.⁵⁹

Papua New Guinea

Major Earthquake hits Papua New Guinea

A major earthquake with a recorded magnitude of 7.5 hit Papua New Guinea on March 30 morning. A tsunami alert was issued soon after. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the epicentre of the 40-km deep quake that took place in the morning of March 30 was near Rabaul, a town northeast of Papua New Guinea. Initially, the recorded magnitude was at 7.7, but it was later reduced to 7.5. The quake struck 55 kilometres southeast of Kokopo, with population of 26,000 people, based on the report by the US Geological Survey. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre initially gave a warning that waves measuring as high as three meters could hit PNG and less than 0.3 metres of waves could hit some Pacific countries. However, the warning was lifted a few hours later after a report that a 3-centimetre tsunami wave was recorded 280 miles from the epicentre, at a wharf in the Solomon Islands. In the epicentre town, residents observed that the sea level slightly increased causing flood in the parking lot of shopping centres located near the beach. No other damage has been recorded.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Indian Defence Attache meets Fiji Police, *FBC News*, available at: <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/28573/indian-defence-attache-meets-fiji-police->, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁵⁹ New Zealand Soldiers Arrive In Australia For Training Before Joint Mission In Iraq Against ISIS, *International Business Times*, available at: <http://au.ibtimes.com/new-zealand-soldiers-arrive-australia-training-joint-mission-iraq-against-isis-1435448>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

⁶⁰ Major Earthquake Hits Papua New Guinea, *IB Times*, available at: <http://au.ibtimes.com/major-earthquake-hits-papua-new-guinea-1435379>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

PNG army investigates Indonesian troop movements

The Commander of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Defence Force was looking into an unauthorised excursion by Indonesian soldiers into the country last week. According to local media, Brigadier-General Gilbert Toropo had directed his officers at the Vanimo Forward Base to submit a report on the matter. Earlier Wutung villagers reported seeing eight armed Indonesian soldiers crossing the border. PNG soldiers at the time were busy

checking passengers and cargo from Indonesia at a checkpoint about 100 metres away. Wutung councillor Raphael Tungla said the Indonesian soldiers passed the border monument on the beach and walked to the edge of his village. He said they immediately turned back when villagers confronted them. But Mr Tungla said he is concerned about the laxity of the PNG soldiers in manning the border. He said soldiers should be patrolling the border and not checking passengers returning from the Batas market who had already been cleared by Customs, Immigration and the police.⁶¹

⁶¹ PNG army investigates Indonesian troop movements, *Radio NZ*, available at: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/271250/png-army-investigates-indonesian-troop-movements>, accessed on: April 30, 2015.

Centre Activities for March and April

1. Delhi Dialogue VII held on March 11 and 12, 2015. The academic sessions were hosted by IDSA on March 12.
2. Study Visit by Students of Master in Social Science (Strategy & Diplomacy) from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia & Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) Malaysia on New Developments in India-China Relations was organized on March 24, 2015.
3. A six-member delegation from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore interacted with the IDSA scholars on current strategic and security issues in the Indo-Pacific Region on April 10, 2015.

ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

Contributions are invited for:

Book Review (800 words)

Commentary (900 - 1300 words)

Photo Essay (10-12 photographs, each with a caption,
accompanied by a 1000 words essay)

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