

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Karzai's half brother Ahmed Wali Karzai killed in Kandahar; Blast kills civilians in Helmand province; US troop withdrawal begins in Afghanistan; Former Taliban leaders dropped off from UN sanction list**

According to reports, Afghan President's half brother Ahmed Wali Karzai was killed in Kandahar. Ahmad Karzai, a leading power broker in the country's south, was shot dead at his home by his own body guard. The assassination is seen as a blow to NATO's battle against the Taliban in the area. Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack.¹ In another incident, a roadside bomb has killed five civilians in Southern Afghanistan, officials have said. The attack took place in Sangin district of Helmand province. It is unknown who carried the attack but the region is a strong hold for Taliban.²

Reports noted that the first US troops have left Afghanistan as part of US President Barack Obama's planned drawdown of about a third of the 100,000 US forces there. US Lt. Col. Wayne Perry, a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), said about 650 troops who had completed their rotation in Afghanistan left on Wednesday as scheduled, and would not be replaced. It would be worth noting that Afghan security forces are to take over security responsibility from foreign forces in seven areas of the country this summer. Afghan forces will then take the lead in securing the entire country by the end of 2014.³

In other developments, fourteen former Afghan Taliban leaders have been removed from an international blacklist by the UN Security Council. The names include four members of the High Peace Council set up last year to pave the way for talks with the Taliban. The sanctions were imposed in 1999, when the Taliban were in power and were expanded after the 9/11 attacks on the United States.⁴

Pakistan

- **United States suspends \$ 800 million aid to Pakistan; Pakistan army stresses fighting without external aid despite suspension of US aid; United States points to greater effort to speed up**

¹ "Afghan President's half-brother shot dead in Kandahar", *BBC*, July 12, 2011 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-14129228>

² "Civilians killed in Afghanistan blast", *BBC*, July 15, 2011 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14165155>

³ "US drawdown begins in Afghanistan, first troops leave", *Dawn*, July 15, 2011 at <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/15/us-drawdown-begins-in-afghanistan-first-troops-leave.html>

⁴ "Afghanistan: UN drops Taliban names from sanctions list", *BBC*, July 16th available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14171925>

fight against terror; Pakistan Intelligence Chief due to leave for talks with the US; Top level US-Pakistan generals meet amidst tensions

Reports noted that the United States announced suspension of \$ 800 mn aid to Pakistan on the issue of fight against terrorism. White House Chief of Staff Bill Daley told ABC television that Pakistan has given reasons enough for US to take this step. The amount withheld equals to almost one third of security aid given to Pakistan annually by the US. Though US still considers Pakistan a major ally in its war against terror, but Osama Bin Laden killing has questioned its sincerity which has led to the aid suspension.⁵

However, the Pakistani army has challenged US suspension of aid stating that it will fight the war with its own resources without any external support. Relations between the key allies in the war on Al-Qaeda drastically worsened after US commandos killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in May, humiliating the Pakistani military and opening it to allegations of complicity or incompetence.⁶

Meanwhile, US State Department has made its decision clear on the aid suspension saying Pakistan has to step up its fight against terrorism. This was announced by State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland who said that US was particularly looking at improving counter insurgency and counter terrorism and until that happens US cannot provide aids at the same pace as present.⁷

According to reports, the ISI chief Shuja Pasha is due to leave for Washington for talks with US military and intelligence officials on fight against terror. The exchange comes on the eve of military aid suspension by the US to Pakistan. This trip is crucial for both the countries as the relation between them has hit an all time low following the Osama bin Laden killing in beginning of May. The nature of this visit is speculated to be intelligence coordination.⁸

In other developments, reports noted that high-level US-Pakistan visits were unfolding for the first time since Washington announced it was cutting more than one-third of its military aid to Pakistan. Marine Gen. James Mattis, the head of US Central Command, met with Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, and the joint chief's chairman, Gen. Khalid Shameem Wynne, the US Embassy in Islamabad informed. Though official sources noted that it was a routine visit to share perspectives on relationship between the two militaries and way forward.⁹

⁵ "Pakistan: US suspends \$800m of military aid", *BBC*, July 10th available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14099402>

⁶ "Army defiant as US halts \$800mn aid", *Dawn*, July 11, available on <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/11/army-defiant-as-us-halts-800mn-aid.html>

⁷ "Pakistan need to step up anti-terror fight: US", *Dawn*, July 11 available on <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/11/pakistan-needs-to-step-up-anti-terror-fight-us.html>

⁸ "ISI chief Shuja Pasha going to Washington", *Dawn*, July 13 available on <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/13/army-says-it-will-fight-terror-using-own-resources-isi-chief-going-to-washington.html>

⁹ "US-Pakistanis meet amid tension, military aid cut", *Dawn*, July 13 available on <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/13/us-pakistanis-meet-amid-tension-military-aid-cut.html>

B. East Asia

China

- **China voices strong objection to Obama-Dalai meeting; First China-US Governors Forum opens; China, Iran celebrate 40th anniversary of bilateral ties; DPRK pledge to enhance ties with China; US military chief visits PLA's air base; Chinese, US army chiefs talk in Beijing; Official confirms China building aircraft carrier; China offers aid to Libyan people**

In a significant development, reports noted that China has expressed its strong indignation and stern objection to US President Barack Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama. China has also asserted that the United States adopt measures to wipe out the impact. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu said this was "such an act has grossly interfered in China's internal affairs, hurt the feelings of Chinese people and damaged the Sino- American relations."¹⁰

Meanwhile, the first China-United States Governors forum was inaugurated. Both Hu Jintao and Barack Obama sent their congratulatory messages to the forum.¹¹

On the other hand, Iran and China celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations.¹² Meanwhile, China and People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have also pledged to strengthen friendly relations.¹³

In another development, the Chairman of United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen visited an air force base of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The base is a terminal of the 19th Division of the Air Command under the PLA Jinan Military Area Command mainly with Su-27 fighters stationed there.¹⁴ Chen Bingde, Chief of the General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), held talks with his US counterpart Mike Mullen. Mullen, arrived in Beijing on July 9 for a four-day visit.¹⁵

¹⁰ "China voices strong objection to Obama-Dalai meeting" *China Daily*, July 17, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/17/content_12917357.htm

¹¹ "First China-US Governors Forum opens" *China Daily*, July 16, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/16/content_12915420.htm

¹² "China, Iran celebrate ties of 40 yrs" *China Daily*, July 16, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/16/content_12915193.htm

¹³ "China, DPRK pledge to enhance ties" *China Daily*, July 13, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/13/content_12889598.htm

¹⁴ "US military chief visits PLA's air base" *China Daily*, July 12, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/12/content_12886564.htm

¹⁵ "Chinese, US army chiefs talk in Beijing" *China Daily*, July 11, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/11/content_12874863.htm

On the domestic front a senior military officer confirmed in public that China is building an aircraft carrier.¹⁶

In other developments, Beijing has also announced a humanitarian aid worth 50 million yuan (\$7.73 million) to the Libyan people.¹⁷

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

- **Uzbek PM addresses both houses of the parliament; Kazakhstan against headscarves for women; Kazakhstan's second communication satellite successfully launched; Kazakhstan and Vietnam seek to build strong relations; Customs Union gas agreement ratified by Russia; Tajikistan cuts airfares from Srinagar; Russia demanded to pay for Tajik military base; Tajikistan and the World Bank sign development projects; Turkmen President signs cooperation agreement with St. Petersburg; Malaysian premier visits Turkmenistan**

Reports noted that Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirzizayev for the first time addressed both houses of the Uzbek parliament in line with new efforts in the Central Asian state to enact democratic reforms. He reported on government's activities. In April 2010, the Uzbek legislature won the right to receive reports from the prime minister on economic and social issues in the country. In February 2010, the Uzbek legislature passed laws that changed the process of nominating the prime minister and removing him from office. Prior to this law, Uzbek President Islam Karimov appointed and demoted the prime minister.¹⁸

According to reports, Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov said, during an online conference, that the government of Kazakhstan will not enforce any legal restraints of the wearing of the Muslim headscarf. Massimov noted that the subject was being strongly politicized in the Muslim-majority Central Asian country and abroad. "We must be tough on the extreme forms that have nothing to do with religion, and both the government and the state must pursue the appropriate policy," he added.¹⁹

In the meanwhile, Kazakhstan's second communication satellite KazSat-2 was successfully launched into the orbit from the Baikonur cosmodrome on 16 July. KazSat-2 will allow Kazakh broadcasters to save costs by switching from foreign satellites. The national telecoms satellite will

¹⁶ "Official confirms China building aircraft carrier" *China Daily*, July 12, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/12/content_12881089.htm

¹⁷ "China offers aid to Libyan people" *China Daily*, July 11, 2011 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/11/content_12875364.htm

¹⁸ "Uzbek PM addresses parliament for the first time", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 15, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Uzbekistan/Uzbek-PM-addresses-parliament-for-the-first-time/viewstory.aspx?id=4453>

¹⁹ "Kazakhstan will not restrict hijab, says premier", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 15, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-will-not-restrict-hijab-says-premier/viewstory.aspx?id=4450>

also expand the range of electronic services offered by the Astana government, as well as boost mobile and internet communications. Kazakhstan plans to launch its next satellite in the series, KazSat-3, in 2013.²⁰

In another development, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev will make an official state visit to Vietnam this year as part of developments that Vietnam hopes will lead to full-scale relations. The date has not yet been set for the upcoming summit meeting. Vietnam is interested in attracting Kazakhstani investments into the oil and gas exploration and production as well. To help build ties between the two, a direct air route will be set up within two or three years.²¹

According to reports, the customs union gas agreement on uniform price and shipment terms took force with Russian ratification of the deal penned last December. Russia was the last member of the tripartite customs union to give final approval to the document that among other things eliminates import-export tariffs, provides access to each other's trunk pipelines for gas sourced within the area and equalizes prices by January 2015.²² Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus signed a Customs Union Protocol in October 2007.

According to reports, Tajikistan is cutting air fares for passengers flying in from the northern Indian city of Srinagar in a bid to revive ancient ties with the region of Kashmir, the Tajik ambassador to New Delhi, Syed Beig Saidov, said. Its price cuts are aimed at boosting newly-revived direct travel between the two regions. The diplomat noted that the two regions have a lot in common, particularly in matters of faith, civilization and mores.²³

Reports noted that Tajikistan demanded Russia to pay for the use of a Tajik military base used by the latter since 2005. Moscow has rejected Tajikistan's demand that the Russian government pay \$300 million a year for use of the Tajik facilities. Over 7,000 Russian troops are now stationed in three Tajik locations: Dushanbe, Qurghonteppe and Kulob.²⁴

Meanwhile, Tajikistan and the World Bank have signed three development projects that will cost a total of \$46.9 million for better warning of climate-related events, better targeting of financial benefits to the poorest citizens, and expanded access to clean and reliable water. One project calls

²⁰ "KazSat-2 launched from Baikonur", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 18, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/KazSat-2-launched-from-Baikonur/viewstory.aspx?id=4454>

²¹ "Kazakhstan, Vietnam announce state summit, direct air route plan", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 15, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Kazakhstan-Vietnam-announce-state-summit-direct-air-route-plan/viewstory.aspx?id=4446>

²² "Customs union gas agreement takes force with Russian ratification", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 15, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Kazakhstan/Customs-union-gas-agreement-takes-force-with-Russian-ratification/viewstory.aspx?id=4448>

²³ "Tajikistan cuts airfares from Kashmir to revive ancient ties", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 15, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajikistan-cuts-airfares-from-Kashmir-to-revive-ancient-ties/viewstory.aspx?id=4447>

²⁴ "Tajikistan demands Russia pay for use of military base", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 18, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajikistan-demands-Russia-pay-for-use-of-military-base/viewstory.aspx?id=4462>

for the World Bank to set aside \$3.2 million to establish a social protection registry and support capacity development through the Tajikistan Social Safety Net Strengthening Project. The lender will also support the Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project that is mainly dedicated to Tajikistan and neighbouring Kyrgyzstan.²⁵

In other developments in the region, the Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a cooperation agreement with the Governor Valentina Matviyenko of Russian city St. Petersburg as part of the governor's three-day visit to the Central Asian country. They discussed on economic, technical and scientific cooperation.²⁶ While, the Malaysian premier Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak – on a two-day visit to Turkmenistan – inaugurated the Onshore Gas Terminal and Kiyarly Gas Treatment Plant on the Turkmen shores of the Caspian Sea. Malaysian state-owned gas firm Petronas will drill an estimated 5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year. In related news, the Malaysian premier announced the country will open an embassy in Turkmenistan to improve bilateral relations.²⁷ In another development, Nurmukhammed Khanamov, who heads the opposition Republican Party of Turkmenistan and other opposition leaders, living in Europe, want to return to their home country at the invitation of Turkmenistan's president to compete in elections next year. Currently, critics of the authoritarian president face fines and stiff jail sentences. The republic only has one registered political party, which is headed by Berdimuhamedov.²⁸

Russia

- **Medvedev to visit Germany, talks are expected to focus on key policy issues; A German nonprofit group dropped plans to honor Prime Minister Vladimir Putin; Russia and Azerbaijan discuss breakaway Karabakh settlement; Russia has no plans to supply arms to Libya; Russia, NATO end talks on sectoral missile defence; Medvedev allows Defence Ministry to import cheaper and better weapons; Russia earmarks on an ambitious plan to sell US\$ 36 billion of state assets in a year; Russia's Sberbank enters Central and East European markets; Russia successfully puts a satellite in orbit meant for Kazakhstan; Medvedev inks law on abortion; Baikonur cosmodrome to remain the mainstay of Russia's space industry**

Reports noted that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is starting a two-day visit to Germany starting on July 18. He leads a delegation of over 20 ministers, top officials and chief

²⁵ "Tajikistan, World Bank sign three development projects", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 14, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/Tajikistan-World-Bank-sign-three-development-projects/viewstory.aspx?id=4434>

²⁶ "Turkmenistan, St. Petersburg sign cooperation agreement", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 12, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/Turkmenistan-St-Petersburg-sign-cooperation-agreement/viewstory.aspx?id=4421>

²⁷ "Malaysia launches Turkmen gas terminal, treatment plant", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 12, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/Malaysia-launches-Turkmen-gas-terminal-treatment-plant/viewstory.aspx?id=4422>

²⁸ "Turkmen opposition exiles hope to return to contest elections", *Central Asia Newswire*, July 13, 2011 at <http://centralasianewswire.com/Turkmenistan/Turkmen-opposition-exiles-hope-to-return-to-contest-elections/viewstory.aspx?id=4428>

executives of major Russian companies. He is heading to Hanover to hold intergovernmental consultations and assess bilateral relations on the whole. The Russian head of state is also expected to meet with businessmen and attend the Russian-German public forum Petersburg Dialogue. The German delegation is led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, who will meet with Medvedev on the eve of the main agenda. Russia and Germany have drafted a package of 12 documents to be signed during the consultations. The sides will in particular discuss establishing a fund to support Russian small businesses. Energy issues are also on the agenda. Germany remains the largest buyer of Russian gas (39 billion cubic meters of gas in 2010). Bilateral trade in 2010 grew over 30% to \$51.8 billion, and the Kremlin said the pre-crisis level of \$60-70 billion may be reached soon²⁹.

However, in an awkward development, a German nonprofit group dropped plans to honor Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. The Werkstatt Deutschland group announced that it would cancel its annual Quadriga prize because of "increasingly unbearable pressure" over its decision to recognize Putin for his role in strengthening German-Russian relations.³⁰

Reports noted that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will discuss the Nagorny Karabakh settlement with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mamedyarov in Moscow. Nagorny Karabakh, a breakaway region on Azerbaijani territory with a predominantly ethnic Armenian population, has been at the center of a bitter conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In early July, Lavrov handed Azerbaijan Moscow's conflict settlement proposals. Similar proposals were handed to Armenia earlier. Karabakh has remained under Armenian control since the late 1980s, when the region claimed independence from Azerbaijan to join Armenia. The conflict is estimated to have left more than 30,000 people dead on both sides between 1988 and 1994.³¹

In another development, Russia's NATO envoy Dmitry Rogozin has said that Russia has no plans to supply arms to the despotic regime of Libya led by Gaddafi. "Both the Russian legislation and the legislation of the European Union states ban any supplies of arms to a territory hit by a civil conflict or a civil war," Rogozin said. However, Rogozin pointed out that what some NATO states are doing in Libya is disgraceful and contradicts all the resolutions of the UN Security Council on the North African country³².

According to reports, the subject of the so-called sectoral missile defense has been taken off the agenda of Russian-NATO negotiations. NATO has never given any encouragement to the Russian proposal, whereby a particular country or group of countries would be responsible for a specific missile defense sector - for instance, Russia shooting down a missile in its airspace targeting an alliance member. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said as much at the Russia-NATO Council meeting in Sochi on July 4, stating that the two sides were not able to reach an agreement on a

²⁹ "Medvedev starts visit to Germany", *RIA Novosti*, July 18, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110718/165254216.html>

³⁰ "Bratersky, Alexander, "Germans snub Putin before Medvedev visit", *The Moscow Times*, July 18, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/germans-snub-putin-before-medvedev-visit/440680.html>

³¹ "Russia, Azerbaijan to discuss breakaway Karabakh settlement", *RIA Novosti*, July 18, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110718/165252420.html>

³² "Russia has plans to supply arms to Libya", *RIA Novosti*, July 17, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110717/165245569.html>

sectoral missile defense system in Europe. In rejecting the zonal option, NATO member states cite their mutual defense obligations under the alliance's founding Washington Treaty, which may not be delegated to non-members. Russia and NATO agreed to cooperate on the European missile shield during the NATO-Russia Council summit in Lisbon in November 2010. NATO insists there should be two independent systems that exchange information, while Russia favors a joint system with full-scale interoperability. Russia also demands legally binding guarantees that NATO missile defense systems will not be directed against it.³³

Reports noted that President Medvedev has allowed the Defence Ministry to buy foreign military equipment if domestically produced gear is overpriced. "You must purchase only high quality hardware at transparent prices, not for the prices appealing to some companies," Medvedev said at a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov and Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov. The president called on the Defense Ministry to scrutinize every contract to make it as transparent as possible.³⁴

Russia's Economic Development Minister Elvira Nabiullina has said that the Economic Development Ministry expects to earn 1 trillion rubles (\$35.6 billion) a year under an expanded asset-sale program. The government's previous plan called for a total of 1 trillion rubles of asset sales over the next three years. President Dmitry Medvedev ordered the government last month to amend the list by Aug. 1, saying the plan was "too modest." The economy ministry wants to sell a 10 percent stake in Rusnano as part of the program.³⁵

Reports noted that OAO Sberbank, Russia's biggest lender, is aspiring to become a regional player in the fast-growing central European market, where lenders worth as much as 9 billion euros (\$13 billion) may go on sale in the coming years. Sberbank agreed on July 14 to buy a network of nine small banks in countries including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and most of former Yugoslavia from Austria's Oesterreichische Volksbanken AG. (VBPS). Chief Executive Officer German Gref said this was only the first step in making.³⁶

In another development, Russian rocket Proton-M launched from Baikonur overnight has successfully carried the KazSat-2 satellite for Kazakhstan to the planned orbit. The satellite is designed to provide television broadcasting and transmit data in the KazSat satellite communication system for Kazakhstan, Central Asian countries and central Russia. It is planned

³³ "Russia, NATO end talks on sectoral missile defense- source", *RIA Novosti*, July 15, 2011, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20110715/165215647.html

³⁴ "Medvedev tells Defence Ministry to shop abroad for cheaper weapons", *RIA Novosti*, July 12, 2011, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20110712/165156214.html

³⁵ "\$36 Bln of state assets a year to sell", *The Moscow Times*, July 18, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/36bln-of-state-assets-a-year-to-sell/440657.html>

³⁶ Groendahl, Waldoch & Maternovsky, "Sberbank enters ex-satellites as \$13 billion east Europebank deals loom", *Bloomberg*, July 18, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-17/sberbank-enters-ex-satellites-as-13-billion-east-europe-bank-deals-loom.html>

to work in orbit for 12 years. Together with the KazSat, the American SES-3 communication satellite was carried to orbit on Saturday.³⁷

Reports noted that President Dmitry Medvedev has signed into law the country's first regulations on the largely unrestricted practice of abortion, requiring clinics to warn potential clients of the purported health hazards of the procedure. It would be worth noting that Russia has among the highest abortion rates in the world, a major contributor to a worrying population decline that the Kremlin is under massive pressure to stop.³⁸

In other developments, the head of Federal Space Agency (Roskosmos) Vladimir Popovkin has said that Russia has no and will have no alternative to Baikonur Cosmodrome in the foreseeing future. Commenting on the particularities of upcoming launches from Vostochny Cosmodrome, Popovkin said the route would go above the Pacific Ocean water zone. The Roskosmos head said, "I'm convinced that our task – to make the first launch from Vostochny Cosmodrome in 2015 and to make the first manned launch in 2018 – will be fulfilled." Till 2016 Russia's Soyuz is likely to be the unique spacecraft to take cosmonauts and astronauts to the International Space Station and back them on Earth. The new American space shuttle should be launched later.³⁹

D. West Asia

Iran

- **Chinese ambassador to Iran predicts annual trade between Iran and China to be at US \$ 40 billion in 2011; Turkey foreign minister visits Iran and discusses regional developments**

According to reports, the annual trade between Iran and China will hit a new record of \$40 billion in 2011, the Chinese ambassador to Tehran has predicted. Speaking at a seminar on Iran-China trade, Yu Hongyang stated that bilateral trade between Iran and China amounted to \$29.4b in 2010, of which \$11.1b was China's export to Iran and \$18.3b was Iran's export to China. The ambassador also added that the two countries' trade exchanges witnessed a 55% growth in the first four months of 2011 in comparison to the corresponding time last year, reaching \$13.3 billion. Iran is also the third largest supplier of oil to China. Hongyang went on say that Iran's exports of row iron, steel parts, copper, pistachio, saffron and other non-oil products to China has increased remarkably in the recent years.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Satellite for Kazakhstan successfully put into orbit", *ITAR TASS*, July 16, 2011, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/186962.html>

³⁸ "Medvedev inks law on abortion", *The Moscow Times*, July 18, 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/medvedev-inks-law-on-abortion/440631.html>

³⁹ "No alternative to Baikonur cosmodrome – Roskomos head", *ITAR TASS*, July 16, 2011, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/187062.html>

⁴⁰ "Iran-China annual trade to hit \$40b: envoy," *Tehran Times*, July 12, 2011, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=244030

In another development, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met in Tehran and discussed the latest developments in the region, notably the unrest in Syria. During the meeting the two leaders emphasized the need to hold regular consultations between Iranian and Turkish officials on the developments taking place in the countries that have been experiencing pro-democracy uprisings in order to help defuse the crisis in these countries, help people realize their legitimate demands, and help prevent foreign intervention in the internal affairs of these states. During a joint press conference after the meeting, Davutoglu said, "All regional countries should pay attention to public demands and consult with great countries in the region such as Iran." He also stated, "Syria is (Turkey's) valued and good friend and is the brother of Turkey and has close relations with Iran." Salehi said, "Syria, Iran, and Turkey are members of a family, and if any of the members of the family faces a problem, the entire family should make moves to help remove that."⁴¹

Iraq

● Iraq enters into negotiations with European Union over exclusion of MKO

According to reports, the Iraqi ambassador to Tehran has said that Baghdad has entered into negotiations with the European Union over an immediate expulsion of the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization members from Iraq. Mohammad Majid al-Sheikh told that the members of the terrorist group have to leave Iraq by the end of 2011. MKO set up its camp (known as Camp Ashraf) inside Iraq during Saddam's rule. The ambassador said after the formation of the post-Saddam government in Iraq, it was decided to make the group leave the country immediately. He went on to say that Baghdad will not allow the group to stay within the country's borders after the end of 2011. He added that "we have conducted some negotiations with the European Union over the expulsion of the group at the scheduled time, and we announced that the Iraqi government cannot support the group after the pullout of US troops." He also noted that "not only monafeqin (MKO), but also other terrorist groups like PJAK (the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan) are not authorized to utilize Iraq's land for setting up their bases in order to attack our neighboring countries."⁴²

Syria

● Reports: Armed groups assassinate civilians and officials in parts of Syria; Syria and North Korea sign cooperation documents; Syrian President and Arab League Secretary General hold talks on conditions in the Arab World

Reports noted that twelve civilians and law enforcement personnel were assassinated by the armed groups who opened fire on gatherings of civilians following the Friday prayers in a number of areas. Dozens of people were also injured in these attacks. The armed terrorist groups have also

⁴¹ "Syria, Iran, and Turkey are members of one family: Salehi," *Tehran Times*, July 12, 2011, at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=244013

⁴² "Iraq, EU talk on quick expulsion of MKO: Iraqi diplomat," *Mehr News Agency*, July 13, 2011, at <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1359139>

cut off the roads in several parts using burning tires and trash containers and attacked public and private properties.⁴³

In another development, reports noted that at the seventh session of the Syrian-Korean Joint Committee, Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have signed five cooperation documents in the fields of customs, communications, fairs, ports and information services and the protocol of the session. Syrian Information Minister Dr. Adnan Mahmoud expressed the necessity of overcoming the distance between the two countries and finding new mechanisms to link their ports in order to increase the trade volume. For his part, Korean Minister of Foreign Trade, Ri Ryong Nam, stressed his country's support to the measures taken by the Syrian government to restore stability and security.⁴⁴

In other developments, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad discussed with the visiting Arab League Secretary General, Nabil al-Arabi, the conditions in the Arab world and the contemporary changes. Their meeting also touched upon the necessity of rallying Arab efforts and work within the framework of the Arab League to solve Arab causes, particularly the Palestinian Cause. In his turn, Al-Arabi voiced the Arab League's full rejection to foreign interference in the Syrian Affairs, and support to the reforms made in Syria, hoping that Syria would emerge stronger given its pivotal role in the region.⁴⁵

Libya

● NATO chief calls for more planes to bomb Libyan targets

According to reports, increasing pressure on member states to contribute more to the Libyan mission, the NATO secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, argued that NATO members should supply more warplanes to bomb Libyan military targets. After meeting the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the NATO chief called on the Netherlands and other members of the alliance to consider their contributions to the mission, stressing the need for air-to-ground strikes.⁴⁶

Egypt

● Mubarak denies responsibility for protester deaths; European Commission pledges aid programmes for Egypt

According to the recently released transcript of prosecution, former Egyptian president Hosni

⁴³ "Twelve Civilians, Law-Enforcement Personnel Martyred at Hands of Gunmen and Snipers", *Syrian Arab News Agency*, July 16, 2011 at <http://www.sana.sy/eng/337/2011/07/16/358570.htm>

⁴⁴ "Syria and Democratic Korea Sign 5 Cooperation Documents", *Syrian Arab News Agency*, July 15, 2011, at <http://www.sana.sy/eng/21/2011/07/15/358454.htm>

⁴⁵ "President al-Assad and AL Secretary General Talks", *Syrian Arab News Agency*, July 14, 2011 at <http://www.sana.sy/eng/21/2011/07/14/358179.htm>

⁴⁶ "NATO chief calls for more planes to bomb Libyan targets", *The Jordan Times*, July 15, 2011 at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=39492>

Mubarak has denied any responsibility for his security forces killing nearly 900 protesters during the Egypt's uprising.⁴⁷

In another development, during his two-day visit to Cairo, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso announced three new programmes to support Egypt's transition to democracy. The EU and the European Investment Bank have also made more than •13 billion available in loans and financial assistance for development in the region over the next three years. This is part of a •20-billion-package agreed at the G8 in May 2011.⁴⁸

Israel

- **Israel commissions a drip irrigation project for food production in Nigeria; Fresh violence in Gaza after rocket firing**

In partnership with the Niger State Government, Israel has commissioned a drip irrigation project for vegetable production in order to improve food security and socio-economic status of the people. Jointly commissioned by the Deputy Governor of the state, Dr. Ahmed Musa Ibetu and Israeli ambassador, Moshe Ram, the project covers an area of 2.5 hectares in Lapai Gwari village and can conserve water up to 70 per cent for maximum output.⁴⁹

In a separate incident, Israel Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told that two Palestinian rockets entered into southern Israel in the latest round of fire across the Gaza border. Earlier, an unspecified "projectile" was fired from Gaza into southern Israel, the Israeli military said. In retaliation, Israeli jets bombed three sites in Gaza. The rocket fire and retaliatory raids represented the first significant upswing in violence in the area since April, when tensions rose after an anti-tank missile fired from Gaza hit an Israeli school bus, killing a teenager.⁵⁰

Palestine

- **Arab League endorses Palestinian bid for UN membership; Despair of peace, Palestinians focus on economy**

According to reports, Foreign Ministers of the Arab League in their meeting in Doha, Qatar, endorsed the Palestinian plan to seek full membership of the United Nations. The ministers pledged to "take all necessary measures and to rally needed support of all world countries to recognise the state of Palestine and to win full membership of the United Nations." The ministers also opined

⁴⁷ "Mubarak denies responsibility for protester deaths", *The Jordan Times*, July 15, 2011 at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=39495>

⁴⁸ "European Commission pledges aid programs for democratic Egypt", *The Daily News Egypt*, July 14, 2011, at <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/egypt/european-commission-pledges-aid-programs-for-democratic-egypt.html>

⁴⁹ "Israel introduces drip irrigation for food production in Nigeria", *Nigerian Guardian*, July 15, 2011, at http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54520:israel-introduces-drip-irrigation-for-food-production-in-nigeria&catid=31:business&Itemid=562

⁵⁰ "New Israeli strikes on Gaza, rocket fire at Israel", *The Jordan Times*, July 15, 2011, at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=39503>

that “comprehensive and just peace with Israel will not be accomplished unless Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab territories.”⁵¹

Separately, disillusioned with the prospects for a peace agreement with Israel, Palestinians are increasingly focused on improving their economic situation, according to a poll survey conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion in the West Bank and Gaza. Asked to name the highest priorities for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in dealing with national questions, 83 per cent named job creation and 36 per cent called for expanded healthcare. Only four per cent said that getting the United Nations recognition for a Palestinian state should be a top priority, while just two per cent called for pursuing peace negotiations with Israel. A vast majority of Palestinians also believed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was not interested in peace. As a result, support for pragmatic leaders like Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad were on the rise, while support for Gaza’s Hamas rulers was down.⁵²

E. Africa

Somalia

- **UNICEF airlifts relief material for Somalia drought**

According to Rozanne Chorlton, UNICEF Representative for Somalia, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has airlifted emergency nutrition supplies and water equipment into Baidoa, a town in the Bay region of south-central Somalia, as part of the agency’s life-saving assistance for drought-affected children. UNICEF and WHO are also preparing to launch a vaccination campaign along the Somali-Kenyan border and in the Dadaab refugee camps.⁵³ It would be worth noting that Somalia is the worst affected country by a severe drought that has ravaged large swaths of the Horn of Africa, leaving an estimated 11 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. More than half a million children in Somalia are acutely malnourished and are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Further, Southern Somalia is the most affected area with 80 per cent of all malnourished children living there.⁵⁴

South Africa

- **South African economy threatened by strike; Public protector releases second report on police leases; South African Customs Union (SACU) announces R400m bailout to Swaziland**

⁵¹ “Arab League endorses Palestinians’ bid for UN’s membership”, *Nigerian Guardian*, July 15, 2011, at http://www.nguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54542:arab-league-endorses-palestinians-bid-for-uns-membership-&catid=76:world&Itemid=560

⁵² “Palestinians despair of peace, focus on economy – poll”, *The Jordan Times*, July 15, 2011, at <http://jordantimes.com/?news=39471>

⁵³ “Somalia: UN Delivers Relief as Response to Horn of Africa Drought Gathers Pace”, *Allafrica.com*, July 15, 2011 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107151140.html>

⁵⁴ *ibid*

According to reports, as South Africa is struggling to recover from twin strikes launched by the metal and chemical worker unions, a further strike by members of the Congress of South African Trade Union-affiliated public service unions is threatening its economic recovery. Earlier, Public Service and Administration Minister Richard Baloyi met union leaders to explain why the government would not go beyond its final offer of a 6.8 per cent wage increase. Unions have since reduced their initial demand for a 10 per cent wage increase to 8 per cent.⁵⁵

In another development, the South African public protector Thuli Madonsela released the second of her reports on two police lease deals worth a total of R1.78-billion. After releasing the report, she asked President Jacob Zuma and his Cabinet to take action against Minister of Public Works Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde, national police commissioner Bheki Cele and senior officials. Madonsela's latest report found that a lease agreement between the public works department and businessman Roux Shabangu, for a headquarters building for the provincial South African Police Service in Durban, is invalid.⁵⁶

Separately, the South African Customs Union (SACU) has announced a R400-million bailout in its next quarterly revenue payments to help the cash-strapped Swaziland pay public salaries and prevent threatened national strikes. Swaziland was plunged into a liquidity crisis after its SACU income fell by 60 per cent in 2010 due to a drop in regional imports. According to Finance Minister Majozi Sithole, domestic debt has soared above R1-billion and the country's overall deficit now exceeds R3-billion.⁵⁷

Sudan

● Sudan and Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) rebels sign Darfur peace agreement in Doha; Sudan security services shuts SPLM office in Al-Gezira

The Sudanese government and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) signed a peace agreement in Doha to end the eight year conflict in Darfur, as JEM blamed Khartoum for refusing to discuss core issues with them. The peace deal came six weeks after a conference of Darfur stakeholders, who endorsed a framework document for the resolution of the armed conflict in western Sudan. The Doha Peace Agreement on Darfur was signed by Sudan's presidential adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Deen and the LJM president Tijani El-Sissi in the presence of a number of dignitaries. President Omer Al-Bashir of Sudan expressed his determination to overcome the past and pledged to work with his "partners in the peace agreement" to achieve the aspirations of Darfur people for security and development.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ "SA hit by strike fever", *Mail and Guardian*, July 15, 2011 at <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-15-sa-hit-by-strike-fever>

⁵⁶ "Protector's challenge to the president", *Mail and Guardian*, July 15, 2011, at <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-15-protectors-challenge-to-the-president/>

⁵⁷ "Swazis to get R400m bailout", *Mail and Guardian*, July 15, 2011 at <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-15-swazis-to-get-r400m-bailout/>

⁵⁸ "Sudan and LJM rebels sign a Darfur peace agreement in Doha", *Sudan Tribune*, July 14, 2011, at <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-and-LJM-rebels-sign-a-Darfur,39539>

In another development, security authorities in Sudan's central state of Al-Gezira have ordered the suspension of the northern sector of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). In a press release, the SPLM said that its assistant secretary-general for political mobilisation in Al-Gezira was summoned to appear before the deputy director of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). Later, the SPLM official was informed of the decision by the state's security committee to close down all SPLM offices, suspend its activities and freeze all of its contacts with other political forces.⁵⁹

South Sudan

- **SPLA denied Amnesty International claims of unlawful killings; South Sudan seeks financial assistance to increase food production; Nile Petroleum and Glencore form joint venture in South Sudan; World Bank commits US\$75 million for basic services in South Sudan**

Reports noted that the army of South Sudan has denied claims by Amnesty International that the former rebels- turned national military, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), are responsible for the unlawful killings and the destruction of homes and other civilian properties. Earlier, in its report released on the eve of South Sudan's independence, Amnesty International remarked that intense fighting between the SPLA and armed opposition groups have killed hundreds of civilians and displaced more than 10,000 people in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei States of the new nation. The report also called for accountability for abuses allegedly committed by soldiers, police, and other security forces in the region.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the government of the Republic of South Sudan called on development partners to provide financial assistance in order to increase food production in the state. Anne Itto, the caretaker minister of agriculture and forestry, insisted that ways must be found to increase yields with a combination of knowledge, technology and investment that would improve food security.⁶¹

Further, in order to boost the country's oil industry, South Sudan's Nile Petroleum Corporation (Nilepet) has entered into a joint venture with Glencore International, a Swiss-based public company involved in producing, processing, refining and transporting energy products. The venture seeks to ensure that crude oil entitlements from the company and the Republic of South Sudan find international markets.⁶²

In other developments, the World Bank (WB) office in South Sudan has announced \$US75 million to support government and citizens for providing basic services. Ian Bannon, acting country head

⁵⁹ "Sudan security services shut SPLM office in central state", *Sudan Tribune*, July 14, 2011, at <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-shutters-SPLM-in-central,39538>

⁶⁰ "SPLA refutes Amnesty International claims of unlawful killings", *Sudan Tribune*, July 14, 2011, at <http://www.sudantribune.com/SPLA-refutes-Amnesty-International,39536>

⁶¹ Garang, Ngor Arol (2011), "South Sudan seeks financial assistance to increase food production", *Sudan Tribune*, July 14, 2011 at <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-seeks-financial,39534>

⁶² "South Sudan: Nile Petroleum, Glencore form joint venture", *Sudan Tribune*, July 13, 2011, at <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-Nile-Petroleum,39532>

for Sudan, said that World Bank encourages the government to adopt participatory policy and give more attention to agriculture and private sector.⁶³

Nigeria

- **Violence rages in Borno as Boko Haram bombs police vehicles; Traditional rulers praise Jonathan and Jega for free and fair elections; Niger basin countries benefited from •1.2m French fund for environmental monitoring**

According to reports, Nigeria is still reeling under violence as three suspected Boko Haram bombers attacked a police patrol vehicle at Maiduguri in Borno State and injured seven people. Confirming the attacks, the spokesman of the Joint Taskforce, Operation Restored Order (JTORO), Col. Victor Ebhaleme said the bombers attacked the police patrol vehicle and destroyed it with explosives. Ebhaleme noted that immediately after the blast, policemen went for a house-to-house search for the fleeing bombers in Bulunkutu and Gomari wards.⁶⁴

Separately, a forum of traditional rulers (Monarchs) in Nigeria has appreciated President Goodluck Jonathan for giving the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) necessary liberty to organise free and fair elections in the country. They also congratulated the chairman of the INEC, Prof Attahiru Jega, for conducting one of the best polls so far in Nigeria. However, they condemned the spate of violence that followed the April presidential elections and criticized the “unpatriotic attitude of politicians”. Further, the group has called on the federal government to intensify efforts in arresting the current wave of terrorism in the country, particularly the northeastern states.⁶⁵

In another development, Permanent Secretary in Nigerian Ministry of Water Resources Ambassador Godknows Igali has noted that Nigeria, along with other member countries of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), has benefited from the •1.2 million French Fund for Global Environment (FFEM), aimed at boosting environmental monitoring across the Niger system. Igali explained that the fund will be used to build the capacity of the Niger Basin Observatory (OBN), develop an Environmental Information System (EIS), launch its web interface and support the establishment of the River Niger Basin Environment Observatory. The grant will also be used for the establishment of an environmental and socio-economic data repository of the NBA and a metadata base, establish a list of 28 environmental and socio-economic indicators with the participation of member countries, and establish a baseline for 21 of the 28 environmental and socio-economic indicators selected by the member countries.⁶⁶

⁶³ “South Sudan: World Bank commits US\$75 million for basic services”, *Sudan Tribune*, July 13, 2011 at <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-World-Bank-commits-US,39524>

⁶⁴ “Violence Rages In Borno, Boko Haram Bombs Police Vehicle”, *Nigerian Guardian*, July 16, 2011, at http://www.nguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54654:-n-violence-rages-in-borno-boko-haram-bombs-police-vehicle&catid=1:national&Itemid=559

⁶⁵ “Traditional Rulers Laud Jonathan, Jega over Polls”, *Nigerian Guardian*, July 16, 2011, at http://www.nguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54649:-traditional-rulers-laud-jonathan-jega-over-polls&catid=1:national&Itemid=559

⁶⁶ “Niger basin countries get •1.2m French fund for environmental monitoring”, *Nigerian Guardian*, July 15, 2011, at http://www.nguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54521:niger-basin-countries-get-12m-french-fund-for-environmental-monitoring-&catid=31:business&Itemid=562

Côte d'Ivoire

- **Government and civil society disagree over scope of ICC investigation; Cote d'Ivoire and France deliberate on business partnership**

Reports noted that government and civil society in Côte d'Ivoire are divided over the scope of the investigations to be undertaken by the International Criminal Court into atrocities and serious violations of human rights committed during the post-electoral crisis of 2010 presidential elections. The Ivorian government wants the ICC to look only at events that took place in the past six months. On the other hand, civil society wants the court to review rights violations committed in Côte d'Ivoire over the past decade, in order to achieve true reconciliation in the country.⁶⁷

In another development, French Prime Minister François Fillon paid an official visit to Ivory Coast along with a business delegation and three ministers and parliamentarians. France already has about 600 companies employing 360,000 Ivorians in the country and Fillon's visit is promised to boost economic relations between these two countries and also strengthen their historical bonds.⁶⁸

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Indian Navy commissions indigenously built fast attack craft INS Koswari; Indo-Russia JV Rosoboronservice India Ltd to service Talwar class stealth frigates**

According to reports, the Indian Navy commissioned indigenously built Fast Attack Craft (FAC) in an effort to strengthen its coastal and offshore surveillance and patrol, in a function held at the eastern naval command in Visakhapatnam on July 12. The craft was commissioned by General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command of the Indian Army, Lieutenant General Bikram Singh. Designed and built by state-run Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata, INS Koswari is a highly manoeuvrable craft and ideally suited for deployment along the coast, a defence release said. The craft's ability to operate in shallow waters at high speed, along with its day-and-night surveillance capability, coupled with enhanced fire power, is expected to give the requisite impetus to combating asymmetric threats emanating from the sea, it said. Named after an island off Tuticorin, INS Koswari, measuring 52 meters in length and displacing 325 tonnes, could achieve speed in excess of 30 knots, the release added. Lieutenant Commander Anil Kumar would be commanding the craft along with a crew of four officers and 35 sailors. Fitted with advanced MTU engines and latest communication sets for the purpose of 'extended coastal and offshore surveillance and patrol', INS Koswari would be based at Karwar, under the naval officer-in-charge

⁶⁷ "Cote d'Ivoire: Disagreement Over Scope of ICC Investigation", *Allafrica.com*, July 15, 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107151146.html>

⁶⁸ Koua, Honore (2011), "Cote d'Ivoire: Nation, France in Business Partnership", *Allafrica.com*, July 14, 2011 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107150039.html>

(Karnataka). It would be deployed in coastal patrol and anti-piracy missions, along the Konkan coast and Lakshadweep group of islands, the release said.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Rosoboronservice India Ltd (ROS(I)) has made a proposal to the Indian Navy to render the guarantee period after-sales service to the three new Talwar class stealth frigates currently under construction at the Yantar shipyard at Kaliningrad in Russia. An agreement towards this is slated to be signed during Navy chief Admiral Nirmal Verma's visit to Russia this week. ROS(I) is a JV formed through a strategic alliance between eight world renowned original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of defence equipment from Russia and Krasny Marine Services Pvt Ltd as the sole Indian partner. It was created by a Russian presidential decree to render after-sales service to all Russian origin assets of the Indian Navy in 2005. The three Talwar class ships currently being built are the Teg, the Tarkash and the Trikan. All three will carry the supersonic BrahMos missile system. They would also be armed with advanced Shtil-1 surface-to-air missiles, 100 mm artillery guns and other equipment, as also a deck - based Kamov KA-31 helicopter. The frigates, having a top speed of about 30 knots, are powered by twin shaft gas turbines and fitted with state-of-the-art navigation, communication, anti-submarine and electronic warfare equipment. Earlier, Russia had built INS Talwar, INS Trishul and INS Tabar at the Balitiisky Zavod shipyard in St Petersburg.⁷⁰

International

● China and the Republic of Korea to build strong military ties; US ships in Vietnam for training evoke sharp criticism from China

According to reports, China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) announced to strengthen bilateral defence ties between the two countries. Chen Bingde, Chief of the General Staff of the PLA met with Kim Kuan Jin, National Defense Minister of the Republic of Korea (ROK) on Thursday. "China and the ROK relations have experienced sound development, and the bilateral ties had recently expanded in a favourable way," Xinhua quoted Chen Bingde, Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army as saying. China also focuses to strengthen the Sino-ROK strategic partnership.

The ROK was ready to strengthen the military exchanges with China in all fields in a bid to contribute to regional peace and stability, the report said.⁷¹

Meanwhile, in a major development, three US Naval ships were welcomed by former foe Vietnam for joint training, despite China's irritation following weeks of fiery exchanges between the communist neighbours over disputed areas of the South China Sea. US and Vietnamese officials have stressed that the seven-day ship visit and naval training are part of routine exchanges planned

⁶⁹ "Fast attack craft INS Koswari commissioned", *Rediff.com*, July 12, 2011, at <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NEWS/newsrf.php?newsid=14982>

⁷⁰ "Indo-Russia JV to service Talwar frigates", *Bharat Rakshak*, July 13, 2011 at <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NEWS/newsrf.php?newsid=14980>

⁷¹ "China, ROK to build strong defence ties", *Brahmand*, July 15, 2011, at <http://www.brahmand.com/news/China-ROK-to-build-strong-defence-ties/7523/1/13.html>

long before tensions began flaring between China and Vietnam in late May. China has criticized the port call as inappropriate, saying it should have been rescheduled due to the ongoing squabble. The US visit, however, did send a message that the US Navy remains a formidable maritime force in the region and US is determined to build stronger military ties with smaller Southeast Asian countries. "We've had a presence in the Western Pacific and the South China Sea for 50 to 60 years, even going back before World War II," Rear Adm. Tom Carney, who's leading the naval exchange, told reporters Friday. "We will maintain a presence in the Western Pacific and the South China Sea as we have for decades, and we have no intention of departing from that kind of activity" he said.⁷²

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Five militants and a soldier killed in North Kashmir's Lolab area**

Reports noted that five Lashkar-e-Toiba militants and one soldier were killed and six soldiers including a Captain injured in a fierce gunfight in north Kashmir's Lolab area. Police sources said following an input about the presence of militants in Dar Mohalla of Maidanpora area of Lolab, 12 kilometers from district headquarter Kupwara, SOG of police along with 18 RR laid a siege in the night. The operation started during the dawn.⁷³

North East India

- **Three ultras of the Adivasi Peoples Army arrested for the Rangiya train derailment; Tripura ultra leader arrested in Aizwal; ULFA offers indefinite ceasefire; Differences reports between ULFA leaders**

Reports noted that three alleged members of the Adivasi Peoples Army an ethnic insurgent outfit which claimed responsibility for the July 10 derailment of the Guwahati-Puri Express, were arrested from Baksa district. The self-styled deputy chief commandant Silva Orang was arrested from the Menoka tea estate in Baganpara area by the police and personnel of the 7 Dogra Regiment.⁷⁴

In another development, one of the top leaders of the banned outfit National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) was arrested by the Assam Rifles (AR). Utpal Debbarma (34), self-styled foreign secretary of the outfit was detained from a place in Aizwal on July 12 and later he was handed

⁷² "Three US ships in Vietnam for joint exercise", *Brahmand*, July 16, 2011, at <http://www.brahmand.com/news/Three-US-ships-in-Vietnam-for-joint-exercise/7534/1/14.html>

⁷³ "5 militants, soldier killed", *Greater Kashmir*, July 15, 2011 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/16/5-militants-soldier-killed-33.asp>

⁷⁴ "Three ultras arrested for Rangiya train derailment", *The Assam Tribune*, July 16, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul1611/at013>

over to Tripura police on the sameday. Additional Superintendent of Police (North Tripura) Manik Das who received Utpal along Tripura-Mizoram border has reportedly brought the militant leader amid tight security.⁷⁵

According to reports, the commander-in-chief of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), Paresh Baruah has said that they would not abide by the ceasefire announcement by Rajkhowa. He said that as per constitution of the ULFA, no member can take decisions on behalf of the outfit from the grasp of enemies. He pointed out that though Rajkhowa has come out on bail, the Government still has control over him and he is not authorized to take any decision on behalf of the ULFA.⁷⁶ Earlier, the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) offered indefinite ceasefire to pave the way for a permanent solution to more than 30 years of insurgency in Assam. ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa said in a statement that the ULFA, with a view to explore a lasting peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict, resolves to cease all forms of armed campaign for an indefinite period.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "Tripura ultra leader held", *The Assam Tribune*, July 14, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul1511/oth07>

⁷⁶ "Paresh rejects ULFA truce, slams Arabinda", *The Assam Tribune*, July 13, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul1411/at06>

⁷⁷ "ULFA offers indefinite ceasefire", *The Assam Tribune*, July 12, 2011 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul1211/at013>