

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

October 5 – October 11, 10 (2), 2015

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **International medical charity leaves Afghanistan; Quetta Shura Taliban leader killed; Considering plan to leave significant force in Afghanistan; Terrorists wounded in Afghanistan rounded up from hospital in Karachi; four new provincial governors appointed; Afghanistan to sign a deal for delivery of Mi-35 gunships; US asks NATO for flexible Afghan draw down plans.**

The International medical charity Doctors Without Borders said on October 4 it had withdrawn from the northern Afghan city of Kunduz after a deadly airstrike destroyed its hospital and killed 19 people. The humanitarian crisis in the city, which briefly fell to the Taliban last week before the government launched a counteroffensive, has been growing increasingly dire, with shops shuttered because of ongoing fighting and roads made impassable by mines planted by insurgents. "All critical patients have been referred to other health facilities and no MSF staffs are working in our hospital," said Kate Stegeman, the communications manager for Doctors Without Borders, using the French acronym for the organization. "Some of our medical staff has gone to work in two hospitals where some of the wounded have been taken," she added. Investigations are continuing into the bombing of the hospital on Saturday, which killed at least 19 people, including 12 MSF staffers. The group blames a U.S. airstrike for the death and destruction. Afghan officials said helicopter gunships returned fire from Taliban fighters who were hiding in the facility.¹

Shekh Wali, a Taliban local leader and member of the Quetta Shura of Pakistan has been killed in a clash with security forces in Faryab. Abdul Satar Barez, acting governor of Faryab says hundreds of Taliban insurgents attacked Maymana, the capital of Faryab, from four different angles on October 5 evening and "wanted to take control of the city but security forces drove them out." "The security forces drove insurgents out after 11 hours of clashes in which 23 Taliban insurgents including the Taliban's shadow governor and member of Quetta Shura of Pakistan was killed," he said. In addition, 13 other insurgents were injured in the clashes. Barez believes that this attack was organized in Pakistan and Shekh Wali led the offensive in the province. "Our investigations show that the battle was planned in Pakistan and Shekh Wali led it. He was also a member of Quetta Shura of Pakistan and he was killed in the attack," he added.²

¹ "Int'l Charity Leaves Afghanistan after Bombing Destroys Hospital", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 5, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13231

² "Quetta Shura Taliban Leader Killed in Faryab", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 6, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13242

President Obama is seriously weighing a plan to keep as many as 5,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan beyond 2016, according to senior U.S. officials, a further setback of his goal to end U.S. military involvement there before he leaves office. The plan presented in August by Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would focus primarily on counterterrorism operations against the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and other direct threats to the United States. Obama has made no final decision on the proposal, which was developed before the Taliban captured Kunduz last month, the first major Afghan city to fall to the Taliban since the war began in 2001. Afghan security forces, supported by American planes and combat advisers, have since been able to retake most, if not all, of the city. But the initial collapse of the Afghan forces in Kunduz has fed long-standing worries that Afghan forces lack the necessary air support, logistics and intelligence capabilities to survive on their own after U.S. service members leave the country.³

Police officials in Karachi city of Pakistan have arrested a group of terrorists from a hospital who had fought in Afghanistan. According to news published by Pakistan's ARY news agency on October 5, Inspector General Sindh Police Ghulam Hyder Jamali has said that several terrorists wounded in Afghanistan were arrested from a hospital in Karachi where they were being treated. Afghan leaders have said in numerous occasions that terrorists fighting in Afghanistan are being treated in Pakistan. They have asked the country's authorities to stop supporting and treating them. According to the National Directorate of Security, Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was also admitted to a hospital in Karachi where he died in April 2013.⁴

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has appointed four new provincial governors, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) announced on October 7. The four new governors were recommended by IDLG and approved by Presidential Palace. A statement released by IDLG states that Mohammad Yaseen Zia has been appointed as the governor for Takhar, Zahir Wahdat for Sar-e-Pul, Sayed Anwar Sadat for Faryab and Abdul Sattar Bariz for Baghlan province. Mohammad Yaseen Zia was a deputy to the former director of National Directorate of Security (NDS). Zahir Wahdat has worked as the deputy governor for Balkh province. Sayed Anwar Sadat has served as the representative of the people of Sar-e-Pul province at Wolesi Jirga or the Lower House of Parliament. Abdul Sattar Bariz has served as the deputy governor for Faryab province. The new appointments in northern part of the country come as it is going through severe insecurity under the leadership of acting governor.⁵

Afghanistan and Russia will sign an agreement for the delivery of Mi-35 gunship helicopters, it has been reported. Zamir Kabulov, President Putin's special representative for

³ "Obama Considering Plan to Leave Significant Force in Afghanistan", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 6, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13244

⁴ "Terrorists Wounded In Afghanistan Rounded Up From Hospital in Karachi", *Khaama Press*, October 6, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/terrorists-wounded-in-afghanistan-rounded-up-from-hospital-in-karachi-3978>

⁵ "President Ghani Appoints Four New Provincial Governors", *Khaama Press*, October 8, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-appoints-four-new-provincial-governors-3975>

Afghanistan, has said the agreement is expected to be signed by the two countries during the ongoing month. Without disclosing the exact the agreement would be signed, Kabulov, said the Russian President Vladimir Putin has instructed Moscow to deliver the gunships to Afghanistan in a bid to boost the capabilities of the Afghan army. "Russia is already providing certain assistance in strengthening the capabilities of the Afghan government forces," Kabulov quoted by local media said. Kabul further added that Russia delivers weaponry to Afghanistan and provides military training for Afghan officers.⁶

The United States defence secretary, Ashton Carter, has asked NATO allies in a meeting on October 8 in Brussels to remain flexible when they review their plans of troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Carter said a number of NATO allies indicated a willingness to review their plans. "I was very pleased to hear ministers of defence from our NATO partners reaffirm their commitment – discussing not whether but how to continue the mission in Afghanistan. It is of course the view of the United States," Carter said. He said that they are continuing the mission in a 3-step action plan. The first step was when President Barack Obama decided in March this year to maintain 9 800 US troops in Afghanistan until the end of this year. The original plan had suggested keeping only 5500 troops by the end of 2015.⁷

Pakistan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **US supports 'War on Terror'; Chinese delegation in Balochistan; China to build four submarines in Karachi; Vital to keep abreast of global changes; Commanders discuss Afghan situation; Contacts with Baloch leaders encouraging.**

The United States has assured Pakistan that it will continue to support the government's efforts to defeat militancy from North Waziristan to Karachi. In a policy statement, read out at a convention convened by the Pakistan Embassy, US Deputy Special Representative Jonathan Carpenter also reiterated Washington's offer of "tangible material" support to democracy in the country. Pakistan's Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani opened the convention, informing the participants that US-Pakistan relations were "much stable" now and the two countries were looking for new avenues to further this relationship. But Mr Carpenter, whose office looks after US ties with Pakistan and Afghanistan, gave a candid review of this relationship and how he saw it unfolding in the near future. "The government of Pakistan, across all its agencies civil, military, intelligence, is engaged in a full-throttle battle against extremism within its borders," he said, while pointing to the sacrifices that the Pakistani armed forces had made in North Waziristan.⁸

⁶ "Afghanistan and Russia to Sign A Deal For Delivery Of Mi-35 Gunships", *Khaama Press*, October 9, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-and-russia-to-sign-a-deal-for-delivery-of-mi-35-gunships-1612>

⁷ "US Asks NATO Allies for Flexible Afghan Draw Down Plans", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 11, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13290

⁸ "US Supports Fight 'From Waziristan to Karachi'", *Dawn*, October 5, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1210984/us-supports-fight-from-waziristan-to-karachi>

A delegation of Chinese company and MPA Prince Ahmed Ali Baloch called on Chief Minister Balochistan, on October 5. According to a hand out issued, on October 5 night, the officials of Chinese Company, Solar Power and Managing Director, Safe City and MPA, Prince Ahmed Ali visited Chief Minister Secretariat and met with Chief Minister Balochistan, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch. The delegation informed the Chief Minister about solar energy and safe city projects. Talking to the delegation, the Chief Minister said the government was making efforts to shift agricultural tube-wells on solar energy. He said the government would extend all possible collaboration to investors. Chief Secretary Balochistan, Saifullah Chathha was also present.⁹

China will build in Karachi four of eight submarines that it is selling to Pakistan. Minister for Defence Production Rana Tanveer Hussain told at the inauguration of the Defence Export Promotion Organisation (DEPO) Display Centre in the federal capital that the deal for the acquisition of submarines from China had been finalised and four of them would be built. He further said that construction of the submarines would simultaneously begin in Pakistan and China. China, he said, would transfer the technology to Pakistan for submarine construction. The implementation of the agreement would augment the existing submarine related capacity. One of the three Agosta 90-B submarines in Navy's fleet — PNS Hamza commissioned in 2008 — was assembled at the Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works. The other two Agosta 90-B submarines — PNS Khalid and PNS Saad — were also indigenously overhauled and retrofitted with air-independent propulsion (AIP) systems in 2011.¹⁰

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif, on October 7 emphasised the need for cadets to remain abreast about the latest regional and global environment and developments. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief said this during his visit to the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), Kakul. The visit focused on reviewing the current training regime for cadets and the PMA's capacity enhancement projects, including progress work on the 4th Pakistan Battalion. The army chief said that with the highest professional standards and rigorous training, the current and future challenges can be overcome.¹¹

With security situation in Afghanistan deteriorating fast, military's top brass on October 8 deliberated on controlling the long and porous border between Pakistan and its western neighbour. "External security situation was comprehensively discussed with particular emphasis on situation in Afghanistan and border management issues on Pak-Afghanistan border," ISPR said in a statement on the Corps Commanders Conference held at General Headquarters. Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif presided over the meeting. Hanging by a thread nearly a fortnight ago Taliban gained a major psychological victory by capturing

⁹ "Chinese Delegation Calls on Balochistan CM", *The News*, October 6, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40045-Chinese-delegation-calls-on-Balochistan-CM>

¹⁰ "China to Build Four Submarines in Karachi", *Dawn*, October 7, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1211363/china-to-build-four-submarines-in-karachi>

¹¹ "It is Vital To Keep Abreast Of Global Changes, Says COAS", *The News*, October 8, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40077-It-is-vital-to-keep-abreast-of-global-changes-says-COAS>

Kunduz. Afghan security forces quickly staged a comeback, but the battle for the city has continued since. Taliban have simultaneously expanded their offensive by launching attacks in Badakhshan, Takhar and Baghlan provinces.¹²

The government has begun efforts to get in touch with self-exiled Baloch leaders and results have been encouraging, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said on October 10. Speaking at a press conference along with Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, he said efforts were under way to find a political solution to the Balochistan crisis. In reply to a question, he said: "The people involved in approaching the Baloch leaders are personally in touch with them." The minister praised the Frontier Corps, Balochistan, for restoring peace in the province. "The FC is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in Balochistan." Chaudhry Nisar said Balochistan would be a major beneficiary of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. "The province is going to become a hub of international trade."¹³

Bangladesh

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **US committed to fight extremism together with Bangladesh.**

Vouching for concerted effort to combat terrorism and violent extremism, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat said the US is determined to work together with its partners for the safety and security of their countries. "We have everything we need to fight the emergence of ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] in Bangladesh. We should never underestimate the enemy," she said, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ruled out the possibility of IS presence in Bangladesh. The US envoy's comment follows the murder of two foreign nationals in Bangladesh within a week, which the IS has claimed responsibility for. Bernicat said they were committed to helping Bangladesh government, if asked for help to get to the bottom of the murders.¹⁴

Sri Lanka

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Prime Minister visits Japan; Sri Lanka, India navies hold 25th IMBL meeting aboard Indian naval ship; US extends assistance to preserve cultural sites and demining activities; China sends special envoy to mend ties with Lanka; Sri Lanka Army releases over 600 acres in North to rightful owners; Seventy three Sri Lankan refugees return home.**

¹² "Commanders Discuss Afghan Situation", *Dawn*, October 9, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1211816/commanders-discuss-afghan-situation>

¹³ "Contacts with Baloch Leaders Encouraging: Nisar", *Dawn*, October 11, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1212301/contacts-with-baloch-leaders-encouraging-nisar>

¹⁴ "US to Fight Extremism Together With Its Partner Counties", *The Daily Star*, October 6, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/us-fight-extremism-together-152596>.

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe made an official visit to Japan on October 3. During the visit, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe delivered a special lecture at the inaugural ceremony of Japan Science and Technology Association's annual sessions in Kyoto on October 4 and addressed the Japanese Diet (Parliament) on October 5. Prime Minister Wickremesinghe met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe briefly on the sideline of the conference in Kyoto, where Abe assured his full support and that of his Government to Sri Lanka and decided to form a high-level committee to look at strengthening ties in all areas between both countries, including on the economic and political fronts. The Prime Minister held bilateral discussions with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on October 6. During the bilateral talk Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe agreed that Japan will cooperate in shoring up the Sri Lanka's economy through infrastructure development and strengthening its maritime surveillance capability. During his stay in Japan, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe met Japanese Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. Wickremesinghe had talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in Japan on October 5 while on a five day visit to the country. At the meeting, the Japanese Foreign Minister had noted the efforts of the new Government to win the confidence of the international community. Kishida said that as a close friend of Sri Lanka, the Japanese Government will assist Sri Lanka as it looks to create a new country. He said Japan has taken note of the efforts of the new Government to create a conducive environment for investors in Sri Lanka. Wickremesinghe noted that Japan was one of five countries which first established diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka. He said that Sri Lanka will extend its full cooperation to ensure Japan obtains a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.¹⁵

Sri Lanka and India navies have held the annual International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) meeting aboard an Indian naval ship in the mid seas on October 7. The Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) in a statement said the 25th International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) meeting between the representatives of Navies and Coast Guards of Sri Lanka and India was held on board Indian Naval Ship Savitri at the Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Line off Kankasanthurai on October 7th, 2015. The Sri Lankan delegation was headed by the Commander Northern Naval Area, Rear Admiral Piyal De Silva. The Indian delegation was headed by Naval Officer-in-Charge (Tamil Nadu & Puducherry) Commodore Alok Bhatnagar. Both delegations consisted of officers specialized in diversified fields. The navies of the two countries meet annually aiming at strengthening the naval relationship between the neighbours. The annual IMBL meeting provides an opportunity to exchange views and ideas with regard to operational effectiveness through common understanding of the Navies and Coast Guards of the neighbours. The 25th meeting primarily focused on maintaining effective

¹⁵ "Sri Lankan Prime Minister Arrives in Japan on an Official Visit", *ColomboPage*, October 3, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct03_1443888165CH.php. "Japanese PM Assures Full Support to Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, October 4, 2015 <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/04/japanese-pm-assures-full-support-to-sri-lanka/>; "Japan to Help Lanka on Economy, Maritime Security", *Colombo Gazette*, October 6, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/06/japan-to-help-lanka-on-economy-maritime-security/>. "Japan will Back Sri Lanka's Domestic Process", *Colombo Gazette*, October 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/05/japan-will-back-sri-lankas-domestic-process/>. "PM Meets Japanese Emperor", *Daily Mirror*, October 7, 2015 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/90279/ranil-meets-japanese-emperor>.

maritime security in the region by integration of forces through co-operation, coordination and collaboration. Mutual understanding of limitations and capabilities of forces to enhance service interoperability and system compatibility in countering challenges in time to come and setting up a viable mechanism for information sharing at tactical level also were important points of discussion at the meeting, the Navy said.¹⁶

As part of its continuing efforts to preserve Sri Lanka's cultural and religious heritage, the Embassy of the United States of America announced new grants totalling \$300,000 to help restore the ancient Buddhist Rajagala Monastery and improve preservation of artefacts at the Anuradhapura Archaeological Museum. Under the new grant, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura will receive \$150,000 from the U.S. Embassy through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) to continue its restoration of the Rajagala Monastery. This is the second phase of U.S. assistance on this project, adding to an initial \$100,000 grant from 2013. A separate \$150,000 grant to Sri Lanka's Department of Archaeology will improve the storage and preservation of artefacts at the Anuradhapura Archaeological Museum. The U.S. Embassy previously supported the Museum, one of Sri Lanka's most visited, with grants in 2009 and 2012. Since 2005, the U.S. Embassy through AFCP has funded eleven conservation projects in Sri Lanka, representing a total commitment of over \$730,000.¹⁷ At a meeting on October 8 with D M Swaminathan, U S Ambassador Atul Keshap announced an additional \$1.745 million (245 million LKR) for demining activities of international and domestic partners and the National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) under the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Hindu Religious Affairs.¹⁸

In a significant move, China has dispatched Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin as the first special envoy to Sri Lanka since the parliamentary elections in August. His visit comes on the heels of back-to-back trips by the newly elected prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to India and Japan, the South China Morning Post reported. "The purpose of the special envoy's trip is to congratulate the prime minister and probably invite him to undertake a China trip, now that he has visited Japan and India," a Sri Lankan official said.¹⁹

Sri Lanka Army, in keeping with the new government's policy to release more security forces-held lands to the civilians, has released over 600 acres. The Army said it had formally released 613 acres of land held by Armed Forces for security requirements during the war in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts to the original owners of the land and for resettlement of displaced civilians. At the National Sowing and Cultivation ceremony held at Waddakachchi in Kilinochchi on October 5, President Maithripala Sirisena handed over the deeds to the lands to the owners. Out of the 613 acres, 474 acres belong to Kilinochchi District and 139 acres

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka, India Navies Hold 25th Imbl Meeting aboard Indian Naval Ship", *ColomboPage*, October 9, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct09_1444357956CH.php.

¹⁷ "US to Provide Rs. 42.1 Million To Preserve Cultural Sites", *Colombo Gazette*, October 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/05/us-to-provide-rs-42-1-million-to-preserve-cultural-sites-2/>.

¹⁸ "US Committed To Assist Lanka's Demining Work", *Colombo Gazette*, October 8, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/08/us-committed-to-assist-lankas-demining-work/>.

¹⁹ "China Sends Special Envoy To Mend Ties with Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, October 9, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/09/china-sends-special-envoy-to-mend-ties-with-lanka/>.

belong to Mullaitivu District. The lands were being used earlier by tri-services under the Security Force Headquarters - Kilinochchi (SFHQ-KLN) and Security Force Headquarters - Mullaitivu (SFHQ-MLT) for security purposes as the fight against terrorism was intensifying before May 2009.²⁰

Another batch of Sri Lankan refugees in India returned home with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The 73 refugees left the special camps for Sri Lanka to start a new life on the island.²¹

Maldives

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Indian Minister of External Affairs visits Maldives; WGAD has called for the release and compensate President Nasheed; Special Envoy of the President of Egypt meets Vice President Adeb; Japan to provide \$20 million for broadcasting service development.**

The Indian Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj made a visit to the Maldives upon invitation of Maldivian Foreign Minister, Dunya Maumoon on October 10 to participate in the fifth Maldives-India Joint Commission. During the visit, the Indian External Minister met with President Abdulla Yamin on October 11 and discussed the relationship between the two countries. A press release issued by the Indian High Commission said that President Yamin requested to India to host an Investors Forum for Maldivian investors. Trade, connectivity, education, health and heritage relations between the two countries were discussed along with the environment at the Maldives-India Joint Commission meeting. The joint commission between India and the Maldives was formed in 1986 to support and strengthen relations between the two countries. Outside the meeting of the Joint Commission, the two countries signed two MoUs to provide support for the Maldivian sports and the Foreign Institute which is under the Foreign Ministry. The Indian High Commission said that the Maldives pledge support in India's effort to become a member of the U.N. Security Council in the talks between the officials of the two countries. Sushma Swaraj also met with the leader of the MDP parliamentary group, Ibrahim Mohamed Soalih (Ibu).²²

The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has said that the trial of the former President, Mohamed Nasheed proceeded unjustly and has called for the release of the former President and enforce the right to compensation. The WGAD made the statement in a report after reviewing the case submitted by the former President's lawyers. The report publicised by

²⁰ "Sri Lanka Army Releases over 600 Acres in North to Rightful Owners", *ColomboPage*, October 7, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct07_1444156993CH.php.

²¹ "73 Sri Lankan Refugees Return Home", *Colombo Gazette*, October 9, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/09/73-sri-lankan-refugees-return-home/>.

²² "Indian Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj Arrives in the Maldives", *SunOnline*, October 10, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33679>. "Indian Minister of External Affairs Leaves the Maldives", *SunOnline*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33739>. "Indian Minister of External Affairs Meets with the MDP PG Leader", *SunOnline*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33733>. "The Maldives and India Signs Two MoU", *SunOnline*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33721>. "Sushma Swaraj Visits President Yamin to Pay Respects", *SunOnline*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33713>.

Jared Genser of the President's legal team notes a number of things that are considered unjust during the trial. And so the report notes that some of the judges that could affect the trial being part of the trial and not giving adequate time to prepare a defence and the former President not having a lawyer at some point of the trial. The other thing noted by the WGAD is not giving the opportunity to assign a lawyer once the original lawyers left the case. It is also noted that only a few number of people were allowed inside the court room for the hearings.

The WGAD believes that the former President was deprived of a fair trial along with the right to prove his innocence saying that the Criminal Court's decision to sentence the former President to 13 years in prison was unfair. Speaking at a press conference on October 5, lawyer Ibrahim Riffath of the former President's defence team said that international treaties signed by the Maldives makes it compulsory for the Government to obey the decision made by the UNWGAD. Ministry of Foreign Affairs however, has rejected the UNWGAD decision. The ministry said that the UN cannot make a decision on a case which is going through the legal process of the Maldives, on which the highest court has not yet issued a verdict. Meanwhile Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) National Council passed a resolution calling for sanctions against the government's rejection of the UNWGAD's decision. Later MDP held a march in Malé calling for the release of former president Mohamed Nasheed. Speaking at the event, MP Rozaina Adam said that the purpose of the march was not only to call for Nasheed's release, but also demand basic human rights for the general public.²³

Special Envoy of the President of Egypt, Hatam El Sayed Tageldin, has expressed concern on behalf of Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi and the Egyptian government, over the blast on the presidential speedboat in the Maldives. Tageldin paid a courtesy call on Vice President Ahmed Adeb at the President's Office on October 5. Tageldin delivered a letter to President Abdulla Yameen on behalf of President Sisi, in which the Egyptian Head of State detailed Egypt's candidature for a Non-Permanent Seat in the UN Security Council for the upcoming term. VP Adeb conveyed on behalf of President Yameen, the assurance of Maldives' support for Egypt's candidature vote scheduled for 15 October 2015 in New York.²⁴

Communications Authority of Maldives (CAM) has announced that the government of Japan has agreed to provide free aid worth \$20 million for the development of broadcasting service in the Maldives. CEO of CAM Ilyas Ahmed said at a ceremony held on October 8 to sign the Minutes of Discussion of a project to establish Integrated Services Digital Broadcasting-Terrestrial (ISDB-T) in the Maldives, that studies related to this donation from Japan are ongoing. The Minutes of Discussion was signed on behalf of Maldives by Minister of Home

²³ "WGAD has Called for the Release and Compensate President Nasheed", *SunOnline*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33471>. "Nasheed's Legal Team: It is Compulsory To Obey The Working Group's Decision", *SunOnline*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33477>. "MDP Holds March Calling For Nasheed's Release", *SunOnline*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/category/1/2>.

²⁴ "Egyptian President's Special Envoy Expresses Concern over Blast on Speedboat, In Meeting with VP", *SunOnline*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33451>.

Affairs Umar Naseer, and on behalf of Japan by Team Leader of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Jotaro Tateyama.²⁵

B. South Asia

China

(September 21-October 11, 2015)

- **China concludes the construction of lighthouses in the South China Sea; China and Thailand discusses speedy construction of railway line; Xi Jinping meets representatives from ethnic minority regions; China issues White Paper on Human Rights; China wants 'win-win relations' with the United States; China issues White Paper on Xinjiang ethnic equality; China announces its contribution to the EU investment plan; China wants Australia to maintain peace and stability in South China Sea; China issues white paper on gender equality; Li Keqiang meets the British Chancellor.**

The Chinese Ministry of Transport held a ceremony marking the completion of construction of Huayang and Chigua Lighthouses on Huayang Reef of China's Nansha Islands. These lighthouses will greatly improve the navigational capacity of the South China Sea and will also reduce the existing risks.²⁶

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai in Beijing. Both sides discussed the bilateral relations. It was also agreed that the China-Thailand railway project should be given priority and an early start. During the meeting Li said that, "The railway will promote the two countries' economic development and facilitate trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between China, Thailand and the Indo-China Peninsula".²⁷

On September 30 the Chinese President met with 13 representatives from the five autonomous regions. These representatives were invited to the National Day celebrations for their contribution to ethnic unity. The Chinese President said, "I have stressed many times that not a single ethnic group should be left behind in the process of comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society".²⁸

²⁵ "Japan to Provide \$20 Million For Broadcasting Service Development", *SunOnline*, October 8, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33599>.

²⁶ "China Completes Construction of Two Large Lighthouses in the South China Sea", *China Daily*, October 9, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/09/content_22144928.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

²⁷ "China, Thailand Agree to Speed up Railway Cooperation", *China Daily*, October 9, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/09/content_22144525.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

²⁸ "Xi Celebrates National Day with Ethnic Minority Representatives", *China Daily*, October 1, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/01/content_22025529.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

On September 25, the China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS) published a report on China's progress in human rights in 2014. This is the fifth human rights blue paper which China has published. It discusses social assistance, health, private data collection, education etc.²⁹

During his first state visit to the United States the Chinese President Xi Jinping called for "win-win co-operation". During his speech at the White House, Xi asserted that China and the United States "must adapt to the changing times". However, issues related to cyber security overshadowed the visit.³⁰

On September 24, China issued a white paper on ethnic equality, unity and development in Xinjiang. This white paper discussed the level of development and progress witnessed by the province. The white paper is titled, "Historical Witness to Ethnic Equality, Unity and Development in Xinjiang".³¹

China has become the first non-European country to announce its contribution to the European Union Commission's 315 billion-euro Investment Plan for Europe. Both sides also agreed to establish a joint working group to increase the cooperation between the EU and China on various aspects of investments.³²

After the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull advised the Chinese to stop island construction in South China Sea, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei said that, "we hope that Australia will stay committed to not taking sides on issues concerning disputes over sovereignty" as a regular press briefing. Hong added that China hopes that Australia will help in maintaining regional peace and stability.³³

China also issued a White Paper on Gender equality and women's development. This white paper marks the 20th anniversary of the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women which was held in Beijing. According to the White Paper, "China has always upheld the constitutional principle of equality between men and women, which is also a basic state policy for promoting progress in the country and in society".³⁴

²⁹ "China Issues Report on Human Rights Progress", *China Daily*, September 29, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/25/content_21981763.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

³⁰ "China's Xi Wants 'Win-Win Co-Operation' with US", *BBC News*, September 25, 2015 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-34355581>, accessed on October 13, 2015

³¹ "China Issues White Paper on Xinjiang Ethnic Equality, Unity", *China Daily*, September 24, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/60thxjannivesary/2015-09/24/content_21969310.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

³² "China Announces Contribution to EU's 315 Billion-Euro Investment Plan", By Chen Yingqun, *China Daily*, September 28, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/28/content_22004015.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

³³ "China Urges Australia to Work for Peace in South China Sea", *China Daily*, September 22, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/22/content_21953394.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

³⁴ "China Issues White Paper on Gender Equality, Women's Development", *China Daily*, September 22, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/22/content_21947110.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

During the seventh China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the British Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne. During the meeting Li said that, "The Chinese government has taken measures to stabilize the markets and guard against systemic risks". He also added that, "China is improving the central parity of exchange rate mechanism of the RMB to speed up the marketization of the regime".³⁵

Japan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Japan welcomes TPP agreement in principle; Japan-Sri Lanka announced Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership; Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi is scheduled to visit Japan; Japan-Russia sub-Cabinet-level meeting held in Moscow.**

On October 5, TPP agreement in principle was reached at the Ministerial Meeting in United States. Japan has welcomed the development and emphasized that since the July 2013, Japan had numerous negotiations with the other participating states to identify the best path that will serve the national interests. Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida stated that this will be the foundation for setting a broader Asia-Pacific free trade area and boost other economic partnership negotiations that Japan is following.³⁶

Japan-Sri Lanka summit meeting was held on October 6 in Tokyo and a Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between Japan and Sri Lanka was announced. Besides, the signing ceremony for yen loan 45 billion for Bandaranaike International Airport Development Project (Phase 2) was held. Both Sri Lankan Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and his Japanese counterpart Abe expressed hope to strengthen the comprehensive relation through trade and investment. They also agreed to discuss several other issues including the National Development Plan of Sri Lanka, and National Reconciliation and Peace building. Moreover, maritime issues such as acceptance of Maritime Self Defence Forces in ports and human resource development.³⁷

Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi is scheduled to visit Japan in third week of October to discuss the upcoming Japan-China-South Korea trilateral summit. He is also expected to meet national security adviser Shotaro Yachi. Discussion is expected to include the prospects of a

³⁵ "Chinese Premier Meets British Chancellor", *China Daily*, September 21, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/21/content_21942413.htm, accessed on October 13, 2015

³⁶ Agreement in Principle on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Negotiations (Statement by Foreign Minister Kishida), *MOFA Japan* October 6, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000877.html

³⁷ Japan-Sri Lanka Summit Meeting, *MOFA Japan*, October 6, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/lk/page4e_000333.html

bilateral Japan-China meeting, a possible summit meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Xi, promoting three-way free trade. This will be Yang's first visit since 2013.³⁸

In a sub-Cabinet-level meeting on October 8 in Moscow, Japan and Russia did not make progress vis-à-vis signing a peace treaty to officially end the war and address the territorial issue off Hokkaido. Authorities reportedly stated that both sides engaged in territorial and peace treaty negotiations from legal and historical perspectives. This is the first sub-Cabinet-level meeting since 2014. Earlier in September in New York during a meeting between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Putin, both sides decided to achieve progress on the peace treaty negotiations.³⁹

The Korean Peninsula

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **North Korea celebrates 70th Workers Party anniversary; South Korea-China held 3rd Bilateral Dialogue on Climate Change; Fourth US-South Korea summit to focus on North Korea; South Korea and Germany to discuss peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula.**

On October 10, North Korea celebrated the 70th Workers Party anniversary by staging a military parade at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang. On the occasion, Supreme leader Kim Jong-un underscored that North Korea is ready to deal with any war threats posed by the US and further blamed US for imposing sanctions affecting the economic development of the nation.⁴⁰ In the parade, North Korea displayed ICBM KN-08 and rockets with miniaturized, diversified nuke warhead. China was represented in the parade by Liu Yunshan from Chinese Communist Party.

On October 9, South Korea-China held 3rd Bilateral Dialogue on Climate Change in Beijing. Both countries discussed several important issues such as new climate regime, the prospects of the December 2015 Paris conference, greenhouse gas emissions trading schemes, energy and technologies for battling climate change and their individual Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted to the UNFCCC.⁴¹

US President Obama and his South Korean counterpart Park Geun-hye is expected to discuss the possibility of additional sanctions on North Korea in the backdrop of Pyongyang's increasing nuclear and missile threats, advancement of the Korea-U.S. alliance, stability and

³⁸ "Top Chinese Diplomat Yang To Visit Japan This Month; Meeting With Abe Eyed", *Kyodo*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/11/national/politics-diplomacy/top-chinese-diplomat-yang-to-visit-japan-this-month-meeting-with-abe-eyed/#.ViCkmW6InIV>

³⁹ "Moscow Talks Over Isle Row, Peace Treaty Go Nowhere", *Jiji*, Oct 9, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/09/national/politics-diplomacy/moscow-talks-isle-row-make-no-headway-sides-stand-ground/#.ViCIAG6InIV>

⁴⁰ "N.K. Leader Voices Readiness To Fight War with U.S.", *Yonhap News Agency*, October 10, 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2015/10/09/0401000000AEN20151009006653315.html>

⁴¹ ROK and China to Hold their 3rd Bilateral Dialogue on Climate Change, *MOFA* October 8, 2015 http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20

prosperity in Northeast Asia and non-traditional security challenges including cyberspace, environment, energy and global health during the fourth US-South Korea summit meeting scheduled on October 16. President Park is also scheduled to visit Pentagon during her official visit. However, authorities reportedly informed that THAAD will not feature in the discussion between the two leaders.⁴²

On October 12, South Korean President Park Geun-hye is expected to hold discussions with German President Joachim Gauck at Cheong Wa Dae and exchange views on enhancing cooperation to achieve a peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula, non-proliferation issue in North Korea and human rights record.⁴³

C. Russia

Russia: National

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Russian security agencies arrest terrorists in Moscow with links to the Islamic State; Russia's reserve funds may get exhausted by 2017-2018 at current spending rate; Putin says Russia will stick to liberal course in currency regulation; OPEC increases forecast for oil production in Russia to 10.75 million barrels per day in 2015; Discovery of new Arctic islands adds additional territories to Russia.**

Russian Security Service (FSB) have arrested a 'few' suspects who have been accused of plotting a terrorist attack in Moscow. A bomb containing 5 kilograms of explosive was also confiscated. These suspects were trained at Islamic State camps in Syria.⁴⁴

Russia's First Deputy Minister of Finance Tatiana Nesterenko has said that the reserve fund is likely to be exhausted by 2017-2018 at their current spending rates. Earlier, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov had stated that attempts will be made to keep National Wealth Fund and Reserve Fund at least 2 trillion roubles (US\$ 32.5 billion) by the end of 2018. As on October 1, 2015 Russia's Reserve Fund amounted to 4.67 trillion roubles (US\$ 75.8 billion) and the National Wealth Fund 4.87 trillion roubles (US\$ 79.1 billion).⁴⁵

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that his government will stick to the liberal course in currency regulations and will not impose any restrictions on capital movement. He also

⁴² "Park, Obama to Discuss More N.K. Sanctions, But Not THAAD: Envoy", *The Korea Herald*, October 8, 2015, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151008000999>

⁴³ Korea-Germany Summit (October 2015), *Korea Net Summit Diplomacy*, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Summit-Diplomacy>

⁴⁴ "Terrorist Suspects Detained In Moscow Trained at Islamic State camps in Syria — FSB", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/828157>

⁴⁵ "Russian Resources Of Reserve Funds May Be Exhausted In 2017-2018 At Current Spending Rate", *Itar-Tass*, October 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/827511>

pledged that the government will carry out a balanced budget and social policy to preserve stability in this sphere.⁴⁶

OPEC has increased its forecast for oil production in Russia to 10.75 million barrels per day in 2015. The outlook revision is associated with a record growth of oil production in Russia in September - by 60,000 barrels per day to 10.83 million barrels per day.⁴⁷

The head of Russia's Northern Fleet's hydrography service, Igor Naumov has said that Russia's territory has grown by 10 square kilometres following discovery of nine islands in the Arctic. He stated that an exploratory mission, under way since August 18, has also discovered five straits, seven capes and four bays.⁴⁸

Russia: International

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Foreign Ministry says Russia not planning a 'land operation' in Syria; Russian Deputy Foreign Minister holds talks with leader of Kurdish forces in Syria; Russian and French diplomats discuss attempts to fight Islamic State; Russia and UAE discuss 'coordinated efforts' against the IS; Foreign Minister Lavrov says Russia is ready to cooperate with all non-terrorist opposition groups in Syria; Russia adds new fighter jets to its Syrian operations; Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister says Russia's operations in Syria play a key role in the fight against terrorism; Russian Military General calls SCO to pool efforts against threats from Afghanistan; Kremlin calls Czech allegations of Russia financing refugee influx to EU ungrounded; Russia plans supply of rocket engines to China; Third Russian-language TV channel likely to start broadcasting in China in 2016; Trade turnover between Russia and China declines by 29 per cent during January-September 2015.**

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that the country is not planning to launch a land operation in Syria. It added that IS poses common threat and this calls for collective action against the militants.⁴⁹

Russian presidential envoy for the Middle East and African countries, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has held talks with the chairman of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party Saleh Muslim in Paris on October 9. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that 'the discussion focused on the developments in Syria and around it with emphasis on consolidating efforts in fighting against the threat coming from the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations, and promoting political settlement of the Syrian crisis on the basis of

⁴⁶ "Putin Pledges Russia Will Keep To Liberal Course In Currency Regulation", *Itar-Tass*, October 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/827893>

⁴⁷ "OPEC Increases Forecast For Oil Production In Russia To 10.75 Mln Barrels Per Day in 2015", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/828123>

⁴⁸ "Discovery of New Arctic Islands Adds Territory Of Five Monaco Principalities to Russia", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/science/828080>

⁴⁹ "Russia Planning No Land Operation in Syria — Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, October 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/827345>

the Geneva communique from June 30, 2012 that guarantees sovereignty, territorial integrity and secularity of the country where equal legal rights are ensured for all ethnic-religious groups living on its territory.⁵⁰

Russian presidential envoy for the Middle East and African countries, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has held talks with the senior diplomatic adviser to French President, Jacques Audibert on 'coordinating efforts; against the Islamic State. The two sides noted that 'counter-terrorism actions should run in parallel with active consolidated work to promote a political settlement to the Syrian crisis based on the Geneva communique of June 30, 2012 with a view to further social and economic resurgence in Syria.'⁵¹

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that senior officials from Russia and the United Arab Emirates have discussed the events in Syria and Yemen as well as the 'problems of coordinated counteraction to the terrorist threat from IS and other extremist groups.' The meeting took place between Russian presidential envoy for the Middle East and African countries, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and UAE's Deputy Director of the Foreign Ministry's international security cooperation department, Mohammed Ali Al Shamsi.⁵²

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on October 12, that Moscow is ready to cooperate with both the Free Syrian Army and with all opposition groups in Syria which do not use terrorist methods. He stated that 'we publicly reiterate that we are ready to cooperate with such patriotically-minded units of the armed opposition, both in terms of coordination of anti-terrorist efforts in the Syrian territory, and in terms of involving these patriotic groups into the efforts towards launching a political process.'⁵³

Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov has said that Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets have been added to the Russian Aerospace Forces in Syria. The jets are expected to provide 'air escort for all flights of Russia's strike aircraft in Syria. Russia has stationed around 50 jets and helicopters in Syria.⁵⁴

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said that Russia's anti-terrorist operation in Syria is playing a key role in countering Islamic State (IS) militants in the region. He also noted the 'constant consultations' that Tehran and Moscow were holding on the

⁵⁰ "Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Holds Talks With Leader Of Kurdish Forces in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/827474>

⁵¹ "Russian, French Diplomats Discuss Coordinated Efforts To Fight Islamic State", *Itar-Tass*, October 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/827404>

⁵² "Russia, UAE Discuss Coordinated Efforts Against IS", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828200>

⁵³ "Russia Ready To Cooperate With All Non-Terrorist Opposition Groups in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828116>

⁵⁴ "New Fighter Jets Join Russian Aerospace Forces' Operation in Syria — Defense Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/828054>

activities of Islamic State and 'and possible consequences of the terrorist group's actions for states of the region.'⁵⁵

The Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff Sergei Istrakov has said that SCO member states should pool their efforts in order to 'prevent the use of Afghanistan as a tool for aggravating the situation in Central Asia.' He added the SCO countries were trying to neutralize the security threats independently by taking unilateral economic, political and humanitarian measures. However, these attempts no not enable them to stand up to new challenges and threats effectively.⁵⁶

The Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that pronouncements by the Czech Defence Minister that Russia is financing refugee influx to the European Union is 'absolutely ungrounded.'⁵⁷

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said that Russia will prepare documents on rocket engines supplies to China for the visit of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to Beijing in December. Russia will also explore the prospect of reverse supplies of microelectronics from China.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, in a separate interview he stated that the two countries are considering the possibility of jointly constructing power units for nuclear power stations (NPPs) in third countries.⁵⁹

Russia's deputy minister of communications and mass media, Alexei Volin has said that a new Russian-language channel is likely to start broadcasting in China next year. The channel is expected to broadcast documentaries, feature films, cultural and educational programmes. At present two Russian channels broadcast in China - RTR Planeta and Russia Today.⁶⁰

The trade turnover between China and Russia during January-September 2015 amounted to US\$ 50 billion, which is 29.3 per cent less than the same period in 2014.⁶¹

⁵⁵ "Russia's Operation In Syria Plays Key Role In Fight Against Terrorism — Iran Deputy FM", *Itar-Tass*, October 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/827606>

⁵⁶ "Russian General Staff Calls SCO To Pool Efforts Against Threats from Afghanistan", *Itar-Tass*, October 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/827375>

⁵⁷ "Russia Financing Refugee Influx to EU Ungrounded", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828091>

⁵⁸ "Russia Plans Supplies Of Rocket Engines to China — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/827972>

⁵⁹ "Russia and China May Jointly Construct NPPs in Other Countries — Russian Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/827975>

⁶⁰ "Third Russian-Language TV Channel May Start Broadcasting in China in 2016", *Itar-Tass*, October 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/827697>

⁶¹ "Trade Volume Between China And Russia Down 29% to \$50 in January-September", *Itar-Tass*, October 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/828288>

D. Central Asia

Kazakhstan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Nazarbayev and Poroshenko discuss bilateral ties and developments in Ukraine; Kazakhstan's Central Bank raises key interest rate to 16 per cent; OHCHR raises concern about the pressures on NGOs in Kazakhstan; Almaty-Khorgos motor road to be completed in 2016; Kazakhstan has increased the export of uranium; Finland's trade minister visits Kazakhstan; Representatives of Syrian opposition meet in Astana.**

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev and his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko have discussed bilateral ties in Astana on October 9. They also discussed the developments in Ukraine. President Nazarbaev expressed his support to the Minsk process and stressed that there is no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. He added that Kazakhstan will continue to send food to Ukraine's east and financially support the regions hit by the conflict through the International Red Cross. The two sides agreed to develop cooperation in the energy sector, infrastructure development, agro-industry, power engineering, agricultural engineering and space industry.⁶²

Kazakhstan's Central Bank has raised its key interest rate from 12 to 16 percent as it continues its attempts to strengthen the *Tenge*. The Bank stated that its decision was based on the economic data and prospects for growth and the goal is to keep inflation in the medium-term within a range of 6 to 8 per cent.⁶³

The Regional Office for Central Asia of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has expressed concern about the draft law passed by the Lower House of Kazakh Parliament in September that introduces amendments to several legislative acts regarding the funding and operation of non-governmental organizations in Kazakhstan.⁶⁴

The President of Kazakhstan's national railways company Askar Mamin had, on October 5, visited the Khorgos-Eastern Gates Free Economic Zone (FEZ) on the Kazakh-Chinese border wherein he reviewed the construction of Almaty-Khorgos motor road which is to be completed in 2016. He also inspected the operation of FEZ's Dry Port. The road project is part

⁶² "Poroshenko, Nazarbaev Discuss Ties, Ukraine Crisis In Astana", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/poroshenko-nazarbaev-ukraine-kazakhstan-ties/27297014.html>

⁶³ "Kazakhstan's Central Bank Raises Key Interest Rate To 16 Percent", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 2, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakh-central-bank-raises-key-interest-rate-to-16-percent/27283871.html>

⁶⁴ "OHCHR Concerned About Legislative Pressure on NGOs in Kazakhstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15844-ohchr-concerned-about-legislative-pressure-on-ngos-in-kazakhstan>

of China's New Silk Road Economic Belt programme and is expected to be completed on time.⁶⁵

Kazakhstan's has almost doubled its share in the export of uranium in 2014 as compared to the year before. Its share now stands at 23 per cent and it produced 22,827 tonnes of uranium during the same period. The country's reserves are expected to last 80-100 years.⁶⁶

Finland's Minister for Foreign Trade Lenita Toivakka has visited Astana during October 4-7. She was accompanied by a 43 member delegation with 18 of them representing vocational institutions and universities. The key areas of discussion revolved around investment, technology, education and sustainable development. Kazakhstan is Finland's biggest trading partner in Central Asia.⁶⁷

The representatives of Syrian opposition held discussions in Astana during October 2-4. The talks were moderated by Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Askar Mussinov and Director of the French Centre for Political and Foreign Affairs Fabien Baussart. Kazakhstan's Secretary of State Gulshara Abdykalikova during the opening remarks emphasised on the country supporting initiatives to restore trust in international relations and strengthen peace and security based on international law. Ms. Abdykalikova added that Kazakhstan hopes for the continuation of talks between the Syrian authorities and the opposition within the framework of the Geneva process.⁶⁸

Kyrgyzstan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Kyrgyz President Atambayev meets Russian President Putin in Sochi; Kyrgyzstan to sign a currency swap agreement with China; Russia hands over six thousand books in Russian to Kyrgyzstan; Social Democratic Party wins the parliamentary elections.**

President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev has, on October 8, met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Sochi. The two leaders discussed topical issues of Kyrgyz-Russian cooperation including regional security, working of Eurasian Economic Union and implementation of joint projects in various fields.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ "Almaty-Khorgos Motor Road To Be Completed in 2016", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15835-almaty-khorgos-motor-road-to-be-completed-in-2016>

⁶⁶ "Kazakhstan Becomes Major Supplier of Uranium to U.S., Production Set to Grow Further", *The Astana Times*, October 10, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/kazakhstan-becomes-major-supplier-of-uranium-to-u-s-production-set-to-grow-further/>

⁶⁷ "Finnish Trade Minister, Major Business Leaders Visit Kazakhstan to Build Relationships", *The Astana Times*, October 5, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/finnish-trade-minister-major-business-leaders-visit-kazakhstan-to-build-relationships/>

⁶⁸ "Representatives of Syrian Opposition Meet in Astana", *The Astana Times*, October 6, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/representatives-of-syrian-opposition-meet-in-astana/>

⁶⁹ "Atambayev and Putin discuss Kyrgyz-Russian cooperation and implementation of joint projects", *Kabar*, October 8, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/14072>

Kyrgyzstan's National Bank Governor Tolkunbek Abdygulov has said that the Bank is ready to sign a currency swap agreement with China. This follows Tajikistan and Kazakhstan signing a similar agreement with Beijing.⁷⁰

Russia's Rossotrudnichestvo has handed over more than six thousand textbooks and teaching and visual aids on Russian language, literature and culture to Kyrgyzstan. As such, sixteen rural and urban schools, three regional libraries and two universities have received the study materials.⁷¹

Kyrgyzstan's Social Democratic Party (SDPK) has won the country's parliamentary elections. It received 27.5 per cent of the votes while Respublika Ata-Jurt (Fatherland) party finished second with 20 per cent of the votes. Meanwhile, six political parties passed the threshold to enter the 120-member unicameral legislature, known as the Supreme Council. It was estimated that 59 per cent of registered voters had cast their votes.⁷²

Uzbekistan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Uzbek and Turkmen Presidents meet in Tashkent; Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister meets with Russia's Deputy Defence Minister; Sixth round of political consultations take place between Uzbekistan and Lithuania; Uzbek security official placed under house arrest.**

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has met with his Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov in Tashkent on October 9. Apart from discussing bilateral ties, the two leaders expressed concern over the developments in Kunduz and stressed on the importance of cooperation in combating extremism, international terrorism and drug trafficking. They also spoke against the construction of HPPs on trans-boundary rivers without taking into account the interests of all states in the region⁷³

Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov has met with Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov in Tashkent on October 7. They discussed 'issues of regional and global security and consolidation of efforts against the modern challenges and threats'. Mr. Antonov emphasized on the importance of military and technical cooperation with Uzbekistan being an important factor for maintaining stability in the region.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ "Asian Review: Kyrgyz Central Bank To Close Swap Deal with China", *Kabar*, October 8, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/analytics/full/14071>

⁷¹ "Russia Gave Kyrgyzstan More Than 6 Thousand Books in Russian", *Kabar*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14087>

⁷² "Monitors Praise Kyrgyz Elections Won By Social Democrats", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/social-democrats-win-kyrgyzstans-parliamentary-elections/27288300.html>

⁷³ "Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan Ready To Promote Peace And Stability In Region", *Aki Press*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.akipress.com/news:566420/>

⁷⁴ "Uzbek FM Meets With Deputy Minister Of Defence of Russia", *UZ Daily*, October 7, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-33843.htm>

The sixth round of political consultations between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and Lithuania was held in Vilnius on October 6. The two sides exchanged opinion on ‘wide-range of issues including development of bilateral relations in political-diplomatic, trade-economic, investment, cultural-humanitarian and other spheres.’ They also considered the prospect of strengthening ties at both the Uzbekistan-EU format, as well as within the UN and other organizations.⁷⁵

The former first deputy of Uzbekistan’s National Security Service, General Hayot Sharifhojaev, who supervised investigations into the alleged corruption deals of Gulnara Karimova has been placed under house arrest. He has been accused of selling properties confiscated from various corruption suspects.⁷⁶

Tajikistan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Russia to reinforce Tajik airbase with helicopters; Tajik authorities arrest 23 IRPT members; Tajik President expresses concern over the Afghan border situation; Tajik Defence Ministry says the Ayni airfield is not leased to Russia; Three border crossings on the Tajik-Afghan border resume operations.**

Russia’s Defence Ministry has said, on October 7, that it will strengthen its 201st Motorized Rifle Division based in Tajikistan by assigning a number of Mi-24P and Mi-8MTV helicopters to the base. The aircraft will be used to provide air cover for military columns, deliver airborne forces and cargo, carry out reconnaissance missions, and evacuate the sick and wounded. The air base is located around 170 kilometres north of the Tajik border with Afghanistan.⁷⁷

Tajik authorities have arrested 23 top officials of the now illegal Islamic Renaissance Party (IPRT), with many accused of supporting the mutiny of a former serving Deputy Defence Minister in September 2015. The suspects face charges of inciting religious and racial hatred, terrorism and attempting to seize power. A few of them have also been charged with fraud, forgery and other crimes. Earlier in September, the country’s Supreme Court had banned IRPT on the grounds of being an extremist and terrorist organisation.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ “Uzbek-Lithuanian Political Consultations Take Place in Vilnius”, *UZ Daily*, October 7, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-33828.htm>

⁷⁶ “Uzbek Security Official Placed under House Arrest”, *Silk Road Reporters*, October 8, 2015 at http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/08/uzbek-security-official-placed-under-house-arrest/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=a92828155f-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-a92828155f-204234821

⁷⁷ “Russia to Reinforce Tajik Airbase with Helicopters”, *Silk Road Reporters*, October 8, 2015 at http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/08/russia-to-reinforce-tajik-airbase-with-helicopters/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=a92828155f-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-a92828155f-204234821

⁷⁸ “Tajik Authorities Arrest 23 IRPT Members”, *Silk Road Reporters*, October 7, 2015 at http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/07/tajik-authorities-arrest-23-irpt-members/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=0228ab0707-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-0228ab0707-204234821

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, during a meeting with Russian President Putin held in Sochi on October 6, has expressed concern over the tense situation along the shared border with Afghanistan. He added that the 'situation was getting worse by the day.'⁷⁹

Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence has said that the Ayni airfield has not been leased to Russia. It stated 'the airfield belongs to the Tajik Defence Ministry and Russia's plan to deploy its attack helicopters at the Ayni airfield does not mean that it is leased to Russia.' It is likely that Russia will use the airfield within the framework of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).⁸⁰

Three border crossings on the Tajik-Afghan border that were closed due to the Taliban attack in Kunduz have resumed operations. These include the Panj, Ishkashim and Ruzvai crossings.⁸¹

Turkmenistan

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran agree to establish uniform rates for the Uzen-Bolashak-Serhetyaka-Akyayla-Incheburun railway line.**

A trilateral meeting between the heads of Railways of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran was held in Tehran on October 9. It was decided to establish uniform rates for container trains from China to Iran across Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran from October 15, 2015. Implementation of this decision is likely to attract the freight traffic from maritime transport and increase the attractiveness of land transcontinental corridors. The leaders also discussed implementing favourable tariff conditions for transporting grain, ferrous metals, aluminium and ferroalloys.⁸²

E. West Asia

Iran

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Russia consulted Iran before entering Syria; South Korea firms invited to build renewable energy plants in Iran; Iran and Armenia negotiating to boost gas for electricity trade.**

⁷⁹ "Tajikistan 'Extremely Concerned' About Situation Along Afghan Border", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 6, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-rahmon-concerned-afghan-border/27291654.html>

⁸⁰ "Ayni Airfield Not Leased To Russia, Says Tajik Defence Ministry", *Asia-Plus*, October 8, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/ayni-airfield-not-leased-russia-says-tajik-defense-ministry>

⁸¹ "Three Border Crossings On The Tajik-Afghan Border Resume Operations", *Asia Plus*, October 6, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/three-border-crossings-tajik-afghan-border-resume-operations>

⁸² "Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran Agree To Establish Uniform Rates For New International Railway Line Uzen-Bolashak-Serhetyaka-Akyayla-Incheburun", *Aki Press*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.akipress.com/news:566525/>

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said that Russia consulted with Iran before taking military action against Daesh - also called ISIL and ISIS - in Syria. Larijani made the remarks in a joint press conference with Bogdan Borusewicz, the speaker of the Polish Senate, in Tehran. Larijani said it is too soon to make judgment about the success of Russia's attacks on terrorists inside Syria. However, he said Russia's attacks on ISIL positions have been "precise".⁸³

Iran has started a new round of negotiations with South Korean firms to help the country develop renewable-energy plants. Top officials of the Iranian Ministry of Energy met with representatives of Hyundai, Tucson, and LSLC companies, as well as the Export-Import Bank of Korea, known as the Korea Eximbank (KEXIM), in Tehran. Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and Armenian Energy and Natural Resources Minister Yervand Zakharyan negotiated for rising Iran's exports of gas to Armenia in exchange for boosting the country's imports of electricity from its neighbour. Zanganeh reminded that the framework for the bilateral cooperation will be as before; adding that the details of boosting Iran-Armenia gas-for-electricity trade will be studied afterwards.⁸⁴

Iraq and Syria

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Demonstrators in the province of Sulaymaniyah against the Kurdistan Democratic Party; Disappearance of armoured vehicles sent to Iraq; Terrorist groups which Washington calls moderate get all kinds of foreign help; "US-led anti-terror coalition" proved to have aimed at maintaining terrorism, prolonging crisis.**

Demonstrators in the province of Sulaymaniyah threw stones at the Kurdistan Democratic Party building east of the province with stones, while the building's guards responded to them and wounded six protesters. In response the guards of the building injured six demonstrators. Their demand was the release of their outstanding salaries.⁸⁵

The chairman of the national coalition, Iyad Allawi, announced on October 7 that the "disappearance" of 76 armoured vehicles sent by Gulf countries to Iraq at his request. He further said that he had the Gulf to send armoured vehicles to counter the ISIS forces in and 76 armoured vehicles were sent via air. He further explained that "after a period of the arrival of the armoured vehicles, the defence minister Khaled al-Obeidi told me that his ministry had

⁸³ "Russia Consulted With Iran Before Pounding ISIL: Larijani", *Tehran Times*, October 11, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250003. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁸⁴ "S.Korea Firms Invited To Build Renewable- Energy Plants in Iran", *Tehran Times*, October 8, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249940. Accessed on October 19, 2015 and "Iran, Armenia Negotiating To Boostgas-For-Electricity Trade", *Tehran Times*, October 5, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249858. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁸⁵ "Demonstrators Threw Barzani Party Building with Stone East of Sulaimaniya", *Iraqi News*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/demonstrators-threw-barzani-party-building-stone-east-sulaimaniya/>. Accessed on October 15, 2015

not received them,” noting that “when asked the government, it told me that the armoured vehicles were useless.”⁸⁶

Syrian Information Minister Omran Zoubi said that Syrian terrorist groups which Washington calls moderate get all kinds of foreign help – funds, modern weapons, management, and governance. Several armed groups operating in Syria, which the West considers to be moderate opposition, are receiving outside help, including from operations centres in Turkey and Jordan, Syrian Information Minister Omran Zoubi told Sputnik. Damascus has repeatedly accused Ankara of providing support to extremist groups operating in Syria. In April, the Syrian Foreign Ministry accused Turkey of providing direct logistical and military support to terrorist organizations, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar were accused of facilitating the infiltration of foreign militants into the country.⁸⁷

The goal of the so-called US-led anti-terror coalition was proved to have aimed at supporting and maintaining terrorism plus prolonging the crisis in Syria, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Faysal al- Mikdad has underscored. He pointed out that Syria’s steadfastness in confrontation of a global terrorist war has helped the world know the real nature of the policies adopted by France, Britain and other colonialist countries towards Syria. Interviewed by the Syrian TV last night, al-Mikdad said Russia started its military operation in Syria after the US-led coalition had proved to be a failure and not serious about fighting terrorism. He added that the Russian airstrikes have made within a few days great achievements that exceeded many times what the coalition has made more than a year after it was formed.⁸⁸

Israel and Palestine

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called for “strengthening and increasing the intifada” saying that “Gaza was ready for confrontation”; Renewed clashes broke out between Israeli forces and residents of East Jerusalem neighbourhoods.**

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called for “strengthening and increasing the intifada” saying that “Gaza was ready for confrontation”. The surge in violence, which began last month in Jerusalem, spread in the past week to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under pressure from his right flank for his management of the crisis. It has been reported that Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked from the HaBayit

⁸⁶ “Allawi Announces the “Disappearance” Of 76 Armoured Vehicles Sent by Gulf States to Iraq”, *Iraqi News*, October 8, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/allawi-announces-disappearance-76-armored-vehicles-sent-gulf-states-iraq/>. Accessed on October 15, 2015

⁸⁷ “Terrorist Groups Which Washington Calls Moderate Get All Kinds Of Foreign Help”, *The Syria Times*, October 8, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20010-terrorist-groups-which-washington-calls-moderate-get-all-kinds-of-foreign-help>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁸⁸ “So-Called “US-Led Anti-Terror Coalition” Proved to Have Aimed at Maintaining Terrorism, Prolonging Crisis”, *The Syria Times*, October 8, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20006-so-called-us-led-anti-terror-coalition-proved-to-have-aimed-at-maintaining-terrorism-prolonging-crisis>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

HaYehudi party and Yisrael Beitenu party leader Avigdor Liberman are calling for more aggressive actions, including new settlements and counterterrorism operations similar to those undertaken by Israel during the second intifada (2000-2002).⁸⁹

Renewed clashes broke out between Israeli forces and residents of East Jerusalem neighbourhoods where two persons were detained. Clashes broke out in Shufat refugee camp, Issawiya, al-Tur, and Jabal al-Mukabber. Two teenagers were detained in al-Tur during the clashes. A Fatah spokesman in Shufat Refugee Camp, Thaer Fafous, said that Israeli forces tried to raid the condolence tent of Wisam Jamal Faraj, who was killed by Israeli forces. This has led to the escalation of cross border violence once again.⁹⁰

The Gulf

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **UAE, Saudi and Qatar committed to achieving stability in Yemen; Mohammed Bin Zayed meets Putin to discuss Syria.**

The foreign ministers of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Yemen recently held a meeting in New York with the heads of leading humanitarian agencies to discuss partnership in delivering humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people. Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Foreign Minister, along with Adel Al Jubeir of Saudi Arabia, Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah of Qatar and Riyadh Yassin of Yemen, emphasised that the objective of the meeting was to coordinate efforts, increase efficiency and explore existing challenges to delivering humanitarian assistance within Yemen.⁹¹

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, on October 11 to discuss security in the Middle East and the conflict in Syria. The meeting between the two is the highest-level contact between the Kremlin and a Gulf Arab official since Russia began a campaign of air strikes to support Syrian President Bashar Al Assad.⁹²

⁸⁹ "Netanyahu Weighs More Aggression Action as Hamas Leader Backs 'Intifada'", *Al Monitor*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/intifada-hamas-israel-is-russia-intervention-kurds.html>. Accessed on October 15, 2015

⁹⁰ "Renewed Clashes Break out Across East Jerusalem Neighbourhood", *Palestine Chronical*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/renewed-clashes-break-out-across-east-jerusalem-neighborhoods/>. Accessed on October 15, 2015

⁹¹ "UAE, Saudi and Qatar Committed To Achieving Stability in Yemen", *Khaleej Times*, October 7, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/uae-saudi-and-qatar-committed-to-achieving-stability-in-yemen>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁹² "Mohammed Bin Zayed Meets Putin To Discuss Syria", *Khaleej Times*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/mohammed-bin-zayed-to-meet-putin-discuss-syria>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

India and West Asia

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Saudi family has denied claims that their domestic helper had her hand chopped; Indian President Pranab Mukherjee addresses the students at Jordanian University; MoU signed between India and Jordan.**

The Saudi family has denied claims that their domestic helper from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu allegedly had her hand chopped off by the employer for complaining about her work conditions, according to Saudi media reports. He added that the helper fell onto the room used for building electricity generators and her hand was cut off. The Saudi man said he was puzzled the helper did not use the flat door, particularly that the key was hung behind the door. He added there was no truth to reports that his mother had been detained by the police or that they had not paid the helper.⁹³

India's traditional support for the Palestinian cause remains "steadfast and unwavering," and the country is ready to "work with all like-minded nations" for amicably solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict, President Pranab Mukherjee said. Addressing students and academics at the Jordan University here, on the second day of his six-day tri-nation tour to West Asia, President Mukherjee sought to ease concerns among the Arab nations about India's growing ties with Israel. "Our bilateral relations with Israel are independent of our relations with Palestine. India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognised borders," the President told an applauding audience, mostly students from one of the leading educational institutions in the Arab world.⁹⁴

Jordan and India on October 11 signed six agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU) in various fields of cooperation. The agreements were signed in the presence of Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, covering cooperation in the maritime transportation sector and a memorandum between the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy and the Indian Foreign Service Institute. Another deal was signed between the Jordan News Agency, *Petra*, and the *Press Trust of India*, in addition to signing the executive programme for cultural exchange between the Jordanian and Indian governments. Also, an MoU was signed between the ICT Ministry and its Indian counterpart to cooperate in ICT and electronics fields, and another between the Jordan Standards and Metrology

⁹³ "Saudi Arabia: Housemaid's Hand Was Severed during Escape Bid, Family Says", *Gulf News*, October 10, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-arabia-housemaid-s-hand-was-severed-during-escape-bid-family-says-1.1598263>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁹⁴ "Our Support for Palestine Remains Steadfast, Says Pranab", *The Hindu*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/president-pranab-mukherjees-sixday-trination-tour-day-2/article7750285.ece>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

Organisation and its Indian peer to cooperate in assessment techniques. Ensour and Mukherjee discussed bilateral ties and regional issues of mutual interest, Petra reported.⁹⁵

F. The United States of America

National

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Defence Secretary Carter praises TPP negotiators for reaching a historic trade agreement; Podliska, a former investigator, says, Benghazi panel targeted Secretary of State Clinton; Quinnipiac University survey shows Trump and Clinton are leading candidates for 2016 Presidential race; Both presidential frontrunners Trump and Clinton reached out to Hispanic voters; Barack Obama slams for growing "anti-immigrant sentiment" in American politics; House of Representatives votes to end a ban on U.S. crude oil exports.**

In a statement, US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter, congratulating Ambassador Michael Froman and the U.S. negotiating team for reaching a historic trade agreement with the 11 other Asia-Pacific nations that make up the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), said on October 5 that "American military strength rests on the foundation of a vibrant economy. TPP will bolster strong economic growth by boosting exports and increasing access to growing markets."⁹⁶ Carter added that "TPP also makes strong strategic sense as a critical piece of our rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific. Our strategy is to promote an Asia-Pacific regional security architecture where everyone rises and prospers".

Air Force Reserve Major Bradley Podliska, a former investigator with the Republican-led congressional committee examining the attacks in Benghazi, Libya, in 2012, told *The New York Times* and *CNN* that in March 2015 the panel abandoned its broader investigation of the events that led up to the deaths in Benghazi of four Americans, including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. Podliska said he was fired after resisting pressure to focus his investigative work on Hillary Clinton and the State Department. He said the move de-emphasized other agencies involved with the attacks on the American consulate on September 11, 2012. Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination for president, and her supporters have accused House Republicans of trying to use the Benghazi committee to hobble her campaign. She recently called it "nothing but a partisan exercise." On October 10, the committee forcefully denied the allegations. It said in a statement that Podliska never raised such concerns while with the panel, and that he himself had inappropriately used

⁹⁵ "Jordan Signs Six Cooperation Deals with India", *The Jordan Times*, October 11, 2015 at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-signs-six-cooperation-deals-india>. Accessed on October 19, 2015

⁹⁶ Statement from the Secretary of Defence Ash Carter on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, *DoD News*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/621926/statement-from-the-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-on-the-trans-pacific-partner>

committee resources to create a PowerPoint “hit piece” on members of the Obama administration, including then-Secretary of State Clinton.⁹⁷

A new U.S. political survey by Quinnipiac University shows billionaire real estate mogul and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump with a sizeable lead in three key battleground states in his bid for the presidential nomination. The former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is holding diminished leads in the same states as she seeks the Democratic nomination.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, both presidential frontrunners Trump and Clinton reached out to Hispanic voters this past week in a bid to boost their voter support. With about 400 days before the election, opinion polls show that rivals are catching up to both frontrunners. On October 7, Clinton addressed 2,000 people at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. In brief remarks preceding President Barack Obama's speech on immigration, Clinton said too many people fail to see how vital Hispanic people are to the United States. Clinton also took the opportunity to lash at rivals who have made remarks some Hispanics find offensive. Leading Republican candidate Trump has said that many of the illegal immigrants from Mexico are criminals. He has not lost support for those remarks and has refused to apologize.⁹⁹

On October 8, President Barack Obama in his address to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute slammed what he said was the growing “anti-immigrant sentiment” in American politics, in what was seen as an implicit criticism of several high-profile Republican presidential candidates. Obama did not mention any candidate by name, but he did denounce those in the Republican Party who are trying to reverse his efforts on immigration reform. President Obama said, “There's nowhere they want to go further backwards than on immigration”.¹⁰⁰

On October 9, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to end a ban on most U.S. crude oil exports. The measure passed 261 to 159 and now goes to the Senate, where analysts say it may have a more difficult time winning votes needed for passage. If the bill survives the Senate, it would go to the White House, where it faces a veto threat. The export ban was put in place after the 1970s Arab oil embargo sent prices for gasoline soaring in the United States. Oil companies and some conservative groups say the United States is now the world's largest oil producer, and they argue that exporting more U.S. crude oil will create jobs, boost economic growth and lower gasoline prices by increasing the world supply of oil.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ “Benghazi Panel Targeted Clinton, Former Staffer Says”, *VOA News*, October 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/benghazi-panel-targeted-clinton-former-staffer-says/3001147.html>

⁹⁸ Bredemeier, Ken, “US Political Survey: Trump, Clinton Lead in Key States”, *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-political-survey-says-trump-clinton-lead-in-key-states/2995317.html>

⁹⁹ Hoke, Zlatica, “US Presidential Candidates Woo Hispanic Voters”, *VOA News*, October 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/presidential-candidates-woo-hispanic-voters/3000094.html>

¹⁰⁰ Gallo, William, “Obama Slams 'Anti-Immigrant' Sentiment in US”, *VOA News*, October 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-slams-anti-immigrant-sentiment-in-us/2998220.html>

¹⁰¹ “House Votes to End Ban on US Oil Exports”, *VOA News*, October 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/house-votes-end-ban-united-states-oil-exports/2998855.html>

International: Asia

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Campbell says American forces are responsible for "mistakenly" hitting Afghanistan hospital in Kunduz; Defence Secretary Carter regrets the loss of innocent lives in the airstrike; Thirty three people are still missing days after the U.S. airstrike; Pentagon gets ready to address the consequences of the tragic airstrike incident; Iran's top leader, Khamenei, has banned direct talks with the United States; Ted Cruz, Republican presidential contender; says Obama administration's plan to accept about 10,000 Syrian refugees is "short of crazy"; Eastern European gangs plan to sell radioactive materials to Middle Eastern militants thwarted; Based on past progress, Pentagon directs to provide weapons to select rebel groups to fight against the ISIL; Russia has used four warships in the Caspian Sea to launch rockets at IS; US wants Russia to play a "constructive" role in fighting against IS; U.S. lawmakers react cautiously to the successful conclusion of TPP negotiations; Democratic presidential candidate Clinton did not support the new TPP; TPP is being hailed more among the Asian member governments than the US.**

The U.S. Army General John Campbell says American forces are responsible for "mistakenly" hitting a hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, in an aerial bombardment that killed 22 people. Campbell told a congressional committee in Washington that Afghan forces requested the airstrike on the hospital operated by the international medical charity Doctors Without Borders because Taliban insurgents were firing from the facility. But he said the U.S. conducted the half-hour-long raid after reviewing the request.¹⁰² Regretting the loss of innocent lives in the airstrike, Defence Secretary Ash Carter also said in a statement on October 6 that "a U.S. military airstrike in Kunduz, Afghanistan, to support Afghan forces on the ground resulted in a mistaken attack on a Doctors Without Borders field hospital. Doctors Without Borders does important work all around the world, and the Department of Defence deeply regrets the loss of innocent lives that resulted from this tragic event".¹⁰³

On October 8, Doctors Without Borders said that 33 people are still missing days after the U.S. airstrike on the international medical charity's hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan killed 22 others. The medical group, known by its French acronym MSF, said nine of the unaccounted for are patients and 24 staff members.¹⁰⁴ In the meantime, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook in a statement said on October 10 that "The Department of Defence believes it is important to address the consequences of the tragic incident at the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan. One step the Department can take is to make condolence

¹⁰² Gul, Ayaz and Bredemeier, Ken, "US Accepts Blame for Afghan Hospital Attack", *VOA News*, October 5, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/renewed-fighting-report-in-afghanistan-kunduz/2993274.html>

¹⁰³ "Statement by Secretary of Defence Ash Carter On the Tragedy in Kunduz, Afghanistan", *DoD News*, October 6, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/622041/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-on-the-tragedy-in-kunduz-afghanist>

¹⁰⁴ Bredemeier, Ken, "33 Still Missing After US Airstrike on Kunduz Hospital", *VOA News*, October 8, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/msf-says-33-still-missing-in-us-airstrike-on/2996819.html>

payments to civilian non-combatants injured and the families of civilian non-combatants killed as a result of U.S. military operations".¹⁰⁵

Addressing elite Revolutionary Guard commanders in Tehran on October 7, Iran's top leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has banned direct talks with the United States because of what he described as "countless harm" to Iran's interests. Although he supported the last 18 months of negotiations, Khamenei has not publicly endorsed Tehran's historic nuclear agreement with the United States, France, Britain, China, Russia and Germany that settled a standoff of more than a decade. Hardliners have accused the administration of President Hassan Rouhani of seeking a resumption of ties with Washington.¹⁰⁶

Ted Cruz, Texas senator and the Republican presidential contender said in an address on October 5 that the Obama administration's plan to accept about 10,000 Syrian refugees is "nothing short of crazy." Cruz told a Michigan crowd he thinks a "significant number" of refugees entering Europe are terrorists from the so-called Islamic State (IS) group. He said it would be the "height of foolishness" to allow "Syrian Muslims" into the country.¹⁰⁷

The Associated Press reported on October 7 that Eastern European gangs have tried to sell radioactive materials to Middle Eastern extremists, including IS. Four attempted sales by gangs with suspected Russian connections have been thwarted in the past five years by authorities in the eastern European country of Moldova working with the FBI. *The Associated Press* reports that the last attempt was in February 2015, when a smuggler in the Moldovan capital, Chisinau, offered a large cache of deadly cesium and was specifically looking for a buyer from IS.¹⁰⁸

On October 9, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook in a statement said that building on the past progress in fighting against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), "Secretary of Defence Ash Carter is now directing the Department of Defence to provide equipment packages and weapons to a select group of vetted leaders and their units so that over time they can make a concerted push into territory still controlled by ISIL." Cook added that "We will monitor the progress these groups make and provide them with air support as they take the fight to ISIL. This focus on equipping and enabling will allow us to reinforce the progress already made in countering ISIL in Syria".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ "Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on Kunduz Condolence Payments", *DoD News*, October 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/622713/statement-from-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-on-kunduz-condolence-payments>

¹⁰⁶ "Iran's Khamenei Bans Further Talks With US", *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/iran-supreme-leader-khamenei-bans-further-talks-with-united-states/2995914.html>

¹⁰⁷ "Cruz: Allowing Syrian Refugees Into US is 'Crazy'", *Associated Press*, October 05, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/cruz-says-allowing-syrian-refugees-into-us-is-crazy/2992208.html>

¹⁰⁸ McKitterick, Molly, "Report: Plan to Sell Nuclear Materials to IS Thwarted", *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/report-eastern-european-nuclear-smugglers-sought-out-extremists/2995399.html>

¹⁰⁹ Pentagon Press Statement on Syria, *DoD News*, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/622610/statement-on-syria>

On October 7, Russia, which has been carrying out airstrikes in Syria, said it has used four warships in the Caspian Sea to launch rockets at Islamic State (IS) targets in the war-torn country. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told President Vladimir Putin that the vessels fired 26 cruise missiles at 11 IS targets that he said were destroyed. He said there were no civilian casualties. Meanwhile, U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter told reporters in Rome that the United States, which has conducted thousands of airstrikes against the IS group in Syria and Iraq, has not agreed to cooperate with Russia in the fight against the extremists.¹¹⁰ Mark Toner, a State Department spokesman, said on October 6 that the U.S. would not want to see Russia transfer its “formula” in Syria to Iraq. Toner said U.S. officials would like to see Russia play a “constructive” role in fighting Islamic State targets in Syria. “To a large extent, we have not seen that, thus far,” he added. He said Russia has only “ratcheted up tensions” with its airstrikes against moderate opposition forces in Syria. “We don’t want to see that same formula transferred to Iraq,” Toner said.¹¹¹

Many U.S. lawmakers reacted cautiously to the successful conclusion of negotiations to forge the world’s biggest trading bloc. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would reduce trade barriers among 12 Pacific Rim nations that account for 40 percent of global economic output. Republican Senator John McCain stood out among lawmakers by immediately and enthusiastically endorsing the pact. McCain said in a statement that “The TPP offers a historic opportunity to reduce trade barriers, open new markets, promote made in America exports, and keep American companies competitive in one of the most economically vibrant and fastest-growing regions in the world”.¹¹² However, Hillary Clinton, U.S. Democratic presidential candidate, said on October 7 that she did not support the new TPP, a huge trade deal she advocated when she was secretary of state. Clinton said the TPP would do too little to protect U.S. workers from the impact of currency manipulation by other nations, and too much to help major pharmaceutical companies at the expense of patients.¹¹³

As per news reports, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the most expansive trade agreement in history, is being hailed among its dozen Asian member governments for unifying a market encompassing 40 percent of the global economy with \$30 trillion total output. But the pact’s implementation is not yet assured. Already there is considerable opposition expressed by some powerful U.S. senators, including those in President Barack Obama’s Democratic Party. Former secretary of state and now Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton is among those opposing the TPP. If all of the participating countries do not ratify it within two

¹¹⁰ “Russian Navy Fires Missiles into Syria”, *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/mccain-russia-winning-in-syria/2994818.html>

¹¹¹ Dockins, Pamela, “US Seeks ‘Constructive’ Response from Russia”, *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-seeks-constructive-response-from-russia/2994256.html>

¹¹² Bowman, Michael, “Many US Lawmakers Noncommittal on TPP”, *VOA News*, October 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/many-us-lawmakers-non-committal-on-tpp/2993811.html>

¹¹³ “Clinton Speaks Out Against New TPP Trade Deal”, *VOA News*, October 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-speaks-out-against-trans-pacific-partnership-trade-deal/2995954.html>

years then six original signatories which account for 85 percent of the bloc's gross domestic product must ratify it. The math means approval by the United States is essential along with either Canada or Japan.¹¹⁴

India-US Relations

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Indian parliamentarians visit US for track-two dialogue; US says India-US relationship has grown enormously under Modi government; India has joined the trilateral “dialogue” with US and Japan; India, US and Japan getting ready for naval Exercise Malabar 2015.**

A group of Indian parliamentarians visit US for track-two dialogue with the American officials, lawmakers, policy experts and industry members for a deeper understanding of India-US relations aimed at taking it to 'strategic plus' level. The agenda also includes meetings at the World Bank and United Nations headquarters, given India's growing prominence at multilateral fora. The group is led by Baijayant "Jay" Panda (Biju Janata Dal) Chair, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)'s India-US Forum of Parliamentarians. The multi-party delegation includes Jyotiraditya Scindia (Congress), K Kavitha (Telangana Rashtra Samithi), Arpita Ghosh (Trinamool Congress) and Gaurav Gogoi (Congress). Panda said in Washington that "The India-US relationship has unprecedented momentum today...The focus of this delegation is to identify ways to strengthen relations across a range of economic and political areas."¹¹⁵

On October 9, the US stated that since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power, India-US relationship has grown enormously, especially on security and diplomatic fronts. The US is now hopeful that this relationship will only become more productive in the coming years. The US State Department Spokesman, John Kirby, said, "There's been enormous progress in US-India relations, and certainly since Prime Minister Modi came into office". Kirby added, "The relationship continues to deepen and grow on the security front and certainly diplomatically, and we look forward to that relationship continuing to grow and to deepen and to become more productive".¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Herman, Steve, "TPP Approval Seen Smoother in Asia Than US", *VOA News*, October 08, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/tpp-approval-seen-as-smoother-in-asia-than-in-us/2996568.html>; and, Padden, Brian, "TPP Sparks Interest, Concern in Asia", *VOA News*, October 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/in-asia-tpp-sparks-interest-and-concern/2993262.html>

¹¹⁵ "Indian Parliamentarians in US to Take Ties To 'Strategic Plus' Level", *The Economic Times*, October 8, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/indian-parliamentarians-in-us-to-take-ties-to-strategic-plus-level/articleshow/49268586.cms?prtpage=1>; and, see "Members of India-US Forum of Parliamentarians head to US", *Business Standard*, October 4, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/members-of-india-us-forum-of-parliamentarians-head-to-us-115100400604_1.html

¹¹⁶ "India, US Relations Progressing In Modi's Leadership: Official", *Press Trust of India*, October 10, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-us-relations-progressing-in-modi-s-leadership-official-115101000068_1.html; and, John Kirby, Spokesperson, Daily Press Briefing, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, October 9, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/10/248065.htm>

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj joined her US and Japanese counterparts, John Kerry and Fumio Kishida respectively, at last week's inaugural US-Japan-India Trilateral Ministerial Dialogue. The meeting was held in New York September 29 on the side-lines of the United Nations General Assembly. India's participation in this new trilateral forum along with the US and its most important Asian-Pacific ally marks a new benchmark in India's integration into the US "Pivot to Asia"—Washington's drive to militarily-strategically isolate and encircle China.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, amidst the growing tension in South China Sea (SCS), India, the US and Japan are getting ready for naval Exercise Malabar 2015. Confrontation is brewing in the South China Sea, with the *Financial Times* reporting that the United States Navy (USN) is about to challenge China's construction of "artificial islands" in disputed waters. By sailing warships next week through a 12-nautical mile zone around these islands, the USN will explicitly reject China's claim.¹¹⁸

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Indigenously built Torpedo Launch and Recovery Vessel INS Astradharini commissioned into the Indian Navy; Union Cabinet approves the construction of a National War Memorial and a National War Museum.**

An indigenously built Torpedo Launch and Recovery Vessel (TLRV), INS Astradharini has been commissioned on October 6, 2015. The design of the Astradharini is a collaborative effort of NSTL (a naval systems laboratory of DRDO), M/s Shoft Shipyard and IIT Kharagpur and has a unique design of a catamaran hull form that significantly reduces its power requirement and is built with indigenous steel. The vessel has a length of 50 m. It is capable to do speeds up to 15 Knots. It can operate at high sea states and has a large deck area with Torpedo Launchers for deploying and recovering various kinds of torpedos during the trials. The ship also has modern power generation and distribution, navigation and communication systems. The unique hull form of the ship demonstrates the country's ship design and shipbuilding capabilities. Significantly, 95 per cent of the ship's systems are of indigenous design in sync with Make in India philosophy. It is an advanced replacement for Astravahini which was decommissioned on July 17, 2015.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Jayasekera, Deepal, "India Joins Trilateral "Dialogue" with US and Japan", *World Socialist Web Site*, October 7, 2015 at <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/10/07/indi-o07.html>

¹¹⁸ Shukla, Ajai, "Amidst tension in South China Sea, US, Japan and India Ready For Naval Exercise Malabar", *Business Standard*, October 12, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/amidst-tension-in-south-china-sea-us-japan-and-india-ready-for-naval-exercise-malabar-115101200065_1.html

¹¹⁹ "INS Astradharini Joins The Indian Navy," *PIB*, October 06, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128467>

The Union Cabinet has approved the construction of a National War Memorial and a National War Museum at Princess Park, near India Gate, New Delhi in memory of all Indian soldiers who have made the supreme sacrifice for the country post-independence. The estimated cost of the project will be around Rs. 500 crore and the total time for completion of the entire project is estimated to be five years. Post-Independence, more than 22,500 soldiers have made the supreme sacrifice in national interests and in defence of the sovereignty and integrity of the country. It has been decided by the Union Cabinet that the prestigious project will be monitored by an empowered Steering Committee chaired by Defence Secretary and assisted by a dedicated project management team, to ensure that the proposed project is completed within scheduled time frame. Significantly, post commissioning, a management body will be formed for maintenance of the National War Memorial and Museum.¹²⁰

International

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Russian warships in the Caspian Sea fire cruise missiles on a wide range of targets in Syria; Serbia expected to double defence industry exports in 2015.**

Reports say that Russian warships in the Caspian Sea have fired 26 Kalibr-NK cruise missiles, hitting a wide range of targets in Syria. The Russian Ministry of Defence released videos showing the missile launch. The targets of the missile strike by the Caspian flotilla were located in eastern and northwestern Syria. Using cruise missiles allowed Russia to avoid deploying aircraft in areas where US fighter jets are known to fly. The strike required prior military co-ordination with both Iran and Iraq, whose airspace the missiles transited to reach Syria. Though, the missile strike cost is estimated USD50 million, it represented an effective show of strength by Russia to impose its decisive influence over the proxy war in Syria.¹²¹

Meanwhile, according to reports, Serbia is expected to double defence industry exports to USD750 million this year. The rise will be the first such significant increase in 15 years. Serbia's Zastava Arms currently has an order book of USD102 million, with the company expecting an RSD400 million (USD3.7 million) profit in 2015 after many years of losses. However, the government has also had to step in to support Zastava. The company's management agreed to an investment by the state in new equipment valued at EUR4 million (USD4.5 million).¹²²

¹²⁰ "Cabinet Approves Construction of National War Memorial," *PIB*, October 07, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128493>

¹²¹ "Russian Intervention In Syria Likely Intended To Force The West To Re-Engage With Russia On Its Terms," *IHS Jane's*, October 07, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55115/russian-intervention-in-syria-likely-intended-to-force-the-west-to-re-engage-with-russia-on-its-terms>

¹²² "Serbia Targets Doubling Of Defence Exports," *IHS Jane's Defence Industry*, October 07, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55120/serbia-targets-doubling-of-defence-exports>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Sixty nine killed in militancy-related, Pak firing incidents: J&K government; Four jawans, militant killed in Kupwara encounters; J&K cop killed in pursuit of militants; Two injured as Valley-bound truck attacked in tense Jammu.**

In a written reply to a question by National Conference legislator Mian Altaf Ahmad, J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed on October 5 informed the state assembly that 69 people including 35 security personnel were killed and 199 injured in militancy-related incidents and Pakistani firing in the state this year. While 49 people - 29 security personnel and 20 civilians - lost their lives in militancy-related violence, six security personnel were among 20 people killed in firing from across the border till September 22 this year, said CM Mufti Sayeed.¹²³

Four Army jawans were killed in North Kashmir's Hafruda forest on October 5 as militants opened fire on an Army patrol. The Army, along with the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir police, had launched a routine operation on October 4 in the dense Hafruda forests. According to a Defence spokesperson, militants present in the area opened fire on the Army assault party, leaving three jawans seriously injured and another missing. The three injured men died on the way to the hospital, while the body of the fourth was recovered later. In a separate incident, a militant was killed in an encounter in Lolab Valley in Kupwara district.¹²⁴

A Jammu & Kashmir Police officer was killed in a shootout while in hot pursuit of a group of Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists at Gund Dachin in Bandipora district on October 7. Sources said the slain officer, Altaf Ahmad, was part of a special police team from Srinagar chasing the terrorists, including LeT commander Abu Qasim, while they were driving to Bandipora. Ahmad headed a special investigation team that probed militancy-related cases. A police spokesman said Ahmad had been on Qasim's tail for a couple of days.¹²⁵

Amid mounting communal tension over Independent MLA Engineer Rashid's "beef party" in Srinagar and subsequent rumours of cow slaughter from different parts of Jammu & Kashmir, two persons sustained severe burn injuries when some miscreants attacked a Valley-bound truck parked outside a local hotel in Udhampur on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on

¹²³ "69 Killed In Militancy-Related And Pak Firing Incidents This Year: J&K Government", *The Economic Times*, October 5, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/69-killed-in-militancy-related-and-pak-firing-incidents-this-year-jk-government/articleshow/49229887.cms>

¹²⁴ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K: Four Jawans, Militant Killed In Kupwara Encounter", *The Indian Express*, October 6, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-3-jawans-militant-killed-in-kupwara-encounter/>

¹²⁵ Pandit, M Saleem, "J&K Cop Killed In Pursuit Of Militants", *The Times of India*, October 8, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/JK-cop-killed-in-pursuit-of-militants/articleshow/49265639.cms?>

October 10. The two injured persons have been identified as Zahid Ahmed, 19, and Showkat Ahmed, 35, both residents of Anantnag. Jammu Divisional Commissioner Pawan Kotwal said the injured had sustained 40 to 70 per cent burns and are being taken to Delhi for specialised treatment. Sources said the truck was carrying coal.¹²⁶

Northeast India

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Security forces seize arms and ammunition in Manipur; Naga, Assamese Civil Society Organisations call for solidarity.**

Acting on a tip off, a joint team of BSF and Manipur police on October 8 seized a huge cache of arms and ammunitions in Thoubal district of Manipur. The cache recovered include one grenade launcher, four grenade launcher shells, two 9 mm pistols, 3 TNT cakes, six gelatine sticks, 56 cartridges of AK-47 rifles, hand grenade, one rocket shell, one detonator, four detonator fuses, three fuse wires and nails.¹²⁷

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, civil society members from Assam and Nagaland who met on October 9 at a 'Naga-Assamese Round Table Towards Strengthening Friendship and Fraternity', unanimously called for a permanent mechanism to continue the dialogue process between the two neighbours. The deliberators proposed a 'coordination committee' under the joint aegis of the Asam Sahitya Sabha and Naga Hoho for facilitating a permanent dialogue forum between the two sides. The Nanda Talukdar Foundation (NTF), which organised the round table for ending the vexed Assam-Nagaland border row, will coordinate between the Sabha and Naga Hoho. The meeting also urged groups and individuals to endeavour for enhancing cooperation between the peoples of the two States in areas of art, literature, culture, sports, trade and commerce and environment protection in their capacities.¹²⁸

Left-wing Extremism

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Maoists kidnap three TDP leaders in Andhra Pradesh; Chhattisgarh: Four CoBRA jawans injured in Naxal attacks; Two jawans killed in Jharkhand encounter.**

Three Girijan leaders of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) of GK Veedhi mandal of Andhra Pradesh were abducted by the Maoists on October 5. The abducted leaders were identified as GK Veedhi mandal president Vandala Balayya, TDP district executive member Mukkani Mahesh and TDP's Janmabhoomi committee member Mamidi Balayya. In a public notice issued by the

¹²⁶ Sharma, Arun, "Valley-Bound Truck Attacked In Tense Jammu, Two Injured", *The Indian Express*, October 11, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/jammu-two-injured-in-violence-over-beef-politics/>

¹²⁷ "Huge Cache Of Arms And Ammunition Seized in Manipur", *The Economic Times*, October 8, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/huge-cache-of-arms-and-ammunition-seized-in-manipur/articleshow/49277344.cms>

¹²⁸ "Call To Strengthen Naga-Assamese Bonds", *The Assam Tribune*, October 10, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1015/at050>

Maoists on October 6, Naxals accused the Girijan TDP leaders of participating in state government's bauxite mining activities in the Agency. The Maoists also stated that the kidnapped leaders would be released if the state government withdrew its efforts, including government orders on bauxite mining.¹²⁹

Four CoBRA jawans were injured in two separate Naxal incidents in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Sukma district on October 8. While three personnel were hurt during a gun battle between security forces and ultras in Bhejji area, another sustained injuries in a pressure bomb blast laid by ultras in Chintagufa area, said Sukma Additional Superintendent of Police Santosh Singh.¹³⁰

Two jawans were killed on October 10 when Maoists attacked a joint team of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and district armed police engaged in a special operation near Katahaldih, under Sundar Pahari police station of Godda district of Jharkhand. In the encounter, SSB constable Sujit Kumar Singh died on the spot while district police constable Surendra Sah succumbed to injuries while being taken to Ranchi. The anti-Maoist operation was launched after the state police headquarters got information that a group of rebels had gathered in the Sundar Pahari area and were planning to disrupt the coming assembly election in Bihar, said police spokesperson S N Pradhan.¹³¹

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(October 5-11, 2015)

- **Communalism in India taken to UN; India raises terrorism concerns in GA 3rd Committee; AIDS programmes slowdown in India; Jordan backs India for Permanent Seat in UNSC.**

Azam Khan, a Minister of Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, sent a letter to the UN Secretary General raising concerns regarding rising communalism in the aftermath of the killing of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri over the issue of cow slaughter at the UN.¹³² His move came in

¹²⁹ Rao, V Kamalakara, "Maoists Kidnap 3 TDP Leaders In Andhra Pradesh", *The Times of India*, October 6, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Maoists-kidnap-3-TDP-leaders-in-Andhra-Pradesh/articleshow/49243735.cms>

¹³⁰ "Four CoBRA Jawans Injured In Two Naxal Attacks", *The Economic Times*, October 8, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/four-cobra-jawans-injured-in-two-naxal-attacks/articleshow/49269835.cms>

¹³¹ Mishra, Alok K N and Pandey, Rajesh Kumar, "2 Jawans Killed In J'khand Red Encounter", *The Times of India*, October 11, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/2-jawans-killed-in-Jkhand-Red-encounter/articleshow/49304903.cms>

¹³² "Will Take Up Dadri Mob Killing With UN, Says Minister Azam Khan", *NDTV News*, October 5, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/will-take-up-dadri-mob-killing-with-un-says-minister-azam-khan-1226291>

for criticism from the BJP and the Shiv Sena.¹³³ Prominent Muslim leader of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Asaduddin Owaisi has also denounced the decision to raise the issue at the UN.¹³⁴

At a discussion in the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly on Crime Prevention and International Drug Control, First Secretary in the Indian Permanent Mission, Mayank Joshi, raised the issue of India's concern with cross-border terrorism.¹³⁵

JVR Prasada Rao, the Secretary General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia-Pacific pointed out that the number of HIV-AIDS cases may increase in India. Since the Central government has reduced its budget for AIDS control in February 2015 and passed the responsibility to the state governments, it is the delays at State level in payment of wages and disbursement of funds that is likely to cause this downturn.¹³⁶

During the visit of President Pranab Mukherji to Jordan, King Abdullah-II extended Jordan's support for India's candidature in the Security Council.¹³⁷

¹³³ "Indian Minister Seeks UN Intervention In Mob-Lynching Incident over Beef Row", October 6, 2015, at <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/indian-minister-seeks-un-intervention-mob-lynching-incident-over-beef-row-1522633>. "Shiv Sena Asks SP to Sack Azam Khan for Writing to the UN over Dadri Issue", October 7, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-shiv-sena-asks-sp-to-sack-azam-khan-for-writing-to-the-un-over-dadri-issue-2132328>.

¹³⁴ "AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi Opposes Taking UP Man's Lynching Issue to United Nations", October 6, 2015, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/aimim-chief-asaduddin-owaisi-opposes-taking-up-mans-lynching-issue-to-united-nations/articleshow/49242954.cms>

¹³⁵ "State-Sponsored Cross-Border Terrorism Of Special Concern: India Tells UN", October 9, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-state-sponsored-cross-border-terrorism-of-special-concern-india-tells-un-2133032>

¹³⁶ "India Risks Backsliding On Success Against HIV-UN Envoy", October 10, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/india-risks-backsliding-o/2182738.html>

¹³⁷ "Jordan to Back India's UNSC Candidature", *Deccan Herald*, October 11, 2015, at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/505745/jordan-back-indias-unsc-candidature.html>