

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Countries sought additional security from the Bangladesh government for their diplomats and citizens.**

At least a dozen countries have sought additional security from the Bangladesh government for their diplomats and citizens. The Dhaka missions of these countries, including the US, Australia and Japan, sent letters to the foreign ministry to take steps to this effect since the murder of Italian national Cesare Tavella in the capital's diplomatic zone on September 28. Several member states of the European Union asked the government to put in place extra security measures at their missions and offices, and the places where their diplomats and citizens reside or visit.¹

Sri Lanka

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Prime minister visits Singapore; Finance Minister participates in the Annual Meeting of the WB and the IMF; Chinese military delegation makes goodwill visit to Sri Lanka; Australian delegation in talks with Defence Secretary; Sri Lanka Navy holds special naval exercise on searching drugs in sea vessels; Religious tensions eased in Sri Lanka after new government – US; Sri Lanka asks China to adjust terms of loans to help overcome financial crisis; Sri Lanka to allow Chinese subs to visit, will keep India informed.**

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe made a two days official visit to Singapore on October 15, 2015. On October 16 Prime Minister Wickremesinghe met his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong and discussed further means of promoting bilateral cooperation between the two countries. During his visit, the Prime Minister also met with several key Ministers of Singapore, including Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies, K. Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Law, Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, S. Iswaran, Minister for Trade and Industry and Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Finance. The purpose of Prime Minister's visit was to obtain support and funding from Singapore for the proposed development program to be implemented in Sri Lanka. PM Wickremesinghe was accompanied by Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade Malik Samarawickrema, Secretary to the Prime Minister Saman Ekanayake, Governor of the Central

¹ "12 Countries Seek Extra Security", *The Daily Star*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/12-countries-seek-extra-security-156346>.

Bank Arjuna Mahendran, High Commissioner-Designate of Sri Lanka to Singapore Nimal Weeraratne, and Acting High Commissioner Wishwanath Aponso.²

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake participated in the Annual Meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from October 9 to October 11 in Lima, Peru. In the meeting, the two international lenders have agreed to extend unconditional support for Sri Lanka's development initiatives. On the side-lines of the meeting, the Finance Minister had discussions with World Bank's Senior Vice President (Operations), Mr. Kyle Peters and World Bank Vice President for South Asia Region Ms Annette Dixon on financing future development programs for Sri Lanka. At this occasion, Minister Ravi Karunanayake has been appointed as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Group of 24 countries on International Monetary Affairs, which is scheduled to take place in Bali Nusa Dua, Indonesia, in October 2018, Government Information Department said.³

The Commander of the Chengdu Military of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) China, General Li Zuocheng, accompanied by five more senior officers, was in Sri Lanka on a goodwill visit with the aim of learning and sharing experiences of both the Sri Lanka Army and the PLA. The delegation, minutes after paying a courtesy call on the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Kolitha Gunatilleke at the Office of the CDS on October 13, arrived at the Army Headquarters to be received by Chief of Staff, Major General Jagath Dias, flanked by Principal Staff Officers. General Li Zuocheng and Lieutenant General Crishanthe De Silva, Commander of the Army during the cordial meeting at the latter's office exchanged views on matters of mutual interest in relation to security operations, generally confined to the rural hinterland and other spheres of military training conducted in specific areas in China. Major General Mahesh Senanayake, Military Secretary and Major General P.M.R Bandara, Senior Liaison Officer were also associated with the meeting, the army media unit said.⁴

Australian delegation led by the Deputy High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Tim Huggins, had talks with Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi at the ministry premises on October 14. The Defence Ministry said that a cordial discussion was held between the Secretary and Deputy High Commissioner on matters of bilateral relevance and mutual interest.⁵

Sri Lanka Navy held a special naval exercise on searching for drugs in the sea on October 15 for the participants of the Meeting of the Senior Drug Enforcement Officials of the Indian Ocean Region in Colombo. A delegation of 60 officials representing 21 countries participated in the occasion which comprised a practical experience on checking fishing vessels by Sri

² "Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and Singapore Hold Bilateral Discussions", *ColomboPage*, October 17, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct17_1445093226CH.php.

³ "Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Appointed as the Chairman of G-24", *ColomboPage*, October 17, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct17_1445092035CH.php.

⁴ "Chinese Military Delegation Discuss Training", *Colombo Gazette*, October 14, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/14/chinese-military-delegation-discuss-training/>.

⁵ "Australian Delegation in Talks with Defence Secretary", *Colombo Gazette*, October 14, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/10/14/australian-delegation-in-talks-with-defence-secretary/>.

Lanka navy VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seize) teams. The delegates viewed a simulated exercise of a mid-sea boarding by the Sri Lanka Navy boarding teams, and vessel search techniques to identify concealed compartments to detect narcotics in fishing vessels. This exercise was jointly conducted with the expertise of the Sri Lanka Navy and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) at the Colombo Naval Base. The three-day Meeting of Senior Drug Enforcement Officials of the Indian Ocean Region commenced on October 13, under the patronage of President Maithripala Sirisena.⁶

The United States says religious tensions have eased in Sri Lanka after the new government took office and staked out a much more tolerant view. Speaking at the release of the 2014 Report on International Religious Freedom Wednesday, David Saperstein, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom at the US State Department said the new government has staked out a more tolerant view. The 2014 Report on International Religious Freedom said the Sri Lankan authorities tacitly condoned harassment and violence, particularly by Buddhist nationalist groups, against religious minorities last year.⁷

Sri Lanka says the country is facing one of the worst financial crisis ever since a big part of the island nation's revenue is spent on servicing the excessive Chinese loans with high interest rates borrowed by the previous regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa. "Chinese loans are a big part of our problem. A bulk of the government expenditure goes into servicing them," Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake told the South China Morning Post (SCMP) in an exclusive interview. The Minister urged China to put their disputes behind them and help the country through one of its worst financial crises ever by adjusting the rates of the loans.⁸

Sri Lanka will allow future submarine visits by China provided they are not too frequent, and will keep the neighbouring India informed of the visits, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said in an interview with *The Straits Times*. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister said that the problem with the last visit by a Chinese submarine was that India claims it was not informed.⁹

Maldives

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **VP Adeen visits China; Maldives committed to expanding partnership with China, says Dunya; Religious Freedom Report 2014 encouraged Maldivian government to respect right to religious freedom; Moosa Ali Jaleel removed from the Defence Ministerial post.**

Maldivian Vice President Ahmed Adeen Abdul Gafoor left for China on an official visit on October 12 to attend a conference of Asian political parties. Maldivian Vice President Ahmed

⁶ "Sri Lanka Navy Holds Special Naval Exercise on Searching Drugs in Sea Vessels", *ColomboPage*, October 15, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct15_1444922059CH.php.

⁷ "Religious Tensions Eased In Sri Lanka After New Government – US", *ColomboPage*, October 16, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct16_1444935285CH.php.

⁸ "Sri Lanka Asks China to Adjust Terms of Loans to Help Overcome Financial Crisis", *ColomboPage*, October 18, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct18_1445180383CH.php.

⁹ "Sri Lanka to Allow Chinese Subs to Visit, Will Keep India Informed", *ColomboPage*, October 18, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct18_1445176868CH.php.

Adeeb has met with Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao. Chinese state media Xinhua News Agency said that during the meeting, Adeeb assured that Maldives is willing to participate in the construction of the "Belt and Road" as well as enhance cooperation with China in tourism and fishery.¹⁰

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon has said that the government of President Abdulla Yameen is committed to expanding the partnership between Maldives and China to new levels. She made this remark in a message to Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of Bilateral Relations between the Maldives and China. The message read: "The Maldives attaches special significance to its relations with China. The Maldives' unwavering commitment to the One China policy, and our shared perspectives in addressing international issues of mutual interests have helped the bilateral relationship to thrive for the benefit of the peoples of our two countries. China is now one of the most important development and trade partners of the Maldives. The Government of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is committed in expanding that partnership to new levels."¹¹

The US has said in its International Religious Freedom Report 2014, published on October 14, that the US Embassy encouraged the Maldivian government to respect the right to religious freedom. The report noted that there is no US permanent presence in the Maldives, and all engagement with the government and civil society was conducted by visiting staff of the US Embassy in Sri Lanka, who travelled to Maldives frequently. The report read: "The embassy also engaged the government on efforts to promote tolerance and reduce violent extremist rhetoric or derogatory statements about other religions, specifically on government efforts to counter the rise of what it characterized as radical Islam. After demonstrations that included anti-Israel messages and those in favour of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, embassy officials engaged the government on strategies to combat intolerance."¹²

President Abdulla Yameen has removed Major General (Retired) Moosa Ali Jaleel from his post as Defence Minister. The decision was announced in a tweet sent out by President's Office Spokesperson Ibrahim Muaz Ali on October 13. The tweet did not reveal any reason as to why Moosa Ali Jaleel was relieved of his duties. The decision comes after an explosion took place on the presidential speedboat leaving First Lady Fathimath Ibrahim in the hospital with injuries to her back. Moosa Ali Jaleel was appointed Defence Minister on January 20, 2014 after Colonel (Retired) Mohamed Nazim was removed from the post and later jailed on weapons charges.¹³

¹⁰ "VP Adeeb Leaves for China", *SunOnline*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33817>; "VP Meets with Chinese Counterpart", *SunOnline*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33929>.

¹¹ "Maldives Committed to Expanding Partnership with China, Says Dunya", *SunOnline*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33877>.

¹² "Religious Freedom Report 2014: Maldivian Government Was Encouraged to Respect Right to Religious Freedom", *SunOnline*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33885>.

¹³ "Moosa Ali Jaleel axed as Defence Minister", *SunOnline*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/33845>.

B. South Asia

China

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **China pledges support to poverty eradication; China wants to boost international peace; China upset over Brussels investment talks with Taiwan; China organizes business talk for Belt and Road Initiative; China rejects the religious freedom report released by United States; Chinese President meets President of Croatia; China concludes army drill; CPC to hold meeting to discuss the next five year plan.**

While addressing the Global Poverty Reduction and Development Forum held in Beijing to mark the 23rd International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that, “China will work with the government and the public to fight the battle against poverty”. He also asserted Chinese support towards eradicating poverty.¹⁴

On October 17, while addressing the 6th Xiangshan Forum, Chinese Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission Fan Changlong said that, “Chinese military will implement the commitment and initiatives put forth recently by President Xi Jinping “in a down-to-earth manner””. He further added that, “China will strengthen counter-piracy experiences exchanges and cooperation with relevant countries in the sea areas of Southeast Asia and beyond”.¹⁵

Jiang Xiaoyan, Spokesperson of China Mission to EU told reporters on October 16, that Beijing wants Brussels “not to explore launching negotiations on investment with Taiwan after European Union has shown such intention in a trade policy paper”. China expected Brussels to not get involved in its domestic and internal issues. China is open to non-official trade and exchanges but will not accept any form of official contacts.¹⁶

On the side-lines of the Asian Political Parties’ Special Conference on the Silk Road which was held in Beijing on October 15, more than 100 business houses from 26 countries discussed the Belt and Road initiative. Azat Peruashev, chairman of the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan said, “The initiative will bring huge benefits to the countries along the Belt and

¹⁴ “China Pledges More Poverty Relief, Praised for Global Contributions”, *China Daily*, October 17, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/17/content_22206589.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

¹⁵ “Defence Official Reveals China’s Plans To Boost International Peace”, By Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, October 17, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/17/content_22206447.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

¹⁶ “Beijing Urges Brussels Not To Seek Investment Talks with Taiwan”, By Fu Jing, *China Daily*, October 16, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/16/content_22205019.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

Road especially Kazakhstan and we will improve our investment environment and help solve problems of the investors".¹⁷

On October 15, China heavily criticized the US State Department's annual religious freedom report. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said at a routine press briefing, "We call on the United States to respect the facts and stop attacking China's religious policies by issuing such reports". The Spokesperson also urged the US to not resort to double standards.¹⁸

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with the President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic in Beijing on October 14. During the meeting Xi said that, "China has paid close attention to the refugee issue in Europe and the Mediterranean and sympathizes with the refugees". He also added that Croatia will be an important trading partner of China through the Belt and Road Initiative".¹⁹

The Chinese People's Liberation Army organized a three-day military drill showcasing coordination between the Chinese army, air force and missile troops in the north-western Qinghai Province. This exercise involved around 140,000 soldiers.²⁰

The fifth plenary session of the 18th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee is scheduled from October 26 to October 29 in Beijing. During the meeting the leaders will discuss the development plan for the next five years.²¹

Japan

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Japan became a permanent member in the annual Malabar exercise; Japan expressed dissatisfaction against UNESCO for archiving Nanjing Massacre documents; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent offerings to Yasukuni shrine; Defence ministry data on scrambling of Chinese fighter jets; USS Benfold deployed at Yokosuka.**

The US, Indian and Japanese navies participated in the 2015 Malabar exercise held in Bay of Bengal. Japan has joined as a permanent member in this annual naval exercise which originally started as India-US naval drill. US deployed USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Normandy, USS Forth Worth, USS City of Corpus Christi, and P-8A maritime surveillance aircraft for the exercise. From the Indian side Rajput-class destroyer, Shivalik-class and Brahmaputra-class frigates, INS Sindhudhwaj, and P-8I maritime surveillance aircraft took

¹⁷ "Business Dialogue Helps Promote Consensus on Belt and Road Initiative", By Zhang Xiang, *China Daily*, October 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/15/content_22199578.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

¹⁸ "China Rejects US Religious Freedom Report", *China Daily*, October 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/15/content_22199438.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

¹⁹ "China Vows to Increase Support for Refugees", By Li Xiaokun, *China Daily*, October 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/15/content_22189111.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

²⁰ "China Concludes Integrated Armed Forces Drills", *China Daily*, October 13, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/13/content_22176226.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

²¹ "CPC Schedules Meeting on New 5-Year Plan", *China Daily*, October 12, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/12/content_22165829.htm, accessed on October 19, 2015

part in the drill. Meanwhile, JS Fuyuzuki, and Akizuki-class guided missile destroyer were sent by Japan.²²

Japan expressed regret over UNESCO's pronouncement to archive 47 Chinese documents on Nanjing Massacre in Memory of the World register. Earlier Japan made repeated requests of not incorporating the documents in the register. These documents include court papers from the International Military Tribunal for the Far East that sentenced numerous Japanese as war criminals and photographs of the slaughter by the Imperial Japanese Army and film tape done by an American missionary. Following the announcement during a meeting held in United Arab Emirates, Japan blamed UNESCO of being politicized and lacking in neutrality.²³ Moreover, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga reportedly indicated that Japan is weighing the option of suspending or decreasing its financial support to UNESCO.²⁴

While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe did not visit the Yasukuni shrine in person, he offered a masakaki tree on October 17. In the following day Sanae Takaichi, the Internal Affairs and Communications Minister and Mitsuhide Iwaki, Justice Minister paid a visit to the shrine. China and South Korea expressed strong protest arguing that these visits by Japanese cabinet members to the Yasukuni shrine triggers regional sentiments and escalate regional tensions.²⁵

Defence ministry reportedly suggested that from July to September, Japanese Air Self-Defence force scrambled Chinese fighter jets 117 times (compared to 103 times during the same period in 2014) to stop likely incursions. Meanwhile, Shinzo Abe and Yang Jiechi decided to accelerate the process of instituting a communications mechanism to prevent miscalculations.²⁶

The USS Benfold has been deployed at Yokosuka (Kanagawa Prefecture). It is among the most advanced ballistic missile defence warships. The objective is to deter North Korea. US Navy spokesperson argued that this is in accordance with the rebalance toward Asia strategy.²⁷

²² "India, U.S. and Japan Hold Naval Exercises Under China's Gaze", *The Japan Times*, AP, Kyodo, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/18/national/india-u-s-japan-hold-naval-exercises-chinas-gaze/#.VieE6G6InIV>

²³ "Japan Hits Out as UNESCO Archives 'Nanjing Massacre' Documents", *AFP-Jiji, Kyodo*, October 10, 2015 at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/10/national/japan-hits-unesco-archives-nanjing-massacre-documents/#.Vid8_W6InIV

²⁴ "Reiji Yoshida, Tokyo Mulls Cutting UNESCO Funding after U.N. Body Registers Nanking Massacre Documents", *The Japan Times*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/13/national/tokyo-mulls-cutting-unesco-funding-after-u-n-body-registers-nanking-massacre-documents/#.Vid-LG6InIV>

²⁵ "China, South Korea Slap Cabinet Members' Yasukuni Visits", *Kyodo*, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/18/national/politics-diplomacy/china-south-korea-slap-cabinet-members-yasukuni-visits/>

²⁶ "ASDF Scrambles Against China Planes At Record Number", *Reuters*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/19/national/politics-diplomacy/asdf-scramble-china-planes-record-number/#.VieDKG6InIV>

²⁷ "U.S. Deploys Advanced Missile Defence Ship to Japan", *The Japan Times*, October 19, 2015 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/19/national/u-s-deploys-advanced-missile-defense-ship-japan/#.VieDwW6InIV>

The Korean Peninsula

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **South Korea and Germany agreed to cooperate on North Korean nuclear issue during a meeting in Seoul; South Korean national history textbooks for middle and high school students to be written by the government-designated authors; Second Korea-Japan-China Cyber Policy Consultation held; South Korea will serve as the chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime.**

On October 12, South Korea-Germany meeting was held in Seoul where both countries decided to strengthen cooperation to address the threats originating from Pyongyang's nuclear determinations. Both sides also reportedly discussed several other issues including the human rights conditions prevailing in North Korea, peaceful unification of the two Koreas, expanding trade and investment, deepen bilateral cooperation for the technical advancement of key industries for instance converging Korea's IT technology with Germany's automobile and equipment engineering.²⁸

On October 12, South Korean Ministry of Education suggested that national history textbooks for middle and high school students will be written by the government-designated authors. Presently, eight private publishing firms publish secondary school history textbooks which are sanctioned by independent expert textbook review committee. Schools select from any of these alternatives. However, now historians with knowledge in different timeframes of history will contribute under the management of the National Institute of Korean History. Meanwhile, several reservations were expressed by 20 student councils opposing the state-authored history textbooks.²⁹

On October 15, the 2nd Korea-Japan-China Cyber Policy Consultation was held in Seoul. Japanese Ambassador in charge of Cyber policy Makita Shimokawa and Chinese Coordinator for Cyber Affairs Wu Haitao met with their South Korean counterpart Choi Sung-joo and discussed cyber strategies and policies, international norms and CBMs in cyberspace and possible areas of trilateral cooperation. All three countries agreed to cooperate on the cyber threats against critical infrastructures.³⁰

South Korea will serve as the chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) for 2016 and 2017. This was unanimously decided in Rotterdam at the 29th MTCR Plenary Meeting.³¹

²⁸ "Korea, Germany To Bolster Ties To Press NK", *The Korea Herald*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151012001137>

²⁹ "Gov't Assures Enough Time For New History Textbooks", *Yohnap*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/main/index.jsp>

³⁰ "The 2nd Korea-Japan-China Cyber Policy Consultation", *MOFA ROK*, October 15, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20

³¹ "ROK to Chair the MTCR in 2016 and 2017", *MOFA ROK*, October 12, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20

C. Russia

Russia: Domestic

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Volume of investments in Russia to fall by 10 per cent in 2015; Gazprom launches gas supplies to Ukraine; Lukoil discovers large gas field in the Romanian shelf; Bashneft oil production increases by 12.1 per cent to 14.7 million tonnes in 9 months; Head of Antimonopoly service says that Gazprom split initiated by Rosneft CEO.**

Russia's Economic Development Minister Alexey Ulyukayev has said, on October 13, that the decline in Russia's investment volume in 2015 will be around 10 per cent. He expected the figure for 2016 to be 1.5 per cent.³²

Gazprom has restarted gas supplies to Ukraine on October 12 and is likely to supply 2.166 billion cubic meters till the end of October. This comes after Ukraine made an advanced payment of US\$ 234 million as part of the September 25 trilateral gas talks between Russia, European Union and Ukraine held in Brussels. The price of Russian gas for Ukraine in the fourth quarter of 2015 will stand at around US\$ 230 per 1,000 cubic meters including discount.³³

Lukoil has discovered large gas fields on Romanian shelf in the Lira offshore structure. The company stated that the area of gas fields can reach up to 39 square kilometres while reserves can exceed 30 billion cubic meters of gas. Drilling exploration is planned for 2016. At present, LUKOIL's share in the project is 72 per cent, while PanAtlantic Petroleum Ltd owns 18 per cent and Societatea Nationale de Gaze Naturale Romgaz SA owns 10 per cent.³⁴

Bashneft has increased its oil production by 12.1 per cent in the first 9 months of 2015 to 14.674 million tonnes.³⁵

The Head of Russia's Federal Antimonopoly Service Igor Artemyev has said that the process of splitting Gazprom into transport and production units has been initiated by Rosneft's CEO Igor Sechin. This issue will be discussed by a presidential commission on fuel and energy complex. In the past, 'market participants' have insisted on splitting Gazprom's transport assets into a separate company, which in their view will improve transparency of setting rates for gas transportation.³⁶

³² "Volume of Investments In Russia To Fall About 10% in 2015 — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, October 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/828357>

³³ "Gazprom Launches Gas Supplies To Ukraine — CEO", *Itar-Tass*, October 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/827991>

³⁴ "Lukoil Discovers Large Gas Field On Romanian Shelf", *Itar-Tass*, October 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/828799>

³⁵ "Bashneft Oil Production up 12.1% to 14.7 mln Tonnes In 9 Months", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/829083>

³⁶ "Gazprom Split-Off Initiated by Rosneft CEO — Head Of Antimonopoly Service", *Itar-Tass*, October 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/829421>

Russia: International

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **President Putin meets Saudi Defence Minister in Sochi; Russia and US defence officials discuss developments in Syria; Kremlin spokesman says President Putin ‘attaches great significance to contacts with US on Syria’; Turkey says that Russian and Turkish positions on Syria and Ukraine differ but consent possible; Russia says it is not supplying weapons to Kurds; Foreign Minister Lavrov says military operation in Syria is not meant to ‘bury’ the political processes; Russian navy ships may join Syria operations; EU rules out peace in Syria under Assad regime and criticizes Russian airstrikes; Russia and Kazakhstan sign Caspian Sea agreement; Russia disagrees with the Dutch probe into MH-17 plane crash; Russia and China launch joint media cooperation programme; Russian and North Korean ruling parties hold consultations in Pyongyang; Russia terms publication of Russian military pilots data in the Ukrainian media a hostile act; Russian Member of Parliament welcome US extending presence in Afghanistan; Russian company to build North-South gas pipeline in Pakistan by mid-2020; President Putin’s visit to Japan put off indefinitely.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has met with the Saudi Deputy Crown Prince and Defence Minister Mohammed bin Salman in Sochi on October 12. During the meeting, the Deputy Crown Prince voiced Saudi Arabia's keen interest in ‘realizing the peaceful aspirations of the Syrian people’ and reiterated its support to solve the Syrian crisis in accordance with the resolutions of the Geneva 1 conference. In addition, the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir stated that Riyadh remains concerned over military operations in Syria and that it seeks to find common grounds with Russia to guard Syria’s unity. Al-Jubeir added that Saudi Arabia will increase cooperation with Russia to fight ‘terrorism’ and will prefer the formation of a transitional government that will eventually lead to the end of Assad regime. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that both countries are willing to cooperate in Syria and want to prevent the formation of a ‘terrorist caliphate’.³⁷

Russian and American military officials have, during a video conference held on October 15, discussed the issue of safe flights for Russia and the US-led coalitions' aircraft over Syria. This was the third such video conference on Syria and the Russian Defence Ministry's press service stated that the two countries are ‘getting closer in positions on the key items of the would-be document.’³⁸ Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has held a telephonic conversation with his US counterpart John Kerry wherein they ‘expressed satisfaction with the work of the military of the two countries to harmonize security measures in Syria’s airspace in the context of anti-terrorist actions.’ They agreed to continue contacts on various aspects of the Syrian settlement in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. The two Foreign

³⁷ “Riyadh, Moscow Join Hands Against ‘Terrorist Caliphate’”, *Kazinform*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2827571>

³⁸ “Russian, US Defence Officials Reach Progress During Video Link-Up on Syria — Pentagon”, *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/829036>

Ministers also discussed progress in the implementation of Minsk agreements on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.³⁹

Presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov has said, on October 13, that Russian President Vladimir Putin attaches great significance to contacts with the United States on Syria and has therefore suggested that a delegation led by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev be sent to the US to discuss Syrian developments. Meanwhile, reports have emerged of the US refusal to meet the Russian delegation leading to President Putin labelling such a move as being unconstructive. He added that the 'weakness of this stance is based on the apparent lack of any agenda and it seems that there is nothing to talk about.' However, he stated that doors are still open to discuss Syria with all parties concerned.⁴⁰

Turkish Deputy Undersecretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Kemal Aydin has said, on October 15, that the positions of Moscow and Ankara on the situation in Syria and Ukraine differ substantially, but consent is still possible. He expressed optimism to 'find a mutually advantageous solution' and called on the two countries to develop sectors where they are united.⁴¹

Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has said, on October 15, that Russia is not supplying weapons to Syrian Kurds. Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had dwelled on Moscow establishing contact with Iraqi Kurds through the Iraqi government. He added that Russia is providing military-technical support to the central governments of Iraq and Syria in the fight against terrorism.⁴²

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, during a meeting with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura held on October 13, that Russia's military operation in Syria does not mean an end to the political settlement. He stated that 'our actions in Syria aimed at raising the efficiency of struggle against terrorism does not mean the political process should be buried. On the contrary, we would like to note the growing need to support your efforts. I hope to get first hand assessments from you about your efforts and about what Russia can do to help implementing the Geneva Communiqué.' He added that Islamic countries should become key participants of coalition against the Islamic State terrorist organization.⁴³

The Deputy Chief of Russian General Staff, Colonel General Andrey Kartapolov has said, on October 16, that Russian naval ships in the Mediterranean can be involved in the strikes on

³⁹ "Lavrov, Kerry Satisfied With Work Of Military on Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829266>

⁴⁰ "Putin Calls US Refusal To Meet With Russian Delegation Unconstructive", October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829084>

⁴¹ "Russian, Turkish Positions On Syria, Ukraine Differ, But Consent Possible — Turkey", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/829271>

⁴² "Russia is Not Supplying Weapons To Syrian Kurds — Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829240>

⁴³ "Russian Military Operation In Syria Not Meant To Bury Political Process — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, October 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828580>

Islamic State militants in Syria. He did not rule out Russia establishing a military base in Syria involving naval, air and ground components.⁴⁴

The European Union member states have come to a consensus that the prospect of peace in Syria under Assad regime is bleak. They have also expressed concern over Russian airstrikes on the Syrian opposition and civilians and the risk of further military escalation.⁴⁵

Russia and Kazakhstan have signed a Caspian Sea agreement on October 15 in Astana. To mark the occasion President Putin stated that 'we have big plans on joint oil production in the Caspian Sea. We have signed an agreement on amendments to the 1998 agreement on the delimitation of the northern part of the Caspian Sea. This will allow companies of the two countries to begin development of a large hydrocarbon field — Tsentralnaya geological structure.'⁴⁶

The Deputy Chief of Russia's aviation agency, Oleg Storchevoy has said, on October 14, that Russia 'emphatically disagrees with the conclusion of the Dutch Safety Board investigations into the MH17 plane crash in eastern Ukraine'. He added that the 'commission was picking evidence and the report did not have enough facts confirming the trustworthiness of the investigation.'⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Russia has invited members of the investigation commission to come to Russia and familiarize themselves with the parameters of the Buk missile system but have not received a reply yet.⁴⁸

Russia and China have launched a joint working audio-visual exchange program titled 'Chinese-Russian Friendship and Joint Implementation of the Silk Road Dream'. This initiative is likely to prepare the groundwork for annual media years between the two countries.⁴⁹

Russian senator Andrey Klimov who is a member the ruling United Russia party's general council has held the first official working consultations with the representatives of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), in Pyongyang on October 14. The two sides 'discussed the schedule of upcoming bilateral contacts with the goal of exchanging experience on party policies and prospects of cooperation between the youth, veteran and women's organizations.

⁴⁴ "Russian Navy Ships May Join Syria Operation — General Staff", *Itar-Tass*, October 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/829437>

⁴⁵ "EU Rules Out Peace In Syria Under Assad Regime, Criticizes Russian Airstrikes", *Itar-Tass*, October 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/829336>

⁴⁶ "Russia, Kazakhstan Sign Caspian Sea Agreement", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/829089>

⁴⁷ "Russia Strongly Disagrees With Dutch Probe Into MH17 Crash — Aviation Agency", *Itar-Tass*, October 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828844>

⁴⁸ "Russia Strongly Disagrees With Dutch Probe Into Mh17 Crash — Aviation Agency", *Itar-Tass*, October 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828844>

⁴⁹ "China, Russia Launch Joint Media Cooperation Programme", *Itar-Tass*, October 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/828742>

The discussion also focused on drafting the agreement on inter-party cooperation. A protocol was signed following the consultations.⁵⁰

Russian Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has described the publication of personal data of Russian fighter pilots in Syria in the Ukrainian media a 'hostile act' and promised to take necessary measures to protect the Russian military servicemen.⁵¹

The First Deputy Chairman of international affairs committee of Russia's Upper House, Vladimir Dzhubarov has said that the US decision to extend its military presence in Afghanistan is a 'strategically important and positive move'.⁵²

Russia and Pakistan have, on October 16, signed an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of the North-South gas pipeline. The 1100 km long, US\$ 2.5 billion gas pipeline will link liquefied natural gas terminals in Karachi with Lahore and is expected to be completed in 42 months. The 12.4 billion cubic meters of gas per year capacity pipeline will be owned and operated by the project company for 25 years after which it will be handed over to Pakistan. RT-Global Resources will create a consortium uniting Russian and foreign investors including Chinese and Pakistani ones as well as potential contractors.⁵³

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Japan has been indefinitely postponed due to disagreements between the two countries on the Southern Kuril Island territory dispute. Earlier, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had met Putin during the side-lines of the United Nations General Assembly session in September, and agreed to coordinate their schedules to facilitate the Russian President's visit.⁵⁴

India-Russia Relations

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Rusnano to create US\$ 2-billion fund to invest in Indo-Russian joint defence ventures; Navy signs Rs 5,000 crore pact with Russian shipbuilder Zvezdochka for Kilo class submarine refit.**

Russian sovereign wealth fund Rusnano Management Company will create a US\$ 2-billion fund with equal contribution from Indian financial institutions to invest in joint venture

⁵⁰ "Russian, North Korean Ruling Parties Hold Consultations In Pyongyang", *Itar-Tass*, October 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/828740>

⁵¹ "Kremlin: Publication of Russian Military Pilots' Data In Ukrainian Media Was Hostile Act", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829131>

⁵² "Top Russian MP Welcomes US Extending Presence in Afghanistan", *Itar-Tass*, October 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829309>

⁵³ "Russian Company To Build North-South Gas Pipeline In Pakistan By Mid-2020", *Itar-Tass*, October 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/829342>

⁵⁴ "Vladimir Putin's Japan Visit Indefinitely Put Off", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, October 16, 2015 at http://rbth.com/news/2015/10/16/vladimir_putins_japan_visit_indefinitely_put_off_50125.html

companies formed between the two countries which will develop defence and aerospace equipment with high-end technology. This is part of the Make in India initiative.⁵⁵

The Indian Navy has signed a contract with Russian shipbuilder Zvezdochka to extend the service life of its Kilo class submarine and will be sending the first submarine for refit in June next year. The extensive refit, the value for which is pegged at Rs 5,000 crore for a total of four submarines, will not only extend the life of the boats but will also upgrade their combat potential. While the first of the four submarines will be upgraded at Severodvinsk in Russia, the plan is to upgrade the remaining three in an Indian yard as part of the 'Make in India' initiative. Zvezdochka has already tied up with Reliance Defence to upgrade the submarines at the Pipavav yard in Gujarat. However, the Navy has at present awarded the upgrade contract for the first submarine only. A decision on the remaining will be taken after a review of Indian yards and their capability to undertake the complex upgrade.⁵⁶

D. Central Asia

Kazakhstan

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **CIS countries sign military cooperation agreement; Kazakhstan and Russia to boost cooperation in oil production and car manufacturing; Kazakhstan to explore deep oil reserves to maintain production; Kazakhstan and Iran seek to strengthen their bilateral investment cooperation; Kazakhstan and China strengthen defence cooperation; Kazakhstan launches first domestic rail production.**

The countries of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have, during the annual summit held on October 16 in Kazakh village Burabay, signed seventeen agreements including agreements on combating international terrorism and military cooperation through 2020. The meeting was attended by leaders of CIS states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan while representatives of Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine participated as observers. At an event related press conference, Russian President Putin dwelled on the importance of closer military cooperation due to the emerging threats in Afghanistan which called for a coordinated response. The next CIS summit will be held in Kyrgyzstan on September 16, 2016.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ "Russia's Rusnano to Create \$2-Billion Fund To Invest In Indo-Russian Defence Joint Ventures", *The Economic Times*, October 16, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russias-rusnano-to-create-2-billion-fund-to-invest-in-indo-russian-defence-joint-ventures/articleshow/49405601.cms>

⁵⁶ "Navy Signs Rs 5,000 Crore Pact With Russian Shipbuilder Zvezdochka For Kilo Class Submarine Refit", *The Economic Times*, October 17, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/navy-signs-rs-5000-crore-pact-with-russian-shipbuilder-zvezdochka-for-kilo-class-submarine-refit/articleshow/49425464.cms>

⁵⁷ "CIS Leaders Sign Military Cooperation Pact", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/cis-summit-military-cooperation-pact/27309627.html>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has paid a state visit to Kazakhstan on October 15 wherein he held discussions with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The two leaders discussed 'bilateral relations, cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union, and pressing international issues. These include the issue of pipeline transit through Kazakhstan, joint development of the Caspian fields of Tsentralnoye and Khvalynskoye, cooperation in the coal industry and transit through the new road along the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. A number of documents were also signed, including ones on delimitation of the northern part of Caspian Sea to implement the sovereign rights for subsoil use and expand cooperation in the automotive industry.'⁵⁸

Deputy Energy Minister Magzum Mirzagaliyev has said that Kazakhstan will explore deep oil production at depths between seven and 15 kilometres and expressed optimism that this will lead to discovery of more than 20 large hydrocarbon deposits. He also predicted the country to face a decline in oil production in fields of Tengiz, Karachaganak, and Kashagan within the next 15-20 years.⁵⁹

The 14th Kazakh-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Cooperation meeting was held in Astana on October 14. The two countries dwelled on implementing the roadmap for future cooperation by focussing on areas like trade, financial and banking, subsoil use, mining, agriculture, energy, culture, tourism, healthcare, science and technology. Notably, Iran has expressed interest in building a refinery in Kazakhstan's Mangystau region. Bilateral trade during January-July 2015 stood at US\$ 360 million. In July, the Centre of technological cooperation with research and technological parks of Iran was set up in Kazakhstan. It aims to strengthen R&D cooperation between Kazakh and Iranian companies and research institutions, as well as attract investors, partners, and technology for joint projects.⁶⁰

Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan has visited Astana on October 12 wherein he met Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Kazakh defence officials. A key area of discussion involved 'training and exchange of experience in the sphere of combating asymmetric threats (training special-forces units).' The Kazakh Defence Minister also emphasised on the importance of cooperation with China in the fields of 'mountain training, training of military swimmers and actions in urban environments for special-forces.' He added that joint tactical anti-terrorism exercises have been planned for the near future. China will provide bolster-type tractors with trawls and loading-unloading platforms for the Kazakh Army.⁶¹

⁵⁸ "Kazakhstan and Russia To Boost Cooperation In Oil Production, Car Making", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15867-kazakhstan-and-russia-to-boost-cooperation-in-oil-production-car-making>

⁵⁹ "Kazakhstan to Explore Deep Oil To Maintain Production", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15866-kazakhstan-to-explore-deep-oil-to-maintain-production>

⁶⁰ "Kazakhstan and Iran Enhance Cooperation", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15865-kazakhstan-and-iran-enhance-cooperation>

⁶¹ "Kazakhstan, China Strengthen Defence Cooperation", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 16, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/kazakhstan-china-strengthen-defence-cooperation/>

Kazakhstan's Aktobe Rail and Section Works (ARBZ) has launched the country's first domestically produced rail products. The company has produced hardened 120-metre, R65 mark rails for high-speed railways and is expected to produce 230,000 tonnes of rolled steel beams, angles and channels in the future. The Kazakh media described the feat as a significant event in the history of the country's industrial development.⁶²

Kyrgyzstan

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Kyrgyzstan CEC announces final election results; Kyrgyzstan and Georgia discuss bilateral ties; Kyrgyzstan and Saudi Arabia discuss possibility of forming a business forum; Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia discuss bilateral cooperation; SCO anti-terror exercises held in China; More than 900 ethnic Kyrgyz from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan receive citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic, Switzerland upgrades medical equipment in Kyrgyzstan; Kyrgyzstan strengthens agricultural export potential.**

Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission has, on October 15, announced the results of the country's parliamentary elections. The SDPK party won the maximum number of seats (38) with a vote share of 27.56 per cent. They were followed by Respublika-Ata Jurt (28 seats) 20.26 per cent, Kyrgyzstan (18 seats) 13.07 per cent, Onuguu-Progress (13 seats) 9.39 per cent, Bir Bol (12 seats) 8.59 per cent and Ata Meken (11 seats) 7.08 per cent.⁶³

Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Valery Dil has held bilateral discussions with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili in Tbilisi on October 16. The key areas of focus involved 'trade, economic and cultural cooperation and improving connectivity.' This includes the opening of regular flights on the Bishkek - Tbilisi – Frankfurt route.⁶⁴

Kyrgyzstan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, A. Zhumabaev has, on October 15, met with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Saudi Chamber of Commerce Abdurrahman bin Abdullah Az- Zamil in Riyadh. The two sides discussed the possibility of forming a business forum in order to attract Arab investments in the Kyrgyz economy.⁶⁵

Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev has met with his Mongolian counterpart D. Ganhuyag in Bishkek on October 15. The two sides discussed prospects of bilateral cooperation in the fields of mining, agriculture, livestock and reforms in the judiciary and public administration.⁶⁶

⁶² "In Historic First, Kazakhstan Launches Domestic Rail Production", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 18, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/in-historic-first-kazakhstan-launches-domestic-rail-production/>

⁶³ "Kyrgyzstan CEC Announces Final Election Results", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2828762>

⁶⁴ "Georgia is Interested In Enhancing Cooperation with Kyrgyzstan", *Kabar*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/economics/full/14151>

⁶⁵ "Kyrgyzstan and Saudi Arabia Discuss Possibility Of Organization Of The Kyrgyz-Saudi Business Forum", *Kabar*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/14137>

⁶⁶ "Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia Discuss Bilateral Cooperation", *Kabar*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/14135>

The SCO has organised its first joint exercise - 'Xiamen-2015, involving its Regional Anti-terrorist Structure, that aimed to counter the threat of terrorism, separatism and extremism emanating from the use of internet. During the exercises, SCO command and staff members identified and prevented the online sabotage activities of terrorist organizations, as well as improved the planning, preparation and execution of special operation skills.⁶⁷

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev has signed a decree on granting citizenship to 948 ethnic Kyrgyz who were former citizens of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and have now returned home.⁶⁸

The Embassy of Switzerland in the Kyrgyz Republic has, under the framework of Healthcare Waste Management project, provided modern laundry equipment worth 55 million Kyrgyz Soms to 30 regional and district hospitals in Kyrgyzstan. The project seeks to improve the quality of healthcare by introducing modern technologies in order to control infections in the hospitals. Switzerland has committed itself towards the project till 2017.⁶⁹

A new logistics centre for storing and processing agricultural produce has been set up in Kyrgyzstan's Sokuluk district in the northern Chui province. Kyrgyz Prime Minister Temir Sariyev, while speaking at the opening ceremony, said that the centre will help develop the country's agriculture sector. It has been built with Dutch technology. The agriculture sector accounts for 14 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's GDP and employs around 62 per cent of its population. At the same time, Kyrgyz farmers and trading companies lack a specialized supply chain that meets the demand of the domestic and foreign markets.⁷⁰

Uzbekistan

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Germany to shut down its air base in Uzbekistan; Indian Ambassador to Uzbekistan holds talks with Uzbek Deputy Minister of Economy.**

Germany has said that it will close down its air base in Termez by the end of 2015. The German Foreign Military Operations Command spokesman Dominik Wullers stated that 'Termez is just a backup, we are not effectively using it right now, that's the reason why we are closing it.' However, the military did not rule out the possibility of German forces

⁶⁷ "First Joint SCO Exercises To Counter Terrorists Held in China", *Kabar*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14122>

⁶⁸ "More Than 900 Ethnic Kyrgyz From Tajikistan And Uzbekistan Receive Citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic", *Kabar*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14105>

⁶⁹ "Switzerland Upgrades Laundries At 30 Kyrgyz Hospitals", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15878-switzerland-upgrades-laundries-at-30-kyrgyz-hospitals>

⁷⁰ "Kyrgyzstan Strengthens Agricultural Export Potential", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15861-kyrgyzstan-strengthens-agricultural-export-potential>

returning to the base in the future. The base has provided support for German and other NATO forces in neighbouring Afghanistan since 2001.⁷¹

Uzbek Deputy Minister of Economy Dilmurad Turdiev has held a meeting with the Indian Ambassador to Uzbekistan Mr. Vinod Kumar on October 12. The two sides discussed the implementation of agreements that were signed during the visit of Indian Prime Minister to Uzbekistan in 2015. They also discussed prospects of cooperation in the fields of pharma, leather, footwear, textile, ICT, software, medicine and science.⁷²

Tajikistan

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Tajikistan signs agreements with Chinese, German and Italian companies; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to increase investments in Tajikistan; Islamic Development Bank to allocate US\$ 70 million to Tajikistan for the CASA-1000 power project; Dushanbe and Ulaanbaatar hold first political consultation; Tajik public servants prohibited from attending regular Friday Prayers in mosques.**

The State Committee of Investment and State Property Management of Tajikistan has signed a number of cooperation documents with Chinese companies. This includes MoUs on construction of hydropower plants and power transmission lines in Danghara, construction of a pump station and water-purifying station in Dushanbe, construction of a coal-fired heat and power plant in Rasht and construction of a railway and development of coalfields. In addition, the Committee and Bavarian Chemical Cluster of Germany signed a MoU on the study and organization of clusters in industrial and agrarian sectors and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in those sectors. Moreover, the Tajik Committee and Department of Agriculture of Tuscany (Italy) have also signed a MoU on setting up a Council of Entrepreneurs of Tajikistan and Italy. The documents were signed on the side-lines of the 2015 Dushanbe International Entrepreneurship Forum.⁷³

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will increase its investments by up to US\$ 200 million in Tajikistan in 2015. Some of the sectors that have been identified include modernization of Tajikistan's electricity transmission infrastructure, support to the banking and small and medium-sized enterprises and improve public utility services.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Western Militaries Exit Central Asia As Germany Shuts Uzbek Base", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/uzbekistan-germany-to-shut-base-last-western-in-central-asia/27308248.html>

⁷² "Deputy Minister of Economy Holds Talks With Indian Envoy", *Uz Daily*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-33905.htm>

⁷³ "Tajikistan Signs Agreements With Chinese, German, Italian Companies", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15877-tajikistan-signs-agreements-with-chinese-german-italian-companies>

⁷⁴ "EBRD Ups Investment in Tajikistan", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15864-ebrd-ups-investment-in-tajikistan>

The Islamic Development Bank will allocate US\$ 70 million to Tajikistan for implementing the Tajik part of Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000). The Bank and the Tajik Finance Ministry signed the loan agreement for this purpose on October 9. The project is expected to cost US\$ 314 million with Tajikistan contributing US\$ 15 million.⁷⁵

Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Aslov has met with his Mongolian counterpart Mr. Damba Gankhuyag in Dushanbe on October 13 wherein they 'exchanged views on state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral cooperation'. Meanwhile, the first political consultations between the two countries took place in Dushanbe on October 12. The talks explored future bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and scientific fields.⁷⁶

Tajik public servants have been prohibited from attending regular Friday Prayers in mosques. A similar rule that prohibits children under the age of 18 from attending Friday Prayers in mosques has already been enforced. Officials have said that the law aims to prevent children from falling prey to Islamic radicalization.⁷⁷

E. West Asia

Iran

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Iran tests new ballistic missile; Velayati: Bashar al Assad is Iran's redline.**

The new generation of Emad, a long-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile, was tested successfully, Defence Minister Hossein Dehqan said. The missile, designed by the scientists and experts of the Defence Ministry, can be controlled till hitting the target with high precision, he added. Dehqan also said that the Armed Force's power will dramatically increase by mass production of the Emad missile.⁷⁸

Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has said protecting the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is Iran's "red line". Iran is well aware that Assad is defending his country's territorial integrity and the Syrian people, Velayati said in an interview with *ISNA* published on October 11. He also said it has been

⁷⁵ "IDB Provides \$70 Million For Tajik Part of CASA-1000 Power Project", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15852-idb-provides-70-million-for-tajik-part-of-casa-1000-power-project>

⁷⁶ "Dushanbe, Ulaanbaatar Hold First Political Consultations", *Asia Plus*, October 13, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/dushanbe-ulaanbaatar-hold-first-political-consultations>

⁷⁷ "Tajik Public Servants Prohibited From Attending Regular Friday Prayers In Mosques", *Asia Plus*, October 13, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/tajik-public-servants-prohibited-attending-regular-friday-prayers-mosques>

⁷⁸ "Iran Tests Newest Ballistic Missile", *Tehran Times*, October 12, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250034. Accessed on 27 October 2015

proved to the Western countries that Iran has been playing a “fundamental” role in supporting the Syrian government.⁷⁹

Iraq and Syria

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Barzani heads to Iran for a Security Conference; Iranian and Russian support enhance Syria’s steadfastness; Having a nuclear free Middle East unattainable without occupation joining of NPT.**

The press secretary of the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Sami Orcoche, announced that the President Nechirvan Barzani will travel to Iran to participate in a security conference in Tehran.⁸⁰

Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister Fayssal Mikdad asserted that Iran’s support for Syria and Russia’s direct intervention to fight terrorism have enhanced Syria’s steadfastness. In an interview with the *Iranian al-Alam* news agency and reported by SANA, Mikdad said the achievements Russia has made in fighting terrorism debunked the US-led coalition, that only claims to be fighting terrorism but has done nothing actually. This coalition, Mikdad added, aims at serving the US’s tools in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in addition to destroying Syria and prolonging the war there.⁸¹

Syria’s Permanent Representative at the United Nations Bashar al-Jaafari has underscored that having a WMD-free Middle East region is unattainable without Israel’s joining of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and without putting the Israeli nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), urging the UN member states to work for evacuating the Middle East region from all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). He made his remarks during the seventieth session of the UN First Committee on Disarmament and International Security.⁸²

Israel and Palestine

October 12 – October 18, 2015

- **Israeli expressed refusal to any international presence in Al-Aqsa Mosque; Palestinian MP claims Intifada has started.**

⁷⁹ “Velayati: Bashar Al Assad Is Iran’s Redline”, *Tehran Times*, October 12, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250033. Accessed on October 27, 2015

⁸⁰ “Barzani Heads To Iran On Saturday To Attend Security Conference”, *Iraqi News*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/barzani-heads-iran-saturday-attend-security-conference/>, Accessed on October 27, 2015

⁸¹ “Mikdad: Iranian and Russian Support Enhance Syria’s Steadfastness”, *Syria Times*, October 16, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20149-mikdad-iranian-and-russian-support-enhance-syria-s-steadfastness>. Accessed on October 30, 2015

⁸² “Al- Jaafari: Having a WMD – Free Middle East Unattainable without Occupation Joining the NPT”, *Syria Times*, October 15, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20132-al-jaafari-having-a-wmd-free-middle-east-unattainable-without-occupation-joining-of-npt>. Accessed on October 30, 2015

Israeli Representative to the UN Danny Danon expressed Israeli refusal to any international presence in Al-Aqsa Mosque, claiming this would “violate decades-old status quo,” *Alkhaleejonline.com* reported. Speaking to journalists outside the main hall of the UN Security Council in New York, Danon said, “What is sought by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is not a surprise for us.” He declared, “Throughout history, every Palestinian leader wanted to avoid taking hard decisions, resorted to incitement, unreal accusations and lies regarding the Temple Mount [Al-Aqsa Mosque].” Danon added, “I want to tell the international community and the [UN] Security Council – if you are serious regarding the reinforcement of peace and you are committed to coexistence in our region, you have to issue a statement clearly refusing incitement and supporting direct talks.”⁸³

A Palestinian MP in the occupied West Bank said that the flame of the Palestinian intifada has been ignited and neither the Palestinian Authority nor Israel and its settlers can stop it. The Hamas MP said that this intifada was ignited as a result of the oppression of Israel’s occupation and the “violations” of its settlers against Islamic and Christian holy sites. “They desecrate them on a daily basis and in front of the whole world,” he argued.⁸⁴

The Gulf

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **UAE reiterated the Saudi-led Arab Coalition's resolve to liberate Yemen; GCC not buying Israeli anti – missile system.**

The UAE reiterated the Saudi-led Arab Coalition's resolve to liberate Yemen from rebels, terrorist organisations and their allies. Receiving visiting Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi at Al Shati Palace in Abu Dhabi, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, said the coalition is determined to restore the legitimate government, security, stability and peace in Yemen. Mohammed bin Zayed renewed the UAE's comprehensive and continuous support, and humanitarian initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of the Yemeni people to overcome the difficult times.⁸⁵

Bahrain has dismissed a report claiming that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states were planning to buy an Israeli Iron Dome anti-missile system. US television channel Fox News had reported that Bahrain and other Gulf states were negotiating to buy the Israeli-developed Iron Dome anti-missile system to defend against a growing arsenal of Iranian missiles.

⁸³ “Israel Refuses Any International Presence in Al- Aqsa”, *Palestinian Chronicles*, October 17, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israel-refuses-any-international-presence-in-al-aqsa/>. Accessed on October 27, 2015

⁸⁴ “The Intifada Has Started, Claims MP; Neither PA Nor Israel Can Stop It”, *Palestine Chronicles*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/the-intifada-has-started-claims-mp-neither-pa-nor-israel-can-stop-it/>. Accessed on October 27, 2015

⁸⁵ “We’ll Liberate Yemen: UAE”, *Khaleej Times*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/well-liberate-yemen-uae>. Accessed on 28 October 2015

However, Eisa Bin Abdul Rahman Al Hammadi, Bahrain's Minister of Information Affairs and Minister of Representatives' and Shura Council Affairs said the report quoting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about an Iron Dome anti-missile system was not true. "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states are looking into buying an anti-missile defence system from the United States, and there are no attempts whatsoever to purchase the system from Israel as claimed by the television channel," Al Hammadi said, quoted by Bahrain News Agency (BNA).⁸⁶

India and West Asia

October 12 – October 18, 2015

- **Sixteen Indian expats to join IS; Israel blocks India's gifts to Palestine.**

At least 16 Indian expatriates in West Asia are estimated to have joined the Islamic State, a latest report with India's intelligence agencies shows. These people have joined the IS from countries such as Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where they were working or have gone seeking job. The estimate is based on information shared between India's Research & Analysis Wing and its counterparts in other countries, an intelligence official said. Most of these people are young men and women who are radicalised by IS through Internet using hate propaganda, the official added. As per an analysis carried out by Indian agencies, the Indians who joined the IS do not "perceive" any sense of injustice in India. However, they have deep seethed anger towards the West. Law enforcement agencies say they are unable to do anything when Indians already living abroad join the IS.⁸⁷

Israeli authorities have denied clearance to four communication systems meant as a gift from India to a Palestinian university's Information Technology (IT) department. The matter assumed significance as President Pranab Mukherjee, who is due to inaugurate a state-of-the-art IT Centre at Al-Quds University, planned to gift these devices as part of the Indian government's plan. The four communication systems were meant to be crucial components of the new IT centre.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ "GCC not Buying Israeli Anti-Missile System", *Gulf News*, October 15, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/gcc-not-buying-israeli-anti-missile-system-1.1601400>. Accessed October 29, 2015

⁸⁷ "At Least 16 Indian Expats in West Asia Join IS", *Economic Times*, October 15, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/at-least-16-indian-expats-in-west-asia-join-is/articleshow/49376800.cms>. Accessed on October 30, 2015

⁸⁸ "Israel Blocks India's Gift To Palestine", *The Indian Express*, October 13, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/israel-blocks-indias-gifts-to-palestine/>. Accessed on October 30, 2015

F. The United States of America

National

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Department of Defence announces the deaths of two airmen; TPP opponents in the US warn of job losses and other negative consequences; A months-long email scandal, former Secretary of State Clinton continues as the frontrunner of the Democratic Party's nominee for 2016 presidential race; Obama says Clinton could have been quicker in disclosing her use of the email server; Clinton and Sanders dominate the Democratic Party's first presidential debate of the 2016 campaign; Democratic frontrunner candidates Clinton and Sanders have raised more than any of the Republicans between July 1 and September 30.**

The US Department of Defence announced on October 13 the deaths of two airmen Maj. Phyllis J. Pelky, 45, of Rio Rancho, New Mexico and Master Sgt. Gregory T. Kuhse, 38, of Kalamazoo, Michigan who were supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel. They died on October 11 in the crash of a British Puma Mk2 helicopter in Kabul, Afghanistan. The DoD stated that the cause of the accident is currently under investigation.⁸⁹

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Ministers (negotiators) statement says "we have come to an agreement that will support jobs, drive sustainable growth, foster inclusive development, and promote innovation across the Asia-Pacific region." However, the deal is controversial in the United States, as opponents warn of job losses and other negative consequences. Those worries sparked numerous demonstrations in the United States. The TPP recently reached by the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim countries has been in the works since 2008, and if approved by each country will cover 40 percent of the global economy.⁹⁰

While Hillary Clinton continues to be seen as the frontrunner to become the Democratic Party's nominee for president, her campaign has been dogged by a months-long scandal involving her use of email during her time as secretary of state. The controversy centres on Clinton's decision to use a personal email account on a privately maintained server rather than a State Department-issued system, which theoretically would have allowed for more thorough documentation of her official correspondence and better protection against hackers. While Clinton has acknowledged that using the private email server was a "mistake," she insists her actions were legal.⁹¹

⁸⁹ "DoD Identifies Air Force Casualties", *DoD News*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/622905/dod-identifies-air-force-casualties>

⁹⁰ Shusman, Bernard, "In US, Trans-Pacific Trade Deal Draws Fire", *VOA News*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/tpp-is-under-fire/3011260.html>

⁹¹ Gallo, William, "Clinton Hounded by Email Scandal", *VOA News*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-hounded-by-email-scandal/3003634.html>

In the meantime, President Barack Obama said that Hillary Clinton made "a mistake" in using a private email server while she served as his secretary of state, but that it did not endanger national security. Obama, in an interview aired on October 11 night on CBS's "60 Minutes," said Clinton could have been quicker in disclosing her use of the email server, which was housed at her home outside New York City.⁹²

Ex-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders dominated the Democratic Party's first presidential debate of the 2016 campaign, largely preserving their status as the party's frontrunners, according to some analysts. Clinton and Sanders, who were joined by three lesser-known candidates during the two-hour debate at a Las Vegas casino on October 13, clashed over issues including gun control, economic policy, and the role of the U.S. military overseas.⁹³

According to the US Presidential candidates release quarterly fundraising figures, Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush raised \$13.4 million over the summer -- more than almost any other primary competitor, but far less than political newcomer Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon who collected about \$20 million during the same time period. Meanwhile, Democratic frontrunners for the 2016 presidential race Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders each has raised more than any of the Republicans between July 1 and September 30. One major revelation from the latest batch of presidential fundraising reports, filed on October 15 with the Federal Election Commission: Donald Trump is no longer a self-funded candidate. The celebrity billionaire who has sat atop GOP polls in recent months raised \$3.9 million in the latest fundraising quarter, only \$100,000 of which came from his own pocket. That's a drastic shift from his springtime fundraising report, when he loaned his campaign nearly all of the \$1.9 million it had.⁹⁴

International: Asia

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **US conducts a major air and ground operation with Afghan forces in southern Afghanistan, killing "numerous" al-Qaida militants; US will maintain the current number of American troops in Afghanistan at 9,800 through most of 2016; Medical aid group MSF says a U.S. tank entered the grounds of its hospital in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz without permission; Obama orders the U.S. government to start preparing to lift sanctions against Iran; Pentagon says coalition forces conducted an airstrike in northwest Syria that killed al-Nasr; US reaffirms the strength of the U.S.-ROK alliance as the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula; US and**

⁹² Bredemeier, Ken, "Obama: Clinton's Private Email Server a 'Mistake'", *VOA News*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-clinton-made-mistake-private-email-server/3002584.html>

⁹³ Gallo, William, "Clinton, Sanders Dominate Democratic Debate", *VOA News*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-sanders-clash-over-syria-gun-control-in-first-debate/3005184.html>

⁹⁴ "US Presidential Candidates Release Quarterly Fundraising Figures", *Associated Press*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-presidential-candidates-release-quarterly-fundraising-figures/3009796.html>

ROK express a willingness to engage in talks with Pyongyang if it is serious about eliminating nuclear capabilities.

The United States military officials said that based on months of intelligence gathering and planning, on October 13, it conducted a major air and ground operation with Afghan forces in southern Afghanistan, killing "numerous" al-Qaida militants. More than 200 American and Afghan forces took part in the offensive, which involved 63 U.S. precision airstrikes while Afghan forces engaged in several ground battles against al-Qaida networks at two related sites.⁹⁵ For an American president who came into office with a promise to end U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the announcement to slow the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan was likely not an easy one. Flanked by Defence Secretary Ash Carter, Vice President Joe Biden and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford, Obama announced on October 15 that he will maintain the current number of American troops in Afghanistan at 9,800 through most of 2016, before trimming that number to 5,500 by the time he leaves office in January 2017.⁹⁶

On October 16, medical aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said that a U.S. tank entered the grounds of its hospital in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz without permission, damaging the compound that was hit in a U.S. air strike earlier this month. The group said in a statement that the vehicle was carrying a team from a joint investigation being conducted by the United States, NATO and Afghan government into why a U.S. aircraft fired on the hospital, killing at least 22 staff and patients. The U.S. military has already taken responsibility for the air strike, which occurred during intense fighting between Afghan forces and the Taliban in the early hours of October 3.⁹⁷

On October 18, President Barack Obama ordered the U.S. government to start preparing to lift sanctions against Iran on what was called Adoption Day -- the day all parties who signed the nuclear deal in July take the first steps towards implementing it. Obama said Iran has also started carrying out its side of the deal -- removing centrifuges, slashing its uranium stockpiles, and filling the Arak heavy-water nuclear reactor with concrete -- all to ensure it cannot build a nuclear weapon.⁹⁸

On October 18, Peter Cook, Pentagon Press Secretary in a statement said, "on October 15, Coalition forces conducted an airstrike in northwest Syria that killed Abdul Mohsen Adballah Ibrahim al Charekh, aka Sanafi al-Nasr, a Saudi national and the highest ranking leader of the

⁹⁵ Gul, Ayaz, "US, Afghan Forces Raid Al-Qaida Camp", *VOA News*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-afghan-forces-raid-al-qaida-camp/3003702.html>

⁹⁶ Pande, Aru, "Obama Slows US Troop Withdrawal From Afghanistan", *VOA News*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-to-reverse-course-on-us-military-posture-in-afghanistan/3007275.html>

⁹⁷ "MSF: US Tank Breached Bombed Afghan Hospital Compound", *Reuters*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/msf-says-tank-breached-bombed-afghan-hospital-compound/3011237.html>

⁹⁸ Dockins, Pamela and Schwartz, Ken, "Obama Orders US to Prepare to Lift Sanction on Iran", *VOA News*, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/iran-nuclear-deal-moves-to-new-phase/3012400.html>

Last updated on: October 18, 2015

network of veteran al-Qaeda operatives sometimes called the 'Khorasan Group'." Al-Nasr was a long-time jihadist experienced in funnelling money and fighters for al-Qaeda. He moved funds from donors in the Gulf region into Iraq and then to al-Qaeda leaders from Pakistan to Syria. In 2012 he took charge of al-Qaeda's core finances before relocating to Syria in 2013. The US Treasury Department previously named Al-Nasr a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224 on August 22, 2014.⁹⁹

US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter met with the Republic of Korea's President Park Geun-hye and Minister of National Defence Han Min-koo in Washington, D.C. on October 15. Defence Secretary Carter, in his meetings with President Park and Minister Han, reaffirmed the strength of the U.S.-ROK alliance as the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and across the Asia-Pacific and strongly reassured both leaders of the United States' ironclad commitment to the defence of the ROK. The leaders also discussed areas of mutual concern in the Asia-Pacific, including the challenges posed by North Korea, and the importance of continued alliance cooperation and coordination to deter and, if necessary, defend against and defeat North Korean threats.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, President Obama and President Park demanded that North Korea abandon its nuclear ambitions, but expressed a willingness to engage in talks with Pyongyang if it demonstrated that it is serious about eliminating its nuclear capabilities. The two leaders called the more than six-decade-old alliance between their nations "a linchpin for peace and security" in the peninsula and across the Asia Pacific region. Obama expressed support for Park's effort to reunify the peninsula and said the United States would be willing to engage with Pyongyang if it shifted its pursuit of nuclear weapons.¹⁰¹

India-US Relations

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **India, Japan and the United States will hold joint naval exercises each year; Japan's inclusion in 2015's naval exercises a significant turning point for the deepening security partnership; Ambassador Verma says India-US defence relationship "stands on its own"; U.S. has keen interest to work with India on defence projects; Ambassador Singh speaks on strong India-US ties.**

On October 12, Indian Government sources said that India, Japan and the United States will hold joint naval exercises each year as the three countries kicked off the first such drills in the Bay of Bengal in eight years, a move likely to concern China. The last time New Delhi hosted

⁹⁹ "Statement on Airstrike in Syria that Killed Sanafi al-Nasr", *DoD News*, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/624656/statement-on-airstrike-in-syria-that-killed-sanafi-al-nasr>

¹⁰⁰ "Readout of Secretary Carter's Meetings With ROK President Park and ROK Minister of Defense Han", *DoD News*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/624498/readout-of-secretary-carters-meetings-with-rok-president-park-and-rok-minister>

¹⁰¹ Salinas, Mary Alice, "US, South Korea Offer Terms for Dialogue With Pyongyang", *VOA News*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-park-guen-hye-south-korea-north-korea-dialogue/3010783.html>

multilateral drills in its waters in 2007; it prompted disquiet in China where some saw it as a U.S.-inspired security grouping on the lines of NATO in Europe. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has however signalled a more robust security policy, seeking stronger strategic ties with the United States and Japan, while keeping a lid on border tensions with China.¹⁰² Strategic analysts call Japan's inclusion in this year's exercises a significant turning point for the deepening security partnership among the three countries. They also see it as a signal that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is shedding old concerns about Chinese sensitivities in moving closer to Washington and its allies.¹⁰³

In a response to Pakistan national security adviser Sartaj Aziz's recent remarks that India-US strategic collaboration should not increase so much that it should become a "threat" to the integrity of the region, US ambassador to India Richard Verma on October 18 said, India-US defence relationship "stands on its own" and the impact of this association from a strategic point of view besides others is to "increase peace, stability and prosperity". He also referred to the forming of an Aircraft Carrier Working Group, a joint effort between the two countries "looking at the future of carrier cooperation" between them. Ambassador Verma, who was in Chennai, India to witness the naval exercises 'Malabar 2015' between India, US and Japan, called the three navies "joint partners" that were "committed to the peaceful resolutions of disputes, committed to the rule of law and civilian control of the military."¹⁰⁴

Ambassador Verma, observing the U.S. keen interest to work with India on defence projects, said that a team, Aircraft-Carrier Technology Working Group, from India had visited the U.S. last month as part of the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). He said, "We are hoping that the team meets again in the next few months. What I was suggesting is that as this team meets and begins to talk not only about operations but also sharing of technology... I think it is possible to build the next aircraft carrier together — the U.S. and India".¹⁰⁵ He added, India and the US are working together in almost all areas like defence, energy, climate and agriculture and there was a growth in bilateral relationships between the two countries.¹⁰⁶

India's ambassador to the United States, Arun K. Singh, in his address to about 100 University students, faculty and invited guests gathered in the Dana Building on October 14 focused on the growth of Indian and United States relations and his thoughts on the two countries' future. During his speech, ambassador Singh referred to a statement made by Indian Prime

¹⁰² "India, US, Japan Kick Off Naval Drills Likely to Annoy China", *Reuters*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-us-japan-kick-off-naval-drills-likely-to-annoy-china/3002450.html>

¹⁰³ Pasricha, Anjana, "Japan Joins India-US Naval Exercises", *VOA News*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/japan-joins-india-us-naval-exercises/3004134.html>

¹⁰⁴ "Defence Relationship Between India, America 'Stands On Its Own', Says US Ambassador At Malabar Naval Drill", *Press Trust of India*, October 18, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Defence-relationship-between-India-America-stands-on-its-own-says-US-ambassador-at-Malabar-naval-drill/articleshow/49442524.cms>

¹⁰⁵ "U.S. Keen On Defence Projects with India", *The Hindu*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/us-keen-on-defence-projects-with-india/article7778897.ece?css=print>

¹⁰⁶ "India, US Ties Growing Deeper by the Day, Says Ambassador", *The Indian Express*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/India-US-Ties-Growing-Deeper-by-the-Day-Says-Ambassador/2015/10/19/article3087308.ece>

Minister Narendra Modi, which hailed the U.S.-India relationship as a natural alliance. President Barack Obama has also affirmed the strategic importance and mutually beneficial nature of the dynamic. Singh was similarly emphatic about the partnership, citing shared institutions, aspirations and values.¹⁰⁷

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Indian Navy plans to conduct an International Fleet Review on the Eastern Seaboard at Visakhapatnam from February 04 – February 08, 2016; Indian naval ship Sahyadri visits Sagami Bay, Japan.**

The Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral RK Dhowan has announced the Indian Navy's plans to conduct an International Fleet Review (IFR) on the Eastern Seaboard at Visakhapatnam from February 04 – February 08, 2016. The CNS said that over 50 navies from across the globe are expected to be represented at this event which would be reviewed by the President of India on February 06, 2016. The leading nations of the world use the opportunity provided by the Fleet Review to enhance mutual trust and confidence with their maritime neighbours by inviting their ships to participate in the Review. The International Fleet Review also provides the host nation an occasion to display its own naval prowess and maritime capabilities whilst simultaneously generating goodwill amongst other maritime nations. The review also aims at assuring the country of the Indian Navy's preparedness, high morale and discipline.¹⁰⁸

In pursuance of India's 'Act East' policy, Indian Naval Ship Sahyadri has entered Sagami Bay, Japan. Sahyadri is currently on operational deployment to North West Pacific region and South China Sea. The ship will participate in the International Fleet Review organised by the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF). It will also undertake professional interactions in harbour as well as exercises at sea with the JMSDF. The JMSDF is also likely to participate in the International Fleet Review 2016, scheduled to be held in February 2016, off the East Coast of India. The visit of INS Sahyadri is aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing inter-operability between navies of the two countries. IN ships had last visited Sasebo, Japan in July 2014. INS Sahyadri is an indigenously built warship of the Shivalik Class. The ship had earlier visited Da Nang, Vietnam on the way to Sagami Bay, Japan. On departure from Japan, the ship will visit ports in the Republic of Korea and the Philippines.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Chew, Desiree, "Indian Ambassador Touts Ties with the United States", *The Michigan Daily*, October 15, 2015 at <https://www.michigandaily.com/section/news/indian-ambassador>

¹⁰⁸ "International Fleet Review 2016," *PIB*, October 14, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128718>

¹⁰⁹ "Visit of INS Sahyadri at Sagami Bay, Japan," *PIB*, October 14, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128725>

International

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **United States reverses troop's reduction plans in Afghanistan; South Korea selects three domestic companies to develop guided air-to-surface missiles for the Republic's Light Armed Helicopter.**

Reports say that in a significant but expected policy reversal, the United States plans to maintain about 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of 2016 and then drop to around 5,500 in 2017. US had previously planned to keep 10,000 troops in Afghanistan through to the end of 2015 and then re-evaluate force levels in 2016 before seeking to withdraw to only an embassy-level presence by 2017. The pace of this new force reduction plan is to be determined by US commanders, and in 2017 a new presidential administration will determine future US commitments.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, according to reports, South Korea's Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA) has selected three domestic companies to develop guided air-to-surface missiles for the Republic of Korea Army's (RoKA's) future Light Armed Helicopter (LAH). DAPA in a statement has said that the three companies selected to develop the missiles would be Hanwha, LIG Nex 1, and Poongsan. The programme is valued at KRW162 billion (USD141 million) and will see the three corporations collaborating on the various components and systems of the missile, including fuses, warhead, propulsion, and navigation. South Korea's Agency for Defence Development is also involved in the programme. Development of the missiles is expected to be complete by 2022, with the programme entering serial production in 2023. This schedule coincides with the development of the LAH, which is expected to enter service with the RoKA from 2022. The LAH is being developed by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) in partnership with Airbus Helicopters. The platform is based on Airbus' EC155 Dauphin helicopter.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ "US To Keep Troops In Afghanistan Indefinitely," *IHS Jane's*, October 14, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55292/us-to-keep-troops-in-afghanistan-indefinitely>

¹¹¹ "South Korea Selects Local Companies To Develop Air-To-Surface Missiles," *IHS Jane's*, October 12, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55201/south-korea-selects-local-companies-to-develop-air-to-surface-missiles>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **One militant killed in Kupwara encounter; MHA seeks report on Article 370; Forty youths weaned away from militancy; Two SPO-turned-militants killed in encounter in J&K.**

The Army, on October 11, claimed to have killed one militant in an ongoing counter-insurgency operation in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. According to Srinagar-based defence spokesman, the operation was launched in Waderbala forest, Handwara, of Kupwara on October 10. "One terrorist has been killed and war-like stores recovered in the joint operation by the Army and police," said the spokesman.¹¹²

The Union home ministry on October 12 sought a report from the Jammu and Kashmir government on the state high court's order that Article 370, which grants special status to the state, is beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation. The ministry sought a copy of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court order from the state government as early as possible, explaining the grounds on which the order was issued, said official sources. The BJP has been demanding repeal of Article 370 for long.¹¹³

The Jammu and Kashmir police have weaned away around 40 young men, mostly from south Kashmir, from joining the terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen by tracking their activities on social media, a senior Home Ministry official said. "The J&K police have a separate wing to track the online activities of these young men. While some operate with pseudo-identities, some are genuine accounts. Mostly they belong to Tral, Pulwama and other parts of south Kashmir. They are being counselled and dissuaded from joining the militant ranks," said the Home Ministry official in Delhi. A top counter-insurgency officer told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani (22) was a "motivation for some of these boys." "The video of Burhan and online activism did play a role in attracting these youths to militancy. Many youths were attracted to militancy after listening to separatist leaders' speeches at the funeral of slain militants," he added.¹¹⁴

Two militants, who had deserted J&K police 38 days back, were killed in an operation in Chenab Valley's Doda district on October 15. The slain SPOs, who had joined the Hizbul Mujahideen in the first week of September, were identified as Ghulam Nabi Mangnoo alias

¹¹² "Militant Killed in Kashmir", *The Hindu*, October 12, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/militant-killed-in-kashmir/article7750405.ece>

¹¹³ "MHA Seeks Report from J&K on HC Order On Article 370", *The Times of India*, October 13, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/MHA-seeks-report-from-JK-on-HC-order-on-Article-370/articleshow/49331018.cms>

¹¹⁴ Singh, Vijaita and Ashiq, Peerzada, "Police Wean 40 Youth Away From Militancy in Kashmir", *The Hindu*, October 13, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/police-wean-40-youth-away-from-militancy-in-kashmir/article7754208.ece>

Maulvi code name Gulla Tailor, and Riaz Ahmed. Mangnoo was first arrested in 2010 when he was working as district commander of the Lashker-e-Toiba. He later joined the police as SPO. Ahmed was working with the Hizb in 2010. On the night of September 7-8, the duo fled along with an AK rifle and an INSAS rifle with 60 and 70 rounds, respectively, and joined militancy. The joining of these two SPOs into militants was welcomed by the Hizb.¹¹⁵

Northeast India

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **NSCN (K) camp destroyed by Myanmar Army; More NE rebel groups may join common platform; HPC (D) militant arrested in Manipur.**

India on October 13 claimed that a camp allegedly belonging to the NSCN-K was demolished along the Indo-Myanmar border by the Myanmar security forces last weekend. The camp, located at Myanmar village Monlei, across Tuensang in Nagaland, was completely destroyed by the Myanmar Army, official sources quoted reports from Myanmar as saying. The camp was located in the same area where Indian Army carried out operations against NSCN-K during which top Government officials had claimed loss to the group.¹¹⁶

The United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia, a newly formed platform of four militant outfits of the North-east region, is trying to rope in at least nine more outfits of the region into the platform to launch a united struggle against the Government of India. Talking to *The Assam Tribune* over phone from an undisclosed location, ULFA (I) commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah said that two Meghalaya-based outfits – GNLA and HNLC – have already expressed their desire to join the common platform. Baruah pointed out that seven militant outfits of Manipur have already formed a common platform called the CORCOM and they are likely to join the new front. He said that the formal process of these outfits joining the new outfit may be completed within this year.¹¹⁷

A self-styled commander of Manipur-based Hmar People's Convention (Democrats) 'Sergeant' Biakliana was arrested by Assam Rifles personnel at Jograpur in Manipur on October 16. Biakliana was the commander of the HPC (D) militants who ambushed the Mizoram Assembly Committee on Government Assurances team near Mizoram-Manipur border in Zokhawthiang hamlet on March 28 last, killing three policemen on the spot, police said.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ashiq, Peerzada, "Two Militants Killed In Encounter in J&K", *The Hindu*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/two-militants-killed-in-encounter-in-jk/article7764691.ece>

¹¹⁶ "NSCN (K) Camp Smashed By Myanmar Forces", *The Assam Tribune*, October 14, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1415/oth050>

¹¹⁷ Choudhury, R Dutta, "More NE Ultra-Outfits May Join Common Platform", *The Assam Tribune*, October 17, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1715/at054>

¹¹⁸ "HPC (D) Militant Arrested", *The Assam Tribune*, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1815/oth056>

Left-wing Extremism

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **Maoist leader arrested in Andhra Pradesh; Maoists release tribal TDP leaders after 10 days; Plans on for major anti-Maoist offensive in Bastar; Maoist leader accuses SP Malkangiri of corruption, false propaganda.**

The East Godavari police on October 11 arrested the CPI (Maoist) Andhra Pradesh State committee member and secretary of the party's Khammam district committee Eruvu Shiva Reddy alias Kiran, along with a registered medical practitioner in the forest area under the Etapaka police station limits. Shiva Reddy was an accused in 73 cases including 27 charges of murder in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh states. A reward of Rs. 20 lakh was also announced on his arrest.¹¹⁹

The three Girijan leaders of the ruling Telugu Desam party of G.K. Veedhi mandal, who were abducted by the Maoists were released on October 14 after 10 days of captivity. The Maoists handed over the abducted leaders to the Girijan employees association after holding a Praja court in interior forests of Chitrakonda area in Odisha. The leaders were cautioned against getting associated with any political party and were asked to participate in the anti-bauxite mining agitation of fellow Girijans. The Maoists who found the bauxite mining as a major issue to regain their lost ground demanded the Government to make its stand clear on not exploiting the bauxite in the Agency and the TDP leaders and workers to quit the party and join the agitation against bauxite mining proposal.¹²⁰

The Chhattisgarh police and central security agencies are gearing up for a major anti-Maoist offensive in restive Bastar region of the State in the coming weeks. According to sources, a major anti-Maoist operation might be launched anytime now, but the CRPF and the State police remain divided on who would lead it. "Inspector-General of Police, Bastar range, S.R.P. Kalluri is keen on operating with the DRG (District Reserve Guard) which consists of mostly local Koya boys. However, the CPRF wants to operate with the CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) with some help from the DRG," said a senior police officer based in Bastar. National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval also visited Bastar earlier this month signalling the Union government's approval for large-scale operations.¹²¹

Bodies of two tribal youths murdered by Maoists were recovered on the outskirts of Kanaguda village under Kalimela police station in Malkangiri district of Odisha on October 15. According to police sources, the murders are suspected to be retaliatory action of Maoists

¹¹⁹ "Maoist Leader Arrested", *The Hindu*, October 13, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/maoist-leader-arrested/article7756155.ece>

¹²⁰ Rao, G. Narasimha, "Maoists Release Tribal TDP Leaders After 10 Days", *The Hindu*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/maoists-release-tribal-tdp-leaders-after-10-days/article7764833.ece?ref=sliderNews>

¹²¹ Dahat, Pavan, "Plans on For Major Anti-Maoist Offensive in Bastar", *The Hindu*, October 15, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/plans-on-for-major-antimaost-offensive-in-bastar/article7762310.ece>

against continuing surrender of their supporters in the district. A hand written letter of Maoists was found near the dead bodies. Through the letter Naxalites had claimed that both have been sentenced to death as they were police informers and were helping anti-Maoist operations. The message also claimed that both the deceased were catalysts behind surrender of several Maoist supporters of the area.¹²²

In a press note released by the CPI (Maoist) on October 17, the leader of the Malkangiri, Visakhapatnam and Koraput border division committee Venu had lashed out at Malkangiri district SP Mitrabhanu Mahapatra for carrying out a false propaganda against the Maoists. He alleged that cops have been keeping arms and explosives in dumps only to take them out later and announce that they have unearthed Maoist dumps. He also accused the Malkangiri SP of being involved in false publicity and corruption.¹²³

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(October 12-18, 2015)

- **India calls for reform of the UNSC to help peacekeeping and prosecute terrorists; Inclusive treaties key to disarmament and space security: India; Empowerment of Women through IT a priority for India; India gears up to host Disaster Risk Reduction meet in November.**

At a debate in the General Assembly, India's PR, Asoke Mukherji, chastised the non-transparent manner in which the UN Security Council decided issues related to peacekeeping and said that this resulted in unnecessary loss of life of peacekeepers. He also criticized the manner in which peacekeeping missions are used to enforce military solutions to conflicts.¹²⁴ In a later debate on the SGs report on the Working of the Organisation, he raised the subject of the need for the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism as it would help legalise extraction and prosecution of terrorists.¹²⁵ At a debate on 'Women, Peace

¹²² "Two Tribal Youths Murdered by Maoists", *The Hindu*, October 16, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/two-tribal-youths-murdered-by-maoists/article7767689.ece>

¹²³ "Maoist Leader Accuses Malkangiri SP of Corruption, False Propaganda", *The Times of India*, October 18, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/visakhapatnam/Maoist-leader-accuses-Malkangiri-SP-of-corruption-false-propaganda/articleshow/49437904.cms>

¹²⁴ "India Dismayed at Lack of Transparency in UN Peace Operations", *The Indian Express*, October 13, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/India-Dismayed-at-Lack-of-Transparency-in-UN-Peace-Operations/2015/10/13/article3077904.ece>

¹²⁵ "India calls for Adoption Of Convention On Terrorism in UN", October 15, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-calls-for-adoption-of-convention-on-terrorism-in-un_1810467.html

and Security' in the Security Council, he raised the issue of hidden vetoes citing technical reasons to prevent the prosecution of non-state actors by the Sanctions Committees.¹²⁶

India's PR to the Conference on Disarmament, Venkatesh Varma, participated in the meeting of the First Committee of the General Assembly on October 12, 2015 and emphasized the need for a non-discriminatory treaty to bring about nuclear disarmament.¹²⁷ He also made a case for an inclusive discussion on a draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities and said that "(A)s a space-faring nation, India has vital developmental and security interest in space".¹²⁸ He said the conventions on chemical and biological weapons were non-discriminatory and thereby more helpful in the achieving complete elimination of WMDs.

At a meeting of the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly on the 'Advancement of Women', First Secretary at the PMI, New York, emphasized on the need for social and economic empowerment of women, including by use of information technology considering the fact that they bear the brunt of economic crises and conflict.¹²⁹

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, UN-ISDR) will host the 2nd ISDR Asia Partnership (IAP) meeting in New Delhi from November 17-19, 2015. This is to prepare for the Conference in November 2016, the first one after the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction earlier this year.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ "Take Lead in Prosecuting Non-State Actors: India to UN Security Council", October 14, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/take-lead-in-prosecuting-non-state-actors-india-to-un-security-council-1232113>

¹²⁷ "Global Framework Needed For Total Elimination of N-weapons: India", October 13, 2015, at <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/world/global-framework-needed-for-total-elimination-of-n-weapons-india-1151528.html>

¹²⁸ "India Calls For Laws To Ensure Open Access To Space For All Nations", October 14, 2015, at <http://www.newsgram.com/india-calls-for-laws-to-ensure-open-access-to-space-for-all-nations/>

¹²⁹ "India Calls For Global Efforts To Empower Women at UN General Assembly", *The Economic Times*, October 14, 2015, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-calls-for-global-efforts-to-empower-women-at-un-general-assembly/articleshow/49347997.cms>

¹³⁰ "India To Host Asia Partnership Meeting On Disaster Risk Reduction Next Month", *Business Standard*, October 16, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/india-to-host-asia-partnership-meeting-on-disaster-risk-reduction-next-115101601236_1.html