

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

October 19 – October 25, 10 (4), 2015

**Editor:** Saroj Bishoyi

## Contributors

**Yaqoob-ul Hassan**

**Gulbin Sultana**

**Gunjan Singh**

**Titli Basu**

**Rajorshi Roy**

**Saroj Bishoyi**

**Amit Kumar**

**Rajbala Rana**

**Arpita Anant**

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1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010

Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in); Email: [twir@idsa.in](mailto:twir@idsa.in)

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Afghanistan

(October 12-25, 2015)

- **Pakistan alleged in supplying arms to Taliban in Paktia; Taliban supreme leader visited Ghazni; U.S. troops to stay in Afghanistan beyond 2016; Situation in Afghanistan is close to critical; War costs country \$9bn a year; Taliban's access to mining wealth; Taliban's summer offensive thwarted; MoD seeks regional countries' support; Only Loya Jirga can protect Afghanistan; Pakistan has influence on Taliban but no control.**

Being backed by Pakistan's paramilitary troops, more than 500 Taliban started attacking Afghan security forces installations in Dand-e-Pathan district of Paktia province, last week, said a security official. Abdul Basir Khpalwak, a border police commander in Paktia province, said that military of Pakistan has even been supplying weapons to the militants through helicopters. He said that Afghan security forces have inflicted heavy casualties on militants. "The war is still ongoing and the militants are trying to capture a number of checkpoints in the district," Radio Azadi quoted Khpalwak as saying. He added that this is not the war of the Taliban militants, but it is rather the war of Pakistan, because the country's paramilitary troops and army soldiers are directly involved. "Pakistan is directly involved and it is sending its paramilitary troops and army soldiers to fight against Afghan forces. We have even received information that Pakistan's helicopters supplied weapons to militants last night," he said. Khpalwak said that security forces have killed 82 militants and wound 30 others so far. Security officials in the province said that they demanded air support from the government, but they haven't received it yet.<sup>1</sup>

A member of parliament has claimed that Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour recently visited Ghazni province and led militant attacks there. Arif Rahmani who represents Ghazni province in Wolesi Jirga or Lower House of the Parliament said during October 14th session that Mullah Mansour stayed in Nawa District for five days to lead operation. This was the first time he came to Afghanistan, even though, government knew about it but no actions taken against him, Rahmani said. Giving insight about the recent failed attack of Taliban on Ghazni city, Rahmani said that they "Taliban" planned to explode several car bombs and other militants to storm the provincial capital but security forces foiled the plan. He said Taliban are now planning to attack Qara Bagh and Moqar districts. Rahmani's comments come after the Deputy Chief of Staff of Afghan National Army said that they prevented the arrival of Mullah Akhtar Mansour in northern Kunduz province. General

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<sup>1</sup> "Pakistani Helicopters Supplying Arms To Taliban in Paktia: Official", *Daily Afghanistan Times*, October 13, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/pakistani-helicopters-supplying-taliban-with-arms-in-paktia-official/>

Murad Ali Murad said that Taliban planned to occupy the province's capital for a few days and bring their supreme leader for a press conference to show that he is in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

President Barack Obama has decided to keep 5,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan beyond 2016. The original plan was to draw-down its troop numbers from 9,800 to about 1,000 by the end of 2016 but military leaders argued that Afghan National Security and Defence Forces and the country's security institutions still need U.S. assistance to combat terrorism and maintain security. But according to senior administration officials, cited by AP, Obama would outline plans to maintain the current force of 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of next year, then draw down to 5,500 troops in 2017, at a pace still to be determined by commanders. The officials have talked to AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly ahead of the president's announcement. On October 14, U.S. Defence Secretary Ashton Carter also said that they are not leaving Afghanistan but an adjustment to the current plan is under consideration. "The narrative that we're leaving Afghanistan is self-defeating. We're not. We can't, and to do so would not be to take advantage of the success had to date," Carter said at a luncheon hosted by the Association of the US Army Sustaining.<sup>3</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said in the meeting of Commonwealth of Independent States Council of Heads that it is important to closely monitor the situation on the CIS' external borders. "We need to ensure the CIS Antiterrorist Centre's effective operation and continue coordinating the work of our intelligence services and keep up a constant exchange of information. It is especially important to monitor closely the situation on the CIS' external borders, and in this respect, I agree with the President of Uzbekistan, who expressed his concern over the situation taking shape in Afghanistan." He said during his speech on October 16. He further said that the situation in Afghanistan is close to critical and preparation for a coordinated action should be taken. "The situation there really is close to critical. Terrorists of all kinds are gaining influence and do not hide their plans for further expansion. One of their goals is to break through into the Central Asian region. It is important that we be ready for coordinated action to respond to any such attempts."<sup>4</sup>

Afghanistan's war and the fight against extremism cost the country a staggering \$9 billion USD last year, said Equality for Peace and Democracy on October 19. A report released by the organization this week states that the health sector and infrastructure development have been the hardest hit sectors in the country due to the increased cost of war. EPD deputy chief Idris Omarzad said: "During the fiscal year of 2014 just over \$9 billion USD was spent on war and (fighting) extremism." For Afghanistan, without calculating macro-economic implications, the cost of one year of conflict and violent extremism was calculated at \$9.091 billion USD, or

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<sup>2</sup> "MP Claims Taliban Supreme Leader Recently Visited Ghazni and Led Attacks", *Khaama Press*, October 14, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/mp-claims-taliban-supreme-leader-recently-visited-ghazni-and-led-attacks-3992>

<sup>3</sup> "5,500 U.S. Troops To Stay In Afghanistan Beyond 2016", *Khaama Press*, October 15, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/5500-u-s-troops-to-stay-in-afghanistan-beyond-2016-3997>

<sup>4</sup> "Putin in CIS Summit: Situation in Afghanistan is Close To Critical", *Khaama Press*, October 17, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/putin-in-cis-summit-situation-in-afghanistan-is-close-to-critical-4005>

approximately \$24.906 million USD per day, read the report. This figure is the equivalent of 44 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP. It is approximately 113 per cent of the total of Afghanistan's 2014 national budget, and amounts to roughly four times the Afghan government's revenue collection target for last year, the report stated. This report was released in cooperation with the United States Institute of Peace, which says this tally, of \$9 billion USD, is a shocking figure and has warned this amount is set to increase this year. According to the US's Institute of Peace, Shah Mahmoud Miakhail: "As long as governance is not improved and rule of law is not implemented, it is very hard to put an end to war." This study focused on a number of categories including security, health, compensation, human capacity building, education and infrastructure.<sup>5</sup>

Sitting on an estimated \$1 trillion USD worth of untapped mineral resources, Afghanistan is still unable to use this wealth to stand on its own two feet due to a number of problems – including insecurity. As a result, this sector has faced enormous challenges over the past 15 years and reports state that Taliban fighters are benefiting from revenue generated by mining companies. In an interview with *Bloomberg News*, Mines and Petroleum Minister Daud Shah Saba said the Afghan government will earn about \$30 million in 2015 from its mineral sector for the third straight year, far short of a previous projection of \$1.5 billion. That is also a quarter of what smugglers -- mostly linked to the Taliban and local warlords -- earn annually selling rubies and emeralds. "Unfortunately we have failed to manage and well control our mining sector," Saba told *Bloomberg News*. "With the current fragile and messy situation, it is really hard to say when Afghanistan should expect any profits from it." Saba has also criticized his predecessor for saying Afghanistan would earn \$1.5 billion in annual mining revenues by now and become financially self-sufficient in a decade. "The revenue projections of the previous government were not realistic," Saba said. "Afghanistan needs to continue receiving international funds -- otherwise the country would not remain functional at all," he told *Bloomberg News*.<sup>6</sup>

After launching this year's so-called summer offensive, the Taliban reportedly intended to siege strategic locations and gain more territory across the nation, but Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) managed to hold their own and drive back the insurgent group, said Afghan chief of army staff Gen. Qadam Shah Shaheem on October 20. According to Shaheem, this military campaign by Afghan National Army (ANA) is still ongoing in several provinces across the country, where forces are committed to eliminating insurgents and restoring security. "The conspiracy of the enemies of the people of Afghanistan was thwarted. The Afghan forces disappointed certain elements associated with intelligence services along with other terrorist groups including some anti-Islam and anti-human circles," Shaheem said. Insurgents have lost the ability to confront Afghan forces face to face on the battlefield and to

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<sup>5</sup> "Afghan War Costs Country \$9bn A Year", *Tolo News*, October 19, 2015, at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan?start=115>

<sup>6</sup> "Concerns Raised Over Taliban's Access To Mining Wealth", *Tolo News*, October 21, 2015, at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21991-concerns-raised-over-talibans-access-to-mining-wealth>

take control of territories. Security forces are now on the offensive and will suppress them whenever they try to attack, he said.<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that it will not allow any terrorist group to use Afghan soil against neighbouring countries. Dawlat Waziri, spokesman for the MoD, said that Afghan forces are capable of defeating militants. However, he urged regional countries to cooperate with Afghanistan to eliminate the menace. "We assure our neighbouring countries that our security forces will not allow militants to have safe havens in Afghanistan and pose threat to security of our neighbours," Radio Azadi quoted Waziri as saying. He said that security forces have managed to destroy hideouts of ISIS and other insurgent groups in Nangarhar, Helmand, Farah, Ghazni and Uruzgan provinces. This comes at a time that a Russian official recently expressed his concerns that ISIS has established a centre in Afghanistan. He said that around 3,500 fighters of the terrorist group are active in Afghanistan. A number of political analysts believe that regional and global consensus should be created to fight against ISIS, also known as Daesh. Ahmad Saeedi, a political analyst, said that different regional terrorist groups have joined Daesh in Afghanistan. "The Afghan government cannot fight against the Taliban militants on its solo basis, then how will it fight against ISIS? Thus, a regional and global consensus is required to fight against Daesh," he added.<sup>8</sup>

Former governor of Kabul province asked the National Unity Government (NUG) to convene the traditional Loya Jirga to discuss the outstanding issues and explore ways to overcome the existing challenges. Abdul Jabar Taqwa in an exclusive interview with *Afghanistan Times* said that only the traditional Loya Jirga can end the crisis in the country. He said the NUG should pave the ground for holding such Jirga as President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah had already signed the agreement in this aspect when we're forming the government. The ex-governor said that the Loya Jirga should elect a new leader for the country and lead the country towards development. Expressing concerns over the current political, economic and security situation, he said that there is need for a new leader if the NUG could not bring reforms. "The prevailing political, economic, security and military situations are of serious nature. The NUG leaders shall bring reforms and take concrete steps to resolve the problems; a new leader shall be elected by the traditional Loya Jirga," he proposed. Large-scale migration of the young Afghans, killing of Afghan civilians and security forces are the indicators that the government is going in wrong direction. "The sons of this nation are killed while the son of the NUG leaders is living abroad. Thus, there is need for a new leadership that should be elected by the traditional Loya Jirga. The Jirga will devise new policy for the country through the new leader."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Afghan Forces Thwart Taliban's Summer Offensive: Security Officials", *Tolo News*, October 22, 2015, at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan?start=90>

<sup>8</sup> "Fighting Militancy: MoD Seeks Regional Countries' Support", *Daily Afghanistan Times*, October 25, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/fighting-militancy-mod-seeks-regional-countries-support/>

<sup>9</sup> "Only Loya Jirga Can Protect Afghanistan From Precipitous Fall: Ex-Kabul Governor", *Daily Afghanistan Times*, October 27, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/only-loya-jirga-can-protect-afghanistan-from-precipitous-fall-ex-kabul-governor/>

Pakistani Premier Mohammad Nawaz Sharif's Adviser on Foreign Affairs has said that Pakistan has influence on Taliban but do not control them, the country's state media Radio Pakistan reported on October 29. "The international community has concerns about the Afghan issue and no world power wants war in Afghanistan. Pakistan and the US want resumption of talks between the Afghan government and Taliban." Sartaj Aziz said, according to Radio Pakistan. "It was up to the Afghan government to resume talks with Taliban and our job is just of a facilitator." His remarks come after the country's former President and military ruler Pervez Musharaf admitted that Taliban were trained and sent to Afghanistan by Pakistan. "We trained Taliban and sent them to fight against Russia. Taliban, Haqqani, Osama Bin Laden and Zawahiri were our heroes then." Musharaf quoted by *CNN-IBN* as saying in an interview on October 28. Afghan government has long asked Pakistan to stop supporting Taliban and other militant group against Afghanistan but so far only empty promises have been given.<sup>10</sup>

## Pakistan

(October 12-25, 2015)

- **Overstepping authority of institutions dangerous; An accord of \$2.5bn pipeline; Don't escalate regional instability; Tactical N-arms to ward off war threat; Janjua appointed NSA; Iran's role in Afghan talks welcome; CPEC projects are future of Pakistan.**

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Anwar Zaheer Jamali on October 12 said any institution crossing its prescribed limits not only damages democracy but also leaves a negative impact on social welfare. Addressing a full court reference here at the Supreme Court on the eve of retirement of Supreme Court Judge Justice Sarmad Jalal Usmani, the chief justice said social justice, peace and the rule of law were crucial for development, prosperity and promotion of democracy. "It is only possible when every institution works in accordance with the law and the Constitution. "The Constitution has drafted principles for every institution according to which the three pillars of the state — the executive, the legislature and the judiciary — have to perform within their prescribed limits besides ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution."<sup>11</sup>

Pakistan and Russia signed on October 16 an agreement for laying a \$2.5 billion pipeline to carry imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Karachi to Lahore. Sidestepping the normal bidding requirements, the agreement was signed as a government-to-government deal. Moscow would provide a loan of \$2bn in return for the award of the contract to state-run Russian firm RT Global, an arm of Russia State Corporation. The Russian company will be responsible for laying the 1,100km pipeline, which will be called North-South Pipeline. It will be capable of carrying 12.4bcm (billion cubic meters) per annum to connect LNG terminals in Karachi with consumption centres near Lahore. The agreement was signed by Minister for

<sup>10</sup> "Pakistan Says It Has Influence On Taliban But No Control", *Khaama Press*, October 29, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-says-it-has-influence-on-taliban-but-no-control-4058>

<sup>11</sup> "Institutions Hurt Democracy If They Overstep Their Authority: CJ", *The News*, October 13, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40154-Institutions-hurt-democracy-if-they-overstep-their-authority-CJ>

Petroleum and Natural Resources Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended the signing ceremony.<sup>12</sup>

Adviser to the PM on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has said that the United States should not escalate instability in the region. In a media interview on October 17, he said that Pakistan qualified for becoming member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. He assured that there would be no compromise on national interests during talks with the United States. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will undertake a four-day official visit to the United States from October 20 to October 23 during which he will meet high-level US officials, including President Barrack Obama. The adviser said that during the forthcoming visit of the prime minister to Washington, the two sides will have an exchange of views on a number of issues of mutual, regional and global interests. Sartaj Aziz said that the two sides would discuss ways to boost cooperation between the two countries in the defence field. "Pakistan wants to promote economic ties with the United States," he said.<sup>13</sup>

Pakistan has made low-yield nuclear weapons to bridge the gap for war that India had created through its cold-start doctrine, Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry told a news briefing on October 19. This is the first concrete explanation from a senior Pakistani official on how Islamabad plans to deal with New Delhi's so-called cold-start doctrine, now renamed the proactive strategy. It also is a rare explanation of Pakistan's decision to make tactical nuclear weapons to deal with the possible threat of an Indian aggression. Briefing the Pakistani media on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Washington, Mr Chaudhry also said that Pakistan would not sign any nuclear deal with the United States during the visit. The prime minister arrives in Washington on Wednesday for a meeting with US President Barack Obama, scheduled for the next day (October 22).<sup>14</sup>

Vowing to come up to the expectations of the nation, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on October 20 paid tributes to the soldiers of the Frontier Corps (FC) for their sacrifices in Operation Zarb-e-Azb. "The FC troops are writing new chapters of bravery, steadfastness and sacrifices in the fight against terrorism," the army chief told the soldiers during his visit to the headquarters of the FC at Bala Hissar here. Inspector General Frontier Corps (IGFC) briefed the army chief on the operational preparedness of the force, progress of the ongoing operations and the FC's capacity building, said a press release of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The COAS said the indomitable courage of the army and the FC soldiers had been the bedrock of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. He added the nation had trust in its armed forces, keeps them in high esteem and acknowledges their sacrifices in the line of

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<sup>12</sup> "Pakistan, Russia Sign \$2.5bn Accord for LNG Pipeline", *Dawn*, October 17, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1213670/pakistan-russia-sign-25bn-accord-for-lng-pipeline>

<sup>13</sup> "US Shouldn't Escalate Regional Instability: Sartaj", *The News*, October 18, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40245-US-shouldnt-escalate-regional-instability-Sartaj>

<sup>14</sup> "Tactical N-arms To Ward Off War Threat, Says FO", *Dawn*, October 20, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1214196/tactical-n-arms-to-ward-off-war-threat-says-fo>

duty. "We are proud to be custodians of this unflinching faith of our nation and will always come up to their expectations," he added.<sup>15</sup>

The government notified on October 22 the appointment of retired Lt Gen Nasser Khan Janjua as the new National Security Adviser (NSA). He has been appointed "with immediate effect, with the status of minister of state," said a notification issued by the Cabinet Division, ending media speculations about the appointment. The post was held by Sartaj Aziz who is also the Adviser on Foreign Affairs and held the status of a federal minister. The new adviser will be based at the prime minister's secretariat. According to a government source, it had decided to bring in a new NSA to revitalise the national security division. "Mr Aziz could not fully attend to both his portfolios," the source said, sharing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's thinking. During the PML-N government's two and a half years in office the National Security Committee has met only four times – the last meeting having taken place over a year ago. The military too had reportedly been pressing the government for bringing in a new NSA.<sup>16</sup>

Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said on October 28 that Pakistan was open to Iran's mediatory role for reviving the stalled Afghan peace process. "We will welcome any contribution which Iran can make also in talking to the groups which are involved in this decision-making and ultimately then promoting a more broad-based dialogue process to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan," Mr Aziz said. He was answering a question at a press conference with the visiting secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, after their talks at the Foreign Office. Mr Shamkhani is in Islamabad on a two-day visit for discussions on regional security, bilateral cooperation and border control. He also met newly appointed National Security Adviser retired Lt Gen Nasser Janjua. The aggravating security situation in Afghanistan was discussed during both the meetings held with Mr Shamkhani and it was agreed that the two countries would work together for peace and stability in neighbouring Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on October 30 that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects were the future of Pakistan and delays in completion of different projects relating to the corridor would not be tolerated. The government decided to update benchmarks of the CPEC for the completion of projects, which would be monitored on monthly and weekly basis while Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will examine it every week. The exercise is being carried out to eliminate any element of delay in the completion of the projects under the CPEC. The decision was taken in a high echelon review meeting of the projects that was held at the PM House and was chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The meeting was attended by Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Secretary to PM Haji Javaid Aslam, Additional Secretary to PM Fawad Hasan Fawad, JS to PM Kamran

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<sup>15</sup> "Nation Has Full Trust In Armed Forces: COAS", *The News*, October 21, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40299-Nation-has-full-trust-in-armed-forces-COAS>

<sup>16</sup> "Janjua Appointed NSA", *Dawn*, October 23, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1215013/janjua-appointed-nsa>

<sup>17</sup> "Iran's Role in Afghan Talks Welcome, Says Aziz", *Dawn*, October 29, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1216106/irans-role-in-afghan-talks-welcome-says-aziz>

Afzal, PSO to PM Dr Nabeel Awan, MS to PM Brigadier Akmal Aziz and JS Abdul Samad Wani.<sup>18</sup>

## Bangladesh

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Bangladesh govt. steps satisfy US, France, Italy; BSF return 25 Bangladeshis.**

The USA, France and Italy expressed satisfaction over the security measures taken by the Bangladesh government to ensure safety of foreigners. Marcia Bernicat, US ambassador in Dhaka, said the government of Bangladesh has been extremely responsive to their requests to help ensure foreigners' safety in the face of the current threat. Meanwhile, French Ambassador Sophie Aubert and Italian Ambassador Mario Palma, after their meeting with Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon, said they were living a normal life without any fear. The threat, she noted, is not for any specific country and there are some terrorists everywhere. "So we adapt to our way of living." Italian Ambassador Mario Palma said there is no ban on coming to or living in Bangladesh for Italians.<sup>19</sup>

Twenty-five Bangladeshi nationals, arrested by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on October 17, returned home through Benapole check post on October 18. Indian border guards arrested them while they were crossing the border illegally. Lt Col Abdur Rahim, commanding officer of BGB 23 Battalion, said BSF members detained the Bangladeshis from Jhaudanga bordering area on October 18 night for entering Indian without valid documents.<sup>20</sup>

## Sri Lanka

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **UN Assistant Secretary-General meets Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Human right delegation to Sri Lanka discusses right violations with Defence Secretary; Sri Lanka submits its Climate Action Plan ahead of 2015 Paris Agreement; Bangladesh Navy ship arrives at Sri Lankan port on goodwill visit.**

The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenca visited Sri Lanka from October 21-October 25. During the visit, Jenca called on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mangala Samaraweera on October 21. His five-day visit follows recent discussions between the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President Maithripala Sirisena in New York in September.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "CPEC Projects Are Future of Pakistan: Nawaz", *The News*, October 31, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40478-CPEC-projects-are-future-of-Pakistan-Nawaz>

<sup>19</sup> "Safety of Foreigners: Govt Steps Satisfy US, France, Italy", *The Daily Star*, October 20, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/govt-steps-satisfy-us-france-italy-159979>.

<sup>20</sup> "BSF Return 25 Bangladeshis", *The Daily Star*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/bsf-return-25-bangladeshis-159172>.

<sup>21</sup> "UN Assistant Secretary-General Meets Sri Lankan Foreign Minister", *ColomboPage*, October 22, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Oct22\\_1445515987CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct22_1445515987CH.php).

A delegation of Human Rights Watch (HRW) to Sri Lanka led by Asia Executive Director Brad Adams, met with the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence Karunasena Hettiarachchi at the Ministry premises on October 22. The HRW representatives exchanged views with the Secretary on issues related to the follow-up of the resolution adopted in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Reconciliation and Accountability process in Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement. Discussions were also held on activities of HRW including training programs conducted in relation to International Humanitarian Laws and International Human Rights Laws and avenues for future cooperation.<sup>22</sup>

Sri Lanka has submitted its new climate action plan to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment in Sri Lanka as the National Focal Point to the UNFCCC has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in accordance with the decisions taken at the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC. This Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) comes in advance of a new universal climate change agreement which will be reached at the UN climate conference in Paris, in December this year.<sup>23</sup>

The Bangladesh naval ship "Abu Bakr" arrived at the Port of Colombo on October 20, 2015 on a four-day goodwill visit.<sup>24</sup>

## Maldives

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Maldives Vice-President Adeb arrested; Maldives population surpasses 400,000; Foreign Secretary: U.N. has failed to stop Israel's subjugation of Palestinians.**

The vice-president of the Maldives was arrested in connection with an alleged plot to assassinate the president on his return from China on October 24.<sup>25</sup>

The official figures of the census conducted in 2014, announced on October 20, show that the total number of people living in the Maldives is 402,071, of which 338,434 are Maldivians and 63,637 are foreigners. The total population of Maldivians is 344,023, of which 166,472 are women and 171,962 are men. The ratio of women to men is 100 to 103. The number of Maldivians living abroad is 5,589. The most populous atolls are Addu atoll, Haa Dhaalu atoll, Raa atoll, Haa Alifu atoll, and Kaafu atoll. The least populous atoll, with a population of 1,601, is Vaavu atoll. Over one-third or 38 percent of the population lives in Malé. The number of people living in Malé is 153,904, of which 129,381 are Maldivians. The last census was done in

<sup>22</sup> "Human Right Delegation To Sri Lanka Discusses Right Violations with Defence Secretary", *ColomboPage*, October 23, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Oct23\\_1445539361CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct23_1445539361CH.php).

<sup>23</sup> "Sri Lanka Submits Its Climate Action Plan ahead of 2015 Paris Agreement", *ColomboPage*, October 22, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Oct22\\_1445533586CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct22_1445533586CH.php).

<sup>24</sup> "Bangladesh Navy Ship Arrives at Sri Lankan Port on Goodwill Visit", *ColomboPage*, October 21, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Oct21\\_1445395496CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct21_1445395496CH.php).

<sup>25</sup> "Maldives Vice-President Adeb Arrested Over 'Bomb Plot'", *BBC*, October 24, 2015 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34625558>.

2006, at which time population stood at 298,968. This constitutes a growth rate of 1.65 percent between 2006 and 2014. Children make up 28 percent of the population, the age-group 18-34 make up 35 percent, and people above 65 make up five percent. The dependent population is 48 percent.<sup>26</sup>

The Maldives have said that the United Nations (U.N.) has failed to stop the Israel's subjugation of Palestinians and urged the U.N. Security Council to take firm measures to end Israel's illegal occupation, and its apartheid practices in Palestine. Speaking at the U.N. Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East including the Question of Palestine, Foreign Secretary Dr. Ali Naseer Mohamed, stated that the U.N. has been a force for good for the entire humanity and helped in ending conflicts and in making peace. And yet, the U.N. has been helpless in ending Israel's subjugation of Palestinians and Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestine epitomises a deep malaise in the international system that we have to address. Foreign Secretary Dr. Ali Naseer reflected on the recent violence that has broken out in Palestine and stated that it painted a bleak picture. The Maldives also raised concerns on the thousands of Israeli settlers who move into the occupied territories of Palestine illegally each year, and stated that the combination of increasingly belligerent political rhetoric, coupled with the enforced physical and demographic changes to the occupied Palestinian territories continually reduce the chances for peace.<sup>27</sup>

## B. South Asia

### China

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **China will continue its financial reforms; Angela Merkel to visit China in late October; China will not use force recklessly in South China Sea.**

During a high-level meeting the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang asserted that Chinese financial reforms will not be stopped because of the recent temporary market turbulences. He further stated that, "The start of the trial is a demonstration of the government's support for financial reforms although such reforms have to be carried out in a gradual manner".<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying announced on October 23 that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel will be paying an official visit to China from October 29 to

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<sup>26</sup> "Maldives Population Surpasses 400,000", *SunOnline*, October 20, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34037>.

<sup>27</sup> "Foreign Secretary: U.N. Has Failed to Stop Israel's Subjugation of Palestinians", *Sunonline*, October 24, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34134>.

<sup>28</sup> "China's Financial Reform to Continue despite Temporary Market Turbulence: Li", By Zhao Yinan, *China Daily*, October 25, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/25/content\\_22277676.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/25/content_22277676.htm), accessed on October 27, 2015

October 30 at the invitation of Li Keqiang. According to a German official, “we expect a further intensification of bilateral trade relations from which both countries can benefit”.<sup>29</sup>

While addressing the Sixth Xiangshan Forum over the weekend, the Chinese Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission Fan Changlong said that, “China will never recklessly resort to the use of force” with regard to the South China Sea. He said that the construction of islands in the South China Sea is aimed at providing better public service to the world.<sup>30</sup>

## Japan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Japan-Australia two-plus-two defence talks likely in November; Japan-Mongolia summit meeting held in Ulan Bator; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s summit meetings in Central Asia.**

The sixth Japan-Australia two-plus-two defence talks involving the defence and foreign ministers of both countries is likely in November. The leaders are expected to discuss several issues including technological cooperation on submarines, strengthening security cooperation and reflect on regional concerns such as Chinese maritime developments. The fifth rounds of talks were hosted by Japan in June.<sup>31</sup>

Japan-Mongolia summit meeting was held between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Mongolian Prime Minister Chimed Saikhanbileg on October 24 in Ulan Bator. Both leaders agreed to strengthen economic cooperation based on the FTA signed in February 2015 and deepen strategic dialogue. Besides, both Japan and Mongolia decided to cooperate on improving the infrastructure in Mongolia, together with the Tavan Tolgoi coal mine.<sup>32</sup>

On October 23, Japan-Turkmenistan summit meeting was held between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Ashgaba. The two leaders agreed to cooperate on infrastructure development, natural gas plant projects totalling ¥2.2 trillion and improving human resources for cutting-edge industries using Japanese-style engineering education.<sup>33</sup> During the Japan-Uzbekistan bilateral summit in Tashkent, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe committed ¥12.7 billion ODA to Uzbekistan. The objective is to advance

<sup>29</sup> “German Chancellor To Visit China”, *China Daily*, October 23, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/23/content\\_22270422.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/23/content_22270422.htm), accessed on October 27, 2015

<sup>30</sup> “China ‘Will Never Recklessly Resort to the Use of Force’”, By Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, October 19, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/19/content\\_22208904.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/19/content_22208904.htm), accessed on October 27, 2015

<sup>31</sup> “Japan, Australia Planning ‘Two-Plus-Two’ Defence Talks For Late November”, *Kyodo*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/26/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-australia-planning-two-plus-two-ministers-meeting-late-november/#.VkBKW1K6a1t>

<sup>32</sup> “Japan, Mongolia Affirm Closer Economic Ties Via Free Trade Pact”, *Kyodo*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/22/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-mongolia-affirm-closer-economic-ties-via-free-trade-pact/#.VkBKnFK6a1t>

<sup>33</sup> “Japan To Assist Natural Gas Processing Projects In Turkmenistan”, *Kyodo*, October 23, 2015 at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Japan-to-assist-natural-gas-processing-projects-in-Turkmenistan>

and stabilize power-generation services and improve medical equipment at hospitals. Out of the ¥12.7 billion, ¥12 billion will be loans and ¥700 million will be grant aid. Besides, both countries agreed to accelerate the process of introducing innovative industrial technologies of Japan to Uzbekistan. Meanwhile Uzbekistan extended support for Japanese initiatives to reform the UNSC.<sup>34</sup>

On October 24, Japan-Tajikistan summit meeting was held between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Emomali Rahmon in Dushanbe. Both leaders agreed to reinforce border control to avert the inflow of narcotics and weapons from Afghanistan and stop money laundering. Moreover, Japan agreed to rehabilitate water supply systems in the Pyanj and make available more drinking water and prevent diseases caused by contaminated water.<sup>35</sup> Prime Minister Abe will also visit Kyrgyzstan on October 26 and Kazakhstan on October 28, 2015.

## The Korean Peninsula

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **President Obama-Park Geun-hye summit meeting; South Korea-Japan Defence ministers meeting held in Seoul; First family reunions held at Mt. Geumgang since February 2014; South Korea fired five warning shots at a North Korean fishing vessel.**

On October 16, US-South Korea meeting was held between President Barack Obama and President Park Geun-hye in Washington where both leaders reiterated their commitment to the security alliance aimed at countering threat originating from North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Both sides expressed concerns regarding the constant progress of North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities and demanded denuclearization of the peninsula. This is President Park's second official visit to the US. The four-day official visit was focused on bilateral defence, economic, and political cooperation with the US. Two joint statements were issued namely, *The United States-Republic of Korea Alliance: Shared Values, New Frontiers* and *United States-Republic of Korea Joint Statement on North Korea*. It is important to note that there was no mention regarding the deployment of THAAD missile system to counter North Korean ballistic missiles.<sup>36</sup>

On October 19, South Korean and Japanese defence ministers met in Seoul and discussed on restarting the negotiation on sharing military intelligence. This comes ahead of the trilateral China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit scheduled in Seoul on November 1. Both Han Min

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<sup>34</sup> "Abe Pledges ¥12 Billion To Uzbekistan", *Kyodo*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/25/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-meets-tajik-president-to-discuss-infrastructure-aid/#.VkBKWFK6a1t>

<sup>35</sup> "Japan Offers Aid To Tajikistan For Farm, Infrastructure Development", *Nikkei Asian Review*, October 24, 2015 at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Japan-offers-aid-to-Tajikistan-for-farm-infrastructure-development>

<sup>36</sup> 2015 United States-Republic of Korea Joint Statement on North Korea, *The White House*, October 16, 2015 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/16/united-states-republic-korea-joint-statement-north-korea>

Koo and Gen Nakatani decided to restart discussion on methods to prevent North Korean provocation, address mutual concerns and strengthen bilateral defence cooperation, Gen Nakatani has also briefed his South Korean counterpart on Japan's new security laws.<sup>37</sup>

On October 20, hundreds of family reunions were facilitated at Mount Geumgang in North Korea for the first time since February 2014. South Korean families who parted ways following the Korean War met their North Korean relatives. This development happened following the inter-Korea agreement reached on August 25 where both Koreas decided to accelerate the momentum of resuming family reunions.<sup>38</sup>

On October 25, South Korea defence ministry confirmed that it fired five warning shots at a North Korea's patrol vessel while South navy was beginning a clampdown on illegal Chinese fishing boats functioning in the western coast. North Korea referred to the event as a serious military provocation to initiate a military conflict.<sup>39</sup>

## C. Russia

### Russia: Domestic

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **President Putin's approval rating touches 90 per cent; FSB detains 22 Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Moscow; Russia's international reserves grow US\$ 3.5 billion to US\$ 377.3 billion; Russia's foreign debt declined by 30 per cent over the last one year; Moscow police detain 500 migrant workers as part of robbery investigation; Russia tests new intercontinental ballistic missile.**

According to a poll conducted by Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (WCIOM), President Vladimir Putin's approval rating has touched a record high of 89.9 per cent. WCIOM had conducted the poll during October 17-18, 2015. A total of 1,600 people from 130 cities in 46 regions took part in it. The statistical error does not exceed 3.5 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Russian Interior Ministry have detained 22 members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (the Islamic Party of Liberation) international organization in Moscow on October 20. Russia had banned the organisation in 2003 on the grounds of being a terrorist organisation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Seoul, Tokyo Likely To Boost Defence Exchanges", *The Korea Times*, October 19, 2015 at [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/11/205\\_188990.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/11/205_188990.html)

<sup>38</sup> "Separated Korean War Families Begin Reunions at Mt. Geumgang", *The Korea Times*, October 20, 2015 at [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/10/485\\_189024.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/10/485_189024.html)

<sup>39</sup> "South Korean Navy Fires Warning Shots At North Korean Patrol Boat While Hunting Chinese Poachers", *South China Morning Post*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/1871888/south-korean-fires-warning-shots-north-korean-patrol-boat-while>

<sup>40</sup> "Putin's Approval Rating Reaches Historical Maximum Of Almost 90% — Pollster", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/830823>

<sup>41</sup> "FSB Detains 22 Hizb Ut-Tahrir Members in Moscow", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/830426>

Russia's Central Bank has stated that the country's international reserves, comprising mostly of gold and foreign exchange, grew by US\$ 3.5 billion during October 9-16 to US\$ 377.3 billion.<sup>42</sup>

Chairperson of the Bank of Russia Elvira Nabiullina has said, on October 21, that Russia's foreign debt has declined by 30 per cent from 2014. She added that the banking sector is expected to remain stable in 2016.<sup>43</sup>

Moscow's police have detained 500 migrant workers from former Soviet republics as part of an investigation into a series of robbery attacks against women in the city. The police have yet to determine whether any of the workers have a connection to the robberies, but investigators intend to look into the migrant workers legal status.<sup>44</sup>

Russian Strategic Missile Force spokesman Col. Igor Yegorov has said that a Yars (NATO reporting name: SS-27 Mod. 2) intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) has been successfully test fired from the Plesetsk cosmodrome. The Yars missile is expected to be Russia's main mobile ICBM in the future.<sup>45</sup>

## Russia: International

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Syrian President Assad visits Moscow; Putin discusses developments in Syria with leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey; Russian lawmaker says Russia's operations in Syria will not last long; Russia calls for joint struggle against the Islamic State; Kremlin says Assad's army and Kurdish militias should conduct anti-IS ground operation in Syria; Iran's Parliament Speaker terms Russia's presence in Syria as 'timely and responsible'; Russia to step up talks with the Arab League in order to settle crises in the Middle East; Russia and Turkey to maintain active dialogue on developments in the Middle East; US Central Command to maintain communication with Russia on Syria; Kremlin refutes 'hoax' about Saudi Arabia's offer on Assad; Russian and Egyptian Defence Ministers discuss military ties and Syria.**

Syrian President Bashar Assad has visited Moscow on October 21 wherein he held discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Mr. Assad thanked the Russian leadership for its aid to Syria, stating that Russia stands for Syria's unity and independence. He added that 'terrorism which now spreads through the region would have taken much greater areas and

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<sup>42</sup> "Russia's International Reserves Grow \$3.5 Bln Over Week To \$377.3 bln", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830946>

<sup>43</sup> "Russia's Foreign Debt Declined 30% Over Year Despite Sanctions, Challenges — Central Bank", *Itar-Tass*, October 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830602>

<sup>44</sup> "Moscow Police Detain 500 Migrant Workers as Part of Robbery Investigation", *The Moscow Times*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/moscow-police-detain-500-migrant-workers-as-part-of-robbery-investigation/540097.html>

<sup>45</sup> "Russia Tests New Intercontinental Ballistic Missile — Defense Ministry", *Russia and India Report*, October 28, 2015 at [http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/10/28/rusia-tests-new-intercontinental-ballistic-misile-defense-ministry\\_534781](http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/10/28/rusia-tests-new-intercontinental-ballistic-misile-defense-ministry_534781)

spread to an even greater territory if it was not for Russia's actions and decisions'. This was Mr. Assad's first trip abroad since the civil war broke out in Syria in 2011. Meanwhile, President Putin has said that Moscow's position on Syria remains unchanged - long-term settlement 'can only be achieved on the basis of political process with participation of all political forces and ethnic and religious groups.'<sup>46</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has, on October 21, held talks over the phone with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Jordanian King Abdullah II, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The talks focussed on developments in Syria and the fight against the Islamic State and took place on Russia's initiative. President Putin also briefed these leaders about his meeting with Syrian President Assad. All sides agreed to maintain contact on the Syrian issue.<sup>47</sup>

The Speaker of Russia's Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko has said that, Russian military operation in Syria will not last long even though the time limit will depend on the results of the fight against terrorists.<sup>48</sup>

Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vitaly Churkin has urged, during an address to the UNSC on October 22, 'the countries that are fighting the Islamic State to review their short-sighted policy of refusing to coordinate efforts with Russia and begin constructive work over a UNSC draft resolution.' He described the threat of IS as intolerable and added that 'collective efforts are required to liquidate the IS terrorist threat on the basis of norms and principles of international law and the provisions of the UN Charter.' Mr. Churkin has also denied the accusations of U.S. Ambassador to UN Samantha Powers that the Russian military operation in Syria has worsened the humanitarian situation in the country and is playing into the hands of the Islamic State.<sup>49</sup>

The head of Kremlin administration Sergey Ivanov has said, on October 22, that the Syrian army in conjunction with the Kurdish militias should carry out the ground operations against the Islamic State terrorists. He added that global terrorism 'vividly manifests' itself in the region by referring to the linkages between IS and other terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram. Mr. Ivanov stressed on the importance of forming a coalition with Middle Eastern countries, US and Europe.<sup>50</sup>

Iran's Parliament Speaker, Ali Larijani has termed Russia's presence in Syria as 'timely and responsible.' He added that Russia, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are

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<sup>46</sup> "Meeting with President of Syria Bashar Assad", *President of Russia*, October 21, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50533>

<sup>47</sup> "Putin Discusses Situation In Syria With Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi, Turkish Leaders", *Itar-Tass*, October 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/830734>

<sup>48</sup> "Lawmaker: Russia's Operation In Syria Won't Last Long, Time Frames Depend On Results", *Itar-Tass*, October 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829942>

<sup>49</sup> "Russia Calls For Joint Struggle against Islamic State – Churkin", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/831167>

<sup>50</sup> "Kremlin: Assad's Army, Kurdish Militias Should Conduct Anti-IS Ground Operation in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/830934>

'playing a major role in stimulating other countries wanting to join counter-terrorism efforts.'<sup>51</sup>

Following a meeting, between Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and Arab League's Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi, the Russian Foreign Ministry has stated that Moscow and the Arab League will join efforts to settle crises in the region and battle the Islamic State terrorist group. It added that the two sides exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East with specific focus on developments in Syria, Libya and Yemen and also on the Israeli-Palestinian settlement. It was also decided to convene a ministerial meeting of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum by the end of 2015 in Moscow. The meeting was held in Moscow on October 17.<sup>52</sup>

Following a meeting between Deputy Foreign Ministers of Russia and Turkey in Moscow on October 19, the two countries have confirmed their intention to maintain active dialogue on developments in the Middle East. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that 'over the course of comprehensive and sincere exchange of opinions, special attention was paid to the military-political situation in Syria and around it, with emphasis on importance to step up efforts in looking for a political settlement of the Syrian crisis on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué from June 30, 2012.'<sup>53</sup>

The Pentagon has said that the Qatar-based Air and Space Operations Centre of its Central Command will maintain communication with the Russian military in order to prevent untoward incidents between the two countries aircrafts in the sky over Syria.<sup>54</sup>

The Kremlin has, on October 20, refuted Iranian media reports that Saudi Arabia allegedly offered Russia US\$ 300 billion in exchange for Moscow's refusal to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Earlier, Iran's Ettelaat newspaper had published an article devoted to the talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Arabian Defence Minister, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in Sochi.<sup>55</sup>

Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu had a telephone conversation with his Egyptian counterpart Sedki Sobhi on October 19. The two sides discussed ways to improve their military-technical cooperation as well as the developments in Syria. The Russian side also confirmed its readiness to strengthen cooperation towards enhancing the potential of Egyptian armed forces and expanding programmes for the training of Egyptian military specialists at higher education establishments of the Russian Defence Ministry. Meanwhile,

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<sup>51</sup> "Russia's Presence In Syria Timely, Responsible — Iran's Parliament Speaker", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/831096>

<sup>52</sup> "Foreign Ministry: Russia, Arab League Set To Step Up Efforts To Settle Crises In Region", *Itar-Tass*, October 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829715>

<sup>53</sup> "Russia and Turkey Confirm Intention To Maintain Active Dialogue on Middle East", *Itar-Tass*, October 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829837>

<sup>54</sup> "US Central Command To Maintain Communication with Russia on Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/830449>

<sup>55</sup> "Kremlin Refutes "Hoax" About Saudi Arabia's Offer on Assad", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/830169>

Russian President's Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov has said that Moscow is planning to supply equipment and helicopters for the Mistral amphibious assault ships that Egypt is buying from France and the value of the deal may exceed US\$ 1 billion.<sup>56</sup>

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Russia to provide €1.2 billion loan to Cuba to finance construction of four power plant blocks; Russian Defence Ministry says it is interested in naval cooperation with Cuba; Russia considers expansion of Amari airbase in Estonia a provocative step; Russia likely to begin removal of enriched uranium from Iran in January-February 2016; Russia considering Iran's request for a US\$ 5 billion loan; Russia and Iran discuss cooperation in the oil sector; Iranian naval group arrives in Astrakhan; German Chancellor says Russia is a reliable supplier of gas; Gazprom CEO discusses implementation of Nord Stream-2 project in France; Rosneft says OPEC no longer acts as a regulator; Russian-Chinese free economic zone to be set up in East Siberian Irkutsk region; Russian and Hungarian Foreign Ministers discuss developments in Ukraine and Syria.**

The Russian Government has, on October 20, approved the draft agreement on extension of €1.2 billion loan to Cuba for financing the construction of power units at Maximo Gomez and East Havana thermal power plants. Three units of 200 megawatts each are expected to be built in East Havana while one unit of 200 megawatts is expected to be constructed in Maximo Gomez.<sup>57</sup>

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said that Russia is interested in building up naval cooperation with Cuba. He made these statements following a meeting with Cuba's Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas in Moscow on October 20. Mr. Shoigu added that Russia is prepared to strengthen the existing military-technical cooperation between the two countries.<sup>58</sup>

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that the proposed expansion of the Amari airbase in Estonia for NATO purposes is 'an openly provocative step' aimed at destabilizing the regional situation.<sup>59</sup>

Russia's envoy to international organizations in Vienna Vladimir Voronkov has said, on October 19, that Russia may begin exports of enriched uranium from Iran from January or February 2016 onwards. According to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran will be allowed to enrich uranium to 3.67 per cent while the current stockpiles are estimated at 10 tons. To do this, Iran has two options — selling enriched uranium abroad or 'diluting' it to the

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<sup>56</sup> "Russia, Egypt Defense Ministers Discuss Boost To Military Ties, Syria", *Itar-Tass*, October 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/830084>

<sup>57</sup> "Russia To Provide €1.2 Bln Loan To Cuba To Finance Construction Of Four Power Plant Blocks", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830299>

<sup>58</sup> "Russia is Interested In Naval Cooperation With Cuba - Defense Minister", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/830159>

<sup>59</sup> "Russia Regards Expansion Of Amari Airbase In Estonia As Provocative Step", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/830268>

natural level without exporting it. Iran also pledged to reconstruct its Fordow fuel enrichment plant, reconfiguring it for the production of stable isotopes for industrial and medical purposes. Tehran is collaborating with Moscow to implement this project.<sup>60</sup>

Energy Minister Alexander Novak has said that Russian Economic Development and Finance Ministries are considering Iran's request for a US\$ 5 billion loan. He added that 'budget-funded intergovernmental credit is widely used as a financial instrument for triggering bilateral cooperation between countries' and a deal with Iran can be concluded in the future. Earlier, Deputy Energy Minister Anatoly Yanovsky had stated that Russian banks including VEB and VTB may provide the loan to Iran.<sup>61</sup>

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak has met with his the Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh in Tehran on October 21 wherein the two sides discussed prospects of cooperation in the oil sector. Mr. Zangeneh spoke about the list of oil deposits where Russia and Iran can cooperate in the future.<sup>62</sup>

Two Iranian ships have arrived on a friendly visit at Russia's Astrakhan port. The Iranian sailors are expected to meet with Russia's regional leadership as well as the command of the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Navy.<sup>63</sup>

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said, on October 17, that Russia remains a reliable supplier of natural gas. She also expressed satisfaction at Ukraine having concluded an agreement with Russia for the supply of gas in the coming winter months.<sup>64</sup>

Gazprom's Chief Executive Alexey Miller has met with the Chief of Staff of the President of France, Jean-Pierre Jouyet on October 22. The two sides discussed development of gas transportation routes for supplying Russian gas to Europe, including the Nord Stream-2 pipeline project. Nord Stream-2 is a natural gas pipeline with a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters that will carry gas from Russia to Germany across the Baltic Sea. The route and the entry point to the German gas transport system in Greifswald are expected to be the same as the first Nord Stream gas pipeline launched in 2011.<sup>65</sup>

Rosneft's CEO Igor Sechin has said that the OPEC has 'fully stopped' to perform its role of a regulator amid the lack of consensus in the October 21 meeting that resulted in no new decisions being taken. He added that Poland has agreed on oil supplies with Saudi Arabia and

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<sup>60</sup> "Russia May Begin Removal Of Enriched Uranium From Iran In January-February — Envoy", *Itar-Tass*, October 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/829963>

<sup>61</sup> "Russia Considering Iran's Application For \$5 Bln Loan", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830929>

<sup>62</sup> "Russia and Iran Discuss Cooperation In Oil Sphere — Iranian Oil Minister", *Itar-Tass*, October 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830726>

<sup>63</sup> "Iranian Naval Group Arrives In South Russian Port On Friendly Visit", *Itar-Tass*, October 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/830532>

<sup>64</sup> "Russia is Reliable Supplier Of Gas, Says Merkel", *Itar-Tass*, October 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/829698>

<sup>65</sup> "Gazprom CEO Discussed Implementation Of Nord Stream-2 Project In France — Company", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/831152>

the share of Europe in global consumption of energy resources will decline from 19 per cent in 2015 to 16 per cent in 2030.<sup>66</sup>

A Russia-China free economic zone will be set up in East Siberia's Irkutsk region. This was decided during the 7th China Overseas Investment Fair (COIFAIR-2015) meeting held in Beijing on October 22. The free economic zone will involve a partnership between Chinese banks and Russia's Sberbank apart from cooperation between insurance companies of the two countries.<sup>67</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has met with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijjarto in Moscow on October 21. The Russian Foreign Ministry press statement stated that 'the two sides had a detailed and constructive discussion of vital issues of Russian-Hungarian relations with a focus on agreements reached during President Vladimir Putin's visit to Budapest on February 17 this year. They also stressed on the importance of intensifying the use of mechanisms of Russian-Hungarian inter-governmental commission for economic cooperation with an aim to resolve the current and long-term questions of bilateral relations.' The two leaders also exchanged views on Ukraine, Syria and the Middle East.<sup>68</sup>

## India-Russia Relations

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visits Moscow.**

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has visited Moscow on October 20 wherein she held discussions with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov and participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> session of India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation meeting. During the discussions, Mr. Lavrov pointed out to the privileged nature of cooperation between Russia and India and hoped that the visit will provide an additional impetus to the development of bilateral ties. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has expressed hope that trade turnover between the two countries will reach US\$ 30 billion by 2025. He added that the Russian government is taking steps to create favourable conditions for developing trade, economic and investment cooperation. This includes a potential free trade agreement, protection of investment, payments in national currencies, cooperation in the oil and gas sector and admitting certifications of conformity and education and diploma standards. He also expressed Russia's willingness to assist India in nuclear energy development, upgrade of thermal power plants, metallurgical and machine-building companies, exploration, mining, construction of gas pipelines, power lines, rail infrastructure, rolling stock, aircraft and helicopter, peaceful use of space, development of modern means of communication, creation of smart cities, construction of industrial facilities, construction and

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<sup>66</sup> "Russian Oil Giant CEO Says OPEC No Longer Acts As Regulator", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830903>

<sup>67</sup> "Russian-Chinese Free Economic Zone To Be Set up in East Siberian Irkutsk", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830800>

<sup>68</sup> "Russian, Hungarian Foreign Ministers Discuss Ukraine and Syria — Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, October 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/830670>

creation of modern systems of water treatment, development of medical equipment and medicines and training of qualified personnel.<sup>69</sup>

## D. Central Asia

### Kazakhstan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Nazarbayev says Kazakhstan braced for crisis; World Bank says Kazakhstan has improved its business climate; National Bank to spend US\$ 3.6 billion of pension funds to support the Kazakh economy; Kazakhstan and Airbus to manufacture satellites in Astana; Majority of Kazakhs support Eurasian Economic Union integration; OSCE criticises the shutdown of Kazakh independent magazine; Kazakhstan may postpone Balkhash power plant project; Kazatomprom to cooperate with US nuclear energy company; Kazakhstan and Japan focus on economic ties during Abe's visit to Astana; Iran and China to build new Kazakh oil refinery.**

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has, on October 19, ordered the country's Prime Minister Karim Masimov to prepare an anti-crisis plan. Earlier, the President expressed deep concern over the economic conditions prevailing in the country by highlighting the 40 per cent decline in budget revenue and a slowdown in agricultural and industrial sectors. Mr. Nazarbayev stated that 'given the situation in the world economy, including Europe and East Asia, it is impossible to forecast it's soon improvement. Our population should be aware of the current situation, which would mean decreasing profit of our companies, lower income, and possible job cuts.' He added that the ongoing crisis is likely to be worse than the crisis of 2007-09.<sup>70</sup>

The World Bank's annual 'ease of doing business' report has highlighted the significant reforms that have been carried out by Kazakhstan in the past one year. The report states that the Astana has made notable improvements in fields like starting a business, registering property, and enforcing contracts. Kazakhstan's current ranking is 41.<sup>71</sup>

The National Bank of Kazakhstan will spend one trillion Tenge (US\$ 3.6 billion) from the State Pension Fund to support the country's slowing economic growth. This includes financing various projects in the construction sector. It was earlier reported that Kazakhstan's international reserves, including the gold and forex reserves of the National Bank and assets of the National (Oil) Fund, decreased 6.2 per cent during the first nine months of 2015 and amounted to US\$ 96.123 billion at the end of September 2015. During this period, the National

<sup>69</sup> "Trade Turnover Between Russia, India To Reach \$30 bln by 2025 — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, October 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/830344>

<sup>70</sup> "Nazarbayev Says Kazakhstan Braced For Crisis", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 20, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15880-nazarbayev-says-kazakhstan-braced-for-crisis>

<sup>71</sup> "Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Make Strides In Improving Business Climate — WB", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 20, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15916-kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-make-strides-in-improving-business-climate-wb>

Bank reserves decreased by 3.45 per cent to US\$ 28.2 billion while National Fund's assets decreased by 7.27 per cent to US\$ 67.9 billion. Last week, President Nursultan Nazarbayev had prohibited using money from the National (Oil) Fund for supporting unprofitable enterprises.<sup>72</sup>

The Deputy Head of the Aerospace Committee of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Investment and Development, Meirbek Moldabekov has elaborated on Airbus building a spacecraft manufacturing and testing complex in Astana. The project is a joint venture with Airbus holding a 27.5 percent share while the rest 72.5 percent belongs to Kazakhstan's State Property Committee. This will allow Kazakhstan to independently conduct the entire cycle of works on spacecraft manufacturing. The project is expected to be commissioned by the end of 2017.<sup>73</sup>

A survey carried out by Eurasian Development Bank's (EDB) Centre for Integration Studies reveals the majority of Kazakhs (78 per cent) having a positive view of Eurasian economic integration. Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan has recorded the highest level of public's support for Eurasian integration among the EEU countries (86 per cent). Among the non-EEU countries, the highest support for joining the union has been recorded in Tajikistan (72 per cent) followed by Uzbekistan (68 per cent).<sup>74</sup>

OSCE representative on freedom of the media Dunja Mijatovic has criticised the shutdown of Kazakhstan's Adam (Human) magazine which is recognised as one of the few independent publications in the country. The magazine has been known for its criticism of government policies. Earlier, an Almaty court had annulled the magazine's registration certificate and ordered to shut down its Facebook page following a violation of the law on languages.<sup>75</sup>

Deputy Energy Minister Bakhytzhan Dzhaksaliyev has said that the commissioning of the 1,320 megawatt Balkhash thermal power plant, planned for 2018, may be postponed to 2022. He attributed the delay to the 'new conditions' that have been put forward by the creditors. Earlier, Korea Times had reported that Samsung Engineering had put the Balkhash coal-fired power plant project on hold due to 'an issue an issue with the Kazakh government over the guaranteed purchase of the power to be produced from the project.' The plan is expected to meet almost 9 per cent of the country's power requirements.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "National Bank To Spend \$3.6b of Pension Funds To Support Kazakh Economy", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15906-national-bank-to-spend-3-6b-of-pension-funds-to-support-kazakh-economy>

<sup>73</sup> "Kazakhstan and Airbus will Manufacture Satellites in Astana", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15893-kazakhstan-and-airbus-will-manufacture-satellites-in-astana>

<sup>74</sup> "Majority of Kazakh, Russian, and Kyrgyz Citizens Support EEU Integration", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15889-majority-of-kazakh-russian-and-kyrgyz-citizens-support-eeu-integration>

<sup>75</sup> "OSCE Condemns Shutdown Of Kazakh Independent Magazine", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/osce-condemns-shutdown-of-kazakh-magazine/27329895.html>

<sup>76</sup> "Kazakhstan May Postpone Balkhash Power Plant Project", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15913-kazakhstan-may-postpone-balkhash-power-plant-project>

Kazakhstan's national atomic company Kazatomprom has signed a MoU with the American Centrus Energy Corp. The document sets the key terms of cooperation for two companies in the nuclear field. The memorandum specifies the development of mutually beneficial relations on competitive supplies of Kazakhstan's uranium to the world market. Centrus Energy Corp. is the main supplier of fuel for the American industrial nuclear power plants.<sup>77</sup>

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has paid a visit to all the five Central Asian Republics wherein he dwelled on the ¥3 trillion economic potential of the region in infrastructure and human resource development projects. Abe made the remarks after holding talks with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, during which the two leaders agreed to step up cooperation in bringing nuclear power to the Central Asian country. Abe is the first Japanese prime minister to visit all five Central Asian countries. Abe said there is strong interest from Japanese firms in Central Asia and expressed hope that Japanese technology and know-how in railway building and other areas will be fully made use of by Kazakhstan and the other countries in the region. Abe added that Japan "wants to address issues of transportation and the flow of goods, which are indispensable for the development of Central Asia." Trade between Japan and Kazakhstan in 2013-2014 amounted to about US\$ 2 billion. Over the past 10 years, Japanese investment in the Kazakh economy has amounted to approx US\$ 5 billion.<sup>78</sup>

Iran and China are likely to assist Kazakhstan in its plans to build a fourth oil refinery in the Mangistau Oblast. Vice Oblast Akim, Rakymbek Amirzhanov stated that 'all of Iran's oil refineries are in the north of the country, and the oil fields are in the south. Iran spends around US\$ 35 per ton of oil to transport crude from the south to the north. With Kazakhstan being located near the northern section of Iran, it is a good candidate for a new oil swap partnership.'<sup>79</sup>

## Kyrgyzstan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Japan pledges more development aid to Kyrgyzstan; Asian Development Bank to support small business growth in Kyrgyzstan; Kyrgyzstan's Social Democrats to establish ruling coalition; China to provide police equipment to the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry.**

During Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's talks with Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev and Prime Minister Temir Sariyev in Bishkek on October 26, an agreement was

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<sup>77</sup> "Kazatomprom To Cooperate with US Nuclear Energy Company", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15890-kazatomprom-to-cooperate-with-us-nuclear-energy-company>

<sup>78</sup> "Kazakhstan, Japan Focus on Economic Ties During Abe's Visit to Astana", *The Astana Times*, October 27, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/kazakhstan-japan-focus-on-economic-ties-during-abes-visit-to-astana/>

<sup>79</sup> "Iran and China to Build New Kazakh Oil Refinery", *Silk Road Reporters*, October 20, 2015 at [http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/20/iran-and-china-to-build-new-kazakh-oil-refinery/?utm\\_source=Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=e3b6ffadb1-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f95a626cec-e3b6ffadb1-204234821](http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/20/iran-and-china-to-build-new-kazakh-oil-refinery/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=e3b6ffadb1-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-e3b6ffadb1-204234821)

reached for Japan to provide Kyrgyzstan with development aid of up to 130 billion yen (more than US\$ 1 billion). This includes assistance for renovation of Manas international airport, development of agricultural sector and reconstruction of the Osh-Batken-Isfana highway in the southern parts of the country.<sup>80</sup>

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Kyrgyzstan's Bai Tushum Bank (BTB) have signed an agreement for a US\$ 10 million loan to help boost micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the country. In Around two-thirds of Kyrgyz population live in rural areas, where the population density is 27 inhabitants per square kilometre and most people do not have access to bank services or formal bank accounts. At the same time, the mobile phone network covers the whole country, with most households having access to a mobile phone. The assistance to BTB will allow it to provide finance to MSMEs and to develop financial services via mobile phone that can reach remote communities.<sup>81</sup>

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev has officially asked the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) to create a ruling coalition. The SDPK won the country's parliamentary elections on October 4, receiving almost 28 per cent of the votes. Six political parties had passed the threshold to enter the 120-member unicameral legislature, which is known as Jogorku Kenesh (The Supreme Council). According to Kyrgyz legislation, if none of the parties receive more than 60 seats a ruling coalition must be established.<sup>82</sup>

Minister of Internal Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Melis Turganbaev has, on October 23, signed an agreement with the Ministry of Public Security of China for the provision of police equipment under the framework of humanitarian aid.<sup>83</sup>

## Uzbekistan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Uzbekistan and Japan sign agreements worth US\$ 8.5 billion; Uzbek police arrest 16 members of Hezb-e Tahrir; Uzbek Foreign Ministry hosts meeting with Chinese delegation; French delegation holds talks at the Senate of Uzbekistan; Uzbekistan offers 540 mineral deposits to investors.**

During the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Tashkent, the two countries have signed agreements worth US\$ 8.5 billion. The agreements cover sectors such as energy, communication and transport. In particular, Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) and Uzbekneftegaz will jointly explore new hydrocarbon reserves in Uzbekistan.

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<sup>80</sup> "Japan Pledges More Development Aid to Kyrgyzstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15908-japan-pledges-more-development-aid-to-kyrgyzstan>

<sup>81</sup> "ADB Supports Small Business Growth in Kyrgyzstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15905-adb-supports-small-business-growth-in-kyrgyzstan>

<sup>82</sup> "Kyrgyzstan's Social Democrats To Establish Ruling Coalition", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-parliament-coalition-negotiations/27333730.html>

<sup>83</sup> "China To Provide Humanitarian Aid To Kyrgyz Interior Ministry In The Form Of Police Equipment", *Kabar*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14204>

Japan will modernize a heating power plant generating electricity in Tashkent and a medical centre in Navoi while Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Mitsubishi Corporation will build an ammonia and carbamide plant on the base of Navoiyazot.<sup>84</sup>

Uzbek law enforcement agencies have arrested 16 members of the banned religious extremist organization Hezb-e Tahrir in Tashkent on October 29. The Interior Ministry stated that the detainees were radicalised abroad and after returning to Uzbekistan began to impose extremist ideology on their wives and underage children. A large amount of extremist literature has also been seized from them.<sup>85</sup>

The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs has held a meeting with a delegation from the Chinese National Association to Assist International Friendship, headed by General Vice Secretary Chen Shao Xin. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the 'possibility of strengthening Uzbek-Chinese relations by expanding contacts between non-governmental organizations and direct connections through public diplomacy'.<sup>86</sup>

Chairperson of the Uzbek Committee on foreign and political issues of Senate of Oliy Majlis, Sadyk Safaev has received a delegation from the National Assembly of France, led by chairperson of the inter-parliamentary friendship group 'France-Uzbekistan' Philippe Meunier on 20 October 2015. During the meeting the two sides discussed ways to strengthen inter-parliamentary relations.<sup>87</sup>

The Uzbek State Committee for Geology and Mineral Resources is offering international investors the opportunity to help develop 540 hard mineral deposits in the country. Specifically, the country has offered 462 deposits of 'building materials' with 37 containing raw minerals, 30 containing semi-precious materials and 11 with mining and raw chemicals on the terms of production sharing agreements and the creation of joint ventures.<sup>88</sup>

## Tajikistan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Eight cooperation documents signed during Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Tajikistan; Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan reportedly agree to exchange disputable border areas; Tajik currency has lost 30 per cent of its value in a year; European Union to**

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<sup>84</sup> "Uzbekistan and Japan Sign Agreements for US\$8.5bn", *Uz Daily*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-34029.htm>

<sup>85</sup> "Uzbek Police Arrests 16 Members of Hezb-e Tahrir", *Uz Daily*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-34085.htm>

<sup>86</sup> "Uzbek Foreign Ministry Hosts Meeting With Chinese Delegation", *Uz Daily*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-34054.htm>

<sup>87</sup> "French Delegation Holds Talks at Senate of Uzbekistan", *Uz Daily*, October 21, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-33987.htm>

<sup>88</sup> "Uzbekistan Offers 540 Mineral Deposits to Investors", *Silk Road Reporters*, October 23, 2015 at [http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/23/uzbekistan-offers-540-mineral-deposits-to-investors/?utm\\_source=Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=29c04ece58-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f95a626cec-29c04ece58-204234821](http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/10/23/uzbekistan-offers-540-mineral-deposits-to-investors/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=29c04ece58-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-29c04ece58-204234821)

**strengthen Tajikistan's capabilities to detect nuclear proliferation; President Rahmon lays cornerstone of a new city for 35,000 people in Sughd.**

Tajikistan and Japan have signed a number of cooperation agreements during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Dushanbe on October 26. These include allocation of funds for rehabilitation of water supply systems in the Panj district and cooperation agreements in the field of science and technology, locust management, banking, scientific and academic research. During the meeting, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon appreciated the Japanese Government's support for social development of Tajikistan by highlighting the 340 social projects that have been implemented under financial support of Japan. Mr. Rahmon outlined sectors like industry, mining, energy, transportation, road building and agriculture as areas that can drive the bilateral trade between the two countries. The two leaders also exchanged views on a number of international and regional issues including the developments in Afghanistan and Middle East.<sup>89</sup>

It has been reported that Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have tentatively decided to 'write finis to the issue of demarcation and delimitation of disputable areas of their common border.' The Kyrgyz media has cited Vice-Premier Abdyrahman Mamataliyev as saying that Kyrgyzstan has proposed to Tajikistan to exchange the disputable border areas. He was quoted as saying that 'it will be a mutually beneficial exchange -- the sides will receive 12 hectares each, we will receive areas located in the village of Kok-Tash, while the Tajik side will receive areas located below Kok-Tash.' He added that 98 per cent of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border will be delineated within the next two years and only areas, where residential buildings are situated in alternate order, will remain to be resolved.<sup>90</sup>

Tajik Finance Minister Abdusalom Qurboniyon has stated that the national currency *Somoni* has lost 30 per cent of its value in a year. He also noted that the country's foreign trade turnover over the first nine months of this year has declined 17.9 per cent compared to the same period last year and population's real incomes have declined 1.7 per cent. As of October 1, 2015, Tajikistan's external debt amounted to US\$ 2.1 billion, which is approx 19.5 per cent of the country's GDP.<sup>91</sup>

The Delegation for the European Union to Tajikistan has said that, under the EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the European Union has strengthened Tajikistan's border monitoring capabilities in the field of nuclear security. This has led to the installation

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<sup>89</sup> "Eight New Cooperation Documents Signed During Japanese Prime Minister's Visit to Tajikistan", *Asia-Plus*, October 26, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/eight-new-cooperation-documents-signed-during-japanese-prime-minister-s-visit-tajikistan>

<sup>90</sup> "Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan Reportedly Agree To Exchange Disputable Border Areas", *Asia-Plus*, October 27, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-kyrgyzstan-reportedly-agree-exchange-disputable-border-areas>

<sup>91</sup> "TJS Lost 30 Percent Of Its Value Against USD in a Year To September 30, 2015", *Asia-Plus*, October 26, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/tjs-lost-30-percent-its-value-against-usd-year-september-30-2015>

of modern systems (radiation portal monitors) to detect trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials at six crossing points on the Tajik border.<sup>92</sup>

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has, on October 19, took part in a ceremony to lay the cornerstone of a new modern city for 35,000 people in the Sughd province. The new city, named Bahoriston, will be built for residents of Istaravshan and Ghonchi districts along the Dushanbe-Khujand highway.<sup>93</sup>

## Turkmenistan

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Turkmenistan and Japan sign deals worth US\$ 18 billion; EBRD provides trade financing to Turkmen bank.**

Japan and Turkmenistan have signed business deals worth more than US\$ 18 billion during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Ashgabat on October 23. This includes projects in the chemicals sector and gas and power station construction. Prime Minister Abe said that Japan stood ready to offer Turkmenistan its expertise and advanced technology and that Japanese companies were interested in participating in the development of industrial infrastructure of the Galkynysh natural gas field using GTL (gas to liquid) technology. Abe is the first Japanese prime minister to visit Turkmenistan.<sup>94</sup>

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is boosting support for cross-border trade in Turkmenistan with its first regional trade finance facility for a private bank in the country. Rysgal Bank will receive an uncommitted multi-currency trade finance facility of up to US \$1 million under the EBRD's Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP).<sup>95</sup>

## E. THE UNITED STATE OF AMERICA

### National

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Paul Ryan says he is "all in" to become House speaker; Boehner sets October 28 as the date for party members to select their nominee for his replacement; Clinton says there can never be perfect security anywhere; Obama urges Americans to do all they can to preserve the country's "natural treasures"; Senate has taken an initial step toward passing Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act.**

<sup>92</sup> "European Union Supports Nuclear Security in Tajikistan", *Asia-Plus*, October 26, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/european-union-supports-nuclear-security-tajikistan-0>

<sup>93</sup> "Rahmon Lays Cornerstone Of A New City for 35,000 People In Sughd", *Asia-Plus*, October 19, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/rahmon-lays-cornerstone-new-city-35000-people-sughd>

<sup>94</sup> "Turkmenistan, Japan Sign Deals Worth More Than \$18 Billion", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-japan-energy-deals/27322768.html>

<sup>95</sup> "EBRD Provides Trade Financing To Turkmen Bank", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 21, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15886-ebrd-provides-trade-financing-to-turkmen-bank>

U.S. Representative Paul Ryan says he is “all in” to become House speaker after obtaining the support of both mainstream and conservative Republicans in the chamber. Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican, sent a letter to his colleagues on October 22 evening describing himself as “ready and eager” to be speaker. The congressman had volunteered reluctantly for the post, but said he would take it only if he obtained an endorsement from an 80 percent majority of his fellow Republican representatives.<sup>96</sup> Outgoing Speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner has set October 28 as the date for party members to select their nominee for his replacement. Boehner also expressed support on October 28 for influential Congressman Paul Ryan, who has said he will run for House Speaker, but only if he has the support of all factions within the badly splintered Republican Party.<sup>97</sup>

During the 11-hour hearing, former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a Republican-led congressional committee on October 22 that she had “lost more sleep than all of you put together” over the deadly 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. Clinton was the sole witness, fourth congressional hearing on the attack that left four Americans dead, including U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens. Republicans had alleged there were many inconsistencies in Clinton’s account of what happened and what could have been done to prevent the incident. They also said previous investigations hadn’t been thorough enough. Specifically, Republicans wanted to know whether the attack on the compound was a planned terrorist strike that could have been stopped with proper security measures or was part of region wide protests against videos mocking Islam. Clinton at times looked bored and impatient, but answered the questions calmly, saying there can never be perfect security anywhere.<sup>98</sup>

In his weekly address on October 24, U.S. President Barack Obama has urged Americans to do all they can to preserve the country’s “natural treasures.” President Obama said the United States is “home to some of the most beautiful God-given landscapes in the world... from the Grand Tetons to the Grand Canyon, from lush forests and vast deserts to lakes and rivers teeming with wildlife.” The president said “it’s our responsibility to protect these treasures for future generations, just as previous generations protected them for us.” In his efforts to highlight the effects of climate change, Obama is the first sitting president to visit a community north of the U.S. Arctic Circle. Scientists and activists have warned that the

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<sup>96</sup> “Ryan ‘All In’ to Become US House Speaker”, *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/paul-ryan-gains-support-of-key-house-group-for-speakership-bid/3018100.html>

<sup>97</sup> Gallo, William, “Boehner Sets Date to Pick Successor”, *VOA News*, October 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/paul-ryan-will-runs-for-house-speaker-if-gop-unites/3016439.html>

<sup>98</sup> “Clinton: Some Risks Inevitable in Pursuing US Diplomacy”, *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/hillary-clinton-to-face-house-panel-on-2012-benghazi-attacks/3018145.html>; Gypson, Katherine, “Republicans Question Clinton Email Use”, *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republicans-question-clinton-email-use/3019663.html>; and, “What You Need to Know About Benghazi Hearing”, *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/what-you-need-to-know-about-benghazi-hearing/3018341.html>

temperatures at the Arctic are increasing at more than twice the average global rate. Loss of Arctic snow and ice is accelerating the warming of the planet as a whole, they say.<sup>99</sup>

The Senate has taken an initial step toward passing a bill, Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act, aimed at improving cybersecurity. The bill is intended to encourage the sharing of threat information among companies and the U.S. government. On October 22, the Senate's 83-to-14 procedural vote was a healthy endorsement of the bill. It's opposed by companies such as Apple, who say it lacks key privacy protections. The Act is co-sponsored by California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein and North Carolina Republican Sen. Richard Burr. They say it's critical to limiting increasingly high-profile cyberattacks such as the one suffered by Sony Pictures last year.<sup>100</sup>

## International: Asia

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **US-Pakistan renewed promises to strengthen a relationship viewed as the best hope to brokering peace in Afghanistan; Kerry voices a "cautious measure of optimism" that a solution can be found to defuse deadly Israeli-Palestinian violence; Kerry says there is a desire to "turn the page" on a "very difficult period"; Syrian rebel commander says his forces last week received a substantial airdrop of small arms from the United States; Pentagon says the U.S. is not in a combat role in Iraq; US must amend a standard national security provision in investment treaties when negotiating with China, says a U.S. business lobby.**

On October 22, the U.S. President Barack Obama welcomed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to the White House with renewed promises to strengthen a relationship viewed as the best hope to brokering peace in Afghanistan. The two leaders emerged from an Oval Office meeting announcing no timeline for stalled peace talks, nor any major breakthroughs on other items that topped their agenda, including concerns about the growth of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Instead, they touted new initiatives on trade, clean energy and education for women. In brief pleasantries before their meeting, President Obama said that "Obviously the United States and Pakistan have a longstanding relationship, work and cooperate on a whole host of issues. We are looking forward to using this meeting as an opportunity to further deepen the relationship." Sharif noted the depth of bilateral ties, saying, "The Pakistan-America relations stand over 70 years, and it is my endeavour to further strengthen and solidify this relationship." The White House is trying to pressure Pakistan to play a major role in Washington's newly revised plans to end the 14-year war on Pakistan's doorstep.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> "Obama: Protect Planet for Future Generations", *VOA News*, October 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-protect-planet-for-future-generations/3021245.html>

<sup>100</sup> "US Senate Takes Initial Step on Cybersecurity Bill", *Associated Press*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-us-senate-takes-initial-step-to-pass-cybersecurity-bill/3018828.html>

<sup>101</sup> "Obama Hosts Sharif For Talks on 'Complicated' Relationship", *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/uneasy-us-pakistan-relations-to-surface-during-obama-sharif-summit/3018176.html>; McKittrick, Molly, "Meeting to Disagree: Obama and Pakistan's Sharif", *VOA News*, October 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/meeting-disagree-obama-sharif/3018026.html>; and,

Following a four-hour meeting on October 22 with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Berlin, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry voiced a "cautious measure of optimism" that a solution can be found to defuse deadly Israeli-Palestinian violence. Kerry said some proposals may be put on the table in the coming days that will have an impact on stopping the unrest. He said he plans to raise the proposals with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Jordanian President King Abdullah during a meeting on October 24 in Jordan's capital, Amman. Kerry also said it is time for the Israelis and Palestinians to move beyond "condemnations and rhetoric," and he urged both sides to take concrete steps to stop the violence, which has left at least eight Israelis and about 50 Palestinians dead.<sup>102</sup> On October 24, wrapping up a series of meetings with Middle East officials on the spiralling unrest between Israelis and Palestinians, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said, there is a desire to "turn the page" on a "very difficult period". Kerry said Israel and Jordan had agreed on specific steps to help reduce the violence, including the use of video monitoring at Jerusalem's most sacred site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif.<sup>103</sup>

Speaking with VOA, the 50-year-old Talal Sellou, who runs a newly formed joint command centre coordinating integrated operations of the Arab and Turkmen militias and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), a top Syrian rebel commander coordinating with the Kurds in the fight against the Islamic State group in northeastern Syria confirmed that his forces last week received a substantial airdrop of small arms from the United States. And, contrary to U.S. Defence Department comments, he said the American-supplied weapons and ammunition are being divvied up with the Kurds ready for an assault on the jihadist capital of Raqqa.<sup>104</sup>

The Pentagon says the U.S. is not in a combat role in Iraq, despite the recent death of a U.S. service member from Islamic State (IS) gunfire during a hostage rescue mission. "U.S. forces are not in an active combat mission in Iraq, and I can say that directly," Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook responded on October 22 to questions from reporters on "mission creep" and "boots on the ground." According to a Pentagon statement, a joint rescue mission by U.S. and Iraqi Kurdish fighters freed about 70 hostages, including at least 22 Iraqi Security Force members, from an Islamic State prison compound in Hawijah, west of Kirkuk. The hostages

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Gul, Ayaz and Pande, Aru, "Low Expectations Precede Obama, Sharif Meeting", *VOA News*, October 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-sharif-set-to-discuss-afghanistan-terrorism-nuclear-issues/3016453.html>

<sup>102</sup> Dockins, Pamela, "Kerry Somewhat Optimistic on Solution to Israeli-Palestinian Violence", *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-netanyahu-meet-on-violence-in-israel/3018133.html>

<sup>103</sup> Dockins, Pamela, "Kerry: Israel, Jordan Agree to Reduce Tensions at Holy Sites", *VOA News*, October 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-visit-jordan-seeking-to-ease-mideast-strife/3021198.html>; and, "Kerry Visits Jordan Seeking to Ease Mideast Strife", *VOA News*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/un-chief-troubled-by-israeli-palestinian-violence/3020349.html>

<sup>104</sup> Dettmer, Jamie, "Use of US Airdrop in Syria Disputed", *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/dispute-over-use-of-us-airdrop-in-syria/3018216.html>

were under threat of “imminent mass executions”. One American service member was killed while assisting Peshmerga forces under fire from Islamic State militants. The death marked the first time a U.S. service member was killed in combat as part of the year-long campaign against IS extremists.<sup>105</sup>

The United States must amend a standard national security provision in investment treaties when negotiating with China, a U.S. business lobby said on October 23, or risk giving Beijing the green light to limit U.S. market access. China, which has more barriers on foreign investment than the United States, is in talks with Washington to narrow the “negative list” of sectors closed to the other side’s investors as part of a bilateral investment treaty (BIT).<sup>106</sup>

## India-US Relations

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Increasing stature of Indians in U.S. society has positive impact on India-US relations; Trilateral naval exercises signal the three powers’ deepening ties as they contend with a more assertive China; US says Pakistan’s relationship with India is critical to Islamabad’s future; Construction of the VH 92 Super Hawk helicopters that transport the US president has begun in India.**

*Foreign Policy* reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to the San Francisco area in September 2015 highlighted a signal immigration story: The great prominence of Indian-born entrepreneurs and executives in Silicon Valley and the key role they play in America’s technological dynamism. But an equally important, if under-noticed, tale was also at play: How the increasing stature of Indians in U.S. society has changed the way all Americans think about India and the resulting impact on U.S. foreign policy. According to a Gallup survey conducted earlier this year, more 70 percent of the U.S. public has a positive impression of India, a score on par with Israel’s traditionally-high favourability rating. This is the latest indicator of how decisively American perceptions about the country have shifted in a relatively short period of time.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Babb, Carla, “Pentagon Denies Combat Role in Iraq After American’s Death”, *VOA News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reports-say-us-special-forces-in-hostage-resuce-bid-in-iraq/3018304.html>

<sup>106</sup> “US Urged to Amend Proviso in China Investment Treaty”, *Reuters*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-urged-to-amend-security-provisio-in-china-treaty-/3019826.html>; “Kashmir a ‘Flashpoint’, Need Third Party To Resolve Issue, Says Nawaz Sharif”, *PTI*, October 23, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/kashmir-a-flashpoint-between-india-pak-need-third-party-mediation-to-resolve-issue-nawaz-sharif/>; and, Haidar, Suhasini, “US-Pakistan Joint Statement: Multitude Of Concerns For Indian Strategic Interests”, *The Hindu*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/uspakistan-joint-statement-what-india-should-watch-out-for/article7795346.ece>

<sup>107</sup> Karl, David J., “The Desi Factor in U.S.-India Relations”, *Foreign Policy*, October 21, 2015 at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/21/the-desi-factor-in-u-s-india-relations/>

*The Wall Street Journal* reported that warships and aircraft from the U.S., India and Japan practiced hunting enemy submarines during wide-ranging exercises in the Bay of Bengal during the weekend, signalling the three powers' deepening ties as they contend with a more assertive China. Worries about Beijing's rapidly increasing military strength and its growing ability to deploy forces far from Chinese shores have helped drive a convergence of strategic thinking in Washington, New Delhi and Tokyo and prompted pledges of defence and economic cooperation. "Our interests are increasingly overlapping," said Amy E. Searight, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defence for South and Southeast Asia. Having "naval partners who are like-minded friends and allies is important."<sup>108</sup>

On October 23, the US said that Pakistan's relationship with India is critical to Islamabad's future as it emphasised on normalisation of ties between the two countries. The White House Deputy Press Secretary, Eric Schultz, told reporters soon after President Barack Obama held wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his Oval Office that "I think it's clear that Pakistan's relationship with India is critical to Pakistan's future, and the normalisation of relations between the two countries is vital both to them and to the stability in the region". In the joint statement after the talks, Obama and Sharif called for a "sustained and resilient" Indo-Pak dialogue process to resolve all outstanding issues. The references to Indo-Pak ties and the need to resolve all outstanding disputes, including Kashmir, between the two countries were contained in the joint statement.<sup>109</sup>

Construction of the first lot of six VH 92 Super Hawk helicopters that transport the US president has begun in India. The new generation helicopter is based on the Sikorsky S-92, whose cabin, some other parts and wire harnesses are made only in India in collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) at Hyderabad. The VH variant is a much advanced version of the civilian S-92 rotorcraft or its military version, the H-92 with more powerful twin engines, fly-by-wire systems and highly advanced communication and electronic warfare (EW) protection suites.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Fairclough, Gordon, "Military Drills in Indian Ocean Signal Deepening Ties", *The Wall Street Journal*, October 18, 2015 at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/military-drills-in-indian-ocean-signal-deepening-ties-1445191451>; and, "India, Japan, US Trilateral Exercise Not Aimed at China: US", *The Economic Times*, October 18, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-japan-us-trilateral-exercise-not-aimed-at-china-us/articleshow/49431698.cms>

<sup>109</sup> "Pakistan's Ties With India Critical To Its Future: United States", *DNA News*, October 23, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-pakistan-s-ties-with-india-critical-to-its-future-united-states-2137639>

<sup>110</sup> "Lockheed Begins Construction of US Presidential Choppers in India", *The Economic Times*, October 20, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/lockheed-begins-construction-of-us-presidential-choppers-in-india/articleshow/49465950.cms>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Advanced Landing Ground at Walong inaugurated; Ministry of Defence approves induction of women into the combat stream of the Indian Air Force.**

Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) at Walong has been inaugurated on October 23, 2015. Walong ALG was operational during 1962 Chinese aggression. Thereafter, it remained abandoned for a long time till it was decided by the government in 2013 to reconstruct the ALG to make it fully Air Operational. The project was closely monitored by the Chief Engineer, Northeastern Projects and Works Department at Headquarters Eastern Air Command. Significantly, the project was completed in a record time of 21 months. Close supervision and active monitoring by Project Monitoring Group (PMG) made it possible despite of its difficult location and natural obstacles in sustaining supply of material and machinery. The Walong ALG will support air operations and will also facilitate the administration in the management of border areas. Besides this, the ALG will also provide air support in responding to the natural calamities, casualties evacuation, humanitarian assistance and supply of equipment and ration to the troops posted in far flung areas.<sup>111</sup>

The Ministry of Defence has approved the induction of women into the Fighter (Combat) stream of the Indian Air Force (IAF). This step is in keeping with the aspirations of Indian women and is in line with contemporary trends in Armed Forces of developed nations. The performance of women officers has been on a par with their male counterparts since their induction into the transport and Helicopter streams of the IAF. Inducting women into the fighter stream would provide them with an equal opportunity to prove their mettle in combat roles as well. The first women pilots would be selected from the batch which is presently undergoing flying training at Air Force Academy. After successful completion of ab-initio training, they would be commissioned in the fighter stream in June 2016. Thereafter, they would undergo advanced training for one year and would enter a fighter cockpit by June 2017. With this decision to open up induction of women in the fighter stream, women have become eligible for induction in all branches and streams of the IAF. Significantly, the Ministry of Defence has also taken up a comprehensive review pertaining to induction of women in Armed Forces, both in short service commission and permanent commission (SSC & PC) and once finalised more and more branches would be opened up for induction of women.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> "Advanced Landing Ground(ALG) at Walong Becomes Operational," *PIB*, October 23, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=129939>

<sup>112</sup> "MoD Approves Induction of Women as Fighter Pilots," *PIB*, October 24, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=129942>

## International

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Iran provides a glimpse of one of its underground missile bases; United States deploys 12 A-10C Thunderbolt II ground attack aircraft in Turkey to support its strikes in Syria and Iraq.**

Reports say that Iran has provided a rare glimpse inside one of its underground missile bases. Iranian state television broadcast new footage from inside an underground base on October 14. The footage was intended to give the impression of a vast underground complex that contains a multitude of transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) that are ready to fire ballistic missiles. The Iranian report described the base as "a city which is beyond the enemy's imagination". Most of the missiles carried by the TELs appeared to be liquid-fuel Shahab-3-series weapons designed to target Israel. Iran claims that there are numerous such bases buried 500 m underground ready to immediately launch their missiles on the supreme leader's orders.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, the United States has deployed 12 Fairchild-Republic A-10C Thunderbolt II ground attack aircraft to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey to support its strikes in Syria and Iraq. The A-10s, from Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, are reportedly replacing the six Lockheed Martin F-16Cs that the USAF deployed to Incirlik from Italy in August. The A-10s have already flown combat missions over Syria and are supported by 300 ground personnel. Significantly, A-10s deployment is not for the first time in Operation 'Inherent Resolve', as the US terms its strikes against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In November 2014 the USAF had deployed A-10s to Ahmed al-Jabr Air Base in Kuwait to support the operation.<sup>114</sup>

## III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

### Jammu & Kashmir

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **Protests, shutdown in Kashmir as truck conductor laid to rest; Two HM militants killed in Shopian encounter; J&K alerted over major terror recruitment drive.**

Clashes between protesters and police were reported in the Kashmir valley on October 19 as the truck conductor, who succumbed to injuries suffered in a petrol bomb attack in Udhampur, was laid to rest amid tight security. Dealing with the situation in a tough manner, the J&K government slapped the Public Safety Act (PSA) on four more people and the

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<sup>113</sup> "Iran's Underground Missile Base," *IHS Jane's*, October 22, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55476/iran-s-underground-missile-base>

<sup>114</sup> "USAF Deploys A-10s To Incirlik For Syria Strikes," *IHS Jane's*, October 22, 2015 at [2015http://www.janes.com/article/55459/usaf-deploys-a-10s-to-incirlik-for-syria-strikes](http://www.janes.com/article/55459/usaf-deploys-a-10s-to-incirlik-for-syria-strikes)

number of those arrested in the case rose to nine. Five people were booked under the PSA earlier. Curfew-like restrictions were imposed in various areas of Srinagar, Zahid's home district Anantnag, and some other parts of the Valley. Normal life was affected in Kashmir Valley due to the strike called by separatists and trade organisations.<sup>115</sup>

The security forces on October 22 killed two Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists in a joint operation in south Kashmir's Shopian district. The slain militants were identified as Adil Khandey and Irshad Ahmed Sheikh. Both are from south Kashmir and locals. They were active for the past two years. This was second such operation in the past 24 hours. One militant of the Hizbul Mujahideen was killed and three soldiers injured in Kunzer area of north Kashmir on October 21.<sup>116</sup>

In the backdrop of a sharp decrease in successful infiltration attempts from across the border into the Kashmir valley, central intelligence agencies have cautioned security forces operating in Jammu and Kashmir that terrorist organizations in the state, particularly the indigenous Hizbul Mujahideen, "will get more aggressive in the coming days" in efforts to recruit local youth. The alert also warns of "Pakistan-based terror operatives sending in substantial money through the hawala network" to whip up trouble in the State so that terror activities and protests can run parallel. In fact, intelligence agencies suspect that the ongoing agitation over a truck driver being killed on suspicion of transporting beef may well be part of the same strategy.<sup>117</sup>

## Northeast India

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **India feels Myanmar army will go after NSCN (K)'s headquarters; Cache of arms, ammo seized in Mizoram.**

With NSCN (Khaplang) staying out of the national ceasefire agreement (NCA) signed on October 15 between Myanmar and eight ethnic armed groups (EAGs), India feels it is a matter of time before Myanmar Army targets the outfit's headquarters in Taga in Myanmar Naga Hills (MNH). According to sources in the Indian intelligence establishment, the immunity that NSCN (K) had enjoyed in Myanmar by virtue of its ceasefire arrangement with Yangon has ended as NCA, signed in Nay Pyi Taw, supersedes all previous ceasefire agreements. In fact, following NSCN (K)'s refusal to be part of the pact that requires all signatories to amalgamate their independent armed militias into regular army, Myanmar troops have launched punitive operations against the outfit's facilities in upper MNH. Two major bases at Ponyu and

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<sup>115</sup> "Trucker's Death: Kashmir Sees Shutdown, Clashes", *Business Standard*, October 20, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/trucker%E2%80%99s-death-kashmir-sees-shutdown-clashes-115101900395\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/trucker%E2%80%99s-death-kashmir-sees-shutdown-clashes-115101900395_1.html)

<sup>116</sup> Ashiq, Peerzada, "Two Militants Killed In Kashmir Gunfight", *The Hindu*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/gunfight-in-kashmir-leaves-militant-dead/article7792867.ece>

<sup>117</sup> "J&K Alerted Over Major Terror Recruitment Drive", *Kashmir Times*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.kashmirtimes.in/newsdet.aspx?q=46104>

Langhting have been burnt down and a few weapons seized, driving out cadres to the forests and mountain hideouts. At least three groups active along the Indo-Myanmar border - Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), Chin National Front (CNF) and NSCN (K) - were part of the peace negotiations ahead of signing of NCA. While CNF signed up, KIO and NSCN (K) walked out. CNF's being part of NCA is expected to bring about a gradual repatriation of Chin refugees based in Mizoram and Manipur.<sup>118</sup>

Assam Rifles' troopers, while carrying out raid between Keitum and Khawhlailung border villages in Serchhip district of Mizoram, seized eight sophisticated assault rifles and twelve loaded magazines from two Mizo men on October 23, police said in Aizawl on October 24. The arms and ammunition include five AK-47s, three AK-56s and twelve magazines loaded with AK series rifles' cartridges.<sup>119</sup>

## Left-wing Extremism

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **IAF to fire in self-defence Maoist in Bastar; Maoist couple surrenders with AK 47; 8 Maoists arrested, one surrenders in Raipur; Naxals torch 37 vehicles, construction machines in Chhattisgarh.**

Indian Air force Chopper Mi-17 will now also be used in retaliatory attacks in counter insurgency operations in Chhattisgarh's Maoist hotbed Bastar region as part of self-defence mechanism. Talking to *The Times of India*, ADG anti-Naxalite operations RK Vij said, "Practices have been conducted for retaliatory attacks and from now on, if Mi-17 chopper faces Maoist attack, it will retaliate. Mi-17 will not be used for offensive attacks but only for self-defence. Choppers that fly to insurgent areas for dropping provisions to camps and for rescue operations of injured jawans, are often attacked and fired by Maoists. Carrying high risks, many commandos have lost their lives while choppers also have gone damaged." In the past, many incidents of Maoists firing at Mi-17 has taken place, hence, decision was taken to undertake retaliate attacks on air after formulating strategy with IAF, Chhattisgarh police force and Border Security Forces. Vij added that situations are going to improve as the commando squad of 'Garuda' have undergone training at safe regions of Bijapur district to fire via machine guns.<sup>120</sup>

A senior Maoist commander surrendered along with his Maoist wife in red hotbed Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on October 22. Active since 2003, Sannu Poyam surrendered with his

<sup>118</sup> Jain, Bharti, "India Feels Myanmar Army will Go after NSCN (K)'s Headquarters", *The Times of India*, October 19, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-feels-Myanmar-army-will-go-after-NSCN-Ks-headquarters/articleshow/49446289.cms>

<sup>119</sup> "Huge Cache Of Arms, Ammo Seized in Mizoram", *The Assam Tribune*, October 24, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct2415/at043>

<sup>120</sup> "IAF's Mi-17 to Retaliate To Maoist Attacks in Bastar", *The Times of India*, October 22, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/IAFs-Mi-17-to-retaliate-to-Maoist-attacks-in-Bastar/articleshow/49490691.cms>

AK-47 as platoon commander. Sannu's wife Maini Majji, active as medical member of Local Guerilla Squad, also surrendered to join mainstream.<sup>121</sup>

Two hardcore Maoists, among eight, carrying cash reward of Rs 5 lakh on their heads, were arrested on October 24 from different parts of Maoists' hotbed Bijapur district in Bastar region. All eight of the arrested Maoists were involved in cases related to murder and loot. In another development, a Maoist commander, Ragnath Gawde, surrendered with a country made gun and 13 rounds of cartridges before Bastar IG. Gawde had joined Maoist ranks in 1999.<sup>122</sup>

In a major attack, Naxals set ablaze at least 37 vehicles and machines engaged in road construction work in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on October 25. "Armed Naxals on October 24 night stormed three locations simultaneously on the Bhopalpatnam—Bhadrakali—Tarlaguda road, which then enters the Telangana state, and torched 37 construction vehicles and machines," Bijapur SP KL Dhruv said. Among the torched vehicles, belonging to three private construction companies, were trucks, tippers and tractors. Poclaim machines and mixing machines were also burnt by the rebels, he said.<sup>123</sup>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### India and the UN

(October 19-25, 2015)

- **India's poor health-related indicators get UNICEF, UN Stats and WHO attention; 5-member Parliamentary delegation visits UN; India does well on trade facilitation parameters; China on trial for bribing PGA to prevent UNSC reform; India celebrates UN's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday; UNSC reform to feature in India-Africa Forum Summit.**

At the UNICEF's Global Maternal Health Conference held in Mexico it was highlighted that at current rates, India will have the highest number of under-five mortality rate in 2030 at 17 per cent, followed closely by Nigeria at 15 per cent. 1 in 147 children in India die before they reach the age of 5. However, the mortality rate in this category has reduced from 126 deaths per 1000 in 1990 to 45 per 1000 in 2014, a decrease of 62 per cent. The rates world over have fallen substantially due to effective tackling of infectious diseases.<sup>124</sup> Yet another report of the

<sup>121</sup> "Maoist Couple Surrenders with AK-47", *The Times of India*, October 23, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Maoist-couple-surrenders-with-AK-47/articleshow/49500942.cms>

<sup>122</sup> "8 Maoists Arrested, One Surrenders in Raipur", *The Times of India*, October 25, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/8-Maoists-arrested-one-surrenders-in-Raipur/articleshow/49524092.cms>

<sup>123</sup> "Naxals Torch 37 Vehicles, Construction Machines in Chhattisgarh", *The Hindu*, October 25, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/naxals-torch-37-vehicles-construction-machines-in-chhattisgarh/article7802849.ece>

<sup>124</sup> "By 2030, India will Account For 17% Of World's Under Five Deaths: UN", *The Times of India*, October 19, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/By-2030-India-will-account-for-17-of-worlds-under-five-deaths-UN/articleshow/49454551.cms>

Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Statistics Division titled “World’s Women 2015” states that India has the lowest sex-ratio of under-five mortality of 93:100, meaning the number of deaths is higher among girls.<sup>125</sup>

Moreover, women’s participation in the work force has declined from 35 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent in 2013. Lastly, the Director General (DG) of World Health Organisation, Margaret Chan, has expressed concern regarding the reduction in budget allocation of the health sector in the fiscal year 2015-16, an amount of INR 33,152, down from INR 37,333 crore for 2014-2015. The DG said that considering the situation of sanitation and access to drinking water, and falling short on the targets of the Millennium Development Goals on infant mortality, under-five mortality and maternal mortality, such a reduction was not called for.<sup>126</sup>

A five-member delegation of Members of Parliament from the ruling and opposition parties of India visited the UN, New York. In two of the UN forums they defended India’s approach and commitment to climate change. In the Second Committee of the General Assembly, S P Muddahanumegowda, highlighted a recent analysis which clearly indicates that lack of enthusiasm of the developed world regarding its responsibilities for support and mitigation of effects of climate change.<sup>127</sup> Mansukh L Mandaviya addressed the ECOSOC and emphasised the importance of growth and poverty reduction for climate change.<sup>128</sup> In the Security Council, a third leader Bhartruhari Mahtab, argued for a more transparent process for the election of the new Secretary General in 2016, whereby, the General Assembly can genuinely exercise its right of selecting the Secretary General from among the recommendation of two or more candidates by the Security Council.<sup>129</sup> He also called for transparency in the working of the 1267 Committee. Kamlesh Paswan urged the Council to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict for peace in the Middle East.<sup>130</sup> In addition, he raised concerns over the rise of radical groups in Iraq and Syria. In the First Committee of the General Assembly, Abhishek Banerji highlighted the concern regarding terrorist acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> “More Girls Under 5 Are Dying Than Boys In India: UN Report”, October 23, 2015, at <http://newsworldindia.in/lifestyle/more-girls-dying-than-boys-in-india-un-report/140003/>

<sup>126</sup> “WHO Cautions against Slashing Health Spending”, October 20, 2015, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/LiRNZzd7hrBwmwLxxSNRUJ/WHO-cautions-against-slashing-health-spending.html>

<sup>127</sup> “Path to Climate Ambition Must Be Paved with Equity: India”, *NDTV News*, October 20, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/path-to-climate-ambition-must-be-paved-with-equity-india-1234298>

<sup>128</sup> “Indian Policy Of Taming Poverty With Growth ‘A Model For Others’”, October 20, 2015, at <http://www.newsgram.com/indian-policy-of-taming-poverty-with-growth-a-model-for-others/>

<sup>129</sup> “India Seeks Drastic Reforms, Transparency In Election of UN Secretary-General”, October 21, 2015, at <http://www.newsgram.com/india-seeks-drastic-reforms-transparency-in-election-of-un-secretary-general/>

<sup>130</sup> “Take Lead in Resolving Israel-Palestine Tensions: India to UN Security Council”, *NDTV News*, October 23, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/take-lead-in-resolving-israel-palestine-tensions-indian-lawmaker-at-un-security-council-1235455>

<sup>131</sup> “India Calls For Vigilance Against Terrorists Acquiring Chemical, Biological Weapons”, October 23, 2015, at <http://www.newsgram.com/india-calls-for-vigilance-against-terrorists-acquiring-chemical-biological-weapons/>

The first ever Global Report of the Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey of the UN put together by the Regional Commissions of the UN was released on October 22, 2015. As part of this, the UNESCAP has ranked India as emerging on the top as regards implementation of trade facilitation measures in South Asia.<sup>132</sup>

Vindicating India's position that China has paid bribes to scuttle the process of Security Council reform, charges have been filed in the US against John Ashe, former President of the General Assembly (2013-14) for accepting money to divert and delay the process of UNSC reform among other things by moving away from the original non-paper prepared by a Committee that he had himself set up for the purpose.<sup>133</sup>

Celebrations marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN on October 24, 2015. In India, as elsewhere in the world 5 structures including three historical monuments, the Shimla railway station and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai were lighted in blue.<sup>134</sup> In addition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also intervened to illuminate Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, citing commonalities in the values shared by the Mahatma and the UN.<sup>135</sup> The flag of the UN was also hoisted along with the Indian flag on all government buildings.<sup>136</sup> The Permanent Mission of India to the UN released a pictorial book on the India-UN engagement spanning 70 years.<sup>137</sup>

Ahead of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with journalists and said there was scope for the two sides evolving a common position on the subject of UNSC reform.<sup>138</sup> External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addressed the Editor's Forum and called for the two sides evolving a common position on the subject of UNSC reform since both had no representation in the Security Council.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> "India Leads S Asia in Trade Facilitation Measures Implementation: UN report", October 22, 2015, at <http://www.navhindtimes.in/india-leads-s-asia-in-trade-facilitation-measures-implementation-un-report/>

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