

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **PM wants Indo-Bangla joint venture for developing Ganges Barrage on the Padma River; Amnesty's statement sparks protest; Bangladesh slips two spots in WB's doing business rankings Sea level rising up to 20mm a year": Says climate change study on Bangladesh; Eighteen Bangladeshi peacekeepers freed.**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stressed developing Ganges Barrage on the Padma River in Bangladesh under a joint venture project between Bangladesh and India. She came up with the view when outgoing Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran met her at her office on October 25. The government has already completed the feasibility study and design of the proposed 2.1km long Ganges Barrage Project at Pangsha in Rajbari, some 98km downstream from the Farakka Barrage built in Pashchimbanda, India. The proposed project has a reservoir to augment the flow of water and its equal distribution, in both dry and rainy seasons, over the Ganges-dependent area. The project will meet the demand of Ganges water for agriculture, fisheries, ecosystem and navigation. About US\$4 billion is needed to implement the project.¹

Several organisations of rights and cultural activists and freedom fighters protested Amnesty International's (AI) recent statement that the pro-independence forces in the 1971 war also committed crimes, and the trial of two convicts was flawed. The organisations demanded that AI retract the statement immediately. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Bangladesh MuktiJoddha Sangsad, Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, and International Crimes Research Foundation also criticised and condemned the statement.²

Bangladesh dropped two positions to 174 in the World Bank's ranking of the ease of doing business due to stalled regulatory reforms.³

The annual rise of sea level in Bangladesh ranges between 6mm and 20mm, posing threats to the country's agriculture, land and population, according to a Department of Environment study. The study, conducted between April 2013 and October 2015, analysed tidal water data of the last 30 years in the entire coastal zones of the country. It focused on the trend analysis of tidal water level to visualise the historical change of sea level rise in the coasts of Bangladesh.

¹ "PM Wants Indo-Bangla Joint Venture", *The Daily Star*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/pm-barrage-padma-indo-bangla-venture-162541>.

² "Amnesty's Statement Sparks Protest", *The Daily Star*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/amnesty-slammed-remarks-pro-liberation-forces-165490>.

³ "Bangladesh Slips Two Spots in WB's Doing Business Rankings", *The Daily Star*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/bangladesh-slips-two-spots-wbs-doing-business-rankings-163873>.

According to the study carried for the first time in Bangladesh with its own capacity, the sea level rises 7 to 8mm a year in the western coastal region including Satkhira, Khulna and Barisal. The rise is 6 to 9mm annually in the central coastal region, which covers Noakhali, Laxmipur and their adjacent districts while 11 to 20mm rise has been observed in the coastal areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. "The sea level rise will have serious impact on the country in future. Salinity will be increased, agriculture will be badly affected, and there will be a shortage of drinking water," said Dr Ainun Nishat, a climate change expert, who finalised the study.⁴

South Sudan rebels on October 29, released 18 Bangladeshi peacekeepers they had taken captive, but were still holding 12 UN contractors captured along with them on the Nile River. The 18 Bangladeshi soldiers were later flown out of Kaka by UN helicopter to Malakal. Around 100 heavily-armed rebels backed by two tanks on October 26 detained the crew of a barge carrying fuel for the UN mission, along with the peacekeepers escorting the shipment. The peacekeepers and the crew were captured north of Malakal, and taken to the town of Kaka, in Upper Nile state.⁵

Sri Lanka

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues visits Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka joins the Open Government Partnership; Sri Lanka signs loan agreements with Saudi Fund; Peaceful protest in Sri Lanka urges UN to implement its resolutions on Kashmir; Business environment improves in Sri Lanka in 2016 despite drop in ranking.**

The United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Catherine Russell and Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister have discussed strategies to advance economic empowerment of women on October 28. The senior U.S official was on a visit to Sri Lanka from October 27 -29, 2015. Ambassador Russell also held talks with Minister of Women and Children's Affairs Chandrani Bandara.⁶

Sri Lanka has become the newest member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. Sri Lanka endorsed the Open Government Declaration committing "to foster a global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory 21st century government," at the Open Government Partnership's Global Summit that is held in Mexico City from October 27 - 29. Sri

⁴ Tusher, Hasan Jahid, "Sea Level Rising up to 20mm a yr":Says Climate Change Study On Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/sea-level-rising-20mm-yr-164065>.

⁵ "18 Bangladeshi Peacekeepers Freed", *The Daily Star*, October 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/18-bangladeshi-peacekeepers-freed-165019>.

⁶ "Sri Lanka FM, Top US Official on Global Women's Issues Discuss Strategies To Empower Women", *ColomboPage*, October 29, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct29_1446098542CH.php.

Lanka is the only South Asian participating country in the OGP and joins other countries in the Asian region such as Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines and Republic of Korea.⁷

The Government of Sri Lanka has signed two new loan agreements with Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) to obtain financing for two major projects. The SFD will partly finance the rehabilitation of A 5 Road corridor from Badulla to Chenkaladi and provide funding to procure medical equipment for the ongoing Epilepsy Hospital Project, the Finance Ministry said. Both Loan Agreements have been inked today in Colombo by Secretary to the Treasury and Secretary to the Ministry of Finance Dr. R.H.S. Samaratunga, and Vice Chairman and Managing Director of SFD Youssef AL-Bassam. The A5 is one of the major highways linking parts of the Central Province to Eastern Province geopolitical zones of the country which carries the bulk of the traffic between Batticaloa and Peradeniya via Badulla. The project, at a total estimated cost of US\$ 140 million, is jointly financed by SFD and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). Under the Financing Agreement, SFD will provide US\$ 60 million for the project.⁸

The Kashmir Study Forum and Pakistani community in Sri Lanka with support of Sri Lankan friends organised a peaceful protest on October 27, opposite the United Nation Office in Colombo to mark the Kashmir Black Day. The protesters urged the Secretary General of the United Nations to encourage, facilitate and support efforts leading to a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions, as well as exercise the mandate entrusted to him by Charter of the United Nations and under relevant international instruments to forthwith ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of the oppressed Kashmiri people in particular their right to self-determination. Similar peaceful assemblies were also held in other parts of the Island including Ampara, Batticaloa and Puttalam, the Pakistan High Commission in Colombo said in a statement.⁹

Despite a decline of eight places in the World Bank's "Doing Business 2016" index, which measures the ease of doing business in 189 different countries, the overall business environment improved in Sri Lanka, the Doing Business report released by the bank revealed.¹⁰

⁷ "Sri Lanka Joins the Open Government Partnership", *ColomboPage*, October 29, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct29_1446101432CH.php.

⁸ "Sri Lanka Signs Loan Agreements with Saudi Fund to Rehabilitate Highway and Procure Medical Equipment", *ColomboPage*, October 30, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct30_1446221893CH.php.

⁹ "Peaceful Protest in Sri Lanka Urges UN to Implement Its Resolutions on Kashmir", *ColomboPage*, October 27, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct27_1445953740CH.php.

¹⁰ "Business Environment Improves in Sri Lanka in 2016 Despite Drop in Ranking", *ColomboPage*, October 28, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Oct28_1446036809CH.php.

Maldives

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **President ratifies Anti-Terrorism Bill; Adam Shareef appointed Defence Minister, Moosa Zameer Tourism Minister.**

President Abdulla Yameen has ratified the Anti-Terrorism Bill. The bill, submitted to parliament by Ihavandhoo MP Mohamed Abdulla, aims to make the Terrorism Act, which came into force in 1990, more relevant to current international standards and the present situation. Acts which shall be construed as terrorism, as defined in the bill are: The act of killing or causing bodily harm or intent to carry out such actions to persons, with the intention of creating fear or terror, or with a political motive; The act or intention of kidnapping or abduction of persons or of taking hostages; The act of causing harm or damage to persons or property; The act or intention of hijacking of vessels or vehicles; and, The act of causing health risks to a group of people or the general public.

It further states that the act of terrorism also includes distribution, circulation, sale, display, and broadcast of documents created by terrorist organisations, and the penalty for this crime shall be prison for a period between seven and ten years. Sharing such information via TV, radio, or internet is also a crime, which carries a prison sentence of between ten and 15 years; as is encouraging or supporting terrorist agendas, which carries a prison sentence of between 17 and 20 years.¹¹

President Abdulla Yameen has appointed Adam Shareef as Minister of Defence and National Security, and former MP Moosa Zameer as Minister of Tourism. Until now, Adam Shareef held the post of Minister of State for Education. Adam Shareef and Moosa Zameer were sworn in at a ceremony at President's Office on October 28. The oath was administered by Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed.¹²

B. East Asia

China

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **China dismisses the ruling of Arbitral Tribunal; Xi Jinping to visit Vietnam and Singapore; Chinese Top Legislature begins discussion on ratification procedure for AIIC; Li Keqiang meets Angela Merkel; Li Keqiang visits ROK; China upset with US naval foray into the South China Sea.**

On October 30 the Chinese Foreign Ministry dismissed a ruling by the Arbitral Tribunal which was established at the request of the Philippines. The Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister

¹¹ "President Ratifies Anti-Terrorism Bill", *SunOnline*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34239>.

¹² "Adam Shareef Appointed Defence Minister, Moosa Zameer Tourism Minister", *SunOnline*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34234>.

Liu Zhenmin said at a media briefing that, “the result of the ruling will by no means affect China’s sovereignty and rights on the South China Sea”. He further added that, “China’s sovereignty and rights in the South China Sea are grounded in history and protected under international laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)”.¹³

Chinese President Xi Jinping is scheduled to visit Vietnam and Singapore from November 5 to November 7. This trip is expected to help strengthen the ties between the countries. It is also expected to improve the relations between China and ASEAN. This trip is scheduled before the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by the end of 2015.¹⁴

The Chinese National People’s Congress Standing Committee started discussing the ratification procedure for the Asian Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) agreement. The Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei said that, “The AIIB shows that China is committed to establishing an open, just and transparent international economic governance system, and it will provide a new platform for cooperation among member states”. It is necessary that all the 57 members of the bank must ratify the agreement by December 31, 2016 in order to become founding members.¹⁵

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel on October 29. Both sides discussed increasing the number of high level contact. During the meeting Li Keqiang said that, “We need to adopt advanced technology and concepts from Germany”. The year 2015 is marked as the Year of China-Germany Innovation Cooperation.¹⁶

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is on an official visit to Republic of Korea (ROK) and is attending the sixth trilateral summit between China, Japan and ROK. This is the first visit by Li Keqiang to ROK as the premier. The three sides will be discussing trilateral cooperation and regional and global issues of common concern.¹⁷

The Chinese navy spokesperson Liang Yang as a response to the US warships entering the waters near the Nansha Islands stated that, “such forays by the US naval vessels into the waters claimed by China in the South China Sea may “trigger eventualities””. He further

¹³ “South China Sea Ruling 'Null And Void', Says Ministry” By Li Xiaokun/Wang Xu, *China Daily*, October 31, 2015, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/31/content_22331955.htm, accessed on November 2, 2015

¹⁴ “Xi’s Vietnam, Singapore Trip To Boost China-ASEAN ties” *China Daily*, October 30, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/30/content_22331131.htm, accessed November 2, 2015

¹⁵ “Top Legislature Starts Ratifying AIIB Agreement” *China Daily*, October 30, 2015, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/30/content_22330232.htm, accessed November 2, 2015

¹⁶ “China, Germany Agree Deeper Cooperation” *China Daily*, October 29, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/29/content_22312593.htm, accessed November 2, 2015

¹⁷ “Premier Li to visit ROK, Attend China-Japan-ROK Summit” *China Daily*, October 26, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/26/content_22289498.htm, accessed November 2, 2015

added that, “China’s sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their adjacent waters is irrefutable”.¹⁸

C. Russia

Russia: National

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Russian commercial aircraft crashes in Egypt; Moscow police detain 150 migrant workers suspected of having links with Islamist militants; Vostochny spaceport to be built by the end of 2015; Novatek likely to face difficulties in financing Yamal LNG project; Russia’s Central Bank keeps key rate at 11 per cent; Twenty Chechens detained in Moscow on their way to join the Islamic State; Russian military spending to increase by less than 1 per cent in 2016; Health Minister warns Russia’s HIV epidemic can spiral out of control; Levada Centre publishes its report on domestic support to Russia’s involvement in Syria; Russian missile manufacturer opens Aerospace Defence educational centre for foreigners.**

A Russian aircraft of the domestic airline company Kogalymavia has crashed over Egypt. The plane was carrying 224 people and there are no survivors. While preliminary reports attribute the crash to systems malfunction yet the Islamic State has also claimed responsibility for downing the aircraft.¹⁹

Moscow police have, on October 27, detained 150 migrant workers on suspicion of links with Islamist militants. The investigators have seized ‘large amounts of banned literature’ including the book ‘Muslim’s Fortress’ and images of the flag of the banned organization Hizb ut-Tahrir.²⁰

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said that the Vostochny Spaceport will be built by end of this year. He added that launch operations are expected to commence from Spring 2016 even though a final decision is yet to be taken.²¹

Kommersant business daily has reported that Russian independent gas producer Novatek is likely to face difficulties in financing the Yamal LNG project. The project is estimated to cost US\$ 27 billion. Novatek has been negotiating with Chinese banks to bridge the gap in funding but the high interest rate on bank loans in China has been a stumbling block. Novatek holds

¹⁸ “China Warns US of ‘Eventualities’ in South China Sea” *China Daily*, October 27, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/27/content_22300530.htm, accessed November 2, 2015

¹⁹ “Russian Airliner With 224 on Board Crashes in Egypt”, *Sputnik News*, October 31, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20151031/1029377194/russian-airliner-egypt-contact-lost.html#ixzz3qKoqoqxY>

²⁰ “Moscow Police Detain 150 Migrant Workers Suspected of Islamist Militant Links”, *The Moscow Times*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/moscow-police-detain-150-migrant-workers-suspected-of-islamist-militant-links/540468.html>

²¹ “Vostochny Spaceport To Be Built By Year-End — Russian Deputy PM Rogozin”, *Itar-Tass*, November 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/science/833389>

60 per cent in Yamal-LNG, while France's Total and China's CNPC hold 20 per cent each in the project.²²

The Board of Directors of Russia's Central Bank have decided to keep its key rate at 11 per cent. The bank decided not to change the key rate by taking into account the existence of significant inflationary risks.²³

Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov has said that a group of 20 ethnic Chechens have been detained in Moscow as they were about to leave for the Middle East to fight for the Islamic State. Mr. Kadyrov also dwelled on Chechnya's awareness promotion campaigns among the youth that aim to prevent religious radicalisation.²⁴

Russia's defence spending is set to increase by a modest 0.8 per cent next year. According to a draft of the 2016 federal budget, 'the 2016 budget allocation for national defence is planned at 3.145 trillion roubles (US\$ 50 billion),' or about 4 per cent of Russia's projected GDP. If the draft budget is approved, defence expenditure will rise by 25.5 billion roubles (US\$ 400 million). The defence budget is one of the few items on the 2016 draft that have not been subjected to funding cuts, while funding for education, health care, and other social expenses are expected to be reduced.²⁵

Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova has said that Russia's HIV epidemic is likely to spiral out of control by the end of the decade if treatment for the disease is not expanded. She stated that the current levels of funding for HIV treatment will provide care for only 2,00,000 people, or 23 per cent of Russia's HIV-positive population. Without funding increases a scenario can develop in which "by 2020 the number of infected patients shoot up by 250 percent. Over 92,000 people contacted HIV in 2014 - a 12 per cent increase over 2013."²⁶

According to a Levada Centre survey that was released on October 29, 53 per cent of respondents approve of Russian policy in Syria - up from 39 percent a month earlier before the airstrikes began. Those who said they did not approve doubled to 22 per cent from 11 per cent. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who said they either did not care or did not know about Russia's actions in Syria fell to 24 per cent in October from 50 per cent in

²² "Russia's Novatek May Face Difficulties With Financing Yamal LNG Project — Media", *Itar-Tass*, October 29, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832575>

²³ "Russia's Central Bank Keeps Key Rate at 11%", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832870>

²⁴ "Kadyrov: About 20 Chechens Detained In Moscow On The Way to Islamic State", *Itar-Tass*, October 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/833067>

²⁵ "Russian Military Spending to Increase by Less Than 1% Next Year", *The Moscow Times*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-military-spending-to-increase-by-less-than-1-next-year/540362.html>

²⁶ "Health Minister Warns Russia's HIV Epidemic Could Spiral Out of Control", *The Moscow Times*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/health-minister-warns-russias-hiv-epidemic-could-spiral-out-of-control/540232.html>

September. The poll surveyed 1,600 adults in cities, towns and villages across Russia. The margin of error did not exceed 3.4 percent.²⁷

Russia's largest air defence system manufacturer Almaz-Antey has established an Aerospace Defence research and educational centre, which will also train specialists from abroad. The centre will prepare personnel who will engage in the development and production of world-class competitive hi-tech products. The new structure will also train Russian and foreign specialists to operate the company's anti-aircraft defence systems.²⁸

Russia: International

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Russia rules out political settlement in Syria before the defeat of terrorism in the country; Al-Qaida calls for Islamic militant coalition against Russia and the West; Russia supports Free Syrian Army's participation in Syria's political settlement process; Russian Foreign Ministry says Islamic State has access to chemical warfare agents production; Russian Upper House Speaker says US ground mission in Syria will violate international law; Russia and Israel agree on dialogue mechanism to discuss Syria; Russia and China agree on expanding cooperation against fighting terrorism; Russia and Serbia sign cooperation agreements in the fields of economy, investment and joint projects; MIG Corporation warns it may suspend servicing Bulgarian fighters; Kremlin insists Ukraine's debt to Russia is not private; Russia sees connection between changes in IMF lending policy and Ukraine's debt; Kiev 'denounces' agreement with Russia on man-portable air defence systems data exchange; Foreign Minister Lavrov says support of Russian world is priority for Russia's foreign policy; Kremlin dismisses claims of Russia's role in Montenegro protests; Russian Orthodox Church and Vatican in talks over meeting of Pope and Patriarch; Russia opposes UN resolution on barrel bombs; Gazprom and Singapore's Pavilion Gas sign 10-year agreement on LNG supplies; Turkey files arbitration case against Gazprom over price for Russian gas.**

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that the duration of Russian military operations in Syria depends on the success in the fight against terrorism. He stated that it will be difficult to arrive at a political settlement before the threat of terrorism is eliminated from the country. Mr. Peskov also stressed that only the Syrian people can decide on President Bashar al-Assad's political future.²⁹

The leader of terrorist group al-Qaida, Ayman al-Zawahri has called for like-minded extremist groups operating in Syria and Iraq to join hands against Russia, the United States

²⁷ "Russians Increasingly Polarized by Syria Intervention – Poll", *Itar-Tass*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-increasingly-polarized-by-syria-intervention--poll/540772.html>

²⁸ "Russian Missile Manufacturer Opens Aerospace Defense Educational Center For Foreigners", *Itar-Tass*, October 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/831780>

²⁹ "Kremlin: No Political Settlement In Syria Before Defeat Of Terrorism", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832845>

and their allies. He stated 'the Americans, Russians, Iranians, Alawites and Hezbollah are coordinating their war against us — are we not capable of stopping fighting amongst ourselves so we can direct all our efforts against them.'³⁰

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and special Presidential representative for the Middle East and Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov has said that Moscow 'supports Free Syrian Army's participation in the political settlement in Syria but does not understand who will represent it and added 'we waiting for them to manifest more clearly or for our partners who maintain relations with the Free Syrian Army to tell us more.'³¹

The Director of Russian Foreign Ministry's Department for non-proliferation and arms control Mikhail Ulyanov has said that the Islamic State militants have taken possession of production of chemical warfare agents. This includes mustard agents and lewisite. He expressed regret over the UN Security Council's inability to condemn these developments and blamed the position of Western countries for the imbroglio. Meanwhile, Mr. Ulyanov also stated that Russia has destroyed more than 90 per cent of its chemical weapons and intends to fully eliminate the remaining arsenal over the next five years.³²

The Speaker of Russia's Federation Council, Valentina Matviyenko has said that the United States is 'flagrantly violating international law since its air force operations in Syria are being conducted illegally without the authorization of the UN Security Council or a request from the Syrian authorities.'³³

Israeli Minister of Immigrant Absorption and Jerusalem Affairs, Zeev Elkin has said that Israel and Russia have agreed on a dialogue mechanism to discuss the developments in Syria. He stated that 'a certain channel of dialogue has been established, I think, to prevent any mistakes and accidental collisions and so far we have managed to avoid any misunderstandings.'³⁴

During the visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Syromolotov to Beijing on October 30, Russia and China have agreed to expand cooperation in fighting terrorism and extremism. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that 'pressing issues in the sphere of fighting against international terrorism were discussed, common understanding was registered on the importance of creating a broad anti-terrorist front to fight against the Islamic State terrorist

³⁰ "Al-Qaida Calls for Islamic Militant Coalition Against Russia and the West", *The Moscow Times*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/al-qaida-calls-for-islamic-militant-coalition-against-russia-and-the-west/541480.html>

³¹ "Russia Supports Free Syrian Army Participating In Political Settlement in Syria — Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832832>

³² "IS has Access To Chemical Warfare Agents Production — Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, October 29, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832554>

³³ "Russian Upper House Speaker: US Ground Missions In Syria Would Violate International Law", *Itar-Tass*, October 28, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832379>

³⁴ "Dialogue Established Between Israel And Russia On Cooperation On Syria — Israeli Minister", *Itar-Tass*, October 28, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832260>

organization, of taking comprehensive measures on countering the phenomenon of foreign terrorist militants, including in the context of minimizing risks for the Central Asian region.³⁵

Russia and Serbia have signed a number of documents following the meeting between the Prime Ministers of the two countries Dmitry Medvedev and Aleksandar Vucic. This includes MoUs between the two governments in the field of economic cooperation, investment and joint projects. Simultaneously, the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) also signed a memorandum with the Serbian Ministry of Defence. The meeting took place in Moscow on October 27.³⁶

Russian aircraft manufacturing corporation MIG has warned Bulgaria that it may suspend the servicing of Bulgarian MIG-29 fighter jets. The warning follows a dispute over Bulgaria's plans to repair and upgrade Russian origin MIG fighters at enterprises in Poland. Earlier, Bulgaria had signed a military cooperation agreement with Poland in October 2015 and the move was described by Bulgarian Defence Minister as an attempt to seek closer integration with EU and NATO.³⁷

Russian Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov expects Kiev to pay its debts to Russia on time. Earlier, the Ukrainian authorities have said that they consider Russia's US\$ 3 billion loan to be a commercial debt and insist on restructuring it. However, Russia has insisted that the loan is a state debt and demanded its full redemption.³⁸

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has spoken about a connection between changes in IMF lending policy and Ukraine's debt. He stated that the 'IMF is going to abandon the long-standing practice not to lend the countries that have arrears to official creditors. Their hastiness shows that the time for discussion of changes to the rules of the Fund, which coincided with the second review of the Ukrainian IMF programmes, was not chosen by chance.' Siluanov also reiterated that Ukraine's debt to Russia is an official one and is not subject to restructuring and writing-off as part of Kiev's programme of private creditors.³⁹

Ukraine has denounced its agreement with Russia on exchange of information about the Iglas and Strelas-type man-portable air defence systems in import and export operations. The two countries had signed this agreement in 2009. The two sides had then agreed to exchange information about the production, availability and condition of such systems and their

³⁵ "Russia and China Agree On Expanding Cooperation In Fighting Against Terrorism", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832802>

³⁶ "Russia and Serbia Sign Documents On Cooperation In Economy, Investment And Joint Projects", *Itar-Tass*, October 27, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832099>

³⁷ "Russia's MIG Corporation Warns It May Suspend Servicing Bulgarian Fighters", *Itar-Tass*, October 29, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/832525>

³⁸ "Kremlin Insists Ukraine's Debt To Russia Is Not Private", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832848>

³⁹ "Russia Sees Connection Between Changes In Imf Lending Policy And Ukraine's Debt — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832822>

supplies. At present, Russia has similar agreements with the United States, Uzbekistan, and other countries.⁴⁰

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that comprehensive support to the Russian world is an unconditional foreign policy priority for Russia. He stated that 'we will keep enthusiastically defending the rights of compatriots, using for that the entire arsenal of available means envisioned by international law'.⁴¹

The Kremlin has dismissed as groundless Montenegro's allegations that Russia may be involved in opposition protests. Montenegro's capital Podgorica has witnessed demonstrations since late September against the authorities' policies, including the idea of joining NATO. Prime Minister Milo Dukanovic has accused Russia of being behind the protests.⁴²

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican are in talks over the possible meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. This was stated by Bishop Tikhon (Shevkunov) of Yegoryevsk who presented at the Foreign Press Association in Rome. He added that the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican were discussing several projects on cooperation in the field of culture.⁴³

Russia has said that it opposes a draft United Nations resolution on Syria's use of barrel bombs because it can jeopardize the upcoming international talks on how to restore peace in the country. The draft is being pushed forward by Spain, Britain and France. A February 2014 resolution adopted by the Security Council demands that all parties in Syria stop using barrel bombs. But this is not covered under Chapter seven of the UN Charter which is militarily enforceable — as the proposed European draft resolution is.⁴⁴

Gazprom Marketing and Trading Singapore Pte Ltd (GM&TS) and Pavilion Gas Pte Ltd (Pavilion Gas) have signed a contract for sales and purchase of liquefied natural gas (LNG) for 10 years. The contract stipulates LNG supplies from Gazprom to Asian countries, including Singapore.⁴⁵

Turkey has on October 26 filed an international arbitration case against Gazprom over the price for Russian gas. According to a statement published by the Turkish company Botas, 'the

⁴⁰ "Kiev Denounces Agreement With Russia On Man-Portable Air Defense Systems Data Exchange", *Itar-Tass*, October 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/832918>

⁴¹ "Support of Russian World Is Priority For Russia's Foreign Policy — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, November 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/833358>

⁴² "Kremlin Dismisses Claims Of Russia's Role In Montenegro Protests As Groundless", *Itar-Tass*, October 28, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/832349>

⁴³ "Russian Orthodox Church, Vatican in Talks Over Meeting of Pope, Patriarch — Bishop", *Itar-Tass*, October 28, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/832435>

⁴⁴ "Russia Opposes UN Resolution on Barrel Bombs", *The Moscow Times*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-opposes-un-resolution-on-barrel-bombs/541087.html>

⁴⁵ "Russia's Gazprom, Singapore's Pavilion Gas sign 10-Years Agreement on LNG Supplies", *Itar-Tass*, October 27, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832025>

company has sent a written request to Gazprom Export regarding gas discount in 2014. The talks resulted in an agreement to reduce price and define discount due to take effect on December 29, 2014. After the 6-month period stipulated by the agreement expired on June 29, 2015 Botas did not apply to arbitration regarding price revision. However, the required documents, defined by agreements achieved earlier, were never signed.' Earlier, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak had spoken about the agreement between Gazprom and Botas on a 10.25 per cent gas discount. Meanwhile, gas discount for the Turkish state company is a compromise between Russia and Turkey within the intergovernmental agreement on construction of the 1st line of the Turkish Stream.⁴⁶

India-Russia Relations

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **IOC eyes 5-10 per cent stake in Russia's Vankor oilfield.**

India's state-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has expressed interest in taking a 5-10 per cent stake in the Rosneft-operated Vankor oil-field. In September 2015, OVL, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), had agreed to buy a 15 per cent stake in the same oil field for US\$ 1.268 billion. Vankor is Rosneft's (and Russia's) second largest field by production and accounts for 4 per cent of Russian production. It produces around 442,000 barrels of crude oil per day. Rosneft holds 100 per cent stake in Vankorneft.⁴⁷

D. Central Asia

Kazakhstan

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visits Kazakhstan; US and Central Asian countries issue Joint Declaration of Partnership; Kazakhstan designates IS as a terror group; Kazakhstan Central Bank chief replaced amid increasing devaluation of currency; Memorandums worth US\$ 1.5 billion signed at Astana Investment forum; Kazakh President signs new civil procedure code; Kazakh President visits Qatar; Kazakhstan jumps 12 places to 41st in World Bank 'Doing Business Report'.**

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has visited Kazakhstan on November 2 wherein he held discussions with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Mr. Kerry praised President Nazarbayev for his "leadership" in non-proliferation, for countering violent extremism and cooperation vis-a-vis Afghanistan but warned that the threat of terrorism is no excuse for stifling democracy and dissent. He added that United States and Kazakhstan 'have a very

⁴⁶ "Turkey Files Arbitration Case Against Gazprom, Disputing Price For Russian Gas", *Itar-Tass*, October 27, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/832020>

⁴⁷ "IOC Eyes 5-10% Stake In Russia's Vankor Oilfield", *Live Mint*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/l3nc81LY2Rg85DObLW18RJ/IOC-eyes-510-percent-stake-in-Russias-Vankor-oilfield.html>

serious set of security interests'. Mr. Kerry also stressed on the importance of economic cooperation between the two countries.⁴⁸

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and the foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have issued a Joint Declaration of Partnership and Cooperation aimed at improving mutually beneficial cooperation in regional trade, transport and communication, energy linkages, and transit opportunities, including upgrading existing facilities and promoting common rules and regulations. The document also aims to deepen U.S.-Central Asia cooperation in combating human trafficking, in counter-narcotics and supporting the security and stability of Afghanistan. Speaking at the C5+1 Ministerial Meeting on November 1 in Samarkand, Kerry assured the regional countries that Washington backs their independence. He stated that 'we want to help your economies to diversify and we'd like to see us both develop – all of us together, develop stronger trade and investment ties among each other and with other countries in the region. We want to work together to support a common New Silk Road project. We look forward to working with you to improve border procedures and infrastructure, to remove unnecessary burdens on businesses, and to fight corruption.' He added that the United States is launching a new programme called Smart Waters initiative that will train the next generation of expert water managers and focus on river basin planning and sustainable water management. The US will also continue to support education in Central Asia by expanding the number of internships that are available for Central Asian students in the Fulbright and in the Muskie programmes.⁴⁹

Kazakhstan has designated the Islamic State (IS) group as a terrorist organization. An announcement of the ruling by an Astana court was posted on the website of the committee on legal statistics and special accounting of the Prosecutor-General of Kazakhstan on November 2. Kazakhstan has now joined Russia and the other Central Asian Republics in banning the Islamic State.⁵⁰

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has replaced the country's central bank chief following a sharp depreciation of the national currency. Nazarbayev named his aide Daniyar Akishev to the post on November 2, and the parliament's upper chamber quickly approved the reshuffle. The central bank is estimated to have spent US\$ 1.7 billion, or 6 per cent of the country's reserves on protecting the Tenge which has lost about a third of its value against the dollar since a floating exchange rate was introduced in August 2015.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "U.S. Secretary of State visits Kazakhstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15933-u-s-secretary-of-state-visits-kazakhstan>

⁴⁹ "U.S. and Central Asian Countries Issue Joint Declaration of Partnership", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15929-u-s-and-central-asian-countries-issue-joint-declaration-of-partnership>

⁵⁰ "Kazakhstan (Finally) Designates IS As Terror Group", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-kazakhstan-terror-group-designation/27341102.html>

⁵¹ "Nazarbaev Replaces Central Bank Chief After Currency Plunge", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-central-bank-chief-replaced/27340055.html>

More than 30 investment memorandums were concluded at the 6th International Investment Forum held in Astana on October 29. The principal aim of the Forum is to create a 'constructive dialogue between administration of Astana city, key participants of Kazakhstani business processes and large players of the world market to support the most favourable conditions for the development of Astana and Kazakhstan'. Speaking at the forum, Kazakhstan's First Deputy Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev also invited foreign investors to participate in Kazakhstan's privatization programme.⁵²

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has, on October 31, signed the new Civil Procedure Code (CPC). The code introduces changes to procedures in investment, civil and other disputes and provides more options for reconciliation, among other changes. The President stated that the CPC will fundamentally improve the legal framework of the country. Starting 2016, Kazakhstan will shift to a three-tier court system from the current 5 tier mode. This will simplify the process of considering cases, improve efficiency and make decisions more understandable to ordinary people. Another change is a new procedure for considering investment disputes which will improve the country's investment attractiveness and strengthen the institution of private property. The new code also extends the possibility of applying information technologies in civil proceedings; for example, in providing copies of records more widely, which will ensure openness in the court system.⁵³

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has visited Qatar during October 25-26 wherein he held talks with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. As part of the meeting, an agreement on easing visa restrictions for diplomatic passport holders and agreements on cultural, financial and energy cooperation were signed. Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, who accompanied the President, stated that 'although there is a vast distance between us, Kazakhstan and Qatar are facing similar challenges. Whether diversifying our economies, tackling extremism or developing technology to harness renewable energy, our countries have much to collaborate on. This visit represents the next chapter of stronger relations between Kazakhstan and Qatar.' Meanwhile, Kazakh Economy Minister Yerbolat Dossayev has said that Qatar will invest about US\$ 100 million into the Kazakh-Qatari Investment Fund and dwelled on the investment opportunities in agriculture, hotel, real estate and the petrochemical sectors.⁵⁴

Kazakhstan has jumped 12 places to 41st in the World Bank's latest Doing Business Report. Kazakhstan was also among only 12 economies to enact four or more reforms making it easier to do business. In all, Kazakhstan has improved across seven of the 10 measured categories. This includes protecting minority investors (jumping 39 places to 25th), starting a business

⁵² "Memorandums Worth \$1.5 Billion Signed At Astana Invest Forum", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15921-memorandums-worth-1-5-billion-signed-at-astana-invest-forum>

⁵³ "President Signs New Civil Procedure Code", *The Astana Times*, November 3, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/11/president-signs-new-civil-procedure-code/>

⁵⁴ "Kazakhstan, Qatar Have Common Challenges, Common Goals, Kazakh President Says", *The Astana Times*, October 27, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/kazakhstan-qatar-have-common-challenges-common-goals-kazakh-president-says/>

(rising 32 places to 21st), resolving insolvency (rising 16 places to 47th) and dealing with construction permits (rising eight places to 92nd).⁵⁵

Kyrgyzstan

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Kyrgyz President Atambayev and US Secretary of State John Kerry discuss topical issues of Kyrgyz-American relations; EU Delegation visits Batken and Osh; Kyrgyz and Tajik Prime Ministers hold talks in Dushanbe; Kyrgyz Parliament forms majority coalition; Kyrgyzstan to render aid to ethnic Kyrgyz victims of earthquake in Afghanistan, Turkey supplies medical aid to Kyrgyzstan.**

Kyrgyz President Atambaev has met the US Secretary of State John Kerry in Bishkek on October 31. The two leaders discussed 'issues of Kyrgyz-American relations and prospects of further cooperation in various fields besides exchanging views on international developments.' Mr. Kerry congratulated Kyrgyzstan on the successful holding of parliamentary elections. He also participated in the opening of the new campus of the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek.⁵⁶

An EU Delegation field mission, in collaboration with Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), visited Batken and Osh in order to take stock of EU funded projects. It involved meetings with farmers in order to have a better understanding of the potential and challenges of the agricultural sector in southern Kyrgyzstan. The EU has promoted capacities building, information awareness, technical training, counselling on legal aspects of improved food production and rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure systems.⁵⁷

Kyrgyzstan's acting Prime Minister Temir Sariiev has met with the Tajik Prime Minister Kahir Rasulzoda in Dushanbe on October 30. The two leaders stressed on the importance of intensifying contacts and improving bilateral trade relations.⁵⁸

The Kyrgyz Parliament has formed a majority coalition – 'stability, confidence and new opportunities' in the Jogorku Kenesh. As a result, 4 factions - SDPK, Onuguu-Progress, Kyrgyzstan and Ata Meken have formed the majority coalition while Respublika- Ata-Jurt and Bir Bol factions will be in the opposition.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "Kazakhstan Leaps 12 Places to 41st in World Bank Doing Business Report", *The Astana Times*, October 29, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/10/kazakhstan-leaps-12-places-to-41st-in-world-bank-doing-business-report/>

⁵⁶ "American University of Central Asia Opens New Campus in Bishkek", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15932-american-university-of-central-asia-opens-new-campus-in-bishkek>

⁵⁷ "EU Delegation Visit To Batken and Osh", *Kabar*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14248>

⁵⁸ "Kyrgyz and Tajik Prime Ministers Hold Talks in Dushanbe", *Kabar*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/14261>

⁵⁹ "Kyrgyz Parliament Forms Majority Coalition", *Kabar*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/14295>

Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister Temir Sariyev has instructed the Ministry of Emergency Situations to determine the amount of damages suffered by ethnic Kyrgyz during the earthquake in Afghanistan and prepare a proposal for necessary assistance to the victims.⁶⁰

Turkey has donated 5 modern ambulances to Kyrgyzstan. Besides, Ankara will also construct a modern hospital in Bishkek.⁶¹

Uzbekistan

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Uzbek President Islam Karimov holds talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry.**

The US Secretary of State John Kerry has paid a visit to Uzbekistan on November 1 wherein he held discussions with President Islam Karimov. They discussed global issues of shared concern, including combating violent extremism as well as regional security and stability.⁶²

Tajikistan

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Tajik authorities deny report of supplying weapons to the Taliban; Tajik President calls on CIS states to expand economic and security cooperation; Defence Ministry conducts large scale military exercises; Tajik President to pay a state visit to Pakistan from November 12; Indian doctors participate in free medical consultation in Dushanbe; Urumqi delegation visits Dushanbe; President Rahmon reviews the budget for the period January-September 2015.**

Tajik authorities have denied reports circulating in the Afghan media that Dushanbe has supplied Taliban with weapons in exchange for the release of four Tajik security guards held prisoners by the Taliban. A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) stated that 'Tajikistan has officially designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization and there are no problems in cooperation between the power wielding structures of the two countries.' The four Tajikistani soldiers were captured last December after they got lost hunting for firewood, and were released in June with the help of Qatari mediation. The terms of the exchange weren't announced at the time, but an unnamed senior Taliban leader, in an interview with the American website *The Daily Beast*, has reportedly said that it involved a shipment of weapons from Dushanbe.⁶³

⁶⁰ "Kyrgyzstan To Render Aid To Ethnic Kyrgyz Victims Of Earthquake in Afghanistan", *Kabar*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/14241>

⁶¹ "Turkey Donates To Kyrgyzstan 5 Ambulances", *Kabar*, November 2, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/health/full/14299>

⁶² "Kerry Meets Uzbek President, Central Asian Leaders", *Voice of America*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-tours-central-asia/3031714.html>

⁶³ "Tajik Authorities Deny Report About Tajik Supply Of Arms To The Taliban As 'Baseless'", *Asia Plus*, November 1, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/tajik-authorities-deny-report-about-tajik-supply-arms-taliban-baseless-0>

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has, on October 30, received officials of the CIS member nations who arrived in Dushanbe to participate in a session of the CIS Council of Heads of Government. President Rahmon drew attention of the CIS Prime Ministers to the negative impact of global economic and financial crisis and called on the CIS nations to expand economic and security cooperation. He also urged CIS states to focus on developments in northern Afghanistan and its impact in Central Asia. Around 40 documents related to economic and humanitarian cooperation were signed during the forum meeting.⁶⁴

Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence has initiated large scale military exercises starting November 2 in Dushanbe and districts subordinate to the centre (RRP). The exercises will run through November 5 and involve more than 40,000 people including soldiers, reservists, local police, and civilian support services. Its purpose is to 'rehearse the organization of territorial defence, mobilization of reservists, and interaction in anti-terror missions'.⁶⁵

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon is expected to pay a state visit to Pakistan during November 12-13. He is expected to hold talks with Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain, Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and speakers of both chambers of the Pakistani parliament. A number of cooperation documents are also expected to be signed during the visit.⁶⁶

Leading doctors from India have provided free medical consultation to residents of Dushanbe and Khujand during October 29 and 30. The doctors include cardiology and traumatology specialists and are part of the annual programme that was initiated in 2014.⁶⁷

A high-ranking delegation from the Chinese city of Urumqi has visited Dushanbe from October 31 to November 2. Urumqi is the sister city of Dushanbe and the delegation discussed the state and prospect of further cooperation between the two cities in various fields.⁶⁸

President Emomali Rahmon has presided over a government meeting aimed at reviewing the results of work carried out during January-September, 2015. The meeting also focused on the draft law on the national budget for 2016 and the national budget's indicators for 2017-2018. It was observed that the real growth of the country's GDP has fallen 0.5 per cent over the first nine months of 2015. The country's external trade turnover has also decreased by 17.9 per cent

⁶⁴ "Rahmon Calls on CIS Nations To Expand Economic And Security Cooperation", *Asia Plus*, October 30, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/rahmon-calls-cis-nations-expand-economic-and-security-cooperation>

⁶⁵ "Defense Ministry Conducts Large-Scale Exercises In Dushanbe And Districts Subordinate To The Center", *Asia Plus*, November 1, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/defense-ministry-conducts-large-scale-exercises-dushanbe-and-districts-subordinate-center>

⁶⁶ "Rahmon Expected To Pay State Visit To Pakistan", *Asia Plus*, November 2, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/rahmon-expected-pay-state-visit-pakistan>

⁶⁷ "Leading Doctors From India Will Hold Free Consultations in Tajikistan", *Khovar*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.khovar.tj/eng/content/leading-doctors-india-will-hold-free-consultations-tajikistan>

⁶⁸ "Urumqi High-Ranking Delegation Visits Dushanbe To Discuss Cooperation Issues", *Asia Plus*, November 2, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/urumqi-high-ranking-delegation-visits-dushanbe-discuss-cooperation-issues>

while the imports have decreased by 21.8 per cent. Mr. Rahmon noted that special attention will be given to construction, energy and transportation sectors in the future.⁶⁹

Turkmenistan

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Turkmen President Berdymukhammedov meets with his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko in Ashgabat.**

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has met with his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko in Ashgabat on October 29. The two leaders noted the significant potential of bilateral cooperation in fuel, energy and transport spheres and 'confirmed their mutual readiness' to increase economic cooperation. They signed ten agreements including an agreement on major infrastructure projects that will engage Ukrainian contractors. As a result the offices of Ukrainian heavy mechanical engineering companies will be opened in Turkmenistan. President Poroshenko stated that 'when Russia closes markets for our products, we must make every effort for Ukrainian producers and exports to be present in their traditional markets where they are well-known and enjoy good reputation... Ukrainian economy will now receive new opportunities'.⁷⁰

E. West Asia

Iran

(October 19-November 1, 2015)

- **Iran not wanting Assad to stay in power forever: Deputy Minister; Larijani's threat to stop implementation of JCPA, if threatened; Russian companies interested in participating in Iranian oil and gas development projects; Extra-regional states seeking to harm security in Iran- Pakistan border: Shamkhani.**

Iran has boosted the number of military advisers it has sent to Syria where it is determined to help defeat "terrorism", a senior official has confirmed, while saying that Iran does not want Bashar al-Assad "to stay in power forever as president". In an interview with *The Guardian* during a visit to London, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's deputy foreign minister, said there was "no [Iranian] fighting force, as such," on the ground. But he said advisers were helping the Syrian army. Alongside, he also lashed out at Saudi Arabia saying its 'radical policies' had encouraged the growth of al- Qaeda and ISIS.⁷¹

⁶⁹ "National Budget Has Received 391 Million Somoni Less in Jan-Sept 2015", *Asia Plus*, October 29, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/national-budget-has-received-391-million-somoni-less-jan-sept-2015>

⁷⁰ "Turkmenistan and Ukraine to Boost Cooperation", *The Times of Central Asia*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15920-turkmenistan-and-ukraine-to-boost-cooperation>

⁷¹ "Iran not Wanting Assad To Stay In Power Forever: Deputy Minister", *Tehran Times*, October 25, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250313. Accessed on November 12, 2015

Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani warned that Iran will stop implementing the nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, if the other side make military threats against the country. Even after the conclusion of nuclear deal between Iran and major powers some U.S. officials have threatened military attacks against Iran. Larijani, a former chief nuclear negotiator, also said inspection of Iran's nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency should be based on law.⁷²

A Russian company will hold negotiations with the Iranian Oil Ministry on swapping crude oil, natural gas, and by products. "Officials from a large Russian company will travel to Iran in the near future in this regard," Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Commerce Amir-Hossein Zamani-Nia said. Russian companies are very interested in participating in Iranian oil and gas development projects, he added.⁷³

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani has expressed concern over financial and logistic supports being provided by some extra-regional countries for terrorists and drug traffickers in order to undermine security in Iran-Pakistan borders. During a meeting with Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in Islamabad, Shamkhani called for expansion of consultations to increase security in border areas. It is essential to reconsider plans to counter efforts intended to undermine security in borders due to "systematic relations" between terrorists and drug traffickers, he added.⁷⁴

Iraq

(October 19-November 1, 2015)

- **Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi stressed international effort to get rid of ISIS; Maliki confirms Russian ambassador's help in developing relations between the two countries; White House favoured the possibility of sending more ground troops as part of the anti-ISIS campaign in Iraq.**

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi stressed, that Iraq is facing a fierce battle against ISIS and needs an international effort to get rid of the organization, while the Russian ambassador to Iraq, Ilya Murgunov, handed Abadi a written message from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Information Office of Abadi said in a statement followed by *IraqiNews.com*, "The Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi met with the Russian ambassador to Baghdad Ilya Murgunov."⁷⁵

⁷² "Larijani: Iran will not Stop Implementing JCPOA If Threatened", *Tehran Times*, October 19, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250217. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁷³ "Russia To Hold Oil, Gas Swap Talks With Iran", *Tehran Times*, November 3, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250565. Accessed on November 13, 2015

⁷⁴ "Extra-Regional States Seeking To Harm Security In Iran- Pakistan Border: Shamkhani", *Tehran Times*, October 31, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250472. Accessed on November 13, 2015

⁷⁵ "Russian Ambassador Hands over a Written Message from Putin", *Iraqi News*, October 19, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/russian-ambassador-hands-written-message-putin/>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

Nuri al-Maliki stressed the need to develop relations between Iraq and Russia, while the Russian ambassador in Baghdad Elijah Anatolyevich Margonov expressed the support of his country to Iraq in rebuilding all its institutions. Maliki stressed “the need to strengthen bilateral relations between the Republic of Iraq and the Russian Federation to serve the higher interests of the two nations, expressing his hope to achieve Iraqi-Russian cooperation in the security and intelligence field.”⁷⁶

The White House favoured the possibility of sending more ground troops as part of the anti-ISIS campaign in Iraq. *Reuters* quoted the White House spokesman Josh Earnest as saying, “Obama spoke today with the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi about fighting ISIS,” adding that, “We do not rule out the possibility of sending more troops to Iraq.”⁷⁷

Syria

(October 19-November 1, 2015)

- **Syrian army establishes control over more areas in Aleppo and Quneitra; Speaker al-Laham: European countries should be more responsible and stop supporting terrorism; Al- Jaffari: Russia’s Putin has become direct partner in fight against terrorist in Syria, Iraq and entire region; Information minister lashes out at Saudi Foreign Minister.**

Units of the army and the armed forces, in cooperation with the popular defence groups, established full control over al-Jabboul village in the eastern countryside of the northern Aleppo province. A unit of the army eliminated the last hotbeds of the ISIS terrorists in al-Jabboul village in the eastern countryside of the province. The forces defending the Air Force Academy also destroyed a den of the ISIS terrorists and killed all terrorists inside it, and destroyed their arms, ammunition and equipment in the surroundings of the Academy at the international road leading to Raqqa province. A number of dens and hotbeds of Jabhat al-Nusra and the ISIS terrorists were also destroyed in the surroundings of al-Nayrab Airport, Sharba’a and Rasm al-Ghazal in the continued operations carried out by the army in the southern and eastern countryside of the province.⁷⁸

Speaker of the People’s Assembly, Mohammad Jihad al-Laham, called for a more reasonable and objective European attitude in dealing with the facts in Syria. During a meeting with the Serbian Parliament’s Speaker Maja Gojkovic on the side-lines of the meeting of the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva, al-Laham also stressed that the European countries should stop providing support to the terrorist organizations that is being given

⁷⁶ “Maliki Confirms to Russian Ambassador Need to Develop Relations between the Two Countries”, *Iraqi News*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/maliki-confirms-russian-ambassador-need-develop-relations-two-countries/>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁷⁷ “White House Does Not Rule out the Possibility of Sending More Troops to Iraq”, *Iraqi News*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/white-house-not-rule-possibility-sending-troops-iraq/>. Accessed on November 13, 2015

⁷⁸ “Syrian Army Establishes Control Over More Areas in Aleppo and Quneitra”, *Syria Times*, October 24, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20292-syrian-army-establishes-control-over-more-areas-in-aleppo-and-quneitra>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

under “false pretexts and names”, *SANA* reported. He warned that the European countries would be the most affected by the spread of terrorism given the number of European nationals who have joined ISIS. Gojkovic, for her part, said her country is aware of the falsification of facts practiced by some media about Syria, viewing the meeting with al-Laham as a “great opportunity” to get acquainted with what is going on in Syria away from the disinformation.⁷⁹

Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari, Syria’s Permanent Representative at the United Nations has stressed the importance of the details and results of President Bashar al-Assad’s visit to Moscow. He has also asserted that the preventive pre-emptive strike made by the leaderships in Moscow and Damascus against terrorism has foiled many plans that were being prepared in the circles of the Western intelligence bodies. He pointed out that these developments have uncovered the weakness of the stances of some countries which used to deny their involvement in sponsoring terrorism and in using it to politically pressure the Syrian leadership. Al-Jaafari went on to say that the importance of strategic Russian moves regarding terrorism fighting can be measured by the level of the hysteria and madness appeared in the western media and in the reaction of some Arab, regional and Western countries.⁸⁰

Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi said it is shame for the countries that are involved in the bloodshed in Syria, Yemen and Iraq to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs. Responding to statements made earlier by the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, Minister al-Zoubi said that al-Jubeir, “who has no clue how diplomacy and politics work, should keep his mouth closed and keep his country out of a matter that is none of its business”, *SANA* reported. He stressed that the Syrians have been known for their values, history and cultural heritage, “whereas al-Jubeir and his masters have been notorious for having the blood of Muslims and Arabs on their hands.”⁸¹

Israel and Palestine

(October 19 – November 1, 2015)

- **Arab league says Palestinians have started a third Intifada;**

The assistant secretary general of the Arab League said that the Palestinians have started the third intifada. This, claimed Abdul Latif Obaid, is proof that they are persisting in their efforts to obtain their rights. Speaking to *Quds Press*, Obaid said that the international community is again paying attention to the Palestinian issue and has “recognised that this must be dealt

⁷⁹ “Speaker al- Laham: European Countries Should Be More Responsible And Stop Supporting Terrorism”, *Syria Times*, October 20, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20228-speaker-al-laham-european-countries-should-be-more-reasonable-and-stop-supporting-terrorists>

⁸⁰ “Al- Jaffari: Russia’s Putin Has Become Direct Partner in Fight against Terrorist in Syria, Iraq and Entire Region”, *Syria Times*, October 22, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20258-al-jaafari-russia-s-putin-has-become-direct-partner-in-fight-against-terrorism-in-syria-iraq-and-entire-region>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁸¹ “Information Minister Lashes Out at Saudi Foreign Minister”, *Syria Times*, October 30, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20385-information-minister-lashes-out-at-saudi-foreign-minister>. Accessed on November 14, 2015

with.” He noted that the Arab League is doing its best to “support the Palestinians, defend them and find a just solution for their cause.” They are, he insisted, the only nation still being deprived of their rights and freedom. Calling for the international community to take stronger action to put pressure on Israel to obey international laws and resolutions, he pointed out that, at the moment, such responses are “far below the level needed.”⁸²

The Gulf

(October 19-November 1, 2015)

- **Syrian President Bashar Al Assad met with Oman’s top diplomat Yousuf Bin Alawi; Riyadh warns UK that it won’t be lectured; US- Saudi Arabia in \$11b advanced warship deal; Omani oil and gas unions threaten strike amid oil slump; Arch rivals Saudi Arabia, Iran discuss Syria face-to-face for first time; Manama dialogue concludes with optimism over Yemen; UAE wins UN Human Rights Council seat for second term.**

Syrian President Bashar Al Assad met with Oman’s top diplomat Yousuf Bin Alawi in Damascus, in a rare visit for a Gulf official since Syria’s conflict broke out, state media reported. Official news agency SANA said Assad and Alawi discussed “the ideas proposed at the regional and international levels to help resolve the crisis in Syria”. Bin Alawi, for his part, was quoted as saying Oman was eager to preserve Syria’s “unity and stability” and would continue its efforts to find a political solution to the conflict.⁸³

Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to Britain criticised the breaching of “mutual respect” between the two countries, adding that the kingdom “will not be lectured to by anyone”. The envoy’s comments come after Britain this month cancelled a bid to provide training to Saudi Arabia’s penal system, as criticism in the UK mounts over the kingdom’s domestic policies. Saudi Ambassador Mohammad Bin Nawaf Bin Abdul Aziz spoke of his country’s economic importance to Britain, and of the value of Saudi cooperation on security matters, “We want this relationship to continue, but we will not be lectured to by anyone,” Abdul Aziz wrote in an opinion piece in Britain’s *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, “To further our shared strategic interests in the years ahead as we confront a variety of threats, it is crucial that Saudi Arabia be treated with the respect it has unwaveringly afforded the United Kingdom.”⁸⁴

The US government has approved an \$11 billion deal to sell Saudi Arabia four advanced warships, officials said, amid mounting regional tension. Saudi Arabia is modernising its eastern fleet, which faces off against Iranian forces across the oil-rich Gulf. The four ships,

⁸² “Palestinian Started Third Intifada, Says Arab League”, *Palestine Chronicles*, October 22, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/palestinians-started-third-intifada-says-arab-league/>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁸³ “Oman’s Top Diplomat Meets Al- Assad In Rare Syria Visit – State Media”, *Gulf News*, October 26, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/oman-s-top-diplomat-meets-al-assad-in-rare-syria-visit-state-media-1.1607543>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁸⁴ “Riyadh Warns UK That It Won’t Be Lectured”, *Gulf News*, October 26, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/riyadh-warns-uk-that-it-won-t-be-lectured-1.1607466>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

based on the US Navy's littoral combat ship, are relatively small but designed to be fast and manoeuvrable in shallow water and to pack a punch. The statement from the Defence Security Cooperation Agency said it had notified the US Congress of the State Department's decision and was awaiting final approval. The agency said the sale would "improve the security of a strategic regional partner, which has been and continues to be an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East".⁸⁵

Trade unions in Oman's oil and gas sector are threatening to go on strike to protest mass layoffs in the sector amid the slump in oil prices, defying laws that prohibit strikes. The strike will begin on November 18, Oman's National Day, and go on indefinitely until the authorities meet demands of the Omani workers to put an end to the layoffs, Saud Al Salmi, the chairman of the oil and gas trade unions, told *Gulf News*, "We aim to go on strike to [persuade] the Omani authorities to find solution for such frightening layoffs of more than 1,300 Omani nationals working in the oil and gas sector," said Al Salmi.⁸⁶

Arch-rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran announced they would attend international talks in Vienna on the Syrian conflict, in what will be their first meeting to discuss the four-year-long war. Saudi Arabia said it aimed to gauge during the talks the willingness of Iran and Russia, the main backers of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his government, for a peace deal, Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said, "The view of our partners ... was that we should test the intentions of the Iranians and the Russians in arriving at a political solution in Syria, which we all prefer," al-Jubeir told a news conference in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and three of his deputies will travel to Vienna, Iranian state news agencies said.⁸⁷

Surprising optimism infused the political discussions in this week's Manama Dialogue in Bahrain over the Al Houthi acceptance of UN Resolution 2216 requiring them to withdraw and disarm. Esmail Ould Shaikh Ahmad, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Yemen, confirmed to *Gulf News* that the Al Houthis have accepted the UN resolution, which requires them to withdraw from occupied territory and surrender their heavy weapons. He also confirmed that Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi had agreed on October 19 to attend upcoming peace talks, which are slated to take place by mid-November. The agenda

⁸⁵ "US- Saudi Arabia in \$11b Advanced Warship Deal", *Gulf News*, October 21, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/us-saudi-arabia-in-11b-advanced-warship-deal-1.1604255>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

⁸⁶ "Omani Oil and Gas Unions Threaten Strike amid Oil Slump", *Gulf Times*, October 29, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/omani-oil-and-gas-unions-threaten-strike-amid-oil-slump-1.1609750>. Accessed on November 14, 2015

⁸⁷ "Arch rivals Saudi Arabia, Iran Discuss Syria Face-To-Face for First Time", *Gulf Times*, October 28, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/arch-rivals-saudi-arabia-iran-to-discuss-syria-face-to-face-for-first-time-1.1609190>. Accessed on November 14, 2015

will be based on UN Resolution 2216 and on the basis of earlier breakthroughs at the Yemeni National Dialogue.⁸⁸

The United Arab Emirates has won a second three-year term membership of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), starting from the beginning of 2016 and ending in late 2018, national news agency Wam reported today. The UAE was elected in a secret ballot conducted by the UN General Assembly in which 32 candidate countries from different geographical groups competed for 18 vacant seats. Along with the UAE, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, and South Korea were elected from Asia, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland from West Europe, Georgia and Slovenia from East Europe, Burundi, Cote D'Ivoire, Togo and Ethiopia from Africa and Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela from Latin America and the Caribbean. The UAE got 159 votes, the second highest vote turnout of the total votes garnered by the other Asian countries.⁸⁹

India and West Asia

(October 19-November 1, 2015)

- **India calls for urgent reform in UNSC amid looming ISIS threats; India seeks Australia help to unravel ISIS conspiracy.**

India said the prevailing architecture of the UN Security Council has proved to be grossly inadequate in effectively dealing with current challenges such as the conflicts in the Middle East and the rise of ISIS as it called for urgent reform of the UN body. "The prevailing architecture of the UN particularly the Security Council has proved to be grossly inadequate in effectively dealing with these challenges. Clearly, we cannot continue to do what we have been doing in the past," visiting Member of Parliament from India Mansukh Mandaviya said at the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of signing of the UN Charter here yesterday. He said there is an urgent need to comprehensively reform the principal organ of the UN responsible for peace and security to reflect contemporary geo-political realities.⁹⁰

Days after Canberra helped nab underworld don Chhota Rajan, India sought Australia's help to unravel the conspiracy behind ISIS luring Indian youth into its fold following the arrest of a Mumbai man who fought alongside the middle-east terror group. During the meeting, the Indian side conveyed that Mumbai youth Areeb Ejaj Majeed, who was arrested on his return from Iraq and Syria after fighting alongside ISIS terrorists, used to communicate with his recruiters and associates through various electronic and social media platforms. Assistance

⁸⁸ "Manama Dialogue Concludes with Optimism over Yemen", *Gulf Times*, November 1, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/manama-dialogue-concludes-with-optimism-over-yemen-1.1610898>. Accessed on November 14, 2015

⁸⁹ "UAE Wins UN Human Rights Council Seat for Second Term", *Khaleej Times*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/uae-wins-human-rights-council-seat-for-second-3-year-term>. Accessed on November 14, 2015

⁹⁰ "India Calls for Urgent Reform in UNSC Amid Looming ISIS Threat, Middle East Conflict", *The Indian Express*, October 24, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-calls-for-urgent-reform-in-unsc-amid-looming-isis-threat-middle-east-conflicts/>. Accessed on November 12, 2015

was sought from Australian authorities regarding subscriber information, login history, IP attachments. "The information would assist in unearthing the entire conspiracy and details of the terrorist acts committed in Iraq and Syria and would also pinpoint the identities of ISIS recruiters and facilitators," a home ministry official said.⁹¹

F. The United States of America

National

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Defence Department needs to change its cyber culture to protect its networks from threats; Emails between President Obama and former Secretary of State Clinton will not be made public till January 2017; Majority Republicans in the House avoided an internal squabble and picked a new leader; House passed a budget bill that would avert any such showdowns until 2017; New Defence Innovation Unit-Experimental is in full start-up mode; Kerry says world has a rare opportunity for a climate change deal; U.S. economic growth slowed, expanding at an annual rate of just 1.5 percent; Clinton using a Southern campaign swing to outline criminal justice proposals; Republican presidential candidates clashed over economic policy and launched personal attacks;**

Defence Department's chief information officer Terry Halvorsen, speaking to a reporters breakfast hosted by *The Christian Science Monitor* in Washington on October 29, emphasised that the Defence Department needs to change its cyber culture to protect its networks from the relentless threat from hackers. Halvorsen said, "I get a question all the time: 'What keeps me awake?' I think most people expect me to answer it's security or it's dollars. It's neither of those things. It's culture". The Internet is an "important part of our business, an important part of our culture, but you have to go there with the right rules and right understandings". He said, DoD has to establish a "culture of cyber discipline," he said, because the attacks against the agency networks are constant. "There's not a time when I'm not being attacked somewhere in the world". He added, good cyber defences include a combination of tools, culture, and training and education. "It's really also educating leaders at every level what their responsibilities are and what they need to know". The Defence Department needs to change its cyber economics as well.⁹²

White House officials said that they will not allow emails between President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to be made public as part of the court-ordered release of all her emails when she was secretary. October 30, a senior unidentified White House official said that releasing the communications at this time would violate the long tradition of records remaining confidential while a president is in office. The official said, "It is

⁹¹ "India Seeks Australia Help To Unravel ISIS Conspiracy", *The Times of India*, October 29, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-seeks-Australia-help-to-unravel-ISIS-conspiracy/articleshow/49555542.cms>. Accessed on November 14, 2015.

⁹² Ferdinando, Lisa, "DoD Needs to Improve Cyber Culture, CIO Says", *DoD News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626607/dod-needs-to-improve-cyber-culture-cio-says>

a principle that previous White Houses have vigorously defended, as it goes to the core of the president's ability to receive unvarnished advice and counsel during his time in office and is central to the independent functioning of the executive branch". The White House plans to keep the emails under wraps at least until Obama leaves office in January 2017. The exact number of emails between the president and Clinton is not known.⁹³

On October 28, majority Republicans in the U.S. House avoided an internal squabble and picked a new leader, and after several years of lurching from one fiscal crisis to the next, the chamber passed a budget that would avert any such showdowns until 2017. The bipartisan, \$80 billion bill would raise the debt ceiling until March 2017 and would increase unpopular, across-the-board spending caps on domestic and military spending for two years. The 266-167 House vote sent the budget plan to the Senate, which could start work on it as early as Thursday. Time is critical because both chambers of Congress need to raise the U.S. borrowing authority by November 3 to avert a potential default on the national debt.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, on his last full day at the pinnacle of Washington power, Speaker John Boehner voiced no regrets about leaving behind the unruly U.S. House of Representatives, reminisced about his career in public life and weighed in on presidential politics.⁹⁵

During a one-on-one interview before giving a presentation at the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International "Unmanned Systems: Defence 2015" meeting in Arlington, Virginia, DIUx Director Dr. George Duchak, formerly director of the Air Force Research Laboratory's information directorate and a Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency programme manager, told *DoD News* that the new Defence Innovation Unit-Experimental is in full start-up mode. Two months before Defence Secretary Ash Carter officially opened the doors of the DIUx in California's Silicon Valley. Duchak said, "We have a building right outside the gate at Moffett Field ... called the Army Reserve Support Centre, and we have an agreement with them for 12,000 square feet of space. Currently, we occupy 3,000 square feet". When the office is complete, the space will be open and collegial, the director added, and, like a business incubator, people will work together in a collaborative environment where all can coordinate and share ideas and opportunities.⁹⁶

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, in an opinion piece published on October 29 in *Financial Times*, London, said, the world has a rare opportunity for a climate change deal, and he's telling leaders to "grab it." Kerry wrote that a strong agreement at the Paris summit in December would "transform the global economy and help avert the worst effects of climate

⁹³ "White House Says It Will Block Release of Clinton Emails to Obama", *VOA News*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/white-house-will-block-release-emails-clinton-obama/3030872.html>

⁹⁴ Saine, Cindy, "US House Passes Budget Bill; Republicans Tap Ryan for Speaker", *VOA News*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/house-republicans-to-vote-for-paul-ryan-as-speaker/3026567.html>

⁹⁵ "Boehner Reflects on Leaving 'Lonely' Job as US House Speaker", *Reuters*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-boehner-reflects-on-leaving-lonely-job-as-us-house-speaker/3027597.html>

⁹⁶ Pellerin, Cheryl, "DoD's Silicon Valley Innovation Experiment Begins", *DoD News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626602/dods-silicon-valley-innovation-experiment-begins>

change." He said success would reflect a new level of partnership with "government leaders from every region working constructively alongside the private sector and civil society." But Kerry pointed to previous global warming deals that have failed to effectively address the problem and said the "pitfalls of the past" must be avoided.⁹⁷

U.S. economic growth slowed in July, August and September, expanding at an annual rate of just 1.5 percent. October 29th report from the Commerce Department showed the gross domestic product expanded at less than half the rate of the previous quarter, as consumer and business spending slowed.⁹⁸

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton is using a Southern campaign swing to outline criminal justice proposals intended to treat black Americans more fairly. It was reported that in Atlanta, Clinton will call for eliminating sentencing disparities between crack cocaine crimes and those involving powder cocaine. Clinton proposes making the change retroactive, according to her campaign.⁹⁹

On October 28, the top 10 Republican presidential candidates clashed over economic policy and also launched several personal attacks during the third debate of the primary election season. The debate, broadcast on financial cable news channel *CNBC*, comes as real estate mogul Donald Trump appears to be losing his months-long grip on the race's front-runner position. The outspoken reality television star, who now trails retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson in several national polls, appeared less brash and on the defensive compared with his performance in previous debates.¹⁰⁰

International: Asia

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Secretary of State Kerry meets separately with his Iranian and Russian counterparts, before international talks on Syria; Carter: the U.S. military remains determined to defeat ISIL extremist forces; U.S. and coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL; Carter: Russia "doomed to fail" in Syria, the goal of the U.S. remains defeating the ISIL; US authorized special operations forces to coordinate Syrian local fighter movements; US announces another \$100 million to help the Syrian opposition boost local governments and civil societies; US seeks to bolster defence ties with Israel amid many**

⁹⁷ "Kerry Urges World Leaders to 'Grab' Global Warming Deal in Paris", *VOA News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-urges-world-leaders-grab-global-warming-deal/3029285.html>

⁹⁸ Randle, Jim, "US Economic Growth Slows to 1.5 Percent", *VOA News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-economic-growth-slows-to-one-and-a-half-percent/3028188.html>

⁹⁹ "Clinton to Pitch Sentencing, Police Changes to Black Voters", *Associated Press*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-to-pitch-sentencing-police-changes-to-black-voters/3029577.html>

¹⁰⁰ Malone, Jim and Gallo, William, "Republicans Clash Over Economic Policy at Presidential Debate", *VOA News*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republicans-hold-third-presidential-debate/3027549.html>; and, "'I Don't Get It': Trump Struggles With Drop in Poll Standings", *Associated Press*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/donald-trump-struggles-with-drop-in-poll-standings/3026180.html>

security challenges; Strong U.S.-South Korea alliance is a deterrent against North Korea's provocations; U.S.-South Korea discuss security issues; US, China to discuss South China Sea tension.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is meeting separately with his Iranian and Russian counterparts in Vienna, before international talks on Syria the top U.S. diplomat has called "the most promising" opportunity in years to end the country's bloody conflict. In addition to one-on-one talks with Iran's Mohammad Javad Zarif and Russia's Sergei Lavrov, Kerry is taking part in informal meetings on October 29 on Syria with senior diplomats from Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Austria and the EU.¹⁰¹

On October 27, Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. testified before the full committee on U.S. military strategy in the West Asia, including Russian involvement in Syria Carter said that the U.S. military remains determined to defeat Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) extremist forces and effectively adapts its campaign as conditions evolve in Iraq and Syria. He first acknowledged Congress for last night's "significant progress" toward a multi-year defence budget deal. A multi-year deal would support the defence strategy, troops and their families; and all elements of America's national security and strength. Turning to U.S. strategy in the West Asia, Carter called the region a kaleidoscope of challenges, and added, "ISIL poses a threat to our people and friendly countries, not only in the Middle East, but around the world." While changes in U.S. strategy are under way, he reemphasized that a lasting ISIL defeat will require enabling capable and motivated local ground forces, recognizing the campaign will take time and energetic diplomacy, and strengthening the execution of U.S. strategy.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported both on October 31 and November 1 that U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq.¹⁰³

Defence Secretary Ash Carter, speaking to reporters in Alaska on October 30, said that while Russia is "doomed to fail" in Syria, the goal of the U.S. remains defeating the ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. Carter said, it appears Russia has not "thought through very thoroughly" its actions in Syria, Carter said. While Russia said it was going to fight ISIL, it is not doing that. Moscow

¹⁰¹ Dockins, Pamela, "US, Russia, Iran Seek to Bridge Gaps on Syria", *VOA News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/international-players-seek-consensus-on-syria-as-talks-begin/3027650.html>; and, Dockins, Pamela, "Kerry: Syria Talks 'Most Promising Opportunity' for Political Solution", *VOA News*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/iranian-foreign-minister-to-attend-syria-talks/3026112.html>

¹⁰² Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter Outlines Strategy to Counter ISIL at Senate Armed Services Hearing", *DoD News*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626113/carter-outlines-strategy-to-counter-isil-at-senate-armed-services-hearing>

¹⁰³ "Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL Targets in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626852/airstrikes-continue-against-isil-targets-in-syria-iraq>; "US Steps up Attacks Against Islamic State", *VOA News*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-concedes-it-is-struggling-in-fight-with-islamic-state-group/3024943.html>; and, Ferdinando, Lisa, "Inherent Resolve Spokesman Updates Iraq, Syria Operations", *DoD News*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626321/inherent-resolve-spokesman-updates-iraq-syria-operations>

is instead, Carter explained, supporting the Assad regime and "fuelling the very civil war that leads to extremism, which ISIL represents, and which the Russians say they fear." He added, Raqqa, Syria, needs to be retaken and returned to its citizens so they can have a "decent way of life, which they're not enjoying under the barbaric rule of ISIL now". The United States and its coalition partners are working to degrade the capacity of ISIL through targeting its supply routes, logistics and leadership.¹⁰⁴

On October 30, the White House said that the president had authorized fewer than 50 U.S. special operations forces to coordinate Syrian local fighter movements with the U.S.-led coalition efforts. These would be the first U.S. ground forces sent to Syria for more than a raid or a specific mission. The U.S. troops deployed to Syria will provide "some training, some advice and some assistance" to those fighting IS extremists, White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters.¹⁰⁵ On October 31, the US State Department announced that another \$100 million would be given to help the Syrian opposition boost local governments and civil societies. It said the money would be used for keeping schools open, restoring access to clean water and electricity, and supporting an independent media. This latest contribution would bring total U.S. aid to the moderate Syrian opposition to \$500 million since 2012.¹⁰⁶

During an appearance at the National Defence University with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said that the United States is seeking to bolster its strong defence ties with Israel amid many security challenges Israel faces in the West Asia. Carter said, "Israel is a cornerstone of our strategy in the Middle East, and its security is a top priority for America, for our military, and President Obama and me personally". He added, the defence relationship between the United States and Israel is stronger than ever. Carter, who is hosting Yaalon for a two-day visit aimed at advancing their countries' defence relationship, recalled traveling to Israel's border with Lebanon in July and seeing "how real and how close" the threat from Hezbollah is to Israel.¹⁰⁷

On November 1, Defence Secretary Ash Carter speaking to reporters during a visit to the South Korean side of the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone between the Koreas said that the United States remains committed to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and continues to call on North Korea to maintain peace and stability in the region. Carter said, the strong U.S.-South Korea alliance is a deterrent to the constant danger posed by North Korea. He added,

¹⁰⁴ Ferdinando, Lisa, "Carter: Russia 'Doomed to Fail' in Syria; ISIL Must be Defeated", *DoD News*, October 31, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626828/carter-russia-doomed-to-fail-in-syria-isil-must-be-defeated>

¹⁰⁵ Babb, Carla, "US Orders Special Operations Forces to Syria", *VOA News*, October 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-to-send-special-forces-to-syria-to-fight-islamic-state/3029684.html>

¹⁰⁶ "US to Give Another \$100M to Moderate Syrian Opposition", *VOA News*, October 31, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-another-one-hundred-million-dollars-syrian-opposition/3031278.html>

¹⁰⁷ Ferdinando, Lisa, "U.S., Israel Seek to Boost Defence Ties, Carter Says", *DoD News*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626136/us-israel-seek-to-boost-defense-ties-carter-says>; and, Garamone, Jim, "Carter, Yaalon Wrap Up Discussions on Middle East Threats, Challenges", *DoD News*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626308/carter-yaalon-wrap-up-discussions-on-middle-east-threats-challenges>

the United States continues to call on North Korea to "avoid provocations, avoid adding to tensions on the peninsula". Pyongyang needs to "take the steps that are called for in the six-party talks to denuclearize the peninsula and ultimately create a situation that is peaceful and prosperous for everyone on the peninsula".¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his South Korean counterpart, Army Gen. Lee Sun-jin, met in Seoul on November 1, 2015 to discuss security issues that face the Korean Peninsula and the way forward for the alliance. Dunford said at the beginning of the meeting at the Korean Ministry of Defence that "This is a superb opportunity to address the critical issues that will allow us to deter North Korean provocations and aggression, and, if necessary, to fight tonight and win". Dunford added, the U.S.-Republic of Korea alliance is in transition. Last year, the two countries agreed that the United States will transfer wartime control of the South Korean military when conditions are right. The conditions-based approach to operational control means a U.S. general retains command of the Combined Forces Command in the event of war. The command has about 28,500 U.S. troops and 640,000 South Korean service members. Progress is being made, Dunford said, and he cited the signing of the new bilateral operations plan and the establishment of a new U.S. and South Korean combined division as examples. Navy Adm. Harry Harris, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, and Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of the Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command, also joined Dunford in the discussions.¹⁰⁹

China's Defence Ministry said it will voice its "solemn position" to the United States when top navy officials from both countries hold an hour-long video teleconference on October 29 to discuss tensions in the South China Sea and naval ties. Admiral John Richardson, the U.S. chief of naval operations, and his Chinese counterpart Admiral Wu Shengli will participate in the talks. The two countries have previously held two other video teleconferences.¹¹⁰

India-US Relations

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **US announces the contract for building the next generation long-range strike bombers at a whopping \$55 billion; India-US trade meeting focuses on translating "enhanced" engagement into tangible results; Role of Indian Diaspora crucial for future India-US relationship; Sureshbhai Patel posed no threat to US police.**

¹⁰⁸ Ferdinando, Lisa, "Carter: South Korean Alliance 'Ironclad' in Face of Constant Danger", *DoD News*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626850/carter-south-korean-alliance-ironclad-in-face-of-constant-danger>

¹⁰⁹ Garamone, Jim, "Dunford Discusses Progress With South Korean Counterpart", *DoD News*, November 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/626844/dunford-discusses-progress-with-south-korean-counterpart>

¹¹⁰ Ide, William, "US, China to Discuss South China Sea Tensions", *VOA News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-china-to-discuss-south-china-sea-tensions/3027722.html>; and, Babb, Carla, "US Official: More South China Sea Patrols Likely", *VOA News*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-sends-ship-near-chinese-artificial-islands/3024390.html>

On October 27, the United States announced the contract for building the next generation long-range strike bombers at a whopping \$55 billion (Rs.3,57,500 crore), providing a stunning contrast to the way India has gone about concluding the purchase of Rafale fighters from France. Pentagon selected the U.S. defence major Northrop Grumman to build a fleet of stealth bombers that can strike deep inside enemy territory with nuclear bombs, and will replace the fabled B-52s, B-1s and B-2s. It is the biggest military contract anywhere in the world, and will result in the building of 100 new-age bombers that will begin entering service from 2020. The U.S. contract for the 100 bombers was awarded to a domestic company, ensuring that the technology and investment stayed within the national boundary, while protecting the classified nature of the programme.¹¹¹

India and the US held a key trade meeting in Washington that focussed on translating "enhanced" engagement into tangible results amid a "high bar" of relationship set by their top leadership. US Trade Representative Michael Froman, speaking at a reception hosted in honour of Nirmala Sitharaman - Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ministry of Commerce & Industry, as well as a Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs under the Finance Ministry - by the US India Business Council (USIBC), said, "Our work this week under the Trade Policy Forum (TPF) focussed on translating engagement into tangible results that will increase the pace of trade growth between our economies". The two co-chaired the ninth India US Trade Policy Forum meeting.¹¹²

Indian Diaspora which constitutes people of Indian origin, has around 30 million people, who live outside of India, but have still kept their cultural connections alive. With the help of the *Internet* and *Facebook*, they are able to frequently keep in touch with their families and do not have to wait for a letter or telegram as was the case only a few decades ago. Time is ripe for a true and honest partnership with the United States. Indians out here are very successful, but we cannot say the same of the US-India relationship. Indians as individuals have been successful but they haven't succeeded as a community. There is much at stake here. "The Indian Diaspora: Defining a New Paradigm in India-US Relationship," is the theme of an upcoming Regional Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Programme. This topic will be discussed two weeks from now in Los Angeles, California, USA.¹¹³

Sureshbhai Patel who slammed to the ground by an Alabama police officer posed no threat to police, two fellow officers testified in the retrial of the cop charged with use of excessive force.

¹¹¹ Joseph, Josy, "U.S. Bomber Pact In Contrast To Indian Rafale Deal", *The Hindu*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-bomber-pact-in-contrast-to-indian-rafale-deal/article7815508.ece>

¹¹² "India, US Hold Key Trade Meeting To Boost Ties", *The Economic Times* October 30, 2015, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-us-hold-key-trade-meeting-to-boost-ties/articleshow/49599010.cms>

¹¹³ Mishra, Mrutyuanjai, "Future of US-India Relations Depends On How The Indian Diaspora Engages with the Americans", *The Times of India*, October 28, 2015, at <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/mind-the-gap/future-of-us-india-relations-depends-on-how-the-indian-diaspora-engages-with-the-americans/>

Patel had arrived days earlier from India to take care of his grandson, presented no threat to police, Madison Police Officer Charles Spence told a Huntsville court on October 29. "To me, he appeared to be in his 70s." "There was no criminal conduct to document" by Mr Patel and that no reasonable suspicion existed to lay hands on Mr Patel, testified Lt. Clint Harrell, according to local AI.com. "Even if they are accused of something, you still treat them right." The first trial of former Madison Officer Eric Parker for the Feb 6 takedown of Mr Patel while he was taking a walk near his son's home ended early last month with a hung jury, as the jury split 10-2 in favour of acquittal.¹¹⁴

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Indian and Sri Lankan Navies participating in the 4th edition of Sri Lanka-India Exercise (SLINEX) in Sri Lanka; The Indian Air Force conducts its annual exercise, Exercise Livewire.**

The Indian and Sri Lankan Navies would undertake the 4th edition of Sri Lanka-India Exercise (SLINEX) off Trincomalee, Sri Lanka from October 27 to November 1, 2015. SLINEX series of bilateral maritime exercises were initiated in 2005 and since then three successful engagements have been conducted. Reinforcing the strong neighbourly ties underscored by extensive maritime interaction, Indian Naval ships Kora, Kirpan and Savitri along with ship-borne integral helicopters entered Trincomalee on October 27 to participate in the exercise. Kora and Kirpan are the missile corvettes, whereas Savitri is Offshore Patrol Vessel. In addition, an Indian Naval maritime reconnaissance aircraft will also participate in the exercise. The Sri Lankan Navy will be represented by Sayura, Samudra, Sagara, six Fast Attack Crafts, two Fast Gun Boats and one Fast Missile Vessel. The exercise will commence with a Harbour Phase to be followed by the Sea Phase, which will commence on October 30. The Sea Phase will include complex operations including anti-piracy exercises, gun firings, cross-deck helicopter operations and anti-surface exercises. SLINEX 15 is likely to further enhance the capability of the two navies to work together at sea and contribute towards maritime security in the region.¹¹⁵

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is commencing its annual exercise, Exercise Livewire, on October 31, 2015. The exercise involves utilization of air assets of all types available with the IAF. The aim of the exercise is to validate the full spectrum of IAF capability in undertaking operations

¹¹⁴ "Slammed Indian Grandfather Posed No Threat: US Cops", *NDTV News*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/indians-abroad/slammed-indian-grandfather-posed-no-threat-us-cops-1237613>; and, "Indian Grandfather Assaulted by US Cop in Feb Said 'No English' 5 Times", *Business Standard*, October 28, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/international/indian-grandfather-assaulted-by-us-cop-in-feb-said-no-english-5-times-115102800104_1.html

¹¹⁵ "In Ships at Trincomalee – SLINEX-15," *PIB*, October 27, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=129986>

in response to likely future threats and operational contingencies, and also to exercise its latest acquisitions effectively in a network centric environment. The latest operational concepts and preparedness would also be checked out. Significantly, joint operations with Indian Army and Navy would be practised on realistic targets, so as to synergise the operational capability of all the three Services. Liaison with Airports Authority of India has been ensured for de-confliction with civil air traffic during the exercise.¹¹⁶

International

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Turkey has been approved by the US State Department to buy 1,000 Joint Direct Attack Munitions; Russia lays down the first of two new arctic multi-purpose support vessels for the Russian Navy.**

Reports say that, Turkey has been approved by the US State Department to buy 1,000 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) guided bomb kits from the United States. Turkey had requested to buy USD70 million's worth of JDAM from Raytheon. The deal is likely to boost Turkey's firepower ability in its recently launched airstrikes against the Islamic State in Syria, and against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq, Syria and Turkey.¹¹⁷

Meanwhile, according to reports, Russia's Vostochnaya Verf shipyard in Vladivostok laid down the first of two new arctic multi-purpose support vessels for the Russian Navy on October 27, 2015. The Project 03182 vessels are designed to act as small tankers, replenishment and support vessels for Russian warships working in the arctic region. They're also intended to be able to take on patrol functions, tow other vessels, conduct search and rescue (SAR) operations, fisheries monitoring and to support civilian shipping and oil and gas operations. The vessels have been built to the Russian Arc 4 ice class standard, the second highest level and equivalent to the Finnish-Swedish IA class. The vessels are understood to be a derivative of the Project 23310 design from the Zelenodolsk Design Bureau (ZPKDB). The first vessel will be called Mikhail Barkov, and will have a displacement of 3,500 tonnes, a crew of 24, a length of 80 m and a range of 1,500 n miles. It will be powered by three diesel-electric engines, and equipped with two auxiliary power units and a bow thruster. Both of the two vessels will enter service with the Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet. As per reports the first vessel, Mikhail Barskov will be delivered in November 2017, with the second following at the end of 2019.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ "Indian Air Force (IAF) to Commence Exercise-Livewire," *PIB*, October 29, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130039>

¹¹⁷ "US Approves JDAM Export To Turkey," *IHS Jane's*, October 29, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55655/us-approves-jdam-export-to-turkey>

¹¹⁸ "Russia Lays Down First Of Two New Arctic Support Ships," *IHS Jane's*, October 28, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55630/russia-lays-down-first-of-two-new-arctic-support-ships>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **BSF lodges protest with Pak Rangers over border firing; Army officer, Two Hizb militants killed in Kashmir encounter; Pakistan supported, trained terror groups: Musharraf; Top LeT commander killed in encounter.**

BSF, on October 27, lodged a strong protest with Pak Rangers over its "unprovoked" cross-border firing which killed one civilian and injured 14 in Jammu and Kashmir over past few days. The protest was conveyed at the Sector Commander level Flag Meeting between BSF and Pakistan Rangers at BOP Octroi (Pakistan side) in R S Pura sector of Jammu district. The Flag Meeting was convened in the wake of renewed firing by Pakistani Rangers after over a month-long lull.¹¹⁹

Two local militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were killed in an encounter with the Army along with the Special Operations Group in Drabgam village of South Kashmir's Pulwama district on October 26. A junior commissioned officer of army was also killed in the encounter.¹²⁰

Pakistan's former president Pervez Musharraf has admitted that Pakistan supported and trained groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) in 1990s to carry out militancy in Kashmir. "In 1990s the freedom struggle began in Kashmir... At that time Lashkar-e-Toiba and 11 or 12 other organisations were formed. We supported them and trained them as they were fighting in Kashmir at the cost of their lives," Musharraf said in an interview to Dunya News on October 25.¹²¹

Top Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) commander Abu Qasim, mastermind behind several high-profile attacks in J&K, was killed on October 29 in a surgical operation in south Kashmir's Kulgam district. Abu Qasim, a resident of Bhawalpur, Multan, worked as the divisional commander of the LeT outfit. He was operating in south Kashmir for the last five years and masterminded the recent Udhampur Attack on the BSF Convoy, in which two BSF jawans were killed and 12 personnel were injured. He was behind several high-profile militant attacks in the Valley since 2012. Meanwhile, a soldier of the army's 14 Rashtriya Rifles lost his life during a firefight in

¹¹⁹ "BSF Lodges Strong Protest With Pak Rangers Over Border Firing", *The Economic Times*, October 27, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/bsf-lodges-strong-protest-with-pak-rangers-over-border-firing/articleshow/49555667.cms>

¹²⁰ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K: Two Hizbul Militants, One Army Officer Killed In An Encounter In Pulwama District", *The Indian Express*, October 27, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-two-hizbul-militants-one-army-officer-killed-in-an-encounter-in-pulwama-district/>

¹²¹ "Pakistan Trained Terror Groups To Fight In Kashmir, Says Pervez Musharraf", *The Indian Express*, October 28, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pakistan-trained-terror-groups-to-fight-in-kashmir-says-pervez-musharraf/>

the forest range, as the operation launched by the security forces to eliminate Qasim entered its second day.¹²²

Northeast India

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **Assam Rifles JCO killed in ambush in Manipur; Armed NSCN-KK cadre held in Dimapur; Assam: Security forces arrest four NDFB(S) militants in Chirang district; United Naga Council calls blockade over 'anti-tribal' bills.**

A day after one Assam Rifles jawan was killed and two others were injured in a gun-fight with suspected militants at Satang area near Kwatha village under Moreh PS in Manipur, a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of 44 Assam Rifles was killed and three others suffered injuries in a militant attack that occurred on October 26 near the waiting shed of Khoikai village under Kamjong subdivision of Ukhrul district. The Revolutionary People's Front has claimed responsibility for the attack.¹²³

The 37 Assam Rifles apprehended an armed self-styled 'under secretary' of the NSCN (KK) during an operation in Chumukedima area in Dimapur, claimed the Kohima-based IGAR (North) on October 23. A .32 pistol with two magazines, a .22 pistol with a magazine and a mobile phone were also recovered during the search operation. The individual, identified as Vkinny Sema of Dimapur, has confessed that he was attempting to sell some weapons to a potential customer.¹²⁴

Four hardcore NDFB(S) militants have been apprehended by security forces during a joint operation in Assam's Chirang district, a defence spokesman said on October 28. The apprehended militants have been identified as Rajeev Basumatary alias Mwrgwng, allegedly involved in the attack on adivasis in December last, Hitesh Narzary, Mohanto Narzary and Antho Narzary. A 7.65 mm Pistol, some ammunition and two grenades have been recovered from them.¹²⁵

United Naga Council (UNC) has announced a 10-day 'Economic Blockade' on National Highways and a ban on construction of national and international projects including Trans

¹²² Ashiq, Peerzada, "Top LeT Leader Abu Qasim Killed In Encounter", *The Hindu*, October 29, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/top-let-leader-abu-qasim-killed-in-encounter/article7817115.ece?ref=relatedNews>

¹²³ "One AR JCO Killed In Attack, RPF Claims Hand", *The Sangai Express*, October 27, 2015 at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/page/items/58639/one-ar-jco-killed-in-attack-rpf-claims-hand>

¹²⁴ "NSCN-KK Cadre Held in Dimapur", *The Assam Tribune*, October 28, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct2815/oth054>

¹²⁵ "Four Hardcore NDFB(S) Militants Nabbed In Assam's Chirang District", *The Economic Times*, October 28, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/four-hardcore-ndfbs-militants-nabbed-in-assams-chirang-district/articleshow/49567075.cms>

Asian Railways from midnight of November 2 in protest against the passing of three anti-tribal Bills and two resolutions by Manipur Assembly.¹²⁶

Left-wing Extremism

(October 26-November 1, 2015)

- **CRPF jawan killed in encounter with Maoists in Sukma; Three CRPF jawans hurt in pressure bomb blast in Chhattisgarh; Maoists go on rampage in parts of Bastar, kill two.**

A CRPF jawan was killed and another injured in a gun battle with Maoists in Chhattisgarh's worst insurgency-hit Sukma district. The skirmish took place on October 25 in forests under Maraguda police station limits while the paramilitary forces were out on an anti-Maoist operation in the region, Sukma additional superintendent of police Santosh Singh told *PTI* on October 26.¹²⁷

Three CRPF jawans were injured when a pressure bomb planted by Naxals in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district exploded on October 28. The incident took place in the forests near Burkapal paramilitary camp under Chintagufa police station limits while a road opening party of security forces was conducting its task, said Sukma Additional Superintendent of Police Santosh Singh. Three jawans belonging to CRPF's 74th battalion sustained minor injuries in the explosion, the ASP added.¹²⁸

Many districts of Chhattisgarh witnessed intensified Maoist activity on October 29 as the rebels killed two civilians and torched 30 vehicles at different locations. The Maoists killed Brujlal Tulavi (27) and Anil Kalko (30) of Kergatta village in Rajnandgoan district of the State and threw their bodies near Sawargaon village on the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border. Allegedly, the duo were killed for running a "secret network of police informers" in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. In a separate incident, the Maoists torched 29 vehicles near Chargaon mines in Kanker district.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ "Economic Blockade", *The Assam Tribune*, October 31, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct3115/oth052>

¹²⁷ "CRPF Jawan Killed, Another Injured In Gun Battle with Maoists", *Hindustan Times*, October 26, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/crpf-jawan-killed-another-injured-in-gun-battle-with-maoists/story-BCa33INcVhgbQPWisvM2UM.html>

¹²⁸ "Three CRPF Jawans Hurt In Pressure Bomb Blast in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, October 28, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/three-crpf-jawans-hurt-in-pressure-bomb-blast-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/49568049.cms>

¹²⁹ Dahat, Pavan, "Maoists Go On Rampage In Chhattisgarh, Kill Two", *The Hindu*, October 31, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maoists-go-on-rampage-in-chhattisgarh-kill-two/article7824610.ece>