

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Gulbin Sultana

Gunjan Singh

Rajorshi Roy

Pranamita Baruah

Zaki Zaidi

Saroj Bishoyi

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives

China

Russia

Japan, South Korea

Iran, Iraq and the Gulf

United States of America

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010
Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Prime Minister Hasina attends the SAARC Summit; Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs Ministry approves Land Boundary Agreement; Government protests the resolution adopted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly on the war crimes verdicts.**

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina along with 63 members left Dhaka for Nepal on November 25 to attend the 18th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit on November 26-27.¹ PM Hasina had four separate bilateral meetings with the heads of the government and state of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal on the side-lines of the summit in Kathmandu on November 26. In the meetings, all the leaders stressed the need for stronger cooperation to combat militancy, alleviate poverty and make SAARC an effective body. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reassured Sheikh Hasina of signing the Teesta water-sharing deal and implementing the Land Boundary Agreement, saying his government was working sincerely on the issues. Modi also informed Hasina that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee, who had opposed the signing of the Teesta treaty, now had no objection and that Mamata would come to Bangladesh with him at the time of striking the deal. He also emphasised that Bangladesh cooperated more in sharing intelligence over the recent Burdwan blasts with the Indian intelligence agencies. During the meeting with the Nepal PM, Hasina recalled the support of the Nepalese people for the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh. Koirala thanked Hasina for allowing Nepal to use the Mongla Port. Hasina said, she requested India to allow Nepal and Bhutan to use its corridor to enter Bangladesh. The Nepalese PM invited Bangladeshi investment in his country in hydro-electricity projects. The Afghan president wanted to know how Bangladesh curbed militancy. Hasina told the president that Bangladesh and her government had to take immense risks to wipe out the menace. She said her government had adopted zero tolerance for militancy. Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif and Hasina exchanged pleasantries and congratulated each other on becoming prime minister for the third time.² At the 30-minute-long meeting, they discussed terrorism and power shortages in Pakistan.³ Hasina invited Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to visit Bangladesh at their earliest convenient time.

¹ "PM Leaves for Nepal Today", *The Daily Star*, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/pm-leaves-for-nepal-today-51958>.

² "Trying, Sincerely", *The Daily Star*, November 27, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/trying-sincerely-52213>.

³ "Hasina, Nawaz Discuss Power, Terrorism", *The Daily Star*, November 27, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/hasina-nawaz-discuss-power-terrorism-52217>.

Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs Ministry has advised the central government to place the India-Bangladesh land boundary agreement bill at the parliament as soon as possible. The bill was sent to the committee for approval after it was placed before the Rajya Sabha in 2013.⁴

Bangladesh government has strongly protested the resolution adopted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Provincial Assembly of Pakistan on the war crimes verdicts, terming it "direct interference" in the internal affairs of Bangladesh. In a diplomatic note sent to the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka on November 25, the Foreign Ministry deplored the adoption of the said resolution by the KPK Assembly, which it said was a brazen denial of justice for the victims of the heinous crimes committed by the convicted individuals and that the KPK Assembly chose to speak for Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. On November 6, the Foreign Ministry summoned the acting high commissioner of Pakistan Ahmad Hussain Dayo and strongly protested Islamabad's reaction to the recent verdict in the trial of war criminal Motiur Rahman Nizami. In an aide-memoire, the government deplored the comments made by a senior and important cabinet member of Pakistan government regarding the verdict by the International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh without appreciating its true perspective. Earlier on December 17, 2013, Dhaka summoned the then Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi Qureshi and deplored the resolutions adopted by the Pakistan National Assembly and Punjab Provincial Assembly expressing concern over the execution of war criminal Quader Mollah.⁵

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Swedish assistance to Bangladesh; Nisha Biswal visits Bangladesh; A delegation of law enforcement and intelligence agencies of Bangladesh visits India; Leather manufacturers from India and Bangladesh sign MoU**

Sweden will give Bangladesh 1.6 billion Swedish krona in development assistance in the next seven years. The move is part of the Nordic country's development strategy for Bangladesh for 2014-2020. The aim of the strategy is to: alleviate poverty; strengthen democracy, respect for human rights and gender equality; and contribute to sustainable development. Sweden committed the same amount in 2013 as development assistance for Bangladesh.⁶

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal came to Dhaka on November 27 on a three-day visit after attending the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu. Nisha Desai Biswal in separate meetings with opposition leader Raushan Ershad, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and civil society representatives said that national consensus among political parties

⁴ "LBA Okayed by Indian Parliamentary Committee", *The Daily Star*, November 26, 2014 at <http://bd.thedailystar.net/lba-okayed-by-indian-parliamentary-committee-52123>.

⁵ "Dhaka Protests Resolution in Pakistan's Khyber Assembly", *The Daily Star*, November 26, 2014 at <http://bd.thedailystar.net/dhaka-protests-resolution-in-pakistans-khyber-assembly-52111>.

⁶ "Sweden Pledges Tk 1,659cr in Aid for Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, November 26, 2014 at <http://bd.thedailystar.net/sweden-pledges-tk-1-659cr-in-aid-for-bangladesh-52042>.

was a must to strengthen democratic processes and sustainable economic development . This was Biswal's third trip to Dhaka.⁷

The seven-member team of law enforcement and intelligence agencies of Bangladesh interacted with officials of India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Kolkata on November 28. The three-day visit of the Bangladesh delegation was aimed at probing the presence of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) link to the October 2 Burdwan blast, and also to help the Indian intelligence agencies locate the Bangladeshi JMB members believed to be hiding in India.⁸

Leather manufacturers from India and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding to intensify cooperation, foster joint ventures and explore possibilities of direct investments on November 27. The Indian Footwear Components Manufacturers Association (IFCOMA) and the Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh signed the agreement on the sidelines of a leather sector fair at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka. Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran was present during the agreement signing.⁹

Sri Lanka

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **President attends the 18th SAARC Summit; Joint military exercise between special forces of Indian and Sri Lankan army; Sri Lankan navy arrested 14 Indian fishermen; Russian naval ship makes goodwill visit at port of Colombo; A delegation of Sri Lankan Air Force makes official visit to Pakistan; UNP leader proposes 'national unity government'.**

At the inaugural session of the 18th South Asian Association for Regional Corporation (SAARC) Summit at the Rashtriya Sabha Griha in Kathmandu, Mahinda Rajapaksa said terrorism was a fundamental challenge for a nation's stability. President Rajapaksa also called on all SAARC countries to join forces against external threats. The President met fellow leaders of the SAARC on the side-line of 18th SAARC Summit.¹⁰ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Mahinda Rajapaksa discussed matters pertaining to the interest of both nations during their meeting. Prime Minister Modi thanked President Rajapaksa after Rajapaksa government released five Indian fishermen who had been incarcerated in a Sri Lankan prison and sentenced to death.¹¹

A three-week long joint military exercise between the special forces of Indian Army and Sri Lanka Army concluded on November 23 with a closing ceremony at the Magampura International

⁷ "US for Talks to End Disputes", *The Daily Star*, November 29, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/us-for-talks-to-end-disputes-52542>.

⁸ "Dhaka Team Exchange Info with NIA", *The Daily Star*, November 29, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/dhaka-team-exchange-info-with-nia-52591>.

⁹ "Bangladesh, India Team up in Leather Sector", *The Daily Star*, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh-india-team-up-in-leather-sector-52407>.

¹⁰ "President Says Terrorism a Challenge", *Colombo Gazette*, November 26, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/11/26/president-says-terrorism-a-challenge-2/>.

¹¹ "Modi and Mahinda Hold Talks in Nepal", *Colombo Gazette*, November 26, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/11/26/modi-and-mahinda-hold-talks-in-nepal/>.

Convention Centre in Hambantota. A contingent of 42 Indian Army Special Force troops including 5 officers and 37 other ranks joined the Sri Lankan contingent of 300 Special Forces and Commandos, and a few Navy and Air Force personnel in the exercise called Mithra Shakthi. The Exercise, meant purely to share knowledge and experience between Special Operation Forces of both Sri Lanka and Indian Armies through enhancement of interoperability, joint efforts and mutual exchange of Special Operation tactics, was implemented under the directions of the Army Commander, Lieutenant General Daya Ratnayake. The Mithra Shakthi Exercise, an initiative, designed largely by the Indian Army was the successful outcome of the 'Annual Defence Dialogue' (ADD) that was co-chaired in Colombo early October by both Mr. R.K Mathur, Indian Defence Secretary and Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to Ministry of Defence and Urban Development.¹²

Sri Lankan Navy arrested 14 Tamil Nadu fishermen– four from Rameswaram and ten from Jagadapattinam – and confiscated three trawlers on November 23.¹³

Sri Lanka Navy, in accordance with naval traditions, ceremonially welcomed the Russian naval ship "Yaroslav Mudriy" arrived at the Port of Colombo on a goodwill visit on November 24. RFNS Yaroslav Mudriy is a destroyer commanded by Captain 3rd Rank Vladimir A. Cherokov. The 126.6 meters long ship has a displacement of 4,480 tons and a crew of 210 naval personnel. The visiting Russian ship stayed in Sri Lanka till November 28.¹⁴

A high level delegation of Sri Lanka Air Force headed by Air Marshal Kolitha Aravinda Gunatilleke, Commander of Sri Lanka Air Force, visited Air Defence Command, Pakistan Air Force (PAF), on November 29. The delegation attended a briefing on the working of Air Defence Command and also visited Air Defence Operation Centre. The Sri Lankan delegation visited Pakistan Air Force Academy (PAF), Risalpur on November 28 and attended a comprehensive briefing about the Academy's organization structure and training. Air Marshal Gunatilleke also called on Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain at Aiwan-e-Sadr on November 27.¹⁵ The delegation of Sri Lankan Air Force is on an official trip of Pakistan to enhance the co-operation between the Air Forces of the two countries.¹⁶

United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremesinghe has proposed forming a national unity government until the next General election if opposition common candidate Maithripala Sirisena wins the January Presidential elections. The UNP leader said that the main objective of the new government will be to abolish the Executive Presidency. He said that while Maithripala Sirisena

¹² "Joint Military Exercise between Sri Lanka and India Armies Concludes", *Colombo Page*, November 24, 2014 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Nov24_1416815238CH.php.

¹³ "Indians Disappointed after New Arrest", *Colombo Gazette*, November 24, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/11/24/indians-disappointed-after-fresh-arrest/>.

¹⁴ "Russian Naval Ship Arrives at Sri Lanka's Colombo Port On Goodwill Mission", *Colombo Page*, November 25, 2014 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Nov25_1416861187CH.php.

¹⁵ "Pakistan Notes Lanka Ties Important", *Colombo Gazette*, November 28, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/11/28/pakistan-notes-lanka-ties-important/>.

¹⁶ "Sri Lankan Air Force Delegation Visits Pakistani Air Defence Command", *Colombo Page*, November 30, 2014 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Nov30_1417339677CH.php.

expects to abolish the Executive Presidency within 100 days after the Presidential elections, he feels it can be done in a shorter space of time. The UNP leader also proposed that temporary concessions be given to the public at the conclusion of the Presidential election next year and later hold a General election and allow the people to select who they want to the new Parliament. He said that at the General election the UNP will contest under the elephant symbol and look to have a larger representation in Parliament but yet work with other political parties on urgent national issues.¹⁷

Maldives

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **President attends the 18th SAARC Summit; PM Modi commits continuous support to Maldives; Government decides to convert the airport in L. Kadhdhoo into a military airport; President reiterates the Maldives' support for the establishment of a Palestinian State.**

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom attended the 18th SAARC Summit. In his address at the inaugural session of the Summit, the President called for collective action among the SAARC member states in working towards the mutual benefit of the region. In this spirit, the foreign ministers of all eight SAARC countries signed the SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity), at the concluding session of the Summit on November 27. The Agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of Maldives by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Dunya Maumoon. On the side-line of the summit, President Yameen met with President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During these meetings, the President highlighted the commitment of the Maldivian Government to further strengthening relations with these South Asian states, while also discussing approaches to make SAARC a more dynamic organization.¹⁸

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have re-affirmed their commitment to further strengthening relations between Maldives and India, while meeting on November 26 in Kathmandu, on the side-lines of the 18th SAARC Summit. Emphasizing the long-standing ties between the neighbouring countries, President Yameen expressed his gratitude to the Indian Government for their continued support and assistance to the Maldives. The President further stated that the Maldives is eager to continue working in partnership with India in various areas of development, and explored opportunities to increase Indian assistance towards the country's health sector. In this regard, Prime Minister Modi asserted that India would continue supporting the Maldives in areas that are prioritised by the Maldivian Government.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Ranil for a National Unity Government", *Colombo Gazette*, November 26, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/11/26/ranil-proposes-a-national-government/>.

¹⁸ "President and First Lady Return to Male', on Conclusion of Official Visit to Nepal to Attend the 18th SAARC Summit", *The Presidency, Republic of Maldives*, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=15002>.

¹⁹ "President Yameen and Prime Minister Modi Commit to Further Strengthening Indo-Maldives Relations", *The Presidency, Republic of Maldives*, November 26, 2014 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=14999>.

The government has decided to convert the airport in L. Kadhdhoo into a military airport. Colonel Retired Muhammad Naazim, the Minister of Defence, said that the airport has been handed over to his ministry for the work of transformation. He also said that the necessary work would be done and the airport would begin operations as a military airport starting from the coming January. The Minister said helicopters used by the Maldives National Defence Force would be relocated there when the transformation is complete. He also said that the ministry is trying to get aircrafts to be used by the MNDF with the new facility.²⁰

In a message sent on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has reiterated the Maldives' support for the establishment of a Palestinian State. In his message, the President emphasized that the Maldives fully supports the Palestine's efforts to establish statehood, and urged the rest of the world to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish an independent state of Palestine.²¹

B. East Asia

China

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Mainland China calls for ongoing peaceful cross-strait relations; Around 15 people killed in a terrorist attack in Xinjiang; China calls for international cooperation in building the Maritime Silk Road; PLA opens bidding from private sector; China wants Palestine and Israel to resume talks; 6.3 magnitude earthquake hits China's Sichuan province.**

A Chinese Mainland spokesman of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, Ma Xiaoguang, said on November 29, while responding to questions related to the recent elections in Taiwan said that, "We hope compatriots across the Straits will cherish hard-won fruits of cross-Straits relations, and jointly safeguard and continue to push peaceful developments of cross-Straits relations".²²

According to the Xinjiang based official news portal, Tianshannet, it was reported that 4 people died and 14 were injured in a terrorist attack which happened on November 28 in Sache. It was also reported that 11 terrorists were shot dead by the police.²³

Secretary-General of the Chinese Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Li Xikui, said on November 27 that, "Civil diplomacy, as an integral part of China's overall diplomacy,

²⁰ "Kadhdhoo Airport to be Transformed into a Military Airport", *SunOnline*, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26285>.

²¹ "President Reiterates Maldives' Support for the Establishment of a Palestinian State", *The Presidency, Republic of Maldives*, November 29, 2014 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=15007>.

²² "Mainland Calls For Continued Peaceful Cross-Straits Relations" *China Daily*, November 29, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/29/content_18998234.htm, accessed on December 1, 2014

²³ "Fifteen Die in Terrorist Attack in Xinjiang" *China Daily*, November 29, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/29/content_18998081.htm accessed on December 1, 2014

will help strengthen relations of people between China and countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road, which is conducive to build an overall cooperation platform".²⁴

According to the PLA Daily report of November 24, it was highlighted that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is keen to invite private enterprises to bid on its training-related contracts. This shows the aim that the PLA is ready to move away from the monopoly of the State owned companies. As per the report, "The PLA General Staff Headquarters recently published 108 military items for advanced training technologies and equipment encouraging private companies to take part in their research, development and manufacturing".²⁵

While talking at the meeting held at the United Nations on November 24 marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that, "China firmly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate right". The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is observed by the United Nations on or around the 29th of November each year.²⁶

An earthquake of 6.3 magnitude hit the Tibetan region of China's Sichuan Province on November 22. Around 54 people were injured and 5 were killed. It affected a large number of people by damaging around 25,000 houses affecting 79,500 people.²⁷

Japan

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Japanese SDF aircrafts to be used for the first time in contributing towards fight against the Ebola virus.**

Japanese government has decided to rope in Japanese Air Self Defence Force (SDF) in the country's fight against the deadly virus-Ebola. As part of Japanese Prime Minister's Shinzo Abe's pledge to offer aid worth \$40 million during his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2014, the ASDF transport flights will reportedly be used in supplying 20,000 sets of personal protective equipment to the Ebola-hit West Africa. It is worth noting that Japan is to provide 700000 sets of personal protective equipment to that region.²⁸

²⁴ "Forum Upholds Intl Cooperation in Building Maritime Silk Road", by Qiu Quanlin in Guangzhou, *China Daily*, November 27, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/27/content_18989754.htm accessed on December 1, 2014

²⁵ Zhao Lei, "PLA Opens Bidding To Lower Costs", *China Daily*, November 26, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/26/content_18977174.htm, accessed on December 1, 2014

²⁶ "Xi Urges Palestinians, Israel To Resume Peace Talks", *China Daily*, November 25, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/25/content_18975629.htm, accessed on December 1, 2014

²⁷ "5 Dead, 54 Injured In Southwest China Quake" *China Daily*, November 24, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/24/content_18965026.htm accessed on December 1, 2014

²⁸ "Japan to Use SDF Aircraft for 1st Time in Fight against Ebola", *The Mainichi Daily*, November 28, 2014, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141128p2g00m0dm064000c.html>

South Korea

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **South Korea resumes talk with Japan on the wartime sex slavery issue; South Korea and Hong Kong to promote cooperation on creative economy; South Korea vows to make stern retaliation against North Korean attack.**

In a significant development, on November 27 South Korea and Japan resumed their talks on the issue of wartime sex slavery or the so called comfort women, one of the major issues of bilateral dispute, after a hiatus of two months. It was the fifth round of talk since the bilateral dialogue on this issue has been initiated in April this year. The last session of such dialogue was held in September 2014. The latest round of talk attracted a lot of attention as it took place just after the two countries' agreement in October 2014 to make efforts towards resolving the comfort women issue and encourage the director-general level talks on it. In the recent round of talk, the South Korean side was presented by Lee Sang-deok, Director General for Northeast Asian Affairs, Seoul, while the Japanese side was represented by Lee's counterpart-Junichi Ihara.²⁹

Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-in, during his three-day long trip to Seoul since November 25, discussed with South Korean President Park Geun-hye regarding the possibilities to promote bilateral cooperation on creative economy. Later on the two sides signed an agreement under which both agreed to support governmental as well as non-governmental agencies, business organizations, private firms, etc. taking part in international events on creative industries. In the meantime, the two sides also agreed to join hands in their efforts towards developing cultural as well as creative industries, e.g., advertising, design, publishing and digital entertainment.³⁰

On November 23, South Korea commemorated the fourth anniversary of the shelling attack on Yeonpyeongdo Island, a frontline South Korean island, by North Korea. This attack in 2010 had left two South Korean marines and two civilians dead while 16 others were injured. During the recent commemoration, South Korean Defence Minister Han Min-koo delivered the speech of Prime Minister Chung Hong-won. In that speech, Prime Minister Chung has vowed to take strong retaliatory measure against any North Korean attack. While citing the volatile security situation in the Korean Peninsula at present and North Korea's relentless provocative action against South Korea, Chung insisted that Seoul should be firm in its defence posture "more strongly than ever."³¹

²⁹ "S. Korea, Japan Resume Talks on Wartime Sex Slavery", *The Korea Herald*, November 27, 2014, at http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20141127000777&dt=2

³⁰ "Korea, HK to Link up on Creative Economy", *The Korea Herald*, November 26, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141126001056>

³¹ "Seoul Vows Stern Response on Anniversary of Deadly Shelling", *The Korea Herald*, November 23, 2014, at http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20141123000269&dt=2

North Korea

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **North Korea and Russia to join hands in reviving the SPT.**

During the recent meeting held between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's special envoy Choe Ryong- in Moscow last week, both sides agreed to make comprehensive joint efforts towards reviving the Six Party Talks (SPT). While emphasizing the need for resuming the talks without any precondition, both sides deliberated on the possibilities of creating a conducive environment towards it. Choe, a close aide of the North Korean leader visited Russia from November 17-24. During his visit, he also held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and agreed to enhance bilateral political, economic and military exchanges in 2015. Moreover Choe and Lavrov agreed to take the bilateral relationship to a higher level and deepen cooperation at the international level.³²

C. Russia

Russia

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Ukrainians to decide on NATO membership in a referendum; Russia criticises Ukraine's attempts to join NATO; Donetsk republic urges UN to send peacekeepers; Ukrainian court allows nationalization of Russia's Transneft pipeline; Merkel says sanctions against Russia are necessary; French President rules out delivery of Mistral ships to Russia; Russia and Venezuela discuss oil price stabilization measures.**

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has declared that his country will hold a referendum on joining the NATO at the end of this decade. He clarified that Kiev will implement the necessary membership requirements within this period.³³

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has said that Kiev's continuous drive to join NATO will lead to further aggravation of the situation in Ukraine and will not improve the Ukrainian people's lives. Mr. Ryabkov was commenting on Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's statement on conducting a referendum on the country's accession to NATO.³⁴

³² "N. Korea, Russia Agree to Push For Six-Way Nuclear Talks: KCNA", *The Korea Herald*, November 25, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141125001066>

³³ "Ukrainians to Decide on NATO Membership in Referendum", *Bloomberg*, November 24, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-24/ukrainians-to-decide-on-nato-membership-in-referendum.html> Accessed on November 25, 2014

³⁴ "Kiev's Plans To Join NATO will Only Aggravate Situation Around Ukraine — Ryabkov", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/763628> Accessed on November 25, 2014

The parliament of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) has on November 25 called for convening a UN Security Council meeting to discuss sending UN peacekeepers to the conflict zone.³⁵

A Commercial Court of Appeals of Ukraine's Rivne Region has ruled that the nationalization of a 1.5 kilometre transit oil products pipeline owned by Russian oil pipeline monopoly Transneft was legitimate. The pipeline runs across western Ukraine to Hungary.³⁶

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said, on November 25 in Berlin, that economic sanctions against Russia are still necessary since Moscow has not undertaken any measure to overcome the crisis. She admitted that the sanctions negatively affect the European economy including the German one.³⁷

French President Francois Hollande has said that the current situation in Ukraine does not allow Paris to hand over the first Mistral helicopter carrier to Russia. Under a €1.2 billion contract, the first Mistral was scheduled to be handed over to Russia on November 14.³⁸

Ahead of the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) meeting scheduled for November 24, Russian and Venezuelan delegations have met in Vienna to discuss measures that may support stability of oil prices and prevent their further slide. This development arose against the backdrop of a 30 per cent fall in the price since the beginning of 2014. Oil exports make up a significant share of Russia's overall export basket.³⁹

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **President Putin discusses bilateral projects with the Vietnamese ruling party chief; Putin calls Russia-Norway relations promising; Russia and Turkey plan to triple bilateral trade to US\$ 100 billion; Eurasian Economic Union plans to boost ties with MERCOSUR; Russia's Upper House approves the allocation of US\$ 1.2 billion to Kyrgyzstan's Eurasian Economic Union integration project; Rosneft to buy 17 per cent stake in Germany's Schwedt refinery; Russia's Central bank to intervene in order to stabilise the volatile currency markets.**

President Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev have met with the Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Mr. Nguen Phu Trong in Sochi on November 25. The discussions revolved around cooperation in the cultural, oil and gas, nuclear power and industrial sectors as well establishment of a Free Trade Zone agreement between Eurasian Union and Vietnam.⁴⁰

³⁵ "Self-Proclaimed Donetsk Republic Urges UN to Send Peacekeepers", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/763581> Accessed on November 26, 2014

³⁶ "Ukrainian Court Allows Nationalization Of Russia's Transneft Pipe", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763840> Accessed on November 26, 2014

³⁷ "Merkel Says Sanctions Against Russia Still Necessary", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/763691> Accessed on November 25, 2014

³⁸ "Hollande: First Mistral Delivery To Russia Impossible Due To Ukraine Situation", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/763596> Accessed on November 25, 2014

³⁹ "Russia, Venezuela to Discuss Oil Price Stabilization Measures", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763506> Accessed on November 25, 2014

⁴⁰ "Putin, Medvedev to Discuss Oil And Gas Projects With Vietnam's Ruling Party Chief", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/763504> Accessed on November 25, 2014

Russian President Vladimir Putin has on November 25 called relations between Russia and Norway promising and expressed hope that joint work conducted in the past few years will not be lost.⁴¹

During the visit of Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yildiz to Moscow on November 26, it was proposed to increase Russia-Turkey bilateral trade to US\$ 100 billion from the current US\$ 33 billion. The key sectors involve energy, food supplies and tourism. The Minister also sought discount on additional gas that it expects to receive from the Blue Stream pipeline.⁴²

The Eurasian Economic Union that will be established in 2015 will look to establish cooperation with the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). It was stated that trade facilitation, removal of trade barriers and investment cooperation were the key areas of focus. The two trade blocs account for over 7 per cent of global economy.⁴³

Russia's upper house has ratified, on November 26, an agreement with Kyrgyzstan that stipulates the allocation of US\$ 1.2 billion in order to facilitate its integration in the Eurasian Economic Union.⁴⁴

According to a deal signed on November 28 Rosneft will buy a 16.67 per cent stake in the Schwedt refinery in Germany. The document was signed in Sochi by Rosneft head Igor Sechin and Total CEO Patrick Pouyanne.⁴⁵

The Russian Central Bank has said that it will intervene if threats emerge to the domestic foreign exchange market's stability. Russia's rouble has plunged by more than 30 per cent since January and OPEC's decision to keep oil production unchanged has witnessed a further devaluation of the rouble.⁴⁶

⁴¹ "Putin Calls Russia-Norway Relations Promising", *Itar-Tass*, November 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763696> Accessed on November 25, 2014

⁴² "Russia, Turkey Plan To Triple Trade To \$100 Billion", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763819> Accessed on November 26, 2014

⁴³ "Eurasian Economic Union To Boost Ties With South America's Largest Trade Bloc", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763730> Accessed on November 26, 2014

⁴⁴ "Russia's Allocation Of \$1.2Bln For Kyrgyzstan Eeu Integration Approved By Upper House", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/763737> Accessed on November 26, 2014

⁴⁵ "Rosneft To Buy 17% Stake In Germany's Schwedt Refinery", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/764278> Accessed on November 30, 2014

⁴⁶ "Russia's Central Bank Ready For Currency Interventions To Stabilize Market", *Itar-Tass*, November 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/764265> Accessed on November 30, 2014

D. Iran, Iraq and the Gulf

Iran

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Iran is standing up to west in nuclear talks; Mysterious Iranian General emerges to promote wins against ISIS; OPEC's decision to retain its production ceiling is not beneficial to all – Iran Oil Ministry; Russia to give grain to Iran in return for oil.**

The day after a deadline November 24th for concluding a nuclear agreement was extended for seven months, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, delivered his first remarks on the negotiations, saying that the West had to bow down Iran. He said, "In the nuclear issue, America and colonial European countries got together and did their best to bring the Islamic Republic to its knees, but they could not do so — and they will not be able to do so". His remarks suggested that he would continue to support nuclear talks, but that he remained sceptical that they would yield a satisfactory agreement.⁴⁷

Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Force emerged into the public eye in Iraqi military and political settings after Mosul fell to IS in June 2014. According to AL-monitor Soleimani has been undeniably engaged in political and military decisions related to Iraq's fight against IS. Soliemani has emerged as a face for the Iranian forces to combat the threat of ISIS.⁴⁸

OPEC's decision to retain its production ceiling is not beneficial to all OPEC member states, but Iran has not protested to maintain group solidarity, Iranian oil ministry news agency Shana reported the oil minister as saying. Iran has said the steep fall in oil prices this year is the result of deliberate moves by some exporters around the Persian Gulf, which have kept production high to undermine Tehran's sanctions-hit economy.⁴⁹

Russian Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukayev said that Moscow plans to sign contracts with Iran to start delivering grain and industrial products to Tehran in return for oil.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Thomas Erdbrink, "Breaking Silence, Ayatollah Says Iran Is Standing Up to West in Nuclear Talks", *The New York Times*, November 25, 2014 at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/26/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks-extension.html?_r=0

⁴⁸ Ali Mamouri, Almonitor, "To Promote Wins Against Is, Iran's Soleimani Emerges", November 28, 2014 at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/11/iran-soleimani-interference-shiite-militias-iraq.html>

⁴⁹ "Iran: OPEC Decision Not Good For All Members But Won't Protest", *Reuters*, November 30, 2014 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/30/us-iran-oil-opec-idUSKCN0JE0AJ20141130>

⁵⁰ Russia To Give Grain To Iran In Return For Oil: Minister", *Presstv*, November 30, 2014 <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/11/30/388166/russia-to-give-iran-grain-in-return-for-oil/>

Iraq

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **ISIS recruiting and training children for active combat; ISIS executes female parliamentary candidates in Mosul; Syria airstrikes kill 95 in ISIS stronghold; ISIS is now launching attacks from inside Turkey; Indian youth with alleged ISIS links arrested.**

A new undated video has revealed that boys attend training camp and religious courses in ISIS camps before heading off to fight. Others serve as cooks or guards at the extremists' headquarters or as spies, informing on locals. In the northern Syrian town of Kobani, children have been seen fighting alongside the jihadists. One man said he saw the bodies of four boys, two of them younger than 14.⁵¹

The Islamic State (ISIS) executed two former female candidates for the Iraqi parliament in the Faisalya area in central Mosul on November 25. "One of the candidates was Ibtisam Ali Jarjis on the Watanya list, and the second one was Miran Ghazi a candidate for Arab List. Both women ran in Iraq's parliamentary elections in April 2014.⁵²

At least 95 people were killed and 120 injured in airstrikes by Syrian government forces on the northern city of Raqqa, a stronghold for the extremist group ISIS. The city is known as a place where ISIS puts training centres, weapons depots and accommodations for fighters. During the Syrian conflict, the group has also seized military bases from the Syrian regime near the city and in the wider Raqqa province.⁵³

Turkey's main Kurdish party accused the government of turning a blind eye to – if not outright supporting – ISIS militants within its borders after suicide bombers attacked the town of Kobani along its southern border with Syria. The Turkish government vehemently denied the claims. Mustafa Bali, a Kobani-based activist, told the Associated Press that ISIS fighters have taken positions in the grain silos on the Turkish side of the border and to coordinate and launch attacks along the border near the crossing point.⁵⁴

Arif Majeed, twenty three years old, from Kalyan, who until now was believed to have been killed while fighting for militant group ISIS in Syria, was arrested he landed in Mumbai. After he was quizzed by NIA, he said, had travelled to join the ISIS militant group and his commanders made him perform menial tasks such as cleaning toilets and was not allowed to fight in the battle

⁵¹ "ISIS Abducting And Indoctrinating Children For Active Combat 'In A Systematic Manner': Reports", by Zeina Karam and Vivian Salama, *Associated Press*, November 24, 2014 <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/11/24/isis-abducting-and-indoctrinating-children-for-active-combat-in-a-systematic-manner-reports/>

⁵² "ISIS Executes Female Parliamentary Candidates in Mosul", *RUDAW* November 25, 2014 at <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/251120141>

⁵³ Laura Smith-Spark and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "Syria Airstrikes Kill 95 In Isis Stronghold, Report Says", *CNN*, November 26, 2014 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/26/world/meast/syria-civil-war/>

⁵⁴ Allen McDuffee, "Activists: ISIS Is Now Launching Attacks From Inside Turkey", *The Atlantic*, November 29 2014 at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/turkey-denies-isis-is-operating-from-its-side-of-the-border/383264/>

field as ISIS commanders considered Indians physically weak. There is a growing threat of radicalised Indian youths getting attracted to join the terror organization.⁵⁵

The Gulf

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **Bahrain holds runoff elections; Saudis say Islamic state behind deadly attack on Shiites; Saudi Arabia says oil prices to stabilize; Qatar running covert desert training camp for Syrian rebels; Gulf states launch joint command to counter ISIS and Iran; Egypt's Mubarak cleared of all charges.**

Bahraini voters returned to the polls for runoffs in a controversial election which is being boycotted by the Shia opposition Al-Wefaq. The group says government officials are unaccountable and unable to protect people's rights. The group wants to see a constitutional monarchy in Bahrain, and the end of the absolute authority of the ruling family.⁵⁶

According to the Saudi press agency, militants who attacked Shiite Muslim worshippers in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province had links to Islamic State. It's the first time Saudi authorities have implicated Islamic State in the assault on the Shiite minority community. The shooting raised concerns that sectarian violence and attacks against foreign nationals may escalate after the kingdom joined the U.S.-led coalition against the breakaway al-Qaeda group.⁵⁷

Saudi Arabia's oil minister said crude prices will stabilize while the United Arab Emirates said OPEC will do what it takes to balance the market. The world's largest oil exporter on November 25 failed to agree a plan with Russia, Venezuela and Mexico to curb output. Iran's oil minister said there is an oversupply of crude. Oil ministers from the 12 nations in the OPEC discussed their combined production after prices plunged 32 percent since June 2014. Crude fell in part on speculation that Saudi Arabia and other OPEC states would not take the necessary measures to curb a surplus.⁵⁸

At a desert base, Gulf state Qatar is covertly training moderate Syrian rebels with U.S. help to fight both President Bashar al-Assad and Islamic State and may include more overtly Islamist insurgent groups. As *Reuter's* reports, the camp, south of the capital between Saudi Arabia's border and Al Udeid, the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East, is being used to train the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other moderate rebels, the sources said.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "I Cleaned Toilets For ISIS In Iraq,' Ex-Fighter Reveals" , *Al Arabiya News*, December 1, 2014 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/12/01/i-cleaned-toilets-for-isis-reveals-ex-fighter.html>

⁵⁶ "Bahrain Opposition Boycotts Runoff Election" , *Euronews*, November 29, 2014 at <http://www.euronews.com/2014/11/29/bahrain-opposition-boycotts-runoff-election/>

⁵⁷ Glen Carey and Zaid Sabah, "Saudis Say Islamic State Behind Deadly Attack on Shiites" , *Bloomberg*, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-24/islamic-state-linked-to-attack-on-shiites-in-saudi-oil-province.html>

⁵⁸ Laura Hurst and Grant Smith, "Saudi Arabia Says Oil Prices to Stabilize" , *Bloomberg*, November 26, 2014 at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-26/saudi-arabia-says-no-one-should-cut-output-oil-will-stabilize.html>

⁵⁹ Amena Bakr, "Qatar runs Covert Desert Training Camp for Syrian Rebels" , *Reuters*, November 26, 2014 , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/26/uk-mideast-crisis-qatar-syria-idUKKCN0JA1C220141126>

Bahrain's Foreign Minister said that the Gulf States are launching a joint military command based in Saudi Arabia to counter threats from militant jihadis and Shia Iran. The establishment of the new joint command comes amid alarm in the Gulf States over the rise of the ISIS, which has not only taken over parts of Iraq and Syria but has supporters among Gulf populations.⁶⁰

An Egyptian court has thrown out a case against former President Hosni Mubarak for conspiring to murder protesters during the 2011 Egyptian revolution due to a technicality and lack of jurisdiction. Mubarak and his sons Alaa and Gamal were also cleared by Chief Judge Mahmoud Kamel al-Rashidi of corruption charges related to exporting gas to Israel. The same Cairo court acquitted Habib al-Adli, former Mubarak-era interior minister, and six senior security commanders of conspiracy to murder protesters.⁶¹

E. The United States of America

National

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **President Obama accepted Defence Secretary Hagel's resignation; Missouri Governor Orders More National Guard Troops to Ferguson after rise of violence and protests; President Obama condemns violence in Ferguson and says there is 'No Excuse' for violence.**

US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel in a statement on November 24 said that "President Obama accepted my letter of resignation. I have agreed to continue to serve as secretary of defence until my successor is confirmed by the United States Senate. You should know I did not make this decision lightly. But after much discussion, the president and I agreed that now was the right time for new leadership here at the Pentagon."⁶²

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon announced on November 25 that additional National Guard troops would enter Ferguson, Missouri, following criticism against him from Missouri's Republican Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder after a night of violence and protests in the St. Louis suburb. Chaos erupted in Ferguson on November 24th night after the announcement that a grand jury would not indict Darren Wilson, a white police officer who shot and killed an unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown on August 9. Nixon declared a state of emergency and activated National Guard units on November 16, but Kinder criticized the Democratic leader for a lack of National Guard officers deployed in Ferguson on November 24th night.⁶³

⁶⁰ Simeon Kerr, "Gulf States Launch Joint Command To Counter Isis and Iran", *Financial Times*, November 30, 2014 <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/ea160466-7890-11e4-a33c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3KvTGOXkl>

⁶¹ "Egypt court dismisses charges against Mubarak", *Aljazeera*, November 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/11/verdict-due-mubarak-trial-egypt-2014112944228138111.html>

⁶² "Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel", Release No: NR-589-14, November 24, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/Releases/Release.aspx?ReleaseID=17049>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

⁶³ Emma Koonse, "Missouri Governor Orders More National Guard Troops Sent to Ferguson; Lieutenant Governor Slams Nixon for Not Sending Them Sooner", *The Christian Post*, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/missouri-governor-orders-more-national-guard-troops-sent-to-ferguson-lieutenant-governor-slams-nixon-for-not-sending-them-sooner-130247/>

President Barack Obama condemned the violence in Ferguson, Missouri on November 25, after a night of protests in the area turned violent following the announcement that a grand jury chose not to indict police officer Darren Wilson in Michael Brown's death. Speaking in Chicago before a scheduled speech on immigration reform, the President acknowledged that many Americans are upset by the decision but appealed for calm. President Obama said, "Burning buildings, torching cars, destroying property, putting people at risk, that's destructive and there's no excuse for it".⁶⁴

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **President Obama pledged to bridge distrust between law enforcement and minority communities; Obama calls Mexican president to discuss immigration action; UN Panel raised concerns with U.S. security practices; Some fear rioting may seal Ferguson fate for decades.**

President Obama pledged to redouble his efforts to find solutions to the distrust between law enforcement and minority communities, saying "the problem is not just a Ferguson problem. It's an American problem." The president said he's asked Attorney General Eric Holder to convene regional meetings around the country to discuss ways to build trust and reduce tensions between law enforcement and the communities they serve.⁶⁵

President Obama spoke with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto on November 26 about Mr. Obama's granting of legal status to millions of illegal immigrants, and the White House said both men pledged to stop more immigrants coming from Central America. The presidents also pledged "to work together to combat organized crime and promote improved security and justice for our citizens," the White House said.⁶⁶

The United Nations panel – the United Nations Committee against Torture – in its recent report stated that the United States needs to make numerous changes to bring its security policies and domestic law enforcement practices fully into line with an international treaty banning torture and cruel treatment. Delivering its findings after two days of hearings in Geneva attended by government representatives in November 2014, the panel monitoring compliance with the treaty cited serious concerns. Among those concerns included the rules of interrogation, a failure to fully investigate allegations of torture during the administration of President George W. Bush, police shootings of unarmed African-Americans and the use of solitary confinement in prisons.⁶⁷

The world watched as crowds hurled bottles, looted liquor stores and set the Ferguson, Mo., city on fire in the 24 hours after a grand jury announced it would not indict police officer Darren

⁶⁴ Zeke J Miller, "President Obama Says There Is 'No Excuse' for Ferguson Violence", November 25, 2014 at <http://time.com/3606492/obama-ferguson-violence-grand-jury-announcement/>. Accessed on 28 November 2014

⁶⁵ Gregory Korte, "Obama: 'The Problem Is Not Just A Ferguson Problem'", *USA Today*, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/11/25/obama-ferguson-protests-immigration-speech/70111056/>

⁶⁶ Dave Boyer, "Obama Calls Mexican President To Discuss Immigration Action", *The Washington Times*, November 26, 2014 at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/nov/26/obama-calls-mexican-president-discuss-immigration-/>

⁶⁷ Nick Cumming-Bruce, "U.N. Panel Cites Concerns With U.S. Security Practices", *The New York Times*, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/29/world/americas/un-torture-panel-concerns-with-united-states-security-practices.html?ref=us>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

Wilson in the shooting death of eighteen year old, Michael Brown. Some fear that images of Ferguson on fire may determine the city's fate for decades to come. Some neighbourhoods affected by riots have needed decades to shed their reputation for violence, said Walter Olson, an expert in constitutional studies and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a public policy research organization in Washington, D.C. Businesses and residents may also face more practical hurdles as they rebuild. Businesses may find it difficult to get insurance. Property values may plummet.⁶⁸

International: Asia

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **U.S. and allies extend Iran nuclear talks by 7 months; U.S. military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq; Deputy Defence Secretary Work's Visits to Afghanistan; US Department of Defence identified 2,339 American service members' deaths in Afghanistan.**

A yearlong effort to reach an enduring accord with Iran to dismantle large parts of its nuclear infrastructure fell short on November 24, forcing the United States and its allies to declare a seven-month extension, but with no clear indication of why they think they can ultimately overcome the political obstacles that have so far blocked a deal. The failure to agree even on the framework for a comprehensive deal, after extended high-level diplomacy over an issue that was arguably President Obama's top foreign policy priority, had to be a disappointment for the administration.⁶⁹

U.S. military forces continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria on November 25-26 using bomber and fighter aircraft to conduct 10 airstrikes, U.S. Central Command officials reported. Separately, U.S. and partner nation military forces conducted seven airstrikes in Iraq using attack, fighter and remotely-piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists, officials said. The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the terrorist group ISIL and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the terrorist group's ability to project power and conduct operations.⁷⁰

Deputy Secretary of Defence Bob Work travelled to Afghanistan November 27-28 to visit U.S. servicemen and women during the Thanksgiving holiday and thank them for their service. While in Afghanistan, Work met with numerous senior U.S. military commanders, to include International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander Gen. John Campbell. In meetings, Work highlighted

⁶⁸ Yamiche Alcindor, "Some Fear Rioting May Seal Ferguson Fate For Decades", *USA Today*, November 30, 2014 at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/27/ferguson-is-new-form-of-protest/19348931/> Accessed 2 December 2014

⁶⁹ David E. Sanger and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. and Allies Extend Iran Nuclear Talks by 7 Months", *The New York Times*, November 24, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/25/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks.html?ref=world>

⁷⁰ "Airstrikes Target ISIL in Syria, Iraq", From a U.S. Central Command News Release, *DoD News*, November 26, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123725>

the progress made by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), ISAF's ongoing transition to the NATO Resolute Support mission, and ongoing U.S. retrograde efforts.⁷¹

The US Department of Defence has identified 2,339 American service members who have died in the Thirteen years of the U.S. fighting the Taliban as a part of the Afghan war and related operations.⁷² Afghan civilian casualties rose 24 percent in the first half of 2014 from the same period a year earlier, according to a report by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kabul.⁷³

India-US Relations

(November 24-30, 2014)

- **U.S. seeks to step up trade talks with India after WTO breakthrough; top US diplomats say a new era emerged in India and India-US relations; India-US held their first round of formal trade talks in four years; U.S. raises protection to firms in India, IPR issues; India, US to start discussion on defence technology and production.**

The United States wants to step up its trade dialog with India, US Trade Representative Michael Froman said on November 24, after the resolution of a global trade dispute paved the way for President Barack Obama to visit India. Direct contacts between Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi this month helped to end a deadlock that had prevented the World Trade Organization (WTO) from implementing a \$1 trillion package of reforms to global customs rules. "The breakthrough at the WTO could not have been possible without the direct and personal engagement of Prime Minister Modi and President Obama," Froman told businessmen in New Delhi in a speech.⁷⁴

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "determination" for development for all, two of the top US diplomats have said that "a new era" has emerged in India under his leadership. On November 24, the US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Right, Sarah Swell, said at a media briefing that "It really does feel like a new era in India under Prime Minister Modi. You see the focus on pushing the economy, opening the economy, accelerating the economy, but you also see it paired with a commitment to greater openness as a society." Atul Keshap, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, said that "American people have a

⁷¹ "Readout of Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work's Visit to Afghanistan", Release No: NR-596-14, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/Releases/Release.aspx?ReleaseID=17054>

⁷² "U.S. Military Deaths in Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, November 28, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/29/us/us-military-deaths-in-afghanistan.html>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

⁷³ Sangwon Yoon and Eltaf Najafizada, "Afghan Candidates Vow to Accept Election Audit Outcome", August 8, 2014 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-08-08/afghan-candidates-vow-to-accept-election-audit-outcome.html>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

⁷⁴ "US Seeks to Step up India Trade Talks after WTO Breakthrough", *Voice of America*, November 24, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-us-seeks-to-step-up-india-trade-talks-after-wto-breakthrough/2531859.html>. Accessed on November 26, 2014.

profound respect for the fact that India stands for democracy, human rights, religious tolerance, pluralism, diversity, rule of law".⁷⁵

The United States and India held their first round of formal trade talks in four years on November 25, seeking to capitalize on the resolution of a global trade dispute to repair a dialog that had fallen into neglect. While the two sides reported no breakthroughs at the Trade Policy Forum, they did set out a work schedule to follow up on talks that focused on agriculture, services, manufacturing and intellectual property rights, a joint statement said. However, U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman said, he was cautiously optimistic after the talks, but played down hopes of major "deliverables" at President Barack Obama's visit to India in January, his second after a trip in 2010.⁷⁶

At the first round in four years of joint trade talks, India and the United States on November 25 agreed to explore the possibility of enhanced market access to identified agricultural products. At the talks, the U.S. raised concern over the level of protection India affords to its companies and the intellectual property rights (IPR) regime in India.⁷⁷

India and the United States will discuss defence technology transfer and joint defence production in Delhi from December 1, 2014, in the first major political-military dialogue in the run-up to US President Barack Obama's visit to India as chief guest at Republic Day in January 2015. The US delegation is being led by Indian-American Puneet Talwar, assistant secretary in the US State Department's bureau of political military affairs. Hoping to give a boost to Prime Minister Modi's call to global manufacturers to 'Make in India', the two sides will explore the possibility of joint defence production in critical areas like missiles after the government allowed 49% FDI in this strategic sector.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ "Briefing on U.S. Official's Travel to India, Nepal", U.S. Department of State, Washington Foreign Press Center, Washington, D.C., November 24, 2014 at <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/11/20141125311451.html#axzz3Kjbs0Gtt>; And, "India-United States relations: New era in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, say top US diplomats", by Press Trust of India @indiacom, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.india.com/news/world/india-united-states-relations-new-era-in-india-under-prime-minister-narendra-modi-say-top-us-diplomats-202970/>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

⁷⁶ "India, U.S. Hold First Trade Talks in 4 Years", *Voice of America*, November 25, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-us-hold-first-trade-talks-in-4-years/2533572.html>. Accessed on November 27, 2014

⁷⁷ "U.S. Raises Protection To Firms in India, IPR Issues", *The Hindu*, November 26, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-raises-protection-to-firms-in-india-ipr-issues/article6634143.ece?ref=relatedNews>. Accessed on November 29, 2014

⁷⁸ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Ahead of Barack Obama Visit: India, US to Start Discussion On Defence Technology, Production from Monday", *ET Bureau*, December 1, 2014, at http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-01/news/56614406_1_defence-cooperation-defence-industry-defence-technology-transfer