

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

November 30 – December 6, 12 (1), 2015

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Afghanistan

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Will work on financing Afghan forces from 2018 to 2020; Islamabad and Kabul agree to revive stalled peace talks with Taliban; €350 mln announced for Afghanistan's reconstruction; Mullah Akhtar Mansour wounded in clash; Will Stay True to Constitution in Peace Talks; Talks with Pakistan to be more effective than Taliban peace talks.**

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are expected to receive financial support until 2020 as the Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) gather in Brussels to hold talks on current and future engagements of the alliance in Afghanistan. The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in his pre-ministerial press conference this after that alliance will review the mission in Afghanistan in light of the security situation. "We will do that together with Minister Rabbani and our operational partners. Meaning the partner countries which join us in our operation in Afghanistan. We will discuss how we continue our mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces during 2016", Stoltenberg said. He said we will discuss how we continue our mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces during 2016. Stoltenberg further added, "We will also launch work to ensure we can finance the Afghan security forces from 2018 to 2020." According to Stoltenberg the latest discussions on financing the Afghan security forces will be started as the financial commitment to Afghan forces, pledged during the Chicago Summit ends after 2017.<sup>1</sup>

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif have agreed in a meeting on the side line of the climate change conference in Paris to revive the stalled peace talks with Taliban but this time a joint action has been put on the platform against those who refuse to join the peace process. "Both leaders agreed to work with all those who would enter such a process as legitimate political actors and act alongside the Afghan government, (but) against those who refuse to take the path of peace," states a statement released by Pakistani PM's office in Islamabad. The meeting on November 30 was scheduled to be between President Ghani and PM Sharif but it later changed to a trilateral meeting to include British Prime Minister David Cameron. Praising commitment between the two leaders for working together for common objectives, Cameron said that UK would be available with its support and assistance in anytime to promote Afghanistan's reconciliation process.

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<sup>1</sup> "NATO to Start Work On Financing Afghan Forces from 2018 to 2020: Stoltenberg", *Khaama Press*, November 30, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/nato-to-start-work-on-financing-afghan-forces-from-2018-to-2020-stoltenberg-1755>

Although, Pakistan has made similar promises in the past but has not remained committed to them.<sup>2</sup>

Germany's Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier has said that his country remains committed to support Afghanistan. After attending meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels on December 1, Steinmeier announced a fund of 350 million euros for Afghanistan's reconstruction in 2016. Steinmeier said that his country will also continue its role in training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANDSF) and institutions under the umbrella of NATO's Resolute Support mission, adding that the number of German troops would be increased to 980. He added, however, the Afghan government should also fulfil its commitments to the international community and accelerate its pledges of reform, fighting corruption and the peace negotiation process with Taliban. Peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban have been stalled since the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Supreme Leader of Taliban, was confirmed after first round of the negotiation in Pakistan in July. But the process is expected to revive as per the agreement of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif. The agreement was reached during a meeting on the side-line of the climate change conference in Paris on November 30.<sup>3</sup>

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, the Supreme Leader of Taliban, likely has sustained serious injuries or killed in a gun battle. Sultan Faizy, spokesman for the first-Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum said the Supreme Leader of Taliban sustained injuries after another commander of the militant group namely Mullah Abdullah Sarhadi opened fire on him in Kuchlakh area which is 25 kilometres from Quetta, capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan province. He said Mullah Akhtar Mansour has been admitted to hospital, adding that five people including Mullah Abdullah Sarhadi were killed in the clash. Meanwhile, the dissident group of Taliban being led by Mullah Mohammad Rasoul claims that Mullah Akhtar Mansour has been killed. A commander of Mullah Rasoul's group has told media that Mullah Akhtar Mansour and his men were killed after their friends opened fire at them during a gathering on December 2 night. However, Taliban spokesman rejects the claim. Mujahid has told media that no clash has taken place and Taliban are ready to present evidences to proof the report as baseless. Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour was appointed as the Supreme Leader of Taliban after the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar was confirmed in July.<sup>4</sup>

Addressing guests at the Korber-Stiftung Foundation in Germany on December 4, President Ashraf Ghani said that any peace deal reached with the Taliban would be in accordance with the country's Constitution. He said he would never seal a deal for peace that would "be the shame of history". Ghani said the concept of peace talks is to secure the future of Afghanistan

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<sup>2</sup> "President Ghani, PM Sharif Agree To Revive Stalled Peace Talks with Taliban", *Khaama Press*, December 1, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-sharif-agree-to-revive-stalled-peace-talks-with-taliban-4372>

<sup>3</sup> "Germany Announces €350 Mln For Afghanistan's Reconstruction in 2016", *Khaama Press*, December 2, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/germany-announces-e350-mln-for-afghanistans-reconstruction-in-2016-4379>

<sup>4</sup> "Mullah Akhtar Mansour Likely Wounded In Clash", *Khaama Press*, December 3, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/mullah-akhtar-mansour-likely-wounded-in-clash-4378>

and said that regarding terrorism, no terrorist from Afghanistan exists in other countries but "terrorists enter our soil from other parts of the world and destabilize our nation." While the outcome is still unclear of Ghani's talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif - which took place last week on the side-lines of the UN climate change conference in Paris - the Afghan leader vowed not to compromise on national interests during peace talks with Taliban. "The first and the second chapters of the Constitution of Afghanistan are not for negotiation. Our women cannot go back to apartheid. Equal rights of the citizens of Afghanistan cannot be compromised. I will never deal and enter into any sort of peace that is going to be the shame of history - it needs to be a peace that is within our constitutional terms and guarantees the future of our citizens," Ghani said.<sup>5</sup>

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said negotiations with Pakistan would be more effective than sitting-in for peace talks with the Taliban group. President Ghani told reporters in Kabul this afternoon that policy of the Afghan government is clear and reiterated his last year's remarks, saying that Afghanistan is engaged in an undeclared war with Pakistan during the past 14 years. In regards to his upcoming visit to Pakistan to attend the Heart of Asia summit and share the issue of Afghan peace talks, President Ghani said "We have right to defend from our fundamental rights in every summits or place." He also added that the government of Afghanistan will welcome all the Afghans waging war against the country, provided that they accept the national constitution and rights of their fellow countrymen. President Ghani delivered a similar statement late in the month of May this year, insisting on reconciliation process with Pakistan as the first step to bring peace and stability in the country. He also added that the ongoing violence has been enforced on Afghanistan and the Afghan people and reiterated that Afghanistan does not favour war. Pakistan facilitated the first round of direct peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban group in Islamabad this year but the second round of the talks scheduled in July failed with the disclosure of the death of Taliban founder and supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.<sup>6</sup>

## Pakistan

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Pakistan Navy ship in Sri Lanka; Legitimate stakeholders' will be taken on board in Afghan reconciliation process; Want peace in Balochistan; Another offer for 'result-oriented' dialogue; Want formally request for second round of peace talks; Report highlights 'messy, hidden' urbanisation; NSA's meet in Bangkok secretly.**

In a display of strong political, diplomatic, economic, cultural and defence ties between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Pakistan Naval ship PNS Shamsheer will arrive at the Colombo Port on November 30 for a four-day goodwill visit. PN ships pay port of call visits to Sri Lanka on a frequent basis, with the aim to strengthen the existing strong relation between the two

<sup>5</sup> "Ghani Vows to Stay True to Constitution in Peace Talks", *Outlook Afghanistan*, December 5, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=13794](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13794)

<sup>6</sup> "Ghani: Talks with Pakistan to be More Effective Than Taliban Peace Talks", *Khaama Press* December 7, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/ghani-talks-with-pakistan-to-be-more-effective-than-taliban-peace-talks-1770>

friendly countries, according to a press release received on November 29. The ship visiting Sri Lanka derives its name from the traditional word 'Shamsheer' which means sword and is a special type of sabre with a 5-15 degree curve from top to tip. The first ship of the class inducted into the Pakistan Navy was HMPS SHAMSHEER (F-252) which was inherited at the time of independence. It served the PN fleet as an anti-submarine frigate as well as training ship for cadets and sailors till 1960.<sup>7</sup>

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and British Prime Minister David Cameron held a trilateral meeting on Monday on the side-lines of the UN Summit on Climate Change and agreed to jointly promote the Afghan peace process with legitimate political actors. "Leaders agreed to work with all those who would enter such a process as legitimate political actors and act alongside the Afghan government, (but) against those who refuse to take the path of peace," said the prime minister's office in Islamabad. During the course of warm and cordial exchanges, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stressed the need for all parties to remain committed to the promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan, notwithstanding the obstacles and impediments in the pursuit of this objective. He also assured the leaders of Afghanistan and the United Kingdom of his government's strong resolve and commitment to ensure that the Pakistani soil is not used for terrorism anywhere.

With regards to resumption of peace and the reconciliation process, the premier reiterated the stance to support an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. "Pakistan is committed to build a stable Afghanistan, which is in the interest of the entire region," the statement said. "Both the countries face a common threat and Pakistan would make all efforts to tackle the menace of terrorism affecting the two countries," the statement added. In this context, the prime minister apprised the two leaders of the successes achieved during last one and half year in the military operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched against all militants and terrorists without any distinction or discrimination. The prime minister told the Afghan president that a warm welcome awaited him in Islamabad at the Heart of Asia Meeting on December 9.<sup>8</sup>

Commander of Southern Command, Lt Gen Aamer Riaz, has said that Pakistan Army wants to see Balochistan emerge as a peaceful and economically thriving province moving on the path of progress and prosperity. He was addressing a ceremony held in the University of Balochistan on Monday to screen short films produced by students and distribute prizes among winners of a competition of short films. Local people would be major beneficiaries of mega development projects undertaken in various parts of the province, he said. Gen Aamer stressed the need for fostering tolerance and harmony in society to defeat "anti-peace elements" and end violence. "All stakeholders will have to make joint efforts to bring an end to violence and extremism, curb corruption and eliminate social evils if we want a thriving

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<sup>7</sup> "Pakistan Navy Ship Due In Sri Lanka Today On 4-Day Visit", *Dawn*, November 30, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1223237/pakistan-navy-ship-due-in-sri-lanka-today-on-4-day-visit>

<sup>8</sup> "Legitimate Stakeholders' Will Be Taken On Board In Afghan Reconciliation Process : Trio Vows To Work For Peace in Afghanistan", *Daily Times*, December 1, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-01/page-1/detail-1>

and developing Pakistan.” Nations are built by noble values and traditions and not with material things; he said and added that the country had a bright and enlightened future.<sup>9</sup>

Pakistan on December 3 reiterated that it wants ‘result-oriented’ dialogue with India to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, and promote bilateral relations. Foreign Office spokesperson Qazi Khalilullah told a weekly briefing that there has been no response from New Delhi so far about the participation of Indian Foreign minister in the Heart of Asia Conference being held in Pakistan next week. “Pakistan has not received any response from India regarding participation of its Foreign minister in the Heart of Asia Conference,” he said. The spokesperson said following a brief interaction between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Paris on the sidelines of climate summit, Pakistan was mediating on how the dialogue process can move forward and two countries could restart the negotiations. He said that Pakistan wants a result-oriented and fruitful dialogue with India to resolve all the outstanding issues including the core issue of Kashmir. A book by renowned Indian TV journalist Barkha Dutt has recently claimed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi held an hour-long secret meeting on the side-lines of the SAARC summit in Kathmandu last year. “Away from prying eyes and more than just a mere handshake, the two leaders are said to have met secretly in a meeting that was facilitated by Indian steel magnate Sajjan Jindal, the brother of former Congress MP Naveen Jindal,” according to the book.<sup>10</sup>

Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Dr Maleeha Lodhi said December 3 that Pakistan was ready to host another round of Afghan peace talks. “But we would like to see the anti-Pakistan rhetoric coming from Kabul to cease,” she told reporters, and added that for the second round of peace talks, Afghan government should formally request Pakistan. Maleeha said there was also a need to create an atmosphere to build a greater trust between the two countries. This was the intent behind the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the side-lines of United Nations Climate Change Summit in Paris, she added. Maleeha said Pakistan desired to see peace in the neighbourhood, which was reiterated by Nawaz Sharif to Ashraf Ghani in their meeting. Dr Lodhi said the annual resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly was an opportunity to debate the revival of peace talks and the future of Afghanistan. She said at the General Assembly, she had presented Pakistan’s viewpoint emphasizing the need for revival of peace talks that began in Murree, where Pakistan hosted first round of the talks. However, she said the importance of the revival of peace talks was underscored by the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. She said both Afghan government as well as Afghan Taliban should follow the international consensus. “The international consensus today is in favour of the negotiated peace,” she remarked. Dr Lodhi said the point she had made at the

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<sup>9</sup> “Army Wants Peace In Balochistan, Says Commander”, *Dawn*, December 1, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1223484/army-wants-peace-in-balochistan-says-commander>

<sup>10</sup> “Pakistan Again Offers India ‘Result-Oriented’ Dialogue”, *Daily Times*, December 4, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-04/page-1/detail-0>

UNGA was that there were two parts to Afghan peace; one is imposition of military solution and the other is negotiated peace.<sup>11</sup>

With the Punjab government developing an economically sustainable industrial city in the proximity of M2 highway, a World Bank report has said that urbanisation provides Pakistan with the potential to transform its economy and to join the ranks of rich nations. But the country, like others in South Asia, has so far struggled to make the most of that opportunity, says the report, "Leveraging Urbanisation in South Asia: Managing Spatial Transformation for Prosperity and Liveability". The report, released on Saturday, points out difficulties in dealing with pressures that enhanced urban population puts on infrastructure, basic services, land and housing. The environment has fostered what the report calls "messy and hidden" urbanisation in Pakistan and the region. This, in turn, has helped to constrain the country's full realisation of the prosperity and liveability benefits of urbanisation, it says. Estimates indicate that cities generate up to 78 per cent of Pakistan's GDP and the government's 'Vision 2025' places a premium on urban job growth. Planning for urban growth can help create vibrant and productive cities that fuel the country's growth, but that will require dealing with the problems posed by the country's messy and hidden urbanisation.<sup>12</sup>

Pursuant to the recently held meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on the side-lines of the Paris Climate Summit, the national security advisers of both countries met in Bangkok on December 6. Lt General (r) Nasir Khan Janjua and his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval held talks on a wide gamut of issues of bilateral interest, including security, terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting lasted for about four hours between the two NSAs and both the dignitaries agreed to take forward the 'constructive engagement'. The two NSAs were assisted by the foreign secretaries of the two countries.

Guided by the vision of the two leaders for a peaceful, stable and prosperous South Asia, discussions were held in a candid, cordial and constructive atmosphere, sources privy to the meeting said. Earlier, security adviser-level talks between India and Pakistan, scheduled for August 23 and 24, were cancelled as both nations reached a deadlock over Pakistan's insistence to hold a meeting with Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi on August 23 despite India's 'advice' to the contrary. Pakistan on August 22 said that it had come to the conclusion that the proposed national security adviser (NSA) level talks between Pakistan and India would not serve any purpose if conducted on the basis of the two conditions laid down by Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj. The Indian foreign minister had earlier said in a presser that India had made clear on August 18 that the scheduled meeting between national security advisers will only discuss issues related to terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Kabul Must Formally Request Islamabad For Second Round Of Peace Talks", *Daily Times*, December 4, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-04/page-1/detail-8>

<sup>12</sup> "WB Report Highlights 'Messy, Hidden' Urbanisation", *Dawn*, December 6, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1224513/wb-report-highlights-messy-hidden-urbanisation>

<sup>13</sup> "In a 'Breakthrough', Pakistan, India NSAs Meet in Bangkok", *Daily Times*, December 7, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-07/page-1/detail-2>

## Bangladesh

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Pakistani Envoy was summoned in protest against Pakistan Foreign Ministry's comment on the execution of war criminals; UN calls for moratorium on execution in Bangladesh; India's trade share with BIMSTEC countries for the financial year 2014-15; New ship for Bangladesh Navy arrives; Foreign minister leads delegation to C'wealth meeting in Malta; Bangladesh offers transit facilities to Nepal; India keen to invest in the proposed Payra seaport; Premature to assess the effect of LBA on infiltration from Bangladesh as the agreement is at implementation stage; India has approved the rehabilitation package and upgradation of infrastructure of the Bangladeshi enclaves and Cooch Behar district.**

Dhaka has reacted sharply to a statement from Islamabad on the execution of two war criminals, and summoned the Pakistan high commissioner in Bangladesh for lodging a formal protest. Pakistani Envoy Shuja Alam was asked to come to the acting foreign secretary's office on November 23. The development came hours after Pakistan foreign ministry issued a statement, voicing "deep concern and anguish" over the execution of war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed.<sup>14</sup>

The United Nations has renewed its call on the Bangladesh government to immediately impose a moratorium on capital punishment and abolish the practice altogether. In a statement issued in Geneva on November 24, Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the government should not implement death sentences awarded by the International Crimes Tribunal, "given the doubts that have been raised about the fairness of trials conducted before the tribunal." The statement came in response to execution of war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid on November 22.<sup>15</sup>

The trade share of India with the Bay of Bengal initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand for the financial year 2014-15 is as under:

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<sup>14</sup> "Karim, Rezaul and Bhattacharjee, Partha Pratim, 'Dhaka Reacts Sharply To Pak Statement'", *The Daily Star*, November 23, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/dhaka-reacts-sharply-pak-statement-176635>.

<sup>15</sup> "UN Calls for Moratorium on Execution in Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, November 25, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/un-calls-moratorium-execution-bangladesh-177523>.

S. No	Country	2014-15			
		Export (in US \$ Millions)	% share (w.r.t. total export)	Import (in US \$ Millions)	% share (w.r.t. total import)
1	Bangladesh	6,451.47	2.08	621.37	0.14
2	Bhutan	333.94	0.11	149.87	0.03
3	Myanmar	773.24	0.25	1,231.54	0.27
4	Nepal	4,558.77	1.47	639.91	0.14
5	Sri Lanka	6,703.72	2.16	756.17	0.17
6	Thailand	3,464.83	1.12	5,865.88	1.31

The Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed in February 2004. The Framework Agreement includes provision for negotiation of FTA on goods, services, investment and economic cooperation amongst the member countries. The Member countries of BIMSTEC have constituted the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) to carry forward the negotiations in accordance with the Framework Agreement. So far 20 Rounds of negotiations have been held.<sup>16</sup>

A new ship for Bangladesh Navy “BNS Somudra Avijan” arrived at Chittagong Naval Base from the USA on November 28, and was welcomed there by high officials of the navy including Rear Admiral Akhter Habib. The ship, a cutter, had started its journey on November 16, 1968 under the US Coast Guard and, was decommissioned on February 3 this year. It was handed over to Bangladesh Navy on May 5 this year and has been added to the 9th frigate squadron. Capt M Wasim Maksud, commander of the ship, said it would be used for patrolling the country's maritime boundary.<sup>17</sup>

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was scheduled to attend the CHOGM and two other events in Paris, cancelled her visits following security situation. Bangladeshi delegation at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2015) on November 27-29 was led by Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Trade Share of India with BIMSTEC Countries”, *PIB*, November 30, 2015, Release ID :132047, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> “New Ship For Navy Arrives from US”, *The Daily Star*, November 29, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/new-ship-navy-arrives-us-179665>.

<sup>18</sup> “Foreign Minister Leads Delegation To C'wealth Meeting in Malta”, *The Daily Star*, November 24, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/foreign-minister-leads-delegation-cwealth-meeting-malta-177112>.

Bangladesh has offered transit facility to Nepal for importing petroleum products from third nations against the backdrop of acute fuel crisis in the country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offered transit facility through Saidpur airport, Chittagong and Mongla ports for transportation of goods to Nepal when outgoing Nepalese Ambassador Hari Kumar Shrestha called on her on November 29. Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal Mashfee Binte while speaking at an interaction organised by Reporters Club Nepal on November 30, 2015 said that Bangladesh Government is ready to allow Nepal to use Mongla and Chittagong ports for import of fuel and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas). Nepal, however, has shown interest in importing aviation turbine fuel from Bangladesh, according to diplomatic sources.<sup>19</sup>

India has offered to invest in the proposed Payra seaport on a government-to-government basis, in a move to further deepen ties between the two countries. The proposal was made at the shipping secretary-level meeting between the two countries that was held in New Delhi in November 2015.<sup>20</sup>

The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) has been signed between India and Bangladesh to resolve the outstanding land boundary issues. The agreement is at implementation stage and it is premature to assess the effect of LBA on infiltration from Bangladesh. Indian Citizenship has been granted to 14,864 persons of erstwhile Bangladeshi enclaves who have shown their intention to become Indian Citizens. There is no case pending for grant of Indian citizenship to those who opted for Indian citizenship during the Joint Survey conducted in July, 2015. Further, the process of inclusion of all 14,864 dwellers of erstwhile 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in the National Population Register (NPR) has been completed on 31.10.2015. Consequently the process of issuance of Aadhar Cards, Ration Cards etc. for enclave dwellers has been initiated.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the Union Cabinet under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the rehabilitation package and upgradation of infrastructure of the Bangladeshi enclaves and Cooch Behar district after transfer of enclaves between India and Bangladesh. The total financial implication for implementation of various components is around Rs. 1005.99 crores. This includes Rs. 898.50 crores as the fixed cost of strengthening and creation of infrastructure in Cooch Behar district and Bangladesh enclaves in India. Besides, a variable cost of Rs. 107.49 crores is likely to be incurred for the rehabilitation. The actual variable cost would depend upon the actual number of families returning to India. All the works will be implemented by the State Government or its agencies in a time-frame of 3-5 years, and funds would be released by the Ministry of Home Affairs to the State Government as grant-in-aid.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "Nepal Fuel Crisis: Bangladesh Offers Transit Facilities Through Seaports", *The Daily Star*, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-offers-transit-facilities-181147>.

<sup>20</sup> Byron, Rejaul Karim, "India Keen To Invest In Payra Seaport", *The Daily Star*, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/india-keen-invest-payra-seaport-181918>.

<sup>21</sup> "Infiltration along Border", *PIB*, December 1, 2015, Release ID :132156, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> "Cabinet Approves Rehabilitation Package And Upgradation Of Infrastructure Of The Bangladeshi Enclaves And Cooch Behar District After Transfer Of Enclaves between India and Bangladesh", *PIB*, December 2, 2015, Release ID :132361, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

## Sri Lanka

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Representatives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) meet President Maithripala Sirisena; Permanent Representative to the OPCW addresses the 20th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.**

A group of representatives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) headed by Lassina Zerbo the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO met President Maithripala Sirisena at the President's Official Residence. During the meeting, a cordial discussion was held between the President and the representatives. These representatives met with the President during their training programme held at the Kandalamahotel, Dambulla from November 29 to December 5, 2015. Nearly 100 persons representing 13 countries including Sri Lanka participated at this training programme.<sup>23</sup>

Sri Lanka has urged the world community to stand firm and united in combating terrorism. This call was made when Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Adam M.J. Sadiq addressed the 20th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in the Hague on December 2. Speaking on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka during the General Debate of the Conference, Ambassador Sadiq referring to the terrorist attacks in Paris, told the meeting: "While unreservedly condemning the recent cold-blooded terror attacks in Paris and elsewhere in the world, Sri Lanka which lost thousands of innocent lives and suffered wanton damage and destruction of property, due to terrorism, calls upon the international community to stand firm and united in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of the source or target of this evil menace". Sri Lanka's Ambassador also spoke of the relationship between the OPCW and Sri Lanka and noted "the capacity building programme on the Safe and Secure Management of Hazardous Substances held in Sri Lanka in September this year in collaboration with Holcim Lanka Ltd. He also referred to the OPCW Associate Program 2015, in which Load Star (Pvt) Company Ltd of Sri Lanka hosted the industrial attachment of two participants from Tunisia and Poland in September 2015, enabling them to gain practical experience in a sophisticated industrial environment".<sup>24</sup>

## Maldives

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Maldives cannot do this alone, says President Yameen in COP21 message; Maldives becomes first signatory to International Solar Alliance.**

<sup>23</sup> "Sri Lanka is Committed To World Peace", *Colombo Gazette*, December 6, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/06/sri-lanka-is-committed-to-world-peace/>.

<sup>24</sup> "Lanka Urges Unity To Combat Terrorism", *Colombo Gazette*, December 2, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/02/lanka-urges-unity-to-combat-terrorism/>.

In his message to the 21st session of Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris, President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has pledged his government's commitment to undertaking all necessary efforts to strengthen the Maldives' resilience to climate change, but stressed that this cannot be achieved by Maldives alone.<sup>25</sup>

Maldives has become the first country to sign the International Solar Alliance (ISA), launched by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and President of France Francois Hollande. The agreement was signed on behalf of the Maldivian government by Minister of State for Environment and Energy Abdulla Majeed, on the sidelines of the ongoing 21st session of Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris.<sup>26</sup>

## B. East Asia

### China

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Russian Su-35 will add to the PLA capabilities; China plans to reduce coal consumption; Relocation essential in fight against poverty; The Philippines attempts will not lead to anything in South China Sea; China planning the G20 Summit of 2016; India is aware that China continues to undertake large scale development projects bordering India.**

According to military observers the introduction of the Russian made Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets into the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will further enhance its capabilities. The confirmation of the deal for 24 Su-35s was given by the Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian. According to Wang Ya'nan, deputy editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge, "So the Su-35 will help the PLA fill in the gap before it has enough J-20s".<sup>27</sup>

According to the Chinese State Council, by 2020 China will upgrade its coal-fired power plants. This will help in reducing pollutant discharge by 60 percent. China also aims to reduce coal consumption to below 65 percent by 2017.<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese government plans to lift around 10 million people out of poverty by relocation. According to the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, "China should push forward the relocation of people living in the country's poorest regions to deliver its ambitious poverty relief goals". As

<sup>25</sup> "Maldives Cannot Do This Alone, Says President Yameen in COP21 Message", *SunOnline*, November 30, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/34900>.

<sup>26</sup> "Maldives Becomes First Signatory To International Solar Alliance", *SunOnline*, December 1, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/34919>.

<sup>27</sup> "Russian Jet Fighters 'To Enhance the PLA'", By Zhao Lei, *China Daily*, December 3, 2015, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/03/content\\_22615057.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/03/content_22615057.htm), accessed December 7, 2015

<sup>28</sup> "China to Cut Pollutant Discharge at Power Plants by 60%", *China Daily*, December 2, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/02/content\\_22611459.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/02/content_22611459.htm), accessed December 7, 2015

per 2015 there were 70.2 million people living below the poverty line in China and the Chinese government plans to lift them all out of poverty by 2020.<sup>29</sup>

Responding to the South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal recent hearing on issues the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that, "China has expounded on many occasions its position that the Arbitral Tribunal has no jurisdiction over the arbitration unilaterally initiated by the Philippines and that China will neither accept nor participate in the arbitration. This position is clear and consistent". She further added that China will not accept any decision forced on it.<sup>30</sup>

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said in a daily media meeting that the preparations for the 2016 Group of Twenty (G20) Summit was going on smoothly. The summit will be held September 4-5, 2016, in the eastern city of Hangzhou. According to the statement the theme of the next year's summit is "building an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy". Xi Jinping said, "China's preparations will be focused on innovating in growth patterns, improving global economic and financial governance, boosting international trade and investment, and promoting inclusive and interconnected development".<sup>31</sup>

In a statement laid on the table of the house the minister of external affairs Sushma Swaraj said that Government is aware that China continues to undertake large scale development projects including construction of highways, railways and high speed rail corridors in Chinese Provinces which are bordering India. China is involved in the construction of or assistance to infrastructure projects in our neighbourhood including in Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These infrastructure projects include power projects, IT projects, housing projects, nuclear energy projects, and construction of highways, motorways, railways, sea and air ports, export processing zones and economic corridors. Government has seen media reports that China plans to extend its rail link to Nepal which might involve building a tunnel under Mount Everest. Full financial and technical details of the proposal have not come to the attention of the Government.<sup>32</sup>

## C. Southeast Asia

### ASEAN

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Pakistan's new envoy to ASEAN; ASEAN-SCO ties; ARF workshop on space security.**

<sup>29</sup> "China Highlights Relocation in Battle against Poverty", *China Daily*, December 2, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/02/content\\_22605753.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/02/content_22605753.htm), accessed December 7, 2015

<sup>30</sup> "Beijing: Manila's Attempt 'Will Lead To Nothing'", *China Daily*, December 1, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/01/content\\_22598077.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/01/content_22598077.htm), accessed December 7, 2015

<sup>31</sup> "China Takes Over G20 Presidency", *China Daily*, December 1, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/01/content\\_22597801.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/01/content_22597801.htm), accessed December 7, 2015

<sup>32</sup> "Development Projects by China", *PIB*, December 2, 2015, Release ID :132281, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

H.E. Mohammad Aqil Nadeem assumed duty as the ambassador of Pakistan to ASEAN and during presentation of his credentials to Secretary General Le Luong Minh, he said that Pakistan is committed to work closely with ASEAN. Ambassador Nadeem informed the secretary general about the trade flows between individual ASEAN countries and Pakistan. In 2016, the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee meeting would be organised to discuss issues of further bilateral cooperation. They also discussed issues which are of common concerns to both sides.<sup>33</sup>

Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), H.E. Dmitry Mezentsev and a high level delegation from the regional organisation met Secretary General Minh on December 2 in Jakarta. Both leaders conveyed their commitment towards strengthening cooperation at the secretariat to secretariat level. Both sides discussed common issues like terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration etc. Secretary General Mezentsev invited Le Luong Minh to attend some of the future SCO meetings and forums.<sup>34</sup>

China, Laos, Russia and US jointly hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on Space Security in Beijing on November 30. This was the first international workshop on space security held in China under the aegis of ARF and China considered it important as it wants to pursue a significant role in the global governance of space security. National space policies, legal tools to control arms use, latest technologies and trust building were issues discussed in the two-day workshop. Near-about 20 countries, regional and international organisations and think-tanks participated in the workshop.<sup>35</sup>

## Southeast Asia

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **US-Brunei high level meeting; Indonesia's speaker accused of corruption; Security Council bill harmful for Malaysia's democracy; Laos-China railway project launched; EU-Vietnam inked free trade deal; Myanmar opposition leader meets president.**

Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Tom Malinowski, Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam Craig Allen, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Scot Marciel, and Special Representative to Muslim Communities Shaarik Zafar met representatives from Brunei Darussalam at UK and attended the US-Brunei High Level Officials Meeting on November 30. Security, defence, trade, economics and regional collaboration were high on their agenda as the US and Brunei wanted to enhance bilateral

<sup>33</sup> "Pakistan to Strengthen Ties with ASEAN", *ASEAN web*, at [http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/pakistan-to-strengthen-ties-with-asean?category\\_id=27](http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/pakistan-to-strengthen-ties-with-asean?category_id=27), accessed on December 21, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to Strengthen Ties with ASEAN", *ASEAN Web*, at [http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-to-strengthen-ties-with-asean?category\\_id=27](http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-to-strengthen-ties-with-asean?category_id=27), accessed on December 21, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> "Third ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Space Security Inaugurated in Beijing", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China*, November 30, 2015, at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/t1320457.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1320457.shtml), accessed on December 22, 2015.

cooperation. Both countries also discussed about issues relating to South China Sea and human rights. Bruneian side reiterated that Brunei would implement its own human rights law in compliance with the international laws.<sup>36</sup>

Setya Novanto, Indonesian Parliament's Speaker and a Golkar leader, has been accused of having involvement in an unfair method of giving government contracts to the mining-giant Freeport- McMoRan's Indonesian unit. Novanto's conversation with Freeport Indonesia's chief executive officer Maroef Sjamsoeddin was recorded and on hearing that, Jusuf Kalla, the Vice-President of Indonesia, called him to step down from his position as the Speaker of the Parliament. Both Kalla and Novanto belong to the Golkar party. Kalla mentioned that maintaining ethics is important in creating trust and transparency in the government's activities. Novanto denied all charges and at present the ethics committee of the Parliament is investigating the manner.<sup>37</sup>

Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim from Malaysia's prime minister's Department has proposed to introduce a national security bill which will enable the National Security Council to command power over the military and impose strict policing on areas labelled as 'security area' for six months. Malaysia's former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said that this would toughen dictatorship in the country. The NSC and the armed forces will enjoy right to arrest or detain anybody in the 'security area' on the basis of suspicion.<sup>38</sup>

China and Lao PDR have launched a joint railway project on December 2, the day marked as the Laos National Day. The long-delayed project may take five years to complete and will connect Luang Namtha province, located at Lao-China border with the Lao-Thailand border between Vientiane and Nong Khai. The 427 km long railway project will be partially funded by Chinese and Laotian governments and rest of the amount will be taken from the state enterprises.<sup>39</sup>

European Union and Vietnam have signed a free trade agreement to remove barriers that exist in the two-way trade between the 28-nations European nations and Vietnam, one of the world's last fewest communist countries. The trade deal came after two years of profound negotiations and both sides expressed satisfaction as trade between EU and Vietnam has seen a three-time upsurge in the last ten years. For EU, this deal is the second in line in the region

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<sup>36</sup> "U.S.-Brunei High Level Officials' Meeting", *US Department of State*, November 30, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/11/250168.htm>, accessed on December 21, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Chris Brummit and Reika Rahadiana, "Secret Recording Threatens Future of Jokowi Political Opponent", *Bloomberg*, December 7, 2015, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-12-06/indonesian-mining-graft-scandal-puts-house-speaker-under-a-cloud>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "Dr M: Security Council Bill Would Steer Malaysia Towards Dictatorship", Ida Lim, *Malay mail Online*, December 2, 2015, at <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/dr-m-security-council-bill-would-steer-malaysia-towards-dictatorship>, accessed on December 15, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> "Laos, China Launch Train Project Construction", *Bangkok Post*, December 3, 2015, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/783989/laos-china-launch-train-project-construction>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

as in 2014 they concluded one similar agreement with Singapore. Right now, Malaysia and Thailand are in the queue.<sup>40</sup>

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met President Thein Sein after November polls in the country in which her party, National League for Democracy (NLD) won 80% seats. President Thein Sein pledged to transfer power to the winning team in a peaceful manner. President's spokesman, U Ye Htut said that since 1948, there has not been any transfer of power to the winning party in the country; hence, President Thein Sein wants to create a new tradition. After the landslide victory in the election, Suu Kyi wanted to meet President Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing and Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann to discuss issues like national reconciliation and implementation of the poll results.<sup>41</sup>

## Oceania

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **New Bill to restrict terrorism in Australia; Australian delegation to visit Pacific Islands.**

The Upper House of Australia has passed a bill which will restrict dual-citizenship holders from having Australian nationality if they are found guilty or suspected of having any connection with terrorism. This law won't be applicable for single-citizenship holders and won't make anyone stateless. This law is similar to what France's President Hollande has proposed after ISIS's attack in Paris. Australia's Attorney General George Brandis said that this law would be applicable in very few circumstances. As Australia is fast becoming a 'popular' country to the Islamic fundamentalists, this law was proposed in order to limit the use of the territory to enlarge the terrorists' networks.<sup>42</sup>

Steven Ciobo, Australia's International Development and the Pacific Minister, is all set to visit Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands aiming at strengthening Australia's relationships with these Pacific Island countries. The high-level delegation will meet government officials, private sector representatives and others to boost Australia's ties with those nations and to seek for new opportunities of aid investments. Gender equality, economic growth, climate change, private sector development, labour mobility will be other issues to be discussed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "EU, Vietnam Sign Free Trade Deal", *Yahoo News*, December 2, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/eu-vietnam-sign-free-trade-deal-161256542.html>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> "President Pledges Peaceful Handover of Power To Opposition", *Frontier Myanmar*, December 2, 2015, at <http://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/president-pledges-peaceful-handover-power-opposition>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Rishi Iyenger, "Australia Passes New Law to Strip Jihadists of Citizenship", *Time*, December 4, 2015, at <http://time.com/4136195/australia-law-citizenship-terror-convict/>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Nasik Swami, "Australian Delegation to Visit Fiji", *The Fiji Times Online*, December 7, 2015, at <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=332941>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

## India-Southeast Asia

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway from March 2016; Cultural club to boost Act East Policy; President of India's message on the eve of National Day of Thailand.**

The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway would be operationalized from March 2016, announced the Union Minister for Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari. To mark the event, a car rally would be organised on the same day. This Trilateral Highway, envisioned long way, has been delayed for several factors and now is expected to be completed by early next year. This would enhance connectivity between Northeast India vis-à-vis India and Southeast Asia. It would also help in enhancing trade and business ties between the local people and benefit them in terms of economic opportunities.<sup>44</sup>

Assam's Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has announced that the Sukapha Samannay Kshetra will be transformed into an effervescent cultural club which will enhance India's Act East Policy by nurturing ties with Southeast Asia. It will demonstrate cultural similarities between Northeast India and Southeast Asia as well as the cultural heritage enjoyed by Northeastern states to rest of India, mentioned an official statement released by the Chief Minister's office. Sukapha was a king who was admired for his promotion of diversified culture in the region.<sup>45</sup>

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the King and people of the Kingdom of Thailand on the eve of their National Day (December 5, 2015). In his message to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of the Kingdom of Thailand, the President has said, "On behalf of the Government, the people of India and on my own behalf, I have the pleasure to extend warm greetings and felicitations to Your Majesty and to the people of Thailand on the occasion of your National Day. President said, "The civilisational ties between India and Thailand have blossomed into a robust and multifaceted relationship. I am confident that this relationship will further strengthen and expand in a wide range of areas for the mutual benefit of both nations".<sup>46</sup>

## D. Russia

### Russia: National

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Russia will reduce harmful emissions by 70 per cent compared to 1990 levels; Finance Ministry supports privatization of Rosneft; Roscosmos 10 year budget cut for the third time; Russian Arctic radioactive waste storage project may be dropped after public**

<sup>44</sup> "India-Myanmar Road Pact in March to Boost Economy", *Northeast Today*, December 3, 2015 at <http://www.northeasttoday.in/india-myanmar-road-pact-in-march-to-boost-economy/> accessed on December 15, 2015

<sup>45</sup> "Sukapha Kshetra to Be Hub of Culture, Research", *The Assam Tribune*, December 3, 2015, at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec0415/at053>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> "President of India's Message On The Eve of National Day of Thailand", *PIB*, December 4, 2015, Release ID :132477, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

**hearings; Oil spill from grounded Russian tanker contaminates 3,500 meters of coastline in the Far East; Interior Ministry estimates the presence of nearly 90 nationalist and extremist groups operating in Russia; Defence Minister Shoigu says Russia will build 392 buildings for military garrisons in Kuril Islands; Oil export duty frozen for 2016; Gazprom announces tender for construction of Power of Siberia pipeline for US\$ 2.35 billion; Russian Security Council discusses ways to deal with Islamic State; Food shortages likely after Turkey sanctions are implemented; Russia develops new aircraft engine PD-14.**

President Putin has said that Russia will reduce harmful emissions by 70 per cent when compared to 1990 levels. He added that Russia will seek breakthrough decisions in the sphere of energy conservation with the help of new nano-technologies. He stated 'Moscow has developed a technology of carbon nanotubes and this technology can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 160-180 million tons by 2030.' Putin also noted that the new agreement on climate should recognize the important role of forests as main greenhouse gas sinks. He made these statements at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris on November 30.<sup>47</sup>

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said, on November 30, that he supports the privatization of Rosneft. He stated 'we support such a decision, this will result in lowered expenses of the Reserve Fund.'<sup>48</sup>

Russia's Federal Space Agency Roscosmos will receive 1.5 trillion roubles (US\$22.5 billion) in government funding over the next ten years. This was stated by Roscosmos Director Igor Komarov on December 1.<sup>49</sup> The figure is less than half of estimated projections cited by space officials earlier this year.

The project of building a low-and medium-level radioactive waste storage facility on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago may be halted at any stage following public hearings. This was stated by the Project Head of the National Operator for Radioactive Waste Management Yana Markina on November 30. The project envisages establishing a "facility for the final isolation of radioactive waste accumulation" from the whole of the Northwest Federal District. It is expected to be set up near Bashmachnaya Guba Bay in the southern part of Yuzhny Island of the Novaya Zemlya archipelago. The site will be located on the territory of the Russian central range, which is not designed for any economic activity as the tests of nuclear weapons were conducted there. The project envisages construction of a facility at a depth of up to 100 meters

<sup>47</sup> "Russia will Reduce Harmful Emissions By 70% Compared to 1990 — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840401>

<sup>48</sup> "Russia's Finance Ministry Supports Privatization Of Rosneft Oil Giant", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840471>

<sup>49</sup> "Roscosmos 10-Year Budget Cut For Third Time", *The Moscow Times*, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/roscosmos-10-year-budget-cut-for-third-time/551337.html>

from the surface. The facility will accommodate 200,000 m<sup>3</sup> of radioactive waste containers and can be expanded to store 400,000 m<sup>3</sup>.<sup>50</sup>

Some 3,500 meters of coastal territory in the Russian Far East have been contaminated by oil spilled from a grounded Russian tanker. The Nadezhda oil tanker ran aground near the port city of Nevelsk on Sakhalin Island and was carrying 786 tons of fuel oil. The accident took place 150 metres off the shore. Russian agencies have estimated that it will take 2 weeks to clean up the area.<sup>51</sup>

Deputy Interior Minister Igor Zubov has said that close to 90 nationalist and extremist groups whose membership is approximately 600 are operating in Russia. He stated 'over the past 10 months, more than 750 extremism-related crimes have been detected - an almost 25 per cent increase compared with the same period last year. In 2015, the Interior Ministry has managed to avert more than 100 conflicts that could have increased inter-ethnic tensions and provoked mass disorders. The threat to national security remains topical for Russia where several million labour migrants from neighbouring states are staying and one sixth of the population are Muslims.'<sup>52</sup>

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said that Russia's special construction agency Spetsstroj will build close to 400 buildings and facilities on the Iturup and Kunashir islands of the Great Kuril Ridge. It will boast of advanced infrastructures, including childcare centres, schools, rest and leisure facilities and hostels.<sup>53</sup>

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has on December 1 signed a decree on freezing the rate of oil export duty for 2016. According to the decree, the rate of export customs duty on oil will be kept at the level of 2015 at 42 per cent. There were suggestions that it be reduced to 36 per cent but the Finance Ministry objected to it since the budget would have faced a shortfall of 200 billion roubles (US\$ 3 billion) in 2016.<sup>54</sup>

Gazprom has on November 30 announced tender for the construction of four sections of the 822 kilometre, 156 billion roubles (US\$ 2.35 billion) Power of Siberia pipeline. The construction will involve subcontractors from small and medium-sized businesses. The pipeline is a gas transportation system that will deliver gas from the Yakutsk and Irkutsk gas production centres in Siberia to Russia's Far East and China. Its planned capacity is 61 billion cubic meters per year. The pipe's total length is 3,968 kms. The estimated construction cost is

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<sup>50</sup> "Russian Arctic Radioactive Waste Storage Project May Be Dropped After Public Hearings", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840307>

<sup>51</sup> "Oil Spill From Grounded Russian Tanker Contaminates 3,500 Meters Of Coastline", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840256>

<sup>52</sup> "Nearly 90 Nationalist, Extremist Groups Operating In Russia — Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/840616>

<sup>53</sup> "Russia will Build 392 Buildings For Military Garrisons In Kuril Islands — Defence Minister", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/840609>

<sup>54</sup> "Oil Export Duty In Russia Frozen For 2016", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840578>

US\$ 21.3 billion. The pipeline route will run along the existing route of the Eastern Siberia - Pacific Ocean oil pipeline. First gas exports to China are scheduled for 2019.<sup>55</sup>

The Russian Security Council has on December 2 discussed employing Islamic clergymen and social networks for waging a counter-propaganda campaign against recruitment of young people by terrorist organisations like the Islamic State (IS). It also discussed mechanisms to work out a coordinated approach with Central Asian countries to counter the IS threat.<sup>56</sup>

Russian Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev has warned that the introduction of sanctions against Turkey may lead to "short-term disruptions" in the supply of fruit and vegetables. He said, 'we need some time, it is not possible to rule out some (supply) failures in the short run. However, we think that the situation is, on the whole, completely manageable.' He added that tomatoes and citrus fruit were most likely to be affected, due to the "very substantial share of Turkish exports" in Russian markets.<sup>57</sup>

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said that Russia must have its own aircraft industry. He also stated that the flight tests of the country's latest aircraft engine PD-14 have commenced and hoped that serial production will begin in 2018. Rogozin added that the hot part (engine core) of the PD-14 engine can be scaled up and form the basis for the creation of a whole family of engines. Meanwhile, serial production of the MS-21 long-haul aircraft will begin in 2017 while Russia also plans to develop a long air aircraft in collaboration with China.<sup>58</sup>

## Russia: International

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Russia's says NATO's membership offer for Montenegro will trigger response; NATO likely to resume contact with Russia; Russian and Saudi Foreign Ministers discuss Syrian settlement issue; Russia bans import of vegetables and fruits from Turkey and imposes additional sanctions; Putin holds talks with Merkel and Juncker; Russian Chief of General Staff discusses the fight against Islamic State with US colleague; Russia and Israel agree to coordinate bilateral actions over Syria; Obama expects gradual 'shift' in Russia's Syria strategy; Defence Ministry identifies three routes of Islamic State oil smuggling to Turkey; Russian and Egyptian Foreign Ministers discuss ways to unite Syrian opposition; Russia says truce in Homs is the first step towards ceasefire in Syria; Donetsk Republic accuses Ukraine of redeploying tanks and multiple**

<sup>55</sup> "Gazprom Announces Tender For Construction Of Power Of Siberia Section For \$2.35 Bln", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840515>

<sup>56</sup> "Russian Security Council Considers Methods Of Propaganda Against IS", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/840980>

<sup>57</sup> "Food Shortages Likely After Turkey Sanctions Implemented – Minister", *The Moscow Times*, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/food-shortages-likely-after-turkey-sanctions-implemented--minister/551522.html>

<sup>58</sup> "Deputy PM: Russia Must Have Its Own Aircraft Industry", *Itar-Tass*, December 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/841516>

**rocket systems to the line of contact; Trade turnover between Russia and Ukraine drops four-fold since 2013; Mexico buys 30 Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircrafts from Russia.**

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that NATO's offer for Montenegro to join the alliance will result in an appropriate Russian response. He said 'Moscow has always noted at various levels that the continuing expansion of NATO and NATO's military infrastructure to the East, of course, cannot but lead to response actions from the East, namely, the Russian side in ensuring security interests and supporting the parity of interests.'<sup>59</sup>

NATO's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has said on December 2 that the alliance is likely to resume NATO-Russia Council meetings. NATO had terminated these contacts in 2014 over the crisis in Ukraine. Stoltenberg said 'we decided also to keep at the same time channels for political contact open. And the NATO Russia Council is part of these channels for political contact and dialogue... And I will now explore how we can use the Council as a tool for political engagement. We have never decided to not use it. And I welcome the support to then convene a Council, and we will look into how we can do that. I will do that together with the ambassadors, and I will come back on when and how this can be done.' He also noted progress in the implementation of the Minsk peace agreements but said that the risk of violence in eastern Ukraine remains. Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had said that contacts between Russia and the West have been gradually getting back to normal and Russian delegates do not find themselves isolated at international events.<sup>60</sup>

Russian and Saudi Foreign Ministers, Sergey Lavrov and Adel al-Jubeir have discussed the Syrian settlement issue over telephone on December 7. Russia's Foreign Ministry stated 'the two ministers exchanged views on the regional agenda with a special focus on the situation around Syria... Mr. Lavrov spoke for ensuring maximally representative nature of a meeting of the Syrian opposition due to be held in Riyadh within days...they also discussed plans of further work within the international Syria support group, including its another meeting to address problems related to the formation of a list of terrorist organization in the territory of Syria.'<sup>61</sup>

Russia has banned import of fruits (oranges, tangerines, grapes, apples, pears, apricots, peaches and nectarines, plums, wild strawberries and strawberries) and vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, cauliflower, broccoli, yellow onions) from Turkey from January 1, 2016. This is seen as a retaliation against the downing of Russia SU-24 fighter jet in Syria by Turkey. In 2014, Russia imported food and agricultural products worth US\$ 1.7 billion from Turkey or roughly 4 per cent of Russia's total food imports. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has also banned charter operations between Russia and Turkey while Turkish citizens without a labour contract signed before December 31, 2015, will not be permitted to work in Russia from

<sup>59</sup> "NATO's Membership Offer For Montenegro Will Trigger Russia's Response — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/840892>

<sup>60</sup> "NATO Resumes Contacts with Russia — Stoltenberg", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/840861>

<sup>61</sup> "Russian, Saudi Foreign Ministers Discuss Syrian Settlement Over Phone", *Itar-Tass*, December 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842086>

January 1, 2016. Russia has suspended the work of intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation (including work on Turkish Stream pipeline) while the visa free regime will be abolished from 2016 onwards.<sup>62</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has held a three-party meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission (EC) President Jean-Claude Juncker in Paris on November 30 during the side-lines of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. The meeting lasted for 1.5 hours and was held behind closed doors. It started in the bilateral format between Putin and Merkel and they were later joined by Juncker. Developments in Syria and Ukraine were the main areas of discussions.<sup>63</sup>

Russian General Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov has, on November 30 via telephone, discussed the fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria with his US colleague Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford. They agreed to continue bilateral contacts. The talks took place at the initiative of the US.<sup>64</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has met with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Paris on November 30. They agreed that that Russian and Israeli military have been 'good at coordinating their actions as part of a new mechanism created in response to the worsening crisis in Syria.' Netanyahu added that 'I do hope that Russia and Israel will be able to find common ground and will hold similar views on global strategic issues. We believe that it is within our power.'<sup>65</sup>

U.S. President Barack Obama has said on December 1 that he expects a "shift" in Russia's strategy in Syria by referring to "fresh memories" in Moscow of the drawn-out Afghan war of the 1980's. He stated 'I think it is possible over the next several months that we see ... a recognition (in Moscow) that it's time to bring the civil war in Syria to a close.' He added that he believed that Russia may eventually align itself with the Western anti-Islamic State coalition, instead of lending support to the Syrian President Bashar Assad. Obama said 'I think Putin understands that — with Afghanistan fresh in the memory for him — to simply get bogged down in an inconclusive and paralyzing civil conflict is not the outcome that he's looking for.' Meanwhile, Obama has also supported Turkey's right to defend itself, its airspace and its territory during a meeting with Turkish President Erdogan. He said, 'we discussed how Turkey and Russia can work together to de-escalate tensions and find a diplomatic path to resolve this issue.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "Russia Bans Import Of Strawberries, Tangerines, Tomatoes, Other Products from Turkey", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/840675>

<sup>63</sup> "Putin Holds Talks with Merkel and Juncker", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/840467>

<sup>64</sup> "Russian General Staff Chief Discusses Fight against Islamic State with US Colleague", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/840488>

<sup>65</sup> "Russia and Israel Pledge To Coordinate Bilateral Actions — Israeli PM", *Itar-Tass*, November 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/840483>

<sup>66</sup> "Obama Expects Gradual 'Shift' in Russia's Syria Strategy", *The Moscow Times*, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/obama-expects-gradual-shift-in-russias-syria-strategy/551380.html>

Russia's Defence Ministry has on December 2 exposed three key routes of oil transportation from Syria and Iraq to Turkey. This was stated by Russian General Staff Main Operations Directorate Chief Sergey Rudskoy. He said the 'western route' reaches Turkish ports on the Mediterranean coast, the 'northern route' connects the Batman oil refinery in Turkey and the 'eastern one' is a large trans-shipment base in the town of Cizre. The Ministry also released images and videos to prove the movement of oil tankers from Syria to Turkey.<sup>67</sup>

The foreign ministers of Russia and Egypt, Sergey Lavrov and Sameh Shoukry, have on December 5 discussed measures to unite a Syrian opposition that rejects terrorism. Russia's Foreign Ministry stated 'the two ministers discussed how to coordinate efforts of Russia and Egypt with the aim to unite the Syrian opposition forces rejecting terrorism for the soonest start of an intra-Syrian dialogue as envisioned in the 2012 Geneva communique...the sides underscored a common opinion of the importance to ensure a maximum representative delegation of the opposition (including participants of the meetings which the opposition held in Moscow and Cairo), with the key role of UN Secretary General Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, for talks with Syria's government.' They also expressed their eagerness to continue intense work at the International Syria Support Group in order to implement the accords achieved in Vienna.<sup>68</sup>

Russia's Foreign Ministry has welcomed the news of a ceasefire in the Syrian city of Homs. It stated 'we believe that its implementation will make it possible to finally normalize the situation in this major Syrian city and put an end to the suffering of its people...we think that such steps can prelude the achievement of a comprehensive ceasefire in Syria through the United Nations effective role and create favourable conditions for launching a sustainable negotiating process between the Syrian government and the opposition, including its armed wing, which denounces terrorism,' On December 1, the Syrian army had reached a UN-mediated agreement with anti-government armed groups that they would start pulling out their militants from the al-Vayer district in the south-eastern outskirts of Homs.<sup>69</sup>

Donetsk People's Republic has accused Ukraine of redeploying tanks and multiple launch rocket systems near the disengagement line. The Donetsk News Agency stated that 25 tanks and three Grad multiple launch rocket systems were spotted near the settlements of Dzerzhinsk and Mariupol. It also stated that the Ukrainian military had violated the ceasefire regime 9 times over 24 hours by shelling some inhabited localities in the region.<sup>70</sup>

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said on December 2 that trade turnover between Russia and Ukraine has decreased four-fold over the last 2 years. He said, 'the embargo and anti-Ukraine sanctions have been virtually in place since 2013, and it's the sanctions that

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<sup>67</sup> "Russia's Defence Ministry Exposes Three Routes Of Illegal Oil Transportation to Turkey", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/841022>

<sup>68</sup> "Foreign Ministers of RF and Egypt Discuss Unity Of Syria's Opposition Rejecting Terrorism", *Itar-Tass*, December 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/841840>

<sup>69</sup> "Truce in Homs is First Step To Ceasefire in Syria — Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/841075>

<sup>70</sup> "Kiev Accused Of Redeploying Tanks, Multiple Rocket Systems To Line Of Contact", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/840658>

pushed the trade turnover between Ukraine and Russia down four-fold. The trade stands not at billions of dollars but at hundreds of millions, which is painful for our producers.’ Earlier, First Deputy Agricultural Policy and Food Minister of Ukraine Yaroslav Krasnopolsky had said that bilateral trade stood at US\$ 456 million.<sup>71</sup>

Mexican Ambassador to Russia Ruben Beltran has said on December 4 that Mexico has acquired 30 Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircrafts from Russia. He added that Mexican authorities had invested "a large sum" in an engineering factory in the Russian city of Ulyanovsk. Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 1.78 billion in 2014.<sup>72</sup>

## E. West Asia

### Iran

(November 9-December 6, 2015)

- **Tehran says it will respond to the possible violation of nuclear deal; South Africa and Armenia keen on re – establishing trade ties with Iran; Iran to acquire S- 300 defence missile system from Russia; Iran to bring back Mesbah satellite back from Italy; Iran and Iraq to sign a gas export deal. Kazakhstan keen on offering cutting-edge nuclear technology to Iran; Iran keen on pumping gas to China.**

In a televised interview the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said that Iran will give a "very explicit" response to a possible violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action by the West. Under the terms of the JCPOA, commonly known as the nuclear deal, Iran will slow down its nuclear programme for some ten years and instead the sanctions against the country will be lifted. In a meeting with the European Parliament President Martin Schulz President Rouhani said the West must observe the terms of the agreement "fully", "timely" and "precisely".<sup>73</sup>

South Africa is determined to establish trade links with Iran and expand cooperation and co-investments with the Islamic Republic, said South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa stated. He referred to petrochemical, oil and gas, agriculture, pharmaceutical, infrastructure, finance, banking, and tourism as the areas in which the two sides have the potential to increase bilateral ties.<sup>74</sup> In similar vein, Iran- Armenian trade gathering was held in a bid to expand bilateral economic and trade ties between the two countries. In a meeting with Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Armenian Ambassador to Iran Artashes Tumanyan emphasised the

<sup>71</sup> "Trade Turnover Between Russia, Ukraine Drops Four-Fold Since 2013 — Ukrainian President", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/841008>

<sup>72</sup> "Mexico Buys 30 Sukhoi Superjet 100 Aircraft From Russia — Ambassador", *Itar-Tass*, December 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/841637>

<sup>73</sup> "Tehran Says Will Respond to Possible Violation of Nuclear Deal", *Tehran Times*, November 9, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250702](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250702). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>74</sup> "S. Africa Determined To Reinforce Trade Links with Iran", *Tehran Times*, November 9, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250698](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250698). Accessed on 8 December 2015

Iranian nuke deal has prepared the ground for the expansion of trade ties between Iran and Armenia.<sup>75</sup>

Russia has signed a contract with Iran on the delivery of S-300 missile defence systems and as soon as the first part of the contract is filled, Tehran will rescind its court case against Russia for non – delivery, the head of Russia's state technologies corporation Rostec. The contract has already come into force.<sup>76</sup>

The communications minister has announced that Iran will bring the confiscated Mesbah Satellite back from Italy. Mahmoud Vaezi, was speaking on the side-lines of his visit to the press exhibition in Tehran, said Iran will be allowed to bring the satellite back as the sanctions against the country will be removed in accordance with the nuclear deal. He also said Italy has announced its readiness to return the satellite.<sup>77</sup>

Iran and Iraq will sign a deal, based on which 25 million cubic meters of Iranian gas will be transferred to Iraq's port city of Basra per day. The Iraqi deputy energy minister will sign the deal with the Iranian deputy oil minister. Based on the agreement, Iran is expected to initially deliver 4 mcm/d of gas and raise it to 25 mcm/d in the future, to feed three power plants in Iraq through a 270-kilometer pipeline.<sup>78</sup>

First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Rapol Zhoshybayev welcomed technological contribution to Iran of Kazakhstan particularly in nuclear plant construction. Zhoshybayev let slip this in a press conference held at the embassy of Kazakhstan where he fielded reporters' questions on different issues. Zhoshybayev deemed nuclear cooperation with Iran as likely because his country is considering setting up two nuclear plants in Kazakhstan, which will meet latest technological standards in the field of nuclear technology.<sup>79</sup>

Iran is likely to pump gas to China via Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline once the pipeline is accomplished, according to National Iranian Gas Company's Managing Director Hamidreza Araqi. Iran is also ready to start gas exports to Pakistan, but the portion of the gas pipeline located within Pakistan is yet to be constructed, the *IRNA news agency* quoting Araqi as saying.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "Iran-Armenia Trade Gathering To Expand Bilateral Ties", *Tehran Times*, November 9, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250696](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250696). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>76</sup> "Iran about To Acquire Russian S-300 Missile Defence Systems", *Tehran Times*, November 10, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250735](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250735). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>77</sup> "Iran to Bring Mesbah Satellite Back from Italy", *Tehran Times*, November 11, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250763](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250763). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>78</sup> "Tehran, Baghdad to Sign Gas Export Deal Today", *Tehran Times*, November 11, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250751](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250751). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>79</sup> "Kazakhstan Keen On Offering Cutting-Edge Nuclear Technology to Iran ", *Tehran Times*, November 12, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250777](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250777). Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>80</sup> "Iran Likely to Pump Gas to China", *Tehran Times*, November 15, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=250860](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=250860). Accessed on 8 December 2015

## Iraq and Syria

(November 9-December 6, 2015)

- **Peshmerga launches military operation on Sinjar under Barzani's supervision; US army announces the death of 60-70 ISIS elements in coalition strikes in Sinjar; Syria calls on Security Council to shoulder its responsibility in fighting terrorism; Algerian Ambassador in Damascus: We are keen on cooperation with Syria in combating terrorism.**

Peshmerga forces have begun the implementation of an extensive military operation to liberate the city of Sinjar (110 northwest of Mosul). The reporter of *Iraqi News* in Arbil said that the operation was launched last night under the supervision of the President of Kurdistan Massoud Barzani and the support of the international coalition, pointing out that an intensive aerial and artillery bombardment is targeting the headquarters of the organization in Sinjar now.<sup>81</sup>

The US military announced, that 60-70 elements of the ISIS organization have been killed in an air strike by the international coalition that targeted ISIS sites in Sinjar District in Nineveh province. *Reuters* quoted the army as saying that, "60-70 elements of the ISIS have been killed in coalition air strikes." It is noteworthy that the Peshmerga forces have begun the implementation of an extensive military operation to liberate the city of Sinjar (110 northwest of Mosul).<sup>82</sup>

The Foreign and Expatriates Ministry sent two identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and the head of the Security Council on the terrorist attacks which took place in Lattakia and resulted in the death and injuring of a large number of civilians. In the letters, the Ministry said that on November 10, 2015, members of Jabhat al-Nusra and "Ahrar al-Cham Movement" terrorist organizations fired two Katyusha rockets at residential neighbourhoods in Lattakia city, with the first rocket landing in al-Awqaf neighbourhood and the other in front of Tishreen University during peak crowded hours, claiming the lives of over 23 civilians and injuring more than 40 others, in addition to damaging public and private properties, *SANA* reported. The letters went on to elaborate that the atrocities committed by terrorists in Syria are enabled by certain states' indifference towards the networks that recruit terrorists and by Erdogan's government which facilitates their illegal entry into Syria. The Ministry stressed that as the Syrian government reiterates its determination to combat terrorism and protect its people, it once more calls upon the Security Council to denounce the

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<sup>81</sup> "Peshmerga Launches Military Operation On Sinjar Under Barzani's Supervision", *Iraqi News*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/peshmerga-launches-military-operation-sinjar-barzanis-supervision/>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>82</sup> "US Army Announces The Death of 60-70 ISIS Elements In Coalition Strikes in Sinjar", *Iraqi News*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/us-army-announces-death-60-70-isis-elements-coalition-strikes-sinjar/>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

terrorist attack on Lattakia and to shoulder its responsibilities in fighting terrorism by implementing its resolutions on counter-terrorism.<sup>83</sup>

From the very beginning of the crisis in Syria, Algeria has adopted firm stances supporting the Syrian people and rejecting all politicized decisions which targeted Syria's sovereignty and aimed at interfering in its internal affairs. In a statement to *SANA* marking the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Algerian Liberation Revolution against the French Colonialism, the Algerian Ambassador in Damascus; Saleh Bosha said "from the very beginning of the crisis in Syria, Algeria's stance was firm and clear. It has supported Syria's unity and voiced solidarity with Syrian people in their ordeal." <sup>84</sup>

## Israel and Palestine

(November 9-December 6, 2015)

- **Israel to build underground barriers around Gaza Strip; EU approves labelling of Israeli settlement products.**

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon announced that Israel would soon begin building a subterranean barrier around the blockaded Gaza Strip. "The Israeli army will begin building an underground barrier, in addition to a security fence, around the Gaza Strip," Yaalon was quoted as saying by Israeli public radio. According to the defence minister, the subterranean barrier will surround the Palestinian enclave to prevent what he described as "terrorists" from infiltrating Israel via underground tunnels.<sup>85</sup>

The European Union adopted measures to label products from Israeli settlements, considered illegal under international law, in a move welcomed by the Palestinian leadership. The EU Commission, the executive branch of the EU, said the body had adopted an interpretative notice on the "indication of origin of goods from the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967." The notice is based on pre-existing EU legislation and will ensure that when the indication of origin on products is mandatory, settlement goods cannot be labelled "Made in Israel."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "Syria Calls On Security Council To Shoulder Its Responsibilities In Fighting Terrorism", *Syria Times*, November 10, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20580-syria-calls-on-security-council-to-shoulder-its-responsibilities-in-fighting-terrorism>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>84</sup> "Algerian Ambassador in Damascus: We are Keen on Cooperation with Syria in Combating Terrorism", *Syria Times*, November 10, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/20574-algerian-ambassador-in-damascus-we-are-keen-on-cooperation-with-syria-in-combating-terrorism>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>85</sup> "Israel to Build Underground Barriers around Gaza Strip", *Palestine Chronicles*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israel-to-build-underground-barrier-around-gaza-strip/>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

<sup>86</sup> "EU Approves Labelling Of Israeli Settlement Products", *Palestine Chronicles*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/eu-approves-labeling-of-israeli-settlement-products/>. Accessed on 8 December 2015

## The Gulf

(November 9-December 6, 2015)

- **Kuwait, Russia boost ties, cooperation; Oman 'ready to mediate between Syria parties'; Arab- South American Summit condemns Iranian interference.**

Kuwait and Russia have boosted their bilateral relations and cooperation by signing agreements and memoranda of understanding. The accords were signed in the Black Sea city of Sochi where Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Emir of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah held official talks. The two leaders discussed ways to develop their relations in all fields, as well as the latest regional and international developments, primarily the Middle East and anti-terrorism efforts, *Kuwait News Agency* (Kuna) reported. Their talks focussed primarily around "ways and means of promoting the economic, investment, oil and military cooperation, reflecting the depth of friendship and size of mutual interests between both sides".<sup>87</sup>

Foreign Minister Yousuf Bin Alawi said Oman was committed to the unity and sovereignty of Syria, pledging that the sultanate will never take a negative stand against the Syrian government as it was chosen by the people of the country. The Omani official said that the relationship with Iran required the cooperation of all sides. "Otherwise, the situation will explode and if it does explode, the region will be the biggest loser," Bin Alawi told *BBC Arabic* in an interview broadcast. The foreign minister added that the Ibadi sect, dominant in Oman, was like any other Islamic sect, extending from Oman to Africa, and had nothing to do with Oman's relations with Iran.<sup>88</sup>

The Arab-South American summit has welcomed a political settlement in Syria and the outcome of the Syria peace talks at the level of foreign ministers in Vienna and stressed the significance of a full implementation of the UN Resolution 2216. A communiqué issued at the end of the summit of Arab-South American Countries, known by its Portuguese and Spanish acronym ASPA, in the Saudi capital Riyadh has called on all legitimate parties in Yemen to respect the decisions adopted by the comprehensive national dialogue based on the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and on Security Council resolutions. The communiqué urged all member countries to encourage negotiations in bilateral agreements in order to boost trade and the flow of investments in line with the national development policies and regional principles. It also stressed on the stressed the significance of cooperation between Arab countries and Iran based on the principles of good neighbourliness and the non-use of force. However, the final statement condemned Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of Arab states as a violation of the international laws, the principle of good neighbourliness and

<sup>87</sup> "Kuwait, Russia Boost Ties, Cooperation", *Gulf News*, November 11, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-russia-boost-ties-cooperation-1.1618166>. Accessed on 22 December 2015

<sup>88</sup> "Oman 'Ready to Mediate between Syria Parties'", *Gulf News*, November 10, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/oman-ready-to-mediate-between-syrian-parties-1.1617551>. Accessed on 22 December 2015

the sovereignty of states. It called on Iran to refrain from acts of provocation that undermine confidence building and threaten security and stability in the region.<sup>89</sup>

## India and West Asia

(November 9-December 6, 2015)

- **Joint Statement on the UK-India Summit 2015; Major General Amir Eshel, Commander of Israeli Air & Space forces called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha; President of India's message on the eve of National Day of UAE; India has approved the signing of the agreement between India and Iran on visa facilitation for Diplomatic, Official/Service and Ordinary passport holders; Agreement on bilateral cooperation signed between India and Bahrain.**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister David Cameron met in London on November 12 and November 13. The two Prime Ministers celebrated the growing strength, breadth and depth of the relations between the two countries. During the meeting, the two Prime Ministers stressed the need for inclusive political settlements in Syria and Iraq and committed to further support the victims in these brutal conflicts. They agreed to continue to hold regular annual senior officials dialogue on West Asia, as a priority area for both countries.<sup>90</sup>

Major General Amir Eshel, Commander of Israeli Air & Space forces called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha at Air Headquarters, on November 30. India-Israel defence co-operation has improved rapidly in the last few years with Israel providing state-of-the-art military hardware to India at reasonable cost. Israelis have been at the cutting-edge of R&D in advanced technologies in a wide range of fields such as telecom, software, biotechnology, medical, electronics, agriculture and defence. Israel undertakes joint industrial R&D projects with several advanced countries including India. On its part, Israel views India as a strategic ally and has displayed willingness to co-operate on all fronts. The Indo-Israel defence relations comprise mainly of purchase of military equipment, MoD level dialogue, technology collaboration and service to service defence co-operation through service level staff talks.<sup>91</sup>

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates on the eve of their National Day (December 2, 2015). In his message to His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the United Arab Emirates, the President has said, "On behalf of the Government, the people of India and on my own behalf, I have immense pleasure in extending warm greetings and felicitations to Your Highness and to the people of the United Arab Emirates on

<sup>89</sup> "Arab- South American Summit Condemns Iranian Interference", *Gulf News* at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/arab-south-american-summit-condemns-iranian-interference-1.1618386>. Accessed on 22 December 2015

<sup>90</sup> "Joint Statement on the UK-India Summit 2015", *Press Information Bureau of India*, November 12, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130408>. Accessed on 22 November 2015

<sup>91</sup> "Israeli Commander of Air and Space Forces Meets Chief of the Air Staff", *PIB*, December 1, 2015, Release ID :132114, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

the occasion of your National Day. India's friendly and warm relations with the United Arab Emirates, rooted in ancient trade and cultural links, are nourished by people-to-people contacts and regular exchange of high-level visits. The successful visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United Arab Emirates in August this year has provided a fresh impetus to our bilateral engagement and elevated it to a comprehensive strategic partnership.<sup>92</sup>

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of the agreement between India and Iran on visa facilitation for Diplomatic, Official/Service and Ordinary passport holders. Three key features of the agreement include (i) Consequent upon this, upon presentation of an official note by the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with the visa application, the resident Diplomatic Missions in the host country would, within 20 working days, issue a gratis visa valid for 90 days for the holders of valid Diplomatic/Official/Service passports, assigned on long-term missions to the Diplomatic Missions or the Consulates General. Appropriate gratis visas of three months' validity for visiting close family members (blood relations such as parents, siblings, adult children as well as in-laws) and visas for other close relatives of the assignees, on payment of visa fees due would be issued. (ii) On presentation of an official note by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating the purpose of the visit, a non-extendable gratis entry visa will be issued within three working days, with a validity of up to fifteen days, to political authorities and officials travelling for specific bilateral purposes or to participate in a conference or seminar. (iii) A multiple-entry gratis visa of three months' validity, for stays up to 20 days during each visit, for the audit/financial and IT/computer officials who travel on stated official business to their respective Diplomatic Missions and Consulates General will be issued within 15 working days.<sup>93</sup>

The Union Minister of Home Affairs Rajnath Singh co-chaired a delegation level meeting with Lt General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in New Delhi on December 2. After the meeting, an agreement on Cooperation in combating international terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in illicit, drugs, narcotic and psychotropic substances and precursors chemicals was signed between the two countries. Lt General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain is on an official visit to India from 1st December to 4th December, 2015 at the invitation of Home Minister Singh. India and Bahrain have close and friendly relations, characterised by shared interests, mutual trust and excellent people-to-people contacts. Over 4,00,000 Indian nationals work and contribute to the development of Bahrain.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> "President of India's message on the eve of National Day of UAE", *PIB*, December 1, 2015, at Release ID :132144, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>93</sup> "MoU between India and Iran on visa facilitation", *PIB*, December 2, 2015, Release ID :132354, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>94</sup> "Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation Signed between India and Bahrain", *PIB*, December 2, 2015, Release ID :132340, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

## F. The United State of America

### National

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **California mass shooting has greatly expanded concerns about foreign terrorists' influence on American soil; Female suspect, Malik, in California shooting came to the U.S. on a K-1 visa; Malik pledged allegiance to a leader of IS militant group; FBI investigating California shooting as an act of terrorism; After Paris attacks, US have bolstered security and quietly stepped up outreach to Muslim residents; Gun control activists are heralding the 2016 Presidential elections as a watershed moment; Despite being a favourite of the U.S. Republican Party establishment, Jeb Bush continues to struggle to gain momentum; Drones could be a key technology of the future and job prospects; NMIO sponsored a three day Operational Value Added Assessment exercise with 13 participating and supporting organizations; U.S. economy had a net gain of 211,000 jobs in November; Senate voted to repeal major portions of Obama's signature domestic achievement: Obamacare.**

Links between the Islamic State group and Tashfeen Malik, which the Pakistani native confirmed just before she and her husband opened fire with automatic rifles and slaughtered 14 people in California on December 2, have greatly expanded concerns about foreign terrorists' influence on American soil. Malik, 29, and her American-born husband, Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, are now the principal focus of an enormous effort by U.S. authorities to discover what motivated or inspired the couple to plan and carry out the attacks, which primarily targeted Farook's co-workers in California's San Bernardino County, east of Los Angeles. Malik and Farook fled the bloodbath and were at large for several hours, until they tried to shoot their way out of a police cordon and died in a volley of hundreds of bullets.<sup>95</sup>

It was reported that the female suspect, Malik, in California mass shooting came to the U.S. on a K-1 visa, known as the fiancé visa. She grew up in Pakistan but later moved to Saudi Arabia, where she met Farook in person. The two had corresponded through an online dating service, according to Farook family attorney Mohammad Abuershaid.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, two U.S. government sources said that Malik pledged allegiance to a leader of Islamic State militant group.<sup>97</sup> The FBI is officially investigating California mass shooting as an act of terrorism. The assistant chief of the FBI's Los Angeles office, David Bowdich, said on December 4 a number

<sup>95</sup> "Role of Terrorism in Shooting Causes Multiple Concerns, Fears", By Carol Guensburg, Katherine Gypson, and Ira Mellman, *VOA News*, December 05, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/role-of-terrorism-in-shooting-causes-multiple-concerns-fears/3090416.html>

<sup>96</sup> Salinas, Mary Alice, "California Shootings Suspect Entered US on Fiance Visa", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/california-shootings-suspect-entered-united-states-fiance-visa/3090066.html>

<sup>97</sup> "US Officials: Female Shooter in California Pledged Allegiance to IS", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/prayer-vigils-held-in-california-following-massacre/3087383.html>

of pieces of evidence have turned up to make it a terrorist act, including signs the massacre was extensively planned. Bowdich would not talk about the specific evidence, but he did say it includes crushed cell phones found in a garbage can near the site of the killings. He said there were "telephonic connections" between the suspects and others, and that the phones could reveal "potential golden nuggets."<sup>98</sup>

In the aftermath of last month's Paris attacks, New York City officials have bolstered security and quietly stepped up outreach to Muslim residents, trying to calm fears of hate-filled retaliation and mend a relationship that has been fraught with mutual suspicion. The city has increased its presence in Muslim neighbourhoods, sending staffers to visit mosques and meet with imams and worshippers. Police officials have briefed community leaders on new counterterrorism procedures. Other city officials have urged Muslims to report any hate crimes, the number of which is sharply lower in New York in 2015 than at this time a year ago.<sup>99</sup>

After years of thwarted efforts to tighten restrictions on firearms, gun control activists are heralding the 2016 elections as a watershed moment. They have more money than ever before to finance their fight. They have Hillary Clinton, the Democratic front-runner for president, solidly in their camp, calling for stricter gun controls at campaign stops — a turnaround from her 2008 presidential bid when she kept the subject at arm's length.<sup>100</sup>

Despite being a favourite of the U.S. Republican Party establishment and a presumed top-tier candidate at the start of the race, Jeb Bush continues to struggle to gain momentum in the presidential campaign, even as the voting season quickly approaches. Bush's troubles were underscored this past week with the release of a new *CNN/ORC poll*, which suggested the former Florida governor now has the support of an astoundingly low 3 percent of Republican and Republican-leaning independents nationwide. With just eight weeks left until the Iowa caucuses – the crucial, first nominating event of the campaign season – the poll highlights just how far Bush has to go to stage an unlikely comeback.<sup>101</sup>

Drones could be a key technology of the future, and job prospects for those who know how to design, build and control them look good. That's why colleges and universities around the USA are starting to offer degrees in unmanned aerial systems. One of them is the University of Washington in Seattle. Aeronautics research scientist Christopher Lum works with students

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<sup>98</sup> "FBI: Treating California Mass Shooting as 'Act of Terrorism'", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-officials-female-shooter-in-california-pledged-allegiance-to-islamic-state/3087829.html>

<sup>99</sup> "Following Paris Attacks, NYC Steps Up Outreach to Muslims", *Associated Press*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/following-paris-attacks-new-york-city-steps-up-outreach-to-muslims/3088467.html>

<sup>100</sup> "US Gun Control Activists Optimistic, But Change May Be Elusive", *Reuters*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-gun-control/3088472.html>; and, Presutti, Carolyn, "California Shooting Sparks Discussion on US Gun Laws", *VOA News*, December 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-its-too-easy-but-gun-laws-tough-to-change/3086360.html>

<sup>101</sup> "As Voting Nears, Jeb Bush Continues to Struggle", *VOA News*, December 05, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/as-voting-nears-jeb-bush-continues-to-struggle/3090235.html>

in the Autonomous Flight Systems Laboratory to explore how civilian drones can safely share the skies with manned aircraft.<sup>102</sup>

The National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office (NMIO) recently sponsored a three day Operational Value Added Assessment (OVAA) exercise with 13 participating and supporting organizations in the Chesapeake Bay. The OVAA focused on validating technical capabilities enhancements to improve maritime information sharing among the Chesapeake Bay maritime community of interest. Organizations participating in the OVAA included Coast Guard Sector Baltimore, Coast Guard Station Saint Inigoes, Calvert County Sheriff's Office, Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP) and Dominion Power-Cove Point LNG Facility. Supporting organizations included NMIO, the Naval Research Lab, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Integrated Maritime Domain Enterprise (IMDE)/ Coastal Surveillance System (CSS) Program Office and the US Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Centre Pacific. The exercise was centred on discovering the value of holistically shared maritime sensor data, from MNRP's Maritime Law Enforcement Information Network (MLEIN), via DHS' IMDE/CSS, with Federal, state and local maritime law enforcement agencies. The shared sensor data supported natural resource and critical infrastructure protection missions of the participating organizations. The data sharing also enabled the testing and evaluation of automated alerting to provide warning to participating organizations on maritime-based threats.<sup>103</sup>

The U.S. economy had a net gain of 211,000 jobs in November, while the unemployment rate held steady at a 7½-year low of 5 percent. According to a government report, job gains were seen in construction, professional services, and health care. Mining and some media companies lost jobs. U.S. businesses have added 13.7 million jobs in a little less than six years, but White House economic adviser Jason Furman says, "We have more work to do." Nearly 8 million Americans are still out of work, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and another 6.1 million can only get part-time work, though they want full-time employment. Average wages rose 2.3 percent over the past year. The job gains are stronger than most economists expected, and support the case for the U.S. central bank to raise the key interest rate later this month.<sup>104</sup>

On December 3, the U.S. Senate voted to repeal major portions of President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement: the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. The Republican-led chamber also defeated an amendment proposed by Democrats to restrict U.S. gun sales in the aftermath of mass shooting in San Bernardino, California. In addition, it voted to withhold federal funds from abortion provider Planned Parenthood. Unlike dozens of

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<sup>102</sup> Banse, Tom, "US Universities Add Degrees in Unmanned Aerial Systems", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-universities-add-degrees-unmanned-aerial-systems/3087787.html>

<sup>103</sup> "National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office Conducts Maritime Information Sharing Exercise", By Christopher Hickey, National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office, *USPACOM News*, December 02, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/632430/national-maritime-intelligence-integration-office-conducts-maritime-information.aspx>

<sup>104</sup> "US Economy Gains New Jobs; Unemployment at 7-year Low", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-economy-gains-new-jobs-unemployment-stays-at-7-year-low/3087712.html>

previous Republican attempts to scrap, defund or otherwise gut the ACA, the current bill is all but certain to reach the White House, where a presidential veto has been promised. The legislation is widely seen as drawing battle lines ahead of U.S. elections next year, when the presidency, all House seats, and one third of the Senate will be up for grabs.<sup>105</sup>

## International: Asia

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Anti-ISIL ground operations have continued to reduce ISIL's freedom of movement in key areas; Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq; Leading companies at COP21 in Paris announced intend to prioritize their sourcing of commodities; After Egypt's parliamentary elections, US looks forward to continued engagement with the Egyptian Government and people; Carter recognises the importance of UK and Germany counter ISIL efforts in Syria; US and Turkey discuss shared efforts to increase contributions to the coalition against Da'esh; U.S. Department of State sponsored a workshop for Libyan museum professionals; US and Ukraine stress the importance of full implementation of the Minsk Agreement; US defends quality of equipment sent to Ukraine; US regrets Russian decision to designate the U.S.-Russia Foundation as a so-called "undesirable" foreign organization; U.S. and Malaysia have completed the "Amphibious Exercise 2015"; US and Japan discuss bilateral and regional defence and security issues; Pacific Air Forces commander hosts the Japanese Minister of Defence, Gen Nakatani; Senior U.S. officials participated in the U.S.-Brunei High Level Officials meeting in London; Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) returns to Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, (CFAY).**

Coalition-enabled anti-ISIL ground operations have continued to reduce ISIL's freedom of movement in several key areas of Iraq and Syria. The U.S. Air Force Col. Patrick Ryder, U.S. Central Command spokesman said, "Increased pressure from simultaneous Coalition operations, from the New Syrian Forces and Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria, to the Peshmerga forces in Northern Iraq, to the Iraqi Security Forces in Central Iraq, are having a cumulative effect - which is the operational weakening of ISIL in those areas". Ryder added, "We will continue to support these operations." In three key areas, ISIL's freedom of movement between Ar Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq, has been restricted or denied due to Coalition-enabled ground operations by anti-ISIL indigenous forces.<sup>106</sup> Meanwhile, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq on December 5. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes coordinated with and

<sup>105</sup> Bowman, Michael, "Obamacare Repeal Passes in Senate, Faces Veto", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obamacare-repeal-passes-senate-faces-veto/3087306.html>

<sup>106</sup> "Coalition Efforts Continue To Reduce ISIL's Freedom Of Movement", By Marine Maj. Andrew M. Aranda, U.S. Central Command, *USCENTCOM News*, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/coalition-efforts-continue-to-reduce-isils-freedom-of-movement>

in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter, bomber and attack aircraft against ISIL targets.<sup>107</sup>

On December 1, at COP21 in Paris, France, leading companies announced that they intend to prioritize their sourcing of commodities in regions implementing large-scale forest and climate programmes. The U.S. welcomes this innovative new approach from Marks & Spencer and Unilever, and the expectation that other companies will join in this approach. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell attended the announcement in Paris and noted the importance of this public-private approach. This move to source from jurisdictions combatting deforestation will bring together the power of global agricultural supply chains with strong government commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. According to the announcement, areas with existing initiatives that meet certain criteria will be the first priority for supply chain sourcing, so long as quality and volume mandates can be fulfilled.<sup>108</sup>

In a statement, the U.S. stated that “On conclusion of Egypt’s parliamentary elections, the United States looks forward to the seating of the new parliament and to our continued engagement with the Egyptian Government and people. We note preliminary statements by domestic and international observers that Egypt’s Higher Electoral Commission administered the elections professionally and in accordance with Egyptian laws, although we remain concerned about low voter turnout and limited participation by opposition parties.” The United States continues to have concerns about limits on freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression and their impact on the political climate in Egypt, and calls upon the Government of Egypt to ensure these fundamental freedoms.<sup>109</sup>

The U.S. Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter in a statement said that “Today’s vote by the United Kingdom to participate in strikes on ISIL targets in Syria is further evidence of the strength of our coalition, and the enduring importance of the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.” Defence Secretary Carter added, “The United Kingdom has been a strong member of the Counter-ISIL coalition since it began in September 2014, making significant contributions to air operations, including through airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions in both Iraq and Syria.” Carter also commended “Germany for moving towards expanding its contributions to the Counter-ISIL effort, including a commitment of up to 1,200 troops as well as additional support for the air campaign”.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “Military Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL Terrorists in Syria and Iraq”, *USCENTCOM News*, December 06, 2015, Release # 20151206-01 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/dec.-6-military-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-and-ir>

<sup>108</sup> “U.S. Government and Companies Reiterate Commitment to Forest and Climate Programmes”, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250207.htm>

<sup>109</sup> “Egyptian Parliamentary Elections”, Press Statement by Mark C. Toner, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250385.htm>

<sup>110</sup> “Statement from Secretary Carter on Counter-ISIL Actions by the United Kingdom and Germany”, *DoD News*, Release No: NR-457-15, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/632434/statement-from-secretary-carter-on-counter-isil-actions-by-the-united-kingdom-a>

Secretary Kerry met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Brussels on December 1 to continue the discussion President Obama had this morning in Paris with Turkish President Erdogan. The two ministers discussed shared efforts to increase contributions to the coalition against Da'esh and next steps in the Vienna political process. Minister Cavusoglu briefed the Secretary on Turkish outreach to Russia, which the Secretary encouraged.<sup>111</sup>

As part of its ongoing efforts to help Libya preserve its cultural heritage, the U.S. Department of State sponsored a workshop for Libyan museum professionals, November 29–December 1, in support of Libya's national inventory of museum objects. The workshop was held in Tunis and was organized by Oberlin College with the participation of the Tunisian Institute National du Patrimoine (National Heritage Institute). This workshop was the first of five sessions being organized to address critical cultural preservation and protection needs in Libya.<sup>112</sup>

Secretary Kerry met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin in Belgrade on December 3. The two ministers met on the side-lines of the OSCE Ministerial meeting. They discussed ongoing events in eastern Ukraine, to include continued Russian support of separatist elements there. And both stressed the importance of full implementation of the Minsk Agreement by all sides, including unfettered access by OSCE monitors. The Secretary also made clear that, until the Minsk Agreement is fully implemented, the U.S. and our partners, continue to support the extension of existing international sanctions on Russia. The Secretary reaffirmed U.S. commitment to Ukraine and to Ukrainian sovereignty. He praised Ukraine's reform progress, and urged the continuation of anti-corruption efforts.<sup>113</sup>

*The Washington Post* reported this week that a Ukrainian special forces unit near the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk was using U.S.-supplied Humvees dating from the late 1980s and early 1990s, based on serial numbers on the vehicles. Three of the Humvees had plastic doors and windows. The *Post* report also said "the low quality of the gear calls into question the U.S. government's commitment to a war that is entering its second year," a stark contrast with allegations that Russia keeps separatists in Ukraine's east well-equipped. As some 300 U.S. soldiers train Ukrainian soldiers at a compound in western Ukraine, the Pentagon is countering reports of old and dilapidated U.S. equipment being given to Ukrainian fighters in the country's east. The Pentagon, which has committed more than \$265 million in security assistance to Ukraine since the fighting began, says U.S. assistance and equipment has made an "important impact on operational effectiveness."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> "Secretary Kerry's Meeting With Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250204.htm>

<sup>112</sup> "Cultural Heritage Risk Reduction Program for Libya", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250239.htm>

<sup>113</sup> "Secretary Kerry's Meeting With Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 3, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250293.htm>

<sup>114</sup> Babb, Carla, "Pentagon Defends Quality of Equipment Sent to Ukraine", *VOA News*, December 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pentagon-spokesman-defends-quality-equipment-sent-ukraine/3090033.html>; and, Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, "On Ukraine's front lines, U.S.-Supplied Equipment Is

In a statement, US State Department Press Secretary Mark C. Toner regretted the Russian Government's decision to designate the U.S.-Russia Foundation as a so-called "undesirable" foreign organization. Toner said, "Ever since President Bush and President Putin announced their intent to establish the Foundation at the St. Petersburg G8 Summit in 2006, the Foundation has worked in partnership with the Russian Government and prominent Russian institutions to carry out its mission to promote long-term economic development and rule of law in Russia and to strengthen ties between our two countries." He added, "We reject the contention that the Foundation's activities constitute a threat to Russia's security. On the contrary, this designation is another deliberate step to further isolate the Russian people from the rest of the world."<sup>115</sup>

The U.S. and Malaysia have completed the "Amphibious Exercise 2015", a four-day-long bilateral training exercise between U.S. Marines with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit and the Malaysian Armed Forces. The exercise aimed to strengthen military cooperation and interoperability in the planning and execution of amphibious operations between the two countries. "The relationship between [U.S. military] and the Malaysian military are essential to theatre security in the Western Pacific," said Brig. Gen. Christopher J. Mahoney, deputy commander of Marine Forces Pacific, during the opening ceremony. "Exercise like these ensure we continue to build on the foundation of a strong working relationship." Training included amphibious operations, jungle survival, weapons and tactics familiarization, and cultural exchange between Kilo Company, Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 15th MEU, and Malaysian soldiers.<sup>116</sup>

Deputy Secretary of Defence Bob Work met with Japan's State Minister of Defence Kenji Wakamiya at the Pentagon on December 1. The two leaders discussed a range of issues, to include the implementation of the new guidelines for U.S.-Japan defence cooperation, the evolving security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, U.S. force realignment, and the third offset strategy. Work thanked Wakamiya for his continued support of the U.S.-Japan alliance. They agreed that the new guidelines has already established a more effective U.S.-Japan alliance and pledged to continue implementation efforts.<sup>117</sup>

Meanwhile, Gen. Lori J. Robinson, Pacific Air Forces commander, hosted the Japanese Minister of Defence, Gen Nakatani, on November 23, as part of Nakatani's tour of U.S. Pacific Command and its component commands. Robinson and Nakatani met to discuss the ongoing

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Falling Apart", *The Washington Post*, November 30, 2015 at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/11/30/on-ukraines-frontlines-u-s-supplied-equipment-is-falling-apart/>

<sup>115</sup> "Designation Under Russia's "Undesirables" Law of the U.S.-Russia Foundation", Press Statement by Mark C. Toner, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250384.htm>

<sup>116</sup> "U.S. Marines, Malaysian Soldiers Complete MALUS AMPHEX 15", By Sgt. Emmanuel Ramos, *USPACOM*, December 01, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/632016/us-marines-malaysian-soldiers-complete-malus-amphex-15.aspx>

<sup>117</sup> "Readout of Deputy Secretary of Defence Bob Work's meeting with Japan State Minister of Defence Kenji Wakamiya", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-455-15, December 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/631665/readout-of-deputy-secretary-of-defense-bob-works-meeting-with-japan-state-minis>

relationship between the two allies and address how the U.S. Air Force and Japanese Air Self-Defence Force can continue to strengthen their partnership. U.S. and Japanese air forces regularly train together to refine capabilities, improve interoperability and contribute to enhanced stability within the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. The two countries conduct regular, combined military exercises, which focus on improving bilateral coordination and joint readiness.<sup>118</sup>

A delegation of senior U.S. officials, including Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Tom Malinowski, Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam Craig Allen, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Scot Marciel, and Special Representative to Muslim Communities Shaarik Zafar, have participated in the U.S.-Brunei High Level Officials Meeting in London, United Kingdom, on November 30, 2015. The U.S. delegation met with senior Bruneian ministers to discuss how the United States and Brunei Darussalam can further enhance their bilateral relationship covering security and defence, trade and economics, and regional cooperation.<sup>119</sup>

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) returned to Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, (CFAY) after completing its 2015 patrol, December 3. Ronald Reagan became the U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier after a hull swap with USS George Washington (CVN 73) in August and departed CFAY Oct. 15 to conduct exercises to foster security and stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and to improve interoperability with her maritime partners. "I'm proud of all the accomplishments that the crew has achieved," said Capt. Chris Bolt, Ronald Reagan's commanding officer. Ronald Reagan and its embarked air wing, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, provide a combat-ready force that protects and defends the collective maritime interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.<sup>120</sup>

## India-US Relations

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Deputy Secretary of State Blinken will travel to India and Pakistan December 7-10.**

The US Department of State in a press release said that Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to India and Pakistan December 7-10 to discuss key political, economic, and security issues with government officials and non-governmental experts. December 7-8 in New Delhi, Deputy Secretary Blinken will meet with senior Indian officials to discuss a range

<sup>118</sup> "Pacific Air Forces Hosts Japanese Minister of Defence during PACOM Tour", By Tech. Sgt. James Stewart, *USPACOM News*, November 30, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/631568/pacific-air-forces-hosts-japanese-minister-of-defense-during-pacom-tour.aspx>

<sup>119</sup> "U.S.-Brunei High Level Officials' Meeting", *USPACOM News*, December 01, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/632017/us-brunei-high-level-officials-meeting.aspx>

<sup>120</sup> "USS Ronald Reagan Completes 2015 Patrol", By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Sara B. Sexton, *USPACOM News*, December 03, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/632587/uss-ronald-reagan-completes-2015-patrol.aspx>

of bilateral and global economic and security issues, including ongoing U.S.-India cooperation to advance mutual prosperity and regional stability. He will also visit a local business incubator as part of his ongoing outreach to build new bridges between policymakers and innovators.<sup>121</sup>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Exercise Drad Sankalp of the Indian Army's southern command culminates; INS Viraat slated to be decommissioned after its participation in the International Fleet Review 2016.**

The final phase of the training exercise by Indian Army's Southern Command culminated on December 5, 2015. The exercise 'DRAD SANKALP' had commenced on December 3. The focus of the exercise was on validation of operational preparedness of the formations and units to the evolving doctrine of the Indian Army to launch swift offensive in the desert terrain in a network centric environment in close coordination with long range Artillery and Air Force. The exercise presented an excellent opportunity to the formations and units to gauge their operational preparedness while operating in a highly intense, dynamic and fluid operational environment. Participation included entire spectrum of ground forces to include fighting arms, combat support arms duly supported by services and logistics, Force Multipliers like Army Aviation, Special Forces and Electronic Warfare System in conjunction with Indian Air Force. During the Exercise, combined arms of infantry and mechanised forces practiced swift manoeuvres in coordination with airborne troops. Significantly, such large scale exercises are conducted once in three to four years as part of operational validation of doctrinal tenets which are dynamic in nature, in keeping with the ever changing security environment.<sup>122</sup>

*INS Viraat*, India's second aircraft carrier commissioned in 1987, is slated to be decommissioned after its participation in the *International Fleet Review 2016* at Visakhapatnam. It is in the process of obtaining Defence Ministry's clearance to the retirement *plan*. The Minister of State for Defence Rao Inderjit Singh has informed the Lok Sabha that government has received a letter from Nalin Kumar Kateel, MP Dakshin Kannada for setting up an Aircraft Carrier Museum on *INS Viraat*, at Mangaluru. Some other coastal states have also shown their interest. Accordingly, all the coastal State Governments including State Government of Karnataka have been requested to convey their firm commitment in view of large financial support required for this project.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> "Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken Travel to India and Pakistan", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250372.htm>

<sup>122</sup> "Chief of Army Staff Reviews Exercise 'DRAD Sankalp', *PIB*, December 05, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=132598>

<sup>123</sup> "INS Viraat," *PIB*, December 04, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=132498>

## International

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **German parliament votes in favour of supporting French and coalition operations against the Islamic State; Italian Air Force receives its first of a planned 90 Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter.**

Reports say that the German parliament Bundestag has voted in favour of supporting French and coalition operations against the Islamic State on December 4. German forces will play a supporting and enabling role, rather than conducting strikes themselves. In total the deployment of some 1,200 German personnel has been approved to support the operations. This will be the single biggest German international military commitment currently active. The deployments include the F122 Bremen-class anti-submarine warfare frigate FGS Augsburg in support of France's naval task force in the Mediterranean; up to six Panavia Tornado aircraft for tactical reconnaissance; and one Airbus A310 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT). An additional 650 German troops will be deployed as part of the UN's MINUSMA mission in Mali in order to relieve pressure on French forces in the region.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, the Italian Air Force received its first of a planned 90 Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter on December 3. The F-35A aircraft is the first to be built outside the US. The Italian government-owned Cameri final assembly and check out (FACO) where the aircraft was built is the only F-35 assembly plant outside the US. Production at Cameri began in July 2013. Italy has a requirement for 60 F-35As and 30 F-35Bs to replace its Panavia Tornado, AMX, and McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier II aircraft.<sup>125</sup>

## III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

### Jammu & Kashmir

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Hizbul militant arrested in Shopian, hideouts busted in J&K; Three armed guerrillas were killed as Army foiled infiltration bid in Kashmir; Soldier, two militants killed in north Kashmir encounter; Two more arrested in J&K in connection with ISI spy racket.**

Three persons, including a Hizbul Mujahideen militant, were arrested in Kashmir valley on December 2. "Based on the information regarding the presence of a terrorist in Harmain village of Shopian, a joint operation of the Army and the police apprehended a Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist Nawaz Ahmad Najar, a resident of Harmain Shopian," said Army spokesman Colonel N.N. Joshi. Two hand grenades and one Chinese grenade were recovered. In another development in north Kashmir, the security forces busted a funding module of the

<sup>124</sup> "Germany Approves Mission To Support Strikes Against Islamic State," *IHS Jane's*, December 03, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56462/germany-approves-mission-to-support-strikes-against-islamic-state>

<sup>125</sup> "Italy accepts first F-35," *IHS Jane's*, December 06, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56474/italy-accepts-first-f-35>

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and arrested two persons. The security forces also busted two militant hideouts in Poonch and Baramulla, where a huge cache of ammunition was recovered.<sup>126</sup>

The Indian Army on December 3 foiled an infiltration bid in Poonch sector of the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir and killed three heavily-armed guerrillas in a gun battle, Colonel SD Goswami, spokesman of the army's Udhampur-based Northern Command, told IANS. There were no casualties in the Indian side, he said, adding that the area has been cordoned off and a search operation was on.<sup>127</sup>

Two militants and a soldier were killed in an encounter in Boban Watsar forest in north Kashmir's Handwara district on December 4, said a Srinagar-based defence spokesman. Two AK weapons and five radio sets were recovered in the operation. Sources said the militants belong to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen.<sup>128</sup>

A retired Indian Army personnel and a school teacher have been arrested in Jammu and Kashmir for being part of the espionage racket run by the ISI, bringing the total number of arrests in this case so far to four. The Delhi Police said the team of Inter State Cell of Crime Branch had gone to Jammu and Kashmir in search of other persons involved in this racket when they arrested Munawwar Ahmad Mir, a retired havildar of the Indian Army. He had joined the Indian Army in 1995 and retired in 2011 after serving in J&K Light Infantry, Rashtriya Rifles, at various places in India. The school teacher was arrested from Khablan tehsil in Thanna Mandi of Rajouri district. Earlier, two espionage rackets were busted with arrests of five people from Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Kolkata. One of the men caught was suspected to be a handler from ISI, while the other was a Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, claimed the Delhi police.<sup>129</sup>

## Northeast India

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Two injured as ULFA (I) militants attack stone crusher unit workers; Meghalaya: Three armed LAEF rebels arrested in West Garo Hills; Top GNLA cadre killed in encounter; Six suspected JuM ultras held in Assam.**

ULFA (I) militants, on November 30, indiscriminately fired upon workers of a stone crusher unit at Namrup in Dibrugarh district, leaving two hindi-speaking workers seriously injured. "Two persons have been injured in the attack last night. It has been confirmed that the attack

<sup>126</sup> Ashiq, Peerzada, "Hizbul Militant Held, Hideouts Busted in J&K", *The Hindu*, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/hizbul-militant-held-hideouts-busted-in-jk/article7937824.ece>

<sup>127</sup> "Army Foils Infiltration In Kashmir, Three Guerrillas Killed", *The Times of India*, December 4, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jammu/Army-foils-infiltration-in-Kashmir-three-guerrillas-killed/articleshow/50036935.cms>

<sup>128</sup> Ashiq, Peerzada, "Soldier, 2 Militants Killed In Kashmir Encounter", *The Hindu*, December 5, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/soldier-2-militants-killed-in-kashmir-encounter/article7950634.ece>

<sup>129</sup> "ISI Spy Ring: Two More Arrested in J&K", *Business Standard*, December 5, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/isi-spy-ring-two-more-arrested-in-j-k-115120500232\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/isi-spy-ring-two-more-arrested-in-j-k-115120500232_1.html)

was carried out by ULFA (I) terrorists," Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) S N Singh told *PTI* on December 1. Meanwhile, in an e-mail statement, claiming to be from the ULFA (I), the outfit took responsibility for the attack. "We the ULFA (I) is claiming responsibility for the incident of Namrup, Dilighat," said the mail from a person asserting himself to be ULFA (I) Deputy commander (Eastern Command) and Assistant Publicity Secretary Arunudoy Asom said.<sup>130</sup>

Three cadres belonging to the Liberation of Achik Elite Force (LAEF) were apprehended by Army personnel from Kukurkata village near Assam-Meghalaya border. The trio hails from Phulbari under West Garo Hills district. According to Army press release, the three cadres had undergone training at NSCN's Hebron camp in Nagaland and at a camp in North Garo Hills. The Army team also recovered two AK series rifles, two magazines, 30 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition and some incriminating documents from the apprehended cadres.<sup>131</sup>

A top cadre of the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) was shot dead on December 3 in an encounter at Durama hills near Khakwa Duragre village in East Garo Hills. The cadre, identified as Kennedy Sangma alias Hebel, was the area commander of Chokpot in South Garo Hills and was also the commander of the Eagle Hunters group, which was formed earlier this year by the outfit to execute policemen. "The operation was conducted by the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) commandos. Kennedy was killed in a heavy exchange of fire," said North Garo Hills superintendent of police Davies Marak. The police recovered two AK-series rifles, a Dragunov sniper rifle, 24 live rounds of AK-series rifles, an empty case, two live rounds of the sniper rifle and four mobile handsets from the site, which was a makeshift hideout of the outfit.<sup>132</sup>

Six suspected Jamat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM) militants were arrested by Chirang Police during the operation that began on December 4. The arrested include one Ashik alias Bura Bhai who is believed to be the main organiser and trainer of the jihadi training camp that was busted at Daukanagar under the Dhaligaon Police Station in September this year. Another suspect named Makibul Hussain alias Laskar, who was one of the key trainers in the camp was also arrested from Krishnai in Goalpara district during the operation which was led by Chirang SP Ranjan Bhuyan.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> "ULFA (I) Militants Attack Stone Crusher Unit Workers, 2 Injured", *Business Standard*, December 1, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ulfa-i-militants-attack-stone-crusher-unit-workers-2-injured-115120100203\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ulfa-i-militants-attack-stone-crusher-unit-workers-2-injured-115120100203_1.html)

<sup>131</sup> "3 LAEF Rebels Held By Army", *The Assam Tribune*, December 3, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec0315/oth052>

<sup>132</sup> Khan, Saidul, "Top GNLA Cadre Killed In Shootout", *The Telegraph*, December 4, 2015 at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1151204/jsp/northeast/story\\_56542.jsp#.VmMXINJ97cs](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1151204/jsp/northeast/story_56542.jsp#.VmMXINJ97cs)

<sup>133</sup> "6 JuM Ultras Held In Chirang", *The Assam Tribune*, December 6, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec0615/at055>

## Left-wing Extremism

(November 30-December 6, 2015)

- **Forces in Chhattisgarh count high Naxals casualties than ever; Naxals PLGA Week: Landmine blast injures cops in Kanker, six Maoists arrested in Odisha; Huge cache of Maoist arms, explosives seized in Bastar.**

Security forces in Chhattisgarh have signalled a sharp increase in the number of “insurgents killed in operations” in the month of November. Police statistics show that of the bodies of Naxals recovered after encounters this year, over 40 per cent — 18 out of 43 — have been found in November alone. The high November count comes the month after visits by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and K Vijay Kumar, senior adviser, Anti-Naxal Operations, to Bastar. Police officers told *The Indian Express* a large part of the success in anti-Naxal operations is due to better coordination among forces. “More than the numbers, what is important is the joint effort that is now being put in,” said R K Vij, ADG, Anti-Naxal Operations. S R P Kalluri, IG of Bastar, suggested the “improved results” had come also from changes in strategy, which was largely worked on during the “rainy season when operations in the jungles are minimal”. “The first aspect is the idea of composite teams. The second aspect is an increase in interstate coordination, while the third is training that has been imparted. During the rainy season, DRG personnel were sent for training in the Northeast”, said Mr Kalluri. Until November, 44 security troops have been killed in Naxalism-related incidents, as opposed to 61 in 2014. “Of these, 19 have died in operations and 10 in IED blasts. There have been 160 encounters, while 203 IEDs have been recovered,” a police officer said.<sup>134</sup>

Coinciding with the first day of the Peoples’ Liberation Guerrilla Army Week being observed by CPI (Maoist), two police jawans were injured in a landmine blast triggered by Naxals in Chhattisgarh’s Kanker district on December 2. The explosion occurred in the morning when a joint team of Border Security Force (BSF) and district police force were cordoning off a forested patch near Markanar village under Koyalibeda police station limits, said Jitendra Singh Meena, S P, Kanker.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, in another development, six Maoists were arrested in Malkangiri district of Odisha on December 2.<sup>136</sup> Reportedly, on the second day of its annual PLGA week observation (December 3), the banned CPI (Maoist) has conducted a public meeting at Gilagondi village, near Gunukurayi in G.K. Veedhi mandal as part of its support to Girijans’ campaign against State and Central governments’ plan to start bauxite mining in the Agency. People from neighbouring villages along with Jerrela area, for which the Union Forest Ministry has given clearance for bauxite mining and the State government issued a GO,

<sup>134</sup> Ghose, Dipankar, “Forces in Chhattisgarh Count More Dead Naxals Than Ever”, *The Indian Express*, November 30, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/forces-in-chhattisgarh-count-more-dead-naxals-than-ever/>

<sup>135</sup> “Two Cops Injured In Maoist Landmine Blast in Bastar”, *The Hindu*, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/two-cops-injured-in-maoist-landmine-blast-in-bastar/article7940398.ece>

<sup>136</sup> “Six Maoists Arrested in Malkangiri”, *The Hindu*, December 2, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/six-maoists-arrested-in-malkangiri/article7942720.ece>

No. 97 last month, have reportedly participated in the meeting which was organised by the Korukonda area committee of the CPI(Maoist).<sup>137</sup>

During an anti-Naxalite operation on December 5, a joint team of Border Security Force and District police recovered huge cache of arms and explosives along with Maoist material in Padbeda forests of Kanker district in Bastar division. The recovery included 11 guns, four tiffin bombs, two pistols, 20 detonators, SLR rifle rounds, Insas magazine, gelatin, electronics, medicines, pamphlets, clothing and other materials. In another development, 140 Battalion BSF during combing operation at Chargaon area arrested three Maoists on December 5.<sup>138</sup>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### India and the UN

(November 9-29, 2015)

- **Statements in the General Assembly; Italian marines case at ITLOS inches forward; India re-elected to UNCITRAL; India's alleged 'blockade' receives SG's attention; India launches website on climate change, PM floats the idea of solar alliance at G20; PMI gets a new PR; Human rights not disconnected from diversities, CCIT critical for dealing with ISIS: Bishnoi; Kiren Rijiju receives UN award for disaster risk reduction; Pak dossiers on India have no material evidence in them; Samantha Power lauds Indian Peacekeeping; Yusuf Hamied of Cipla on High Level Panel on health; Counsellor Amit Narang on climate change; India in the General Assembly- Palestine, refugees and protection of HR defenders; Natural disasters cause among the highest casualties in India; Eyes set on COP21 in Paris.**

Indian representatives and visiting MPs participated in five debates in the General Assembly. Prominent among them are the debate on Palestine in the 4<sup>th</sup> Committee of the GA in which Minister S Srinivas Prasad pointed out that the visit by President Pranab Mukherji to Palestine in October, 2015 was a gesture that points to the importance India gives to the cause of Palestine and hopes for an early resolution of the issue.<sup>139</sup> Participating in the General Assembly debate on the annual report of the Security Council, India's PR, Asoke Mukherji, pointed to several failures of the Council. Among them were the inability to ensure that states adhere their commitments to the anti-terrorism resolutions, secrecy in the working of the sanctions regime, inability to investigate and prosecute terrorists who harmed peacekeepers,

<sup>137</sup> "Maoists Conduct Meeting at Gilagondi", *The Hindu*, December 4, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/maoists-conduct-meeting-at-gilagondi/article7946800.ece>

<sup>138</sup> Drolia, Rashmi, "Huge Cache of Maoist Arms, Explosives Seized in Bastar", *The Times of India*, December 5, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Huge-cache-of-Maoist-arms-explosives-seized-in-Bastar/articleshow/50057129.cms>

<sup>139</sup> "Statement by Mr. S. Srinivas Prasad, Minister, at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (4th Committee) on Agenda Item 54: UNRWA", November 10, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/adminpart/uploadpdf/54970UNRWA%20stmnt%20by%20S.%20Prasad%20on%20Nov%2010,%202015.pdf>

inability to bring peacekeeping missions to a successful closure etc.<sup>140</sup> First Secretary Devesh Uttam participated in the informal consultations on the Peacebuilding Architecture and emphasized the importance of funding for peacebuilding activities, the important role of peacekeepers in early peacebuilding and subsequently, the need for a clear distinction between the role of humanitarian actors and peacekeepers in this process.<sup>141</sup>

The International Tribunal for the Law of Sea (ITLOS) has constituted a five-member arbitral tribunal to look into the case of the Italian marines whose firing off the coast of Kerala resulted in the death of two fishermen. The Tribunal will be headed by Judge Vladimir Golitsyn of Russia. The two other arbitrators are Judge Jin-Hyun Paik of Korea and Judge Patrick Robinson of Jamaica. Italy had appointed Professor Francesco Francioni and India appointed Judge Patibandla Chandrasekhara Rao earlier this year.<sup>142</sup>

India was elected to the UN Commission for International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) for another six year term (2016-2022) thus making its stint in the body unbroken for forty years. The Permanent Mission of India expressed its appreciation for the support given to India by member states of the UN.<sup>143</sup>

The Secretary General expressed concern over the 'blockade' of Nepal along the India-Nepal border, which was resulting in shortage of fuel supply in the landlocked country reeling under the effects of the devastating earthquake earlier this year. He called on all sides to help clear the obstruction of essential supplies to the country.<sup>144</sup> The protest by the Madhesi community in Nepal against the new constitution that divides their ancestral land near Raxaul, the main trading point on the Indo-Nepal border had resulted in this situation.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> "Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, at the United Nations General Assembly Plenary Meeting on the Annual Report of the UN Security Council", November 12, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2324>. Also see "UNSC 'helpless' on enforcing its own sanctions against terrorism: India", November 13, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/unsc-helpless-on-enforcing-its-own-sanctions-against-terrorism-india\\_1821408.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/unsc-helpless-on-enforcing-its-own-sanctions-against-terrorism-india_1821408.html)

<sup>141</sup> "Intervention by Mr. Devesh Uttam, First Secretary, During Informal Consultations on the 2015 Review of Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA)", November 13, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/adminpart/uploadpdf/82213PBA%20Stmnt%20Devesh%20Uttam%20Nov%2013,%202015.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> "Italian Marines Case: Tribunal that Will Take Final Call Constituted", *The Indian Express*, November 10, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/italian-marines-case-tribunal-that-will-take-final-call-constituted/>

<sup>143</sup> "India Re-Elected to UN Commission on International Trade Law", *The Hindu Business Line*, November 10, 2015, at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-reelected-to-un-commission-on-international-trade-law/article7864604.ece>

<sup>144</sup> "Ban Ki-Moon Calls on All Stakeholders to Lift Obstructions at Nepal-India Border", November 11, 2015, at <http://thehindu.com/news-international/ban-ki-moon-calls-on-all-stakeholders-to-lift-obstructions-at-nepal-india-border/>

<sup>145</sup> "UN Chief Calls For Lifting Of Blockade On Indo-Nepal Border", November 11, 2015, at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/un-chief-calls-for-lifting-of-blockade-on-indo-nepal-border/1/521454.html>

Ahead of the Climate Change Summit COP 21 in December in Paris, MInsiter for Environment Prakash Javadekar launched a website that details its thoughts on the issue.<sup>146</sup> The issue was also discussed at the G20 summit in Belek, Turkey, in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi floated the idea of a 'grand solar alliance' to promote the use of renewables.<sup>147</sup> He also urged the leading countries of the world to support the UN's sustainable development goals.<sup>148</sup> Syed Akbaruddin has been appointed as India's next PR to the UN.<sup>149</sup>

At a discussion on the report of the Human Rights Council in the General Assembly, Deputy PR Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi urged the UN to hold dialogues on human rights issues to better accommodate regional, cultural and religious perspectives on human rights. He also urged that the right to development be declared as a human right.<sup>150</sup>

At a meeting of the Security Council on the subject of maintenance of international peace and security, Deputy PR Bagwant Singh Bishnoi referred to the need for denial of space and finances to terrorist organisations such as the LeT, Al Qaeda and the ISIS.<sup>151</sup> In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, he emphasized that ideology was not sufficient for sustaining these groups. Therefore the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism, which seeks to criminalise such support must be adopted.<sup>152</sup>

Kiren Rijju, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs, was conferred the award of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Champion for the Asian Region by the United Nations Office for

<sup>146</sup> "Union Minister Javadekar Launches India's 'Climate Action Website' Ahead Of Paris Meet", November 12, 2015, at <http://www.newsnation.in/article/96905-union-minister-javadekar-launches-indias-climate-action-website-ahead-paris-meet.html>

<sup>147</sup> "Prime Minister Narendra Modi Pushes Grand Global Solar Alliance Before G20", *The Times of India*, November 15, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Prime-Minister-Narendra-Modi-pushes-grand-global-solar-alliance-before-G20/articleshow/49792738.cms>

<sup>148</sup> "PM Modi urges G-20 nations to align with UN's Sustainable Development Goals", *DNA News*, November 15, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-pm-modi-urges-g-20-nations-to-align-with-un-s-sustainable-development-goals-2145588>

<sup>149</sup> "Syed Akbaruddin is India's Next Permanent Representative to UN", *The Hindu*, November 16, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/syed-akbaruddin-is-indias-next-permanent-representative-to-un/article7884137.ece>

<sup>150</sup> "Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative of India on Agenda Item Report of the Human Rights Council [67]: A/70/53 at the UNGA", November 16, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2326>. Also see, "UN Should Consider Cultural, Religious Backgrounds For Human Rights Dialogues: India", *The Economic Times*, November 17, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-17/news/68356532\\_1\\_human-rights-council-equal-rights-resolution](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-17/news/68356532_1_human-rights-council-equal-rights-resolution).

<sup>151</sup> "Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at the Open Debate of the UN Security Council 'Maintaining of International Peace and Security : Security, Development and the root cause of conflict", November 17, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2328>

<sup>152</sup> "India Urges Global Action To Deny Facilities for LeT, IS", *The Economic Times*, November 18, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-18/news/68382315\\_1\\_security-council-international-peace-and-security-comprehensive-convention](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-18/news/68382315_1_security-council-international-peace-and-security-comprehensive-convention)

Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). This is the first award of this nature since the agreement on the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>153</sup>

At a hearing of the US Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee, Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan's advisor on foreign affairs stated that the dossiers given by Pakistan to the UN Secretary General and the US Secretary of State contained no material evidence of India's involvement in terrorism in Balochistan, FATA and Karachi.<sup>154</sup> He said these only identified a pattern and a narrative and that material evidence could not be shared for the sake of protecting the sources.<sup>155</sup> The Foreign Office of Pakistan issued a statement soon after to state that the evidence in the dossiers was irrefutable.<sup>156</sup>

USA's PR to the UN, Samantha Fox visited India on November 20, 2015. Participating in the "Women in the World" Summit she lauded India's role in peacekeeping, and the need for women to play a greater role in peacekeeping missions.<sup>157</sup> She also delivered a lecture on "Towards More Effective Peacekeeping in 21st Century" at the Indian Council for World Affairs, in which she emphasised on the need for periodic assessment of troops deployed for peacekeeping.<sup>158</sup>

Dr Yusuf Hamied, Chairperson of Cipla, a generic drug manufacturing company, has been selected by the UNSG to join the high-level panel on health technology innovation and access to promote investment and research and development for diseases whose returns are not assured. The panel is mandated to do this task in fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals on health issues.<sup>159</sup>

Participating in an event jointly organised by the Observer Research Foundation and the ZEIT-Stiftung on November 21, 2015, Amit Narang, Counsellor, PMI New York, said that

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<sup>153</sup> "UN confers Shri Kiren Rijiju with Disaster Risk Reduction Asia Champion honour", November 17, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/un-confers-shri-kiren-rijiju-with-disaster-risk-reduction-asia-champion-115111701371\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/un-confers-shri-kiren-rijiju-with-disaster-risk-reduction-asia-champion-115111701371_1.html)

<sup>154</sup> "Dossiers on India Have No 'Material Evidence'", *Dawn*, November 20, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1220957>

<sup>155</sup> "Pak Dossiers To US, UN on Indian Terror Involvement Have No Material Evidence: Sartaz Aziz", November 20, 2015, at <http://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world/pak-dossiers-on-indian-terror-have-no-material-evidence-27392.html>

<sup>156</sup> "Dossiers on Indian Terrorism Have Irrefutable Evidence, Asserts FO", *Dawn*, November 21, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1221045/dossiers-on-indian-terrorism-have-irrefutable-evidence-asserts-fo>

<sup>157</sup> "US Ambassador Applauds India and Calls for Larger Involvement of Women in Peacekeeping Operations", November 20, 2015, at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/us-ambassador-applauds-india-and-calls-for-larger-involvement-of-women-in-peacekeeping-operations-2514986.html>

<sup>158</sup> "UN Peacekeeping: US for Improved Consultations Among Countries", *Business Standard*, November 20, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/un-peacekeeping-us-for-improved-consultations-among-countries-115112000976\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/un-peacekeeping-us-for-improved-consultations-among-countries-115112000976_1.html)

<sup>159</sup> "Indian Scientist Appointed to High-Level Panel on Health", *The Times of India*, November 21, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Indian-scientist-appointed-to-high-level-panel-on-health/articleshow/49868324.cms>

'climate inequality' was at the heart of the debate on climate change and therefore climate action. He also elaborated on India's initiatives for reducing its emissions.<sup>160</sup>

Asoke Mukherji, India's PR, spelt out the developmental work being carried out by India in Palestine on November 23 marking the international day of solidarity with the Palestinian people. He said India was involved in providing health, education, skill development and vocational training. In addition to substantial financial contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), budgetary and project assistance, setting up libraries at centres of higher education and construction of schools.<sup>161</sup>

At a General Assembly meeting to discuss the report of the UNHCR on the refugee crisis, Deputy PR, Bhagwant S Bishnoi emphasised that the lives lost in the Mediterranean over the last two years must be treated as a refugee crisis and not a simple issue of migration. He said Security Council Resolution 2240 which makes a reference to boats used by refugees as likely threats to peace and security are an improper way of securitising refugee migration.<sup>162</sup>

India opted not to endorse the adoption of a resolution on the protection of human rights defenders. It was explained that this was because India was already party to covenant on civil and political rights which guarantees protection to all people and it felt that there was no need for a resolution specifically for defenders of human rights.<sup>163</sup>

A report by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on 'the Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction' lists India among the five countries most hit by disasters. The countries are the US, China, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The report states that 805 million people in India were affected by 288 weather-related disasters during the 1995-2015. The 1999 cyclone which claimed around 10,000 lives in Odisha caused the maximum casualties.<sup>164</sup>

In the lead up to the Paris Climate Conference, Minister for Environment, Prakash Javadekar said that India would make sincere efforts to cut its emissions, but reiterated that India would

<sup>160</sup> "Remarks by Mr. Amit Narang, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to UN", *Governance Talks*, Co-organized by Observer Research Foundation and ZEIT-Stiftung New York, November 21, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/adminpart/uploadpdf/26803can22nov15.pdf>

<sup>161</sup> "Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, on Agenda Item 38 - 'Question of Palestine' at the United Nations General Assembly", November 23, 2015, <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2331>

<sup>162</sup> "Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative, on Agenda Item 130 'Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers' at the United Nations General Assembly", November 23, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2330>

<sup>163</sup> India's Explanation of Position on the Adoption of Draft Resolution A/C.3/70/46/Rev.1 On Human Rights Defenders at the Third Committee At The 70th Session Of The United Nations General Assembly", November 25, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org /pages.php?id=2332>.

<sup>164</sup> "India, China Most Affected By Weather-Related Disasters: United Nations", *The Economic Times*, November 24, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-24/news/68536450\\_1\\_weather-related-disasters-weather-related-disasters-india-and-china](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-24/news/68536450_1_weather-related-disasters-weather-related-disasters-india-and-china)

strongly stand by the “polluter pays” principle.<sup>165</sup> At the Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be proposing a grand alliance of 122 nations for generating solar power.<sup>166</sup> ON the eve of the Conference, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he had faith in India’s commitment and endorsed the need for developed countries to contribute to the climate fund.<sup>167</sup> As part of the World Economic Forum, 78 multinationals, including from India pledged their commitment to the Climate deal that would ensure from the Summit in Paris.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> “Climate Change: India ready to be Part of Solution, Says Prakash Javadekar”, *DNA News*, November 25, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-climate-change-india-ready-to-be-part-of-solution-says-prakash-javadekar-2149029>

<sup>166</sup> “India Set For Paris Climate Meet with Grand Plans On Renewables”, *Business Standard*, November 29, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-set-for-paris-climate-meet-with-grand-plans-on-renewables-115112900388\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-set-for-paris-climate-meet-with-grand-plans-on-renewables-115112900388_1.html)

<sup>167</sup> “Honour Pledge To Give \$100bn To Developing Nations: Ban Ki-moon to West”, *The Indian Express*, November 29, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-news/honour-pledge-to-give-100bn-to-developing-nations-ban-ki-moon-to-west/>

<sup>168</sup> “Top CEOs Pledge Support for United Nations’ Climate Deal”, November 24, 2015, at <http://www.odishanewsinsight.com/business/top-ceos-pledge-support-for-un-climate-deal/>