

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **On-going process for peace talks with Taliban is ISI's game; US proposes \$2.5b in aid to Afghanistan; 2015 had highest number of civilian casualties in seven years.**

Ahmad Zia Masoud, the Special Envoy to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani for reform and good governance, believes that the ongoing process for peace talks with Taliban is the game of Pakistan's intelligence agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). While talking to a gathering in Takhar province on February 9, Masoud said that the purpose of this process is to place Taliban in the government. He went on to say that if Pakistan brings one group to the negotiation table it will strengthen another group for fighting. During the government of former President Hamid Karzai's, High Peace Council came into shape, bombardment of foreign forces, night raids and the use of heavy weapons against Taliban stopped but nothing of this added up to the optimism for peace, Masoud added. While criticizing government policies, Masoud expressed concerns over the country's future. With current policies of government for peace, it is possible that the fighting will further explore, he said. Pointing to the quadrilateral process started by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China for bringing Taliban to the negotiation table, Masoud said that "it is waste of time" for keeping Afghan government heedless so they can increase attacks. President Ghani's Special Envoy also said that a Resistance Shura (Council) needs to be formed under the leadership of the former Mujahideen commanders which would be able to maintain security of the country in one year, he added.¹

The Obama administration proposed \$2.5 billion in financial assistance to Afghanistan on February 10 when Secretary of State, John Kerry said the aid would reinforce the country's security and development. "Our proposal requests \$2.5 billion for programmes that reinforce Afghanistan's security and development by maintaining the gains of the last decade, supporting military training and assistance..." Kerry said in his proposal to the Congress. He added the proposed assistance would help the Afghan government tackle corruption, counter the influence of extremists and terrorists strengthen civil society and promote health, education, economic growth and good governance. Earlier in the day, President Barack Obama sent his last annual budget to the Congress, reaffirming America's long term commitment to Afghanistan. "The budget continues to support long-term national security and economic interests in Afghanistan and helps sustain political, economic, and security gains in the country as the US draws down its forces and assistance levels gradually decline," Obama said.²

With the recorded deaths and injuries of 10534 civilians in Afghanistan in 2014, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in its annual report that this was the

¹ "Masoud Believes the Ongoing Process for Peace Talks with Taliban is ISI's Game", *Khaama Press*, February 10, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/masoud-believes-the-ongoing-process-for-peace-with-taliban-is-isis-game-4567>

² "Obama Administration Proposes \$2.5b in Aid to Afghanistan", *Daily outlook Afghanistan*, February 11, 2016, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=14438

highest number of civilian casualties since 2009. But last year recorded yet another rise in the number of civilians hurt or killed. UNAMA in its 2015 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict says that the numbers of civilian casualties in Afghanistan during 2015 are the highest recorded. The report released today is produced by UNAMA in coordination with the UN Human Rights Office. It shows that increased ground fighting in and around populated areas, along with suicide and other attacks in major cities, were the main causes of conflict-related civilian deaths and injuries in 2015. "This report records yet another rise in the number of civilians hurt or killed. The harm done to civilians is totally unacceptable," said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. "We call on those inflicting this pain on the people of Afghanistan to take concrete action to protect civilians and put a stop to the killing and maiming of civilians in 2016." UNAMA documented 11,002 civilian casualties (3,545 deaths and 7,457 injured) in 2015, exceeding the previous record levels of civilian casualties that occurred in 2014. The latest figures show an overall increase of four per cent during 2015 in total civilian casualties from the previous year. UNAMA began its systematic documentation of civilian casualties in 2009. Ground engagements between parties to the conflict caused the highest number of total civilian casualties (fatalities and injuries), followed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide and complex attacks. Ground engagements caused the most fatalities amongst civilians, followed by targeted and deliberate killings. "The people of Afghanistan continue to suffer brutal and unprincipled attacks that are forbidden under international law," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.³

Pakistan

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Army seeks funds for new security division; Eleven Projects worth Rs10bn approved; Are new anti-terror laws an exercise in futility?**

Pakistan Army has sought additional funds from the Finance Ministry to raise a new security division and an additional 28 security battalions, it emerged on February 7. A statement released by the Ministry of Finance said senior officials from the army had a meeting with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar at his ministry in Islamabad, where the demand for "financing and the release of funds" was made by the military officials. The statement quoted Dar as saying that the "government attaches the highest importance to security matters" and assured the "provision of funds for the new security division and additional battalions." Pakistan Army is currently spearheading a war against terrorism in Pakistan's northern tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, where terrorists from militant organisations are believed to have taken refuge. In June 2014, the army launched a comprehensive military operation – Zarb-i-Azb – against Taliban militants threatening the writ of the state by launching brazen attacks on government and military installations. Since then, the military has claimed to kill thousands of militants in air raids in the north and through intelligence-based operations in various parts of the country. But the threat of militancy and extremism is far from over.⁴

³ "2015 Had Highest Number of Civilian Casualties in Seven Years, UN Report Shows", *Khaama Press*, February 14, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/2015-was-the-deadliest-year-for-civilians-in-past-seven-years-shows-un-report-4576>

⁴ "Army Seeks Funds for New Security Division", *Daily Times*, February 8, 2016, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-02-08/page-2/detail-7>

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on February 8 cleared the procurement of 58 diesel electric locomotives by Pakistan Railways at a cost of Rs16.30 billion and forwarded the project to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council for approval. The CDWP meeting, chaired by Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal, approved eleven development projects, including four higher education projects, worth Rs10.08bn. The foreign exchange component of the approved projects in water resources, transport and communication, physical planning and housing and education sectors comes to Rs1.69bn. The highest number of projects approved by CDWP related to the Higher Education Commission. The meeting approved strengthening and enhancement of academic provisions in the Faculty of Life and Environment Sciences, University of Peshawar worth Rs547.21 million. A development project for the University of Balochistan, Quetta at the cost of Rs1.09bn with foreign exchange component of Rs571.073m was also approved. Establishment and upgrading of 'Core Engineering Department' in Mardan Campus of the University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar at the cost of Rs1.4bn was approved with foreign exchange component of Rs763.48m.⁵

ISPR Director General Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa on February 12 revealed that the law enforcement agencies have successfully broken the nexus between al Qaeda (subcontinent chapter) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ). Briefing media persons, the army spokesman said security forces have achieved a major success during the ongoing Karachi operation by arresting over 97 hard-core terrorists, including three high-value targets (HVTs). "We have broken the overall network and nexus of terrorists belonging to al Qaeda subcontinent chapter and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. They were backed by Tehreek-e-Taliban... This is a major achievement, but we have much more to do," Bajwa said. He said the terrorists were involved in almost all major incidents of terrorism in Karachi, adding that all of them are in army's custody. They committed several heinous crimes, including attacks on security forces, Kamra airbase attack, Mehran airbase attack in Karachi, suicide attack on senior police officer Chaudhry Aslam, attacks on naval buses in Karachi and other incidents of terrorism, he said. About the HVTs, he said they are three hardcore terrorists – Masna, the "number two" of al Qaeda subcontinent chapter, Naeem Bukhari, the head of LJ's Sindh chapter, and Munna, a wanted member of al Qaeda. They had head money of Rs 15 million, Rs 20 million and Rs 5 million, respectively, Bajwa said, adding that Masna was the mastermind of the June 2014 airport attack in Karachi. The three hardcore terrorists were later presented to the media. The DG ISPR said army foiled a Hyderabad jailbreak plot by arresting the perpetrators from the city, seizing their arms and ammunition.⁶

In an effort to improve the laws and institutions dealing with prosecution of terrorists, the PML-N government took a number of measures, such as enacting the Protection of Pakistan Act (PoPA) and the notification of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (Nacta) as the focal body for coordination of anti-terror efforts. However, thanks to redundancies, a lack of interest from the concerned quarters and resistance from other departments, these new laws and bodies did not prove to be of much use. As PoPA reaches the end of its life and Nacta shows no signs of rejuvenation, this special report examines the reasons behind their ineffectiveness. Just around 30 cases registered under PoPA over past year and a half: Overlaps with other legislation, definitional problems plague new laws; Key posts vacant in centre, provinces. In hindsight, the

⁵ "11 Projects Worth Rs10bn Approved", *Dawn*, February 9, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1238244/11-projects-worth-rs10bn-approved>

⁶ "Al Qaeda, LeJ and TTP Working Hand in Glove", *Daily Times*, February 13, 2016, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-02-13/page-1/detail-0>

promulgation of the Protection of Pakistan Act (PoPA) seems to have been a 'futile' exercise, given that the legislation is going to expire in July this year without any concrete results.⁷

Bangladesh

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Bangladesh expresses concerns over recent rocket launch by North Korea; Delegation from ministry of commerce holds meeting with India's DGAD; Delhi to take ties with Dhaka to new height; Bangladesh to import 120 railway coaches from India; India and Bangladesh hold the 62nd meeting of the joint committee on sharing of Ganges water at Farakka; Pakistan summons Bangladesh envoy; A delegation from the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand visits Bangladesh; UN wants Bangladesh on high-level panel on water; European Parliament delegation visits Bangladesh.**

Dhaka has expressed deep concern about the recent rocket launch by North Korea and urged the country to refrain from any action that might escalate the tension on the Korean Peninsula. In a statement on February 10, the foreign ministry said that this was a clear violation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.⁸

Monoj Kumar Roy, Additional Secretary of the Commerce Ministry led a Bangladesh delegation comprising officials of Tariff Commission, World Trade Organisation (WTO) cell and Jute Department to discuss the anti-dumping and countervailing duties initiated by India on Bangladeshi jute products. The meeting with India's Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) was held in Delhi on February 3. At the meeting Monoj Kumar explained Dhaka's position vis-à-vis India's allegations against Bangladesh giving subsidy and cash incentive to its jute products. The issue came to the fore in October 2015 when the DGAD under the ministry of commerce of India started investigating imposition of anti-dumping and countervailing duties on jute goods exported from Bangladesh based on the claims of Indian Jute Mills Association. "We have made the DGAD of India understand that Bangladesh as an LDC (least developed country) can provide subsidy and cash incentives against exports. Our subsidy and cash incentives, which are decreasing gradually, cannot injure Indian industries," said Monoj Kumar on the outcome of the meeting with the DGAD of India. Monoj Kumar also brought another point to India's attention that as per WTO rules no country can launch investigations against countervailing and anti-dumping duties simultaneously. But India initiated the move simultaneously, he said.⁹

Newly appointed Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla said New Delhi gives its highest priority to its relations with Dhaka and wants to carry forward the ties to a "new height". The Indian envoy came up with the remark when he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in Dhaka on February 7. Shringla also referred to a recent meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam in New Delhi. "India will provide all-out support to Sheikh Hasina's government,"

⁷ "Special report: Are New Anti-Terror Laws an Exercise in Futility?", *Dawn*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1239696/special-report-are-new-anti-terror-laws-an-exercise-in-futility>

⁸ "Bangladesh Concerned Over Recent Rocket Launch by N Korea", *The Daily Star*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-concerned-over-recent-rocket-launch-n-korea-415120>.

⁹ Sajjadur Rahman, "Bangladeshi Jute Products", *The Daily Star*, February 8, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/india-shelves-investigation-214273>.

the Indian envoy quoted Sushma as saying. At the meeting both sides discussed several bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi and Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Abul Kalam Azad were present at the meeting.¹⁰

Bangladesh Railway is going to import 120 modern carriages from India at an estimated cost of over Tk 425 crore, with the first consignment of 40 to arrive in Bangladesh in March. This is the biggest-ever consignment of Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches to be exported by the railways, said a senior official of Indian railway ministry. The export order of 120 LHB coaches include 17 air conditioned first class, 17 AC chair cars, 34 non-AC chair cars with pantry, 33 non-AC chair cars with prayer room and 19 power car coaches. The manufacturing of stainless steel LHB broad gauge coaches for Bangladesh Railway is in progress at the Rail Coach Factory (RCF) in Kapurthala in northern Indian state of Punjab.¹¹

A leading Indian negotiator of the trans-boundary rivers C. Lal said on February 12 that they would promptly respond to the signing of the much-awaited Teesta water-sharing agreement whenever Bangladesh proposes it to them. Lal was leading a five-member delegation at the 62nd meeting of the Joint Committee on sharing of Ganges water at Farakka. Only Bangladesh could tell when the issue should be discussed because they would propose it, said Lal, also the co-chairman of joint committee. Mofazzal Hossain, led a five-member Bangladesh delegation at the Ganges meeting.¹²

Amid a diplomatic tension between Dhaka and Islamabad, Pakistan authorities summoned Bangladesh High Commissioner in Islamabad Suhrab Hossain on February 8. Diplomatic sources in Dhaka see Pakistan's move as an act of retaliation following Dhaka's summoning of Pakistan High Commissioner Shuja Alam on February 2. "Dhaka had a specific reason for summoning the Pakistan envoy and handing him over a protest note as Pakistan violated diplomatic norms by picking up the Bangladesh High Commission official on February 1 and detaining him without any reason," said a senior official at the foreign ministry. Though the Pakistani plainclothes men picked up Jahangir and harassed him, they did not reveal their identities, which the diplomatic circles termed "dangerous, alarming and a matter of grave concern." The plainclothes men had also blindfolded him. Later, they dropped him off at an unknown place after midnight and returned his ID card, cell phone, and motorbike. Earlier on the same day, detectives in Dhaka detained Pakistan High Commission staff Abrar Ahmed Khan for his "suspicious movement".¹³

A 10-member delegation from the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand came to Dhaka on February 10, 2016 to join the first meeting of Bangladesh-Thailand Joint Working Group (JWG) on health services held on February 11, 2016. The delegation was led by Jiroth Sindhvananda, senior advisor of International Medicine of the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand. Biman Kumar Saha, additional secretary to the ministry of health and family welfare, led the Bangladesh

¹⁰ "Delhi to Take Ties with Dhaka to New Height", *The Daily Star*, February 8, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/delhi-take-ties-dhaka-new-height-214225>.

¹¹ "Bangladesh To Import 120 Railway Coaches from India", *The Daily Star*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-import-120-railway-coaches-india-415249>.

¹² "Delhi Positive on Teesta: Says Indian Member of JRC", *The Daily Star*, February 13, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/delhi-positive-teesta-510205>.

¹³ "Pakistan Summons Bangladesh Envoy", *The Daily Star*, February 9, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/pakistan-summons-bangladesh-envoy-214768>.

delegation. The meeting came as preparatory to the proposed 4th meeting of the Bangladesh-Thailand Joint Trade Committee to be held in Dhaka in the second half of this year.¹⁴

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon phoned Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 7 and offered Bangladesh membership in a UN high-level panel on water, which is to be formed. Hasina readily accepted it.¹⁵

A four-member European Parliament (EP) delegation led by Jean Lambert (Green Party-UK), came to Dhaka on February 10 to witness the state of political rights, freedom of expression, labour rights and the overall human rights situation in Bangladesh. Reportedly, the aim of the visit was to convey the Bangladeshi leadership and interlocutors, the EP's priorities on democracy and human rights in Bangladesh.¹⁶

Sri Lanka

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **UN human rights chief visits Sri Lanka.**

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein made a four-day official visit to Sri Lanka on February 6, 2016, at the invitation of the Sri Lankan government. The High Commissioner called on the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mangala Samaraweera at the Ministry on the same day. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Harsha De Silva and delegates of the UN High Commission for Human Rights were also present at the meeting. Later, he met with the Ad Interim Resident Coordinator of UN in Sri Lanka Una McCauley, and the Heads of UN Agencies in Sri Lanka. The National Freedom Front (NFF), Sri Lanka's opposition political party led by MP Wimal Weerawansa, organised a protest in Colombo against the visit of the United Nations human rights chief. Hundreds of protesters carrying placards and shouting slogans gathered outside the UN complex in Colombo to protest the right chief's visit, which, according to the protesters, would affect the Sri Lankan military adversely. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on President Maithripala Sirisena at the Presidential Secretariat on February 9, 2016 and held cordial discussions on the current developments in Sri Lanka.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Bangladesh, Thailand to Discuss Public Health Co-Op Today", *The Daily Star*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-thailand-discuss-public-health-coop-today-417730>.

¹⁵ "UN Wants Bangladesh on High-Level Panel on Water", *The Daily Star*, February 8, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/un-wants-bangladesh-high-level-panel-water-214300>.

¹⁶ "European Parliament Delegation Due Today", *The Daily Star*, February 10, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/european-parliament-delegation-due-today-351331>.

¹⁷ "UN Human Rights Chief Arrives in Sri Lanka", *ColomboPage*, February 6, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Feb06_1454731184CH.php. "UN Rights Chief Says will Listen To Everyone, Look for Constructive Discussion", *ColomboPage*, February 6, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Feb06_1454779557CH.php. "Sri Lanka Opposition Party Protests UN Rights Chief's Visit", *ColomboPage*, February 6, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Feb06_1454778067CH.php. "UN High Commissioner for Human Rights calls on President", *PMD News*, February 9, 2016, at <http://www.pmdnews.lk/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-calls-president/>.

Maldives

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Japan opens embassy in Maldives; CMAG delegation visits the Maldives; High-level Maldivian delegates meet Commonwealth secretary-general; German ambassador meets with the controller general of immigration.**

Though the Japanese embassy has been in use since start of 2016, the embassy was officially opened on February 8. Japanese embassy was officially opened in a ceremony participated by Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister Masakazu Hamachi, Japanese Ambassador for Sri Lanka and Maldives Kenichi Suganuma and Maldivian Foreign Secretary Dr. Ali Naseer. Japanese Government has said that opening an embassy in Maldives would strengthen ties between the two countries. Diplomatic ties between Japan and Maldives was built on 1967. Japanese Government has said that opening the embassy would make the celebration of 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 2017 all the more colourful.¹⁸

Delegates from Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) left Maldives on February 8 after concluding their one-day visit to Maldives to assess the current situation in the country. Maldivian Foreign Ministry said that delegates from CMAG – who visited Maldives upon invitation of Maldivian government – had constructive discussions with high-ranking government officials and other relevant authorities – including President Abdulla Yameen and Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon. The delegation was led by CMAG Vice-Chair Carl Greenidge and Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett; and includes Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya, Dr. Amina Mohamed, and Foreign Secretary of India Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.¹⁹

A high-level Maldivian delegation led by Maldivian Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon met with Secretary-General of Commonwealth, Kamallesh Sharma on February 11. The other members of the delegation were Fisheries and Agriculture Minister Dr. Mohamed Shainee, Attorney-General and Acting Minister of Law and Gender Mohamed Anil, and Chief Communications Officer at President's Office Ali Khalid. Foreign Ministry said that current political situation in Maldives, including permission given to former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed to travel to UK for medical care was discussed during the meeting. Foreign Ministry said in their press statement that both Sharma and Maldivian delegates agreed that the visit by the team from CMAG "reaffirmed the value of close partnership and collaboration between Commonwealth Secretariat and member states."²⁰

German Ambassador to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, Dr. Jürgen Morhard has met with the Controller General of Immigration, Mohamed Anwar on February 11, 2016. The topics of

¹⁸ "Japan Opens Embassy in Maldives", *SunOnline*, February 8, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36170>.

¹⁹ "CMAG Delegation Concludes Visit to Maldives", *SunOnline*, February 8, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36166>.

²⁰ "High-Level Maldivian Delegates Meet Commonwealth Secretary-General", *SunOnline*, February 13, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36256>.

discussion at the meeting were strengthening the relationship between the two countries and easing the German VISA process to Maldivians.²¹

B. East Asia

China

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Wang Yi attends the fourth foreign minister's meeting of ISSG; China supports UN actions towards North Korea; China upset with British remarks over Hong Kong.**

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying announced that on February 11 the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi left Beijing to attend the fourth foreign ministers' meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) which is being held at Munich, Germany.²²

With respect to the situation on North Korea the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asserted that China will support the UN Security Council Resolution. He further said that, "[We] support the United Nations Security Council to take further steps and in adopting a new resolution so that North Korea will pay the necessary price and show there are consequences for its behaviour".²³

In response to British suggestions that a Hong Kong bookseller was detained and "involuntarily removed to mainland" foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said that, "Hong Kong affairs are China's domestic affairs". Lei further asserted that China strongly criticized any such attempts by Britain.²⁴

Japan

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Japan is expected to obtain a greater range of ship-borne interceptors; U.S., Japan and South Korea agreed to accelerate information-sharing; Japan reportedly agreed to share secret stealth technology with Australia; first Japan, U.S., Australia and Philippines coast guard commanders meeting likely in spring; Japan plans to allot development assistance to 60 projects at the sixth TICAD in August.**

Reports in the Japanese media indicated that following North Korea's missile launch on February 7, Japan is preparing to obtain a greater range of ship-borne interceptors. Japan will upgrade two of the six Aegis ships, build two more and may purchase a U.S. land-based high-altitude interception system. At present, four Aegis destroyers are armed with SM-3 interceptors built on

²¹ "German Ambassador has Met with the Controller General of Immigration", *SunOnline*, February 11, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36243>.

²² "Chinese Foreign Minister To Attend Fourth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of ISSG" *China Daily*, February 9, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-02/09/content_23441686.htm, accessed on February 15, 2016

²³ "China Urges UN Action To Make North Korea 'Pay Price'", *South China Morning Post*, February 13, 2016 at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1912824/china-urges-un-action-make-north-korea-pay-price>, accessed on February 15, 2016

²⁴ "China Criticises Britain For 'Interfering' in Case of Missing Hong Kong Booksellers", *The Guardian*, February 13, 2016 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/13/china-criticises-britain-for-interfering-in-case-of-missing-hong-kong-booksellers>, accessed on February 15, 2016

the Block 1A system and the remaining two will be upgraded by 2018. Meanwhile, Block 2A system is being jointly developed by the U.S. and Japan. Japan is also reviewing introduction of the THAAD system.²⁵

On February 10, U.S., Japan and South Korea agreed to accelerate information-sharing and further coordinate security initiatives aimed at regional peace and stability following Pyongyang's missile launch. Defence officials including head of Japan's Self-Defence Forces Adm. Katsutoshi Kawano, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Pearl Harbor Gen. Joseph Dunford and chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Lee Sun-Jin discussed the security situation and decided to meet another time before the end. They also discussed the possibility of strengthening security relations by boosting participation in military exercises.²⁶

Reports suggest that Japan has decided that it will share secret stealth technology with Australia in case Japan wins the bid to design and make Australia's next generation submarines. Japanese Soryu-class submarine is competing with other international bidders including DCNS of France and Germany's TKMS for the project which amounts \$36 billion. As of now, Japan only shares this with the U.S.²⁷

Japan, the U.S., Australia and Philippines is reportedly planning a meeting in spring involving their coast guard commanders for the first time to augment maritime security, together with cooperation on equipment procurement and conducting joint drills. The first meeting is likely to be hosted by the Philippines.²⁸

Japan reportedly plans to allot development assistance to 60 projects focused on infrastructure development comprising ports and road networks, agriculture and health care in African nations. Announcement is likely at sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be hosted in Nairobi in August. Moreover, the projects comprise advancing natural gas extraction in Mozambique and an urban transport network in Nairobi.²⁹

²⁵ "Japan To Upgrade Missile Interception System, Considers Three-Tier Defence", *Jiji*, February 15, 2016 at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/15/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-upgrade-missile-defense-considers-acquiring-three-tier-system/#.Vu_EBtJ961v

²⁶ "U.S., South Korea, Japan Boost Data-Sharing in Response To North Korea threat", *Reuters*, February 11, 2016 at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/11/national/politics-diplomacy/u-s-south-korea-japan-boost-data-sharing-response-north-korea-threat/#.Vu_D0dJ961t

²⁷ "Japan Steps Up Bid for Australia Sub Contract; Willing To Share Secret Stealth Tech", *AFP-Jiji*, February 8, 2016 at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/08/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-steps-up-bid-for-australia-sub-contract-willing-to-share-secret-stealth-tech/#.Vu_FPdJ961t

²⁸ "Japan, U.S., Australia, Philippines Coast Guards To Huddle Over China Activities", *Kyodo*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/09/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-australia-philippines-u-s-coast-guards-huddle-china-activities/>

²⁹ "As China Boosts Influence, Japan Eyes Aid for 60 Africa Infrastructure Projects", *Kyodo*, February 12, 2016 at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/12/national/politics-diplomacy/china-boosts-influence-japan-eyes-aid-60-africa-infrastructure-projects/#.Vu_TitJ961t

C. Southeast Asia and Oceania

ASEAN

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **US-ASEAN Summit; Thai Foreign Minister Visited ASEAN Secretariat**

President Barack Obama will meet the state leaders of ASEAN countries in the mid of February in California. *The Washington Post* called it as a 'Parade of Dictators' from Southeast Asia, a region holding immense geo-strategic significance. President Obama aims at getting support from the ASEAN members on US freedom of navigation theory in South China Sea, disputed and claimed by a couple of Southeast Asian countries, China and Taiwan. In fact, few months back, a US Navy Destroyer sailed through the region with active support from Manila, one of the contestants of the disputed islands. In an order that President Obama reaches his goal, the US Secretary of State John Kerry made a visit to Cambodia and Lao PDR few days back. He tried, in vain, to convince these two countries on taking a unified stand against China's assertive behaviour in South China Sea which includes the latter's massive reclamation activities. However, there are countries in the region that are aligned towards the US. Given this context, how China would react to US-ASEAN understanding is a question to be addressed in future.³⁰

Thailand Foreign Affairs Minister Don Pramudwinai visited ASEAN secretariat in Jakarta and met Secretary General Le Luong Minh on February 12. In 2017, ASEAN will celebrate its 50th anniversary and both leaders stressed on the need to making ASEAN more people centric to mark that achievement. Secretary General assured the Thai minister about ASEAN's help and assistance to all member countries in their activities related to community building and economic integration. This was Pramudwinai's second official visit to Jakarta since he assumed his position in 2015.³¹

Southeast Asia

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Indonesian Minister invited ASEAN Countries for Joint Ventures in the Defence; Cambodia's PM Seeking Explanation for Charging his Country; Woodside Discovered New Gas Reserves Offshore Myanmar; Mahathir Mohamad Facing Defamation Case.**

Indonesia's Coordinating Maritime Affairs Minister Rizal Ramli invited all ASEAN countries to invest in its defence sector at a Press Meet in Mataram. He said that involving other countries in Indonesia's defence sector will strengthen the country's defence. Citing the example of Airbus's experience in Europe, he showed his willingness to encourage cooperation and increasing stakes from other ASEAN countries in the defence industry of Indonesia. Airbus was dominated by

³⁰ Alcuaz, Coco, "US-ASEAN Summit: Obama to Welcome Southeast Asian Leaders amid China Challenge", *International Business Times*, February 14, 2016, at <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-asean-summit-obama-welcome-southeast-asian-leaders-amid-china-challenge-2304459>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³¹ "Thai Foreign Minister Visits ASEAN Secretariat", *ASEAN Officials website*, February 12, 2016, at <http://www.asean.org/thai-foreign-minister-visits-asean-secretariat/>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

France when it experienced a fall. Followed by that, many European companies obtained stakes in it and consequently Airbus was able to give a tough competition to US based Boeing.³²

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen apparently asked for apology or explanation from those who criticised him in 2012 for not allowing ASEAN to issue the Joint Communiqué. In a graduation ceremony in the country, the prime minister mentioned that he expressed his unhappiness over the questions raised on Cambodia's closeness with China in 2012. He pointed out not only Cambodia, but other ASEAN countries too have not been able to name China on paper as offender of international maritime laws. He reiterated Cambodia's stand on favouring bilateral mechanisms to resolve territorial disputes. He said that ASEAN will not resolve the South China Sea disputes.³³

Woodside, an Australian company, discovered a new gas reserve in block AD-7 in the Bay of Bengal, 100km off northern Myanmar in a water depth of about 830m. The exact gas reserve has been found in Thalín A-1 well, in Block AD-7. Another gas reserve was found by the same company in Block A-6 (in Shwee Yee Htun-1). Woodside is partner with Korean company Daewoo and French Total in these two gas blocks. The company expressed its satisfaction on the new discoveries.³⁴

Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is facing defamation case for his blog post on Attorney-General Mohamed Apandi Ali in Malaysia. On February 5, the former prime minister charged the attorney general for lack of credibility as the latter refused to charge the present Prime Minister Najib Razak. Mr. Apandi refused to charge Mr. Razak over his personal deposit of RM 2.6 billion last month. Mr. Mahathir Mohamad also claimed that Najib Razak should resign from his post.³⁵

Oceania

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Russia transfer weapons to Fiji; John Key opens door for asylum seeker children.**

Twenty Russian weapon experts from the country's military reached in Fiji followed by the arrival of 20 large containers of arms and weapons to help Fiji in transferring the same. The consignment has small arms, ammunition, military trucks and training equipment; all for Fiji's UN Peacekeeping operations. Another source mentioned that the new arms and weapons will be used by Fijian soldiers engaged in the UN Disengagement Observer Force in Golan Heights. Initially the opposition in Fiji raised some questions over the secrecy of this weapons transfer as this was not passed through the Parliament. However, this is considered to be one of the steps taken by Fiji

³² Nani Afrida, "Indonesia Invites ASEAN to Engage in Defence Industry", *The Jakarta Post*, February 9, 2016, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/02/09/indonesia-invites-asean-engage-defense-industry.html>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

³³ Palatino, Mong, "Cambodia's Hun Sen Wants a South China Sea Apology", *The Diplomat*, February 12, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/cambodias-hun-sen-wants-a-south-china-sea-apology/>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

³⁴ Klinger, Peter, "Woodside Makes Myanmar Find", *The West Australian*, February 12, 2016, at <https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/30804138/woodside-makes-second-myanmar-discovery/>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

³⁵ "Mahathir Faces Criminal Defamation Probe over Blog Post on Malaysia's Attorney-General", *Straits Times*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/mahathir-faces-criminal-defamation-probe-over-blog-post-on-malaysias-attorney-general>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

in consistence with its Look North Policy, adopted after the 2006 Coup. Followed by this Coup, Fiji was 'abandoned' by its traditional partners like Australia and New Zealand and hence, under the Look North policy, the small island nation is now building closer ties with China, India and Russia.³⁶

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key had a meeting with his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull and the former opened New Zealand's door for 37 asylum seeker children, originally destined for Nauru. In 2013, Mr. John Key and former Australian PM Julia Gillard signed a deal where New Zealand promised to resettle 150 refugees each year from Nauru and Manus Island detention centres. However, successive Australian prime ministers, Tony Abbott and Turnbull have rejected the idea by saying that resettlement would encourage smuggling and criminal activities in the country. Given this context, Mr. John Key's statement is expected to make new pressure on the Australian side.³⁷

India-Southeast Asia

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Vice President's visit to Southeast Asia; RCEP negotiation in Brunei.**

India's Vice President Hamid Ansari paid a visit to Thailand and Brunei in the first week of February. In Chulalongkorn University, while delivering a speech on India's Southeast Asia connect, he mentioned that Commerce, Culture and Connectivity are few focus areas of cooperation between India and ASEAN. He spoke about spread of Buddhism from India to Southeast Asia and the cultural influence enjoyed by India in the region. India is considering liberal visa regime for 10 ASEAN countries in an order that Buddhist tourism can be encouraged.³⁸ India and Thailand also spoke about defence cooperation.

Senior officials from ASEAN, China, India and four other Asian nations will meet at Brunei in the mid of February for a five-day interaction to discuss issues related to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The RCEP talk was initiated in 2012 in Phnom Penh and this would be the 11th round of negotiation on RCEP. RCEP negotiation is significant for India as another mega-trade block, Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) does not include India as its member and it will certainly have its impact on India's exports at the regional vis-à-vis global level.³⁹

³⁶ "Russian Experts Arrive in Fiji for Weapons Handover", *Radio New Zealand International*, February 10, 2016, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/296150/russian-experts-arrive-in-fiji-for-weapons-handover>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

³⁷ Hunter, Fergus, "New Zealand Prime Minister John Key Opens Door To 37 Asylum Seeker Children", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/new-zealand-prime-minister-john-key-opens-door-to-37-asylum-seeker-children-20160215-gmugsb.html>, accessed on February 23, 2016.

³⁸ "India Mulling Easing Visa for ASEAN To Boost Buddhist Tourism", February 8, 2016, at <http://www.siasat.com/news/india-mulling-easing-visa-asean-boost-buddhist-tourism-913756/>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³⁹ "India, RCEP Members To Discuss Trade Pact in Brunei Starting February 15", *Business Standard*, February 11, 2016, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-rcep-members-to-discuss-trade-pact-in-brunei-starting-february-15-116021101158_1.html, accessed on February 23, 2016

D. Russia

Russia: National

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Oil export duty in Russia to decline by 24 per cent from March 1, 2016; First Zika case registered in Russia; Russian government plans to privatize Rosneft and Bashneft in 2016; Russia's Orthodox Church hails landmark meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill; Russian enterprises to cut jobs in 2016; Capital outflow in 2015 stood at US\$ 57 billion; Russian Interpol declares Khodorkovsky internationally wanted.**

Export duty on oil in Russia will decline by 24 per cent to US\$ 39.5 per tonne from March 1 as against US\$ 52 per tonne a month earlier. However, the preferential oil export duty for a number of oil fields in Eastern Siberia, the Caspian fields and the Prirazlomoye deposit will remain at zero. This is due to the new calculation formula, which was approved as part of tax manoeuvre in the oil industry from February 1, 2015. Meanwhile, the duty on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) will also remain at zero.⁴⁰

The first case of Zika virus has been registered in Russia on February 15. The infected person had gone on a vacation to the Dominican Republic.⁴¹

Minister of Economic Development Alexei Ulyukayev has said, on February 14, that the Russian government plans to privatize a number of energy companies in 2016, including Rosneft and Bashneft.⁴²

Russia's Orthodox Church has hailed the meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill in Cuba on February 12 by calling it 'highly successful'.⁴³

Deputy Economic Development Minister Oleg Fomichev has said, on February 12, that Russian enterprises who have been affected by the economic slowdown are likely to slash jobs in 2016. He stated 'we are facing risks due to last year's decline in production in the majority of sectors though no employees were released as enterprises expected the situation to improve but there hasn't been much of improvement. We think most enterprises may simply change their strategy and start releasing employees'. According to the data provided by Russia's state statistics service Rosstat, the number of unemployed in Russia stood at 4.264 million people (accounting for 5.8 per cent of economically active population), a 7.4 per cent increase compared with 2014. The Economic Development Ministry expects Russia's unemployment to increase to 6.3 per cent in 2016.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ "Oil Export Duty in Russia To Decline by 24% from March 1 — Finance Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/856801>

⁴¹ "First Zika Case Registered in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/856765>

⁴² "Russian Government Plans To Privatize Rosneft, Bashneft in 2016", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/856674>

⁴³ "Russia's Orthodox Church Hails Landmark Meeting of Pope Francis, Patriarch Kirill", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/856626>

⁴⁴ "Russian Enterprises To Slash Jobs This Year — Deputy Minister", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/856284>

Deputy Minister of Economic Development Oleg Fomichev has said, on February 12, that net capital outflow from Russia amounted to US\$ 57 billion in 2015 when compared to US\$ 153 billion in 2014. He added that repaying private external debt has become the main component of net capital exports while the most significant reduction appeared in external liabilities of banks.⁴⁵

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former Yukos CEO, has been declared internationally wanted by Interpol's Russian bureau on February 11 in connection with the murder of Vladimir Petukhov, the mayor of the Siberian oil capital Nefteyugansk in 1998. However, Interpol's Russian bureau's request does not mean Khodorkovsky will be included on the Interpol's database. The final decision will be made by an independent commission. In December 2015, Khodorkovsky was charged in absentia with masterminding two murders and declared internationally wanted by Russia's Investigative Committee.⁴⁶

Russia: International

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Medvedev's Munich speech urges West to 'end confrontation'; Putin and Obama discuss developments in Syria and Ukraine; Russian Prime Minister Medvedev says Syrian conflict may become a 'permanent war'; Russia says Assad's departure will lead to Syria's disintegration; EU accuses Russia of aggravating the Syrian conflict; Hollande urges Russia to leave Syria; Erdogan Says Putin is 'occupier' in Syria; Russian and Saudi Foreign Ministers discuss developments in Syria; Russia says Iraq's success in anti-Islamic State operations due to Russian weapons; Russia demands apology from South Korea for claiming it helped North Korea's weapons programme.**

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, in a speech at the Munich Security Conference delivered on February 14, urged Western countries to end confrontation with Russia and instead collaborate with it to prevent a new 'cold war'. He stated 'there is still no united Europe, all world economies show weak growth. Conflicts rage in the Middle East and Northern Africa, we are in the middle of a migration collapse. Relations between the European Union and Russia are ruined'. Medvedev also described NATO's relationship with Moscow as "closed" and hostile. He stated 'almost every day they call Russia the main threat for NATO, Europe, the U.S. and other countries. It makes me wonder if we are in 2016 or in 1962'. Medvedev's speech also focused terrorism being global problem. He stated 'terrorism will become the new type of world war and the world needs to unite to fight terrorism. I think that the Islamic State should thank my colleagues [heads of Western countries] that cancelled collaboration with Russia's special services'. He also termed the Western sanctions on Russia ineffective and unprofitable, adding that the sanctions will not have the desired political effect.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Capital Outflow from Russia in 2015 Totals \$57 bln — Official", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/856230>

⁴⁶ "Russian Interpol Declares Khodorkovsky Internationally Wanted", *The Moscow Times*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-interpol-declares-khodorkovsky-internationally-wanted/559255.html>

⁴⁷ "Medvedev's Munich Speech Urges West to 'End Confrontation'", *The Moscow Times*, February 15, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/medvedevs-munich-speech-urges-west-to-end-confrontation/559594.html>

Presidents of Russia and the U.S. Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama respectively have, during a telephone conversation held on February 14, discussed the developments in Syria and Ukraine. The conversation was organized at the initiative of the U.S. The Kremlin press release stated 'the parties gave a positive estimation of the results of the meeting of the International Syria Support Group in Munich on February 11-12, which confirmed the approaches and provisions of Resolution 2254 of the UN Security Council both in the part of humanitarian aspects and in the modality of ceasefire regime, as well as in preparations for a realistic political process. They also agreed to develop cooperation between diplomatic and other authorities to implement the Munich communique of the International Syria Support Group'.⁴⁸

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said on February 12 that the conflict in Syria may escalate into a "permanent" war that can last for decades, if peace talks were to collapse or if foreign countries tried to intervene by deploying ground troops. He stated 'a ground operation means drawing everybody who takes part in it into a war. The Americans should consider — and the U.S. president, and our Arab partners [should consider] whether they want a permanent war. Do they think they can quickly win it? That doesn't happen, particularly in the Arab world. Everybody is fighting against everybody there. There is no monolithic force there, when you have [President Bashar] Assad and troops loyal to him, and then you have some anti-government group. It's much more complicated'.⁴⁹

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov has said, on February 15, that the departure of Syrian President Bashar Assad will lead to the country's disintegration. He stated 'Bashar Assad is the legitimate president. Americans requested us more than once: let us decide together who will rule Syria. We never engaged in such things. This is what Syrians must decide themselves'.⁵⁰

European Council President Donald Tusk has said, on February 9, that Russia's actions in Syria "are making a very bad situation even worse. As a direct consequence of the Russian military campaign, the murderous regime of [Syrian President Bashar] Assad strengthens its position, the moderate Syrian opposition pulls back, and thousands of refugees flee to Turkey and Europe'. Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has also condemned Russia's air strikes in Syria. She stated 'we have been horrified by what has been caused in the way of human suffering for tens of thousands of people by bombing — bombing primarily from the Russian side'. In response, the Kremlin called for a careful and responsible attitude when making statements about Syria and said there is no credible evidence to back up Merkel's claims.⁵¹

French President Francois Hollande has, on February 12, called on Russia to cease its operations in Syria. He stated 'we ask Russia to stop its actions, because thousands of people have left their

⁴⁸ "Putin, Obama Discuss on the Phone Syrian Settlement, Situation in Ukraine", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/856660>

⁴⁹ "Russia's Medvedev: Syrian Conflict May Become 'Permanent War'", *The Moscow Times*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russias-medvedev-syrian-conflict-may-become-permanent-war/559296.html>

⁵⁰ "Russian Diplomat: Assad's Departure To Lead To Syria's Disintegration", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/856809>

⁵¹ "EU's Tusk Accuses Russia of Aggravating Syrian Conflict", *The Moscow Times*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/eus-tusk-accuses-russia-of-aggravating-syrian-conflict/559112.html>

homes due to the bombings. We have to be sure that Bashar Assad will step aside'. Hollande also accused Assad in murdering his people with Moscow's assistance.⁵²

Turkish President Recep Erdogan has, on February 8, described Russian President Vladimir Putin as an "occupier" in Syria. He stated 'What are you [Putin] doing in Syria? You're essentially an occupier'. Erdogan's comments came after the recent suspension of a UN-hosted peace conference on Syria in Geneva. The conference was adjourned due to the recent offensive of Syrian government forces against rebels near Aleppo. Previously, Erdogan had proposed a meeting with Putin to discuss the latest developments in the relationship between the two countries, but Putin had turned down the offer.⁵³

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Saudi Arabian counterpart Adel Al-Jubeir have, on February 12, discussed the situation in Syria and bilateral cooperation on the side-lines of Munich Security Conference. Mr. Lavrov hoped that the agreements reached during the session of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) will be implemented soon.⁵⁴

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, on February 15, that the Iraqi army's latest achievements in the fight against the Islamic State terrorist group are directly linked to supplies of armaments and military hardware from Russia. In the first week of February, the first meeting of the Russian-Iraqi inter-governmental commission took place in eight years.⁵⁵

The Russian Foreign Ministry has, on February 10, demanded an apology from South Korea for accusing Russia of supplying rocket technology to North Korea following Pyongyang's launch of a space rocket on February 7. The head of Foreign Ministry's Department of Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Mikhail Ulyanov, accused Seoul for making "irresponsible" and "unprofessional" accusations.⁵⁶

India-Russia Relations

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **India and Russia revive 5th-generation fighter aircraft talks while Kamov cost negotiations begin.**

After a hiatus of nearly a year, India and Russia have revived talks on the much-delayed fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA). Meanwhile, cost negotiations for the joint production of 200 Kamov 226T helicopters have also begun. Under the FGFA programme, India has invested close to US\$ 290 million. Under a new offer proposed by Russia, India will have to pay US\$ 3.7 billion,

⁵² "France's Hollande Urges Russia to Leave Syria", *The Moscow Times*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/frances-hollande-urges-russia-to-leave-syria/559305.html>

⁵³ "Turkey's Erdogan Says Putin Is 'Occupier' in Syria", *The Moscow Times*, February 8, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/turkeys-erdogan-says-putin-is-occupier-in-syria/559023.html>

⁵⁴ "Russian and Saudi Foreign Ministers Discuss Situation in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/856270>

⁵⁵ "Russian Official: Iraqi Army Succeeds in Anti-is Fight Due To Arms Supplies from Russia", *Itar-Tass*, February 15, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/856712>

⁵⁶ "Russia Demands South Korea Apologize For North Korea Rocket Delivery Claim", *The Moscow Times*, February 15, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-demands-south-korea-apologize-for-north-korea-rocket-delivery-claim/559211.html>

instead of US\$ 6 billion, for the technological know-how and three prototypes of PAK-FA fighters.⁵⁷

E. West Asia

Iran

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Japan signs investment pact with Iran to boost economic ties; Iran calls on U.S. to reassure European banks over trade with Iran.**

Japan and Iran signed a bilateral investment pact in a bid to give Japanese firms an edge in the global rush for access to the resource-rich nation. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida signed the pact with Iran's visiting Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ali Tayyebnia during a ceremony at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo. The signing comes after Tokyo lifted sanctions on Iran last month following confirmation by a U.N. nuclear watchdog that Tehran had implemented measures promised under a landmark nuclear deal it struck with six major powers in July. The sanctions included halts on new investment in oil and gas.⁵⁸

Iran called on the United States to make a clear public pledge that it would not penalize European banks for legitimate trade with the Islamic Republic. Many foreign banks are cautious about resuming trade with Iran following January's nuclear deal because they fear being caught up in ongoing U.S. sanctions. "Rebuilding the confidence of the banks that the United States will not re-intervene in their relations with Iran may require some further assurance from the United States," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said at Chatham House in London.⁵⁹

Iraq and Syria

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **PKK: We are ready to participate in the liberation of Mosul; Washington increases its troops in Iraq to 3870; Syria calls on Turkish Government to cease violation of its sovereignty; UN adjourns Syria talks, asks big powers to help.**

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) revealed its readiness to participate in the liberation operation of Mosul, while indicated to the necessity of its participation in this operation to back up the security and Peshmerga forces. The party's Spokesman in Sinjar District Akeed Kelari said in a press statement followed by *IraqiNews.com*, "The PKK forces are preparing to participate in the liberation operations of Mosul, and will fight the battle of Mosul starting from Tal Afar,

⁵⁷ "India, Russia Revive 5th-Generation Fighter Aircraft Talks; Kamov Cost Negotiations Begin", *The Times of India*, February 10, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Russia-revive-5th-generation-fighter-aircraft-talks-Kamov-cost-negotiations-begin/articleshow/50932828.cms>

⁵⁸ "Japan Signs Investment Pact with Iran to Boost Economic Ties", *Tehran Times*, February 6, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252769. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁵⁹ "Iran Calls on U.S. to Reassure European Banks over Trade with Iran", *Tehran Times*, February 6, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252778. Accessed on March 1, 2016

Makhmour and Kirkuk areas," adding that, "We are ready to coordinate with all the forces that participate in the liberation of Mosul."⁶⁰

The Pentagon announced that the United States increased the number of its troops in Iraq to 3,870 soldiers to provide training, advice and guidance functions to Iraqi forces in its war against the so-called the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The last number announced by the Pentagon about the number of US soldiers in Iraq was 3,500 after sending 370 extra soldiers to this country. The mission of those troops is limited to training and providing advice and assistance tasks, but they are not directly participating in the battles against ISIS.⁶¹

Syria called on the Turkish government to cease its violations of Syria's sovereignty and respect international law. A source at the Foreign and Expatriates Ministry said that the Turkish artillery opened fire at Atira village in the northern countryside of Lattakia, injuring civilians, SANA reported. The Syrian government considers this a "blatant breach of international law and a crime against the Syrian civilians," the source said, demanding that Turkey cease these violations and respect international law. The source concluded by stressing that the Syrian government reserves the right to hit back at this heinous crime by all available means.⁶²

U.N.-mediated talks to end the war in Syria are on pause until February 25, said U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura, saying the talks had not failed but needed immediate help from international backers led by the United States and Russia. "I have concluded frankly that after the first week of preparatory talks there is more work to be done, not only by us but by the stakeholders," he said, according to Reuters. "I have indicated from the first day that I won't talk for the sake of talking." He was speaking after meeting opposition coordinator Riad Hijab, who had just arrived in Geneva. De Mistura had overseen several days of stuttering progress and postponed meetings, without ever getting the two sides in a dialogue.⁶³

Israel-Palestine

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Egypt flooded Hamas tunnels at Israel's request, minister says; South Africa's ANC reaffirms support for Palestinians.**

The Egyptian military flooded several smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza Strip's southern border at Israel's request, Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz said. Speaking at an event in Beersheba, Steinitz stated that Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi had destroyed numerous tunnels built by the Islamist Hamas terrorist group, which rules the Palestinian enclave, including last October,

⁶⁰ "PKK: We are Ready to Participate in the Liberation of Mosul", *Iraqi News*, February 6, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/pkk-we-are-ready-to-participate-in-liberation-of-mosul/>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁶¹ "Washington Increases Its Troops in Iraq to 3870", *Iraqi News*, February 4, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/washington-increases-the-number-of-its-troops-in-iraq-to-3870/>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁶² "Syria Calls on Turkish Government to Cease Violation of Its Sovereignty", *Syria Times*, February 1, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/21975-syria-calls-on-turkish-government-to-cease-violations-of-its-sovereignty>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁶³ "UN Adjourns Syria Talks, Asks Big Powers To Help", *Syria Times*, February 3, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22023-un-adjourns-syria-talks-asks-big-powers-for-help>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

on Israel's behalf. "Some Hamas tunnels were flooded, to a certain extent at our request," Steinitz said, according to Ynet. "Flooding is a good solution in that realm." The energy minister added that security coordination between Israel and Egypt was "better than ever."⁶⁴

South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) has said it continues to work for the "freedom of the Palestinians". In a speech in Johannesburg City Hall during an event to mark the International Day of Support for the Rights of Palestinians, ANC spokesperson Khusela Sangonikhawe said: "We are pledging our support and committing ourselves to continue working with the people of Palestine and all progressive people of the world until, truly, the freedom of the Palestinians is recognised." "The ANC will continue to stand on the side of all oppressed people of the world whose human rights are violated," she stated.⁶⁵

The Gulf

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Saudi Arabia needs Turkey and Iran to turn Syria war around; Bahrain king travels to Russia, to hold talks with Putin.**

With rebel forces facing the prospect of a crushing defeat by Syria's Russian-backed regime, their allies Saudi Arabia and Turkey may send in limited numbers of ground troops, analysts say. Riyadh left open the possibility of deploying soldiers, saying it would "contribute positively" if the US-led coalition against Daesh in Syria decides on ground action. The fate of Saudi-backed Syrian armed opposition groups fighting to topple President Bashar Al Assad is also a major concern for the kingdom. "I think Saudi Arabia is desperate to do something in Syria," said Andreas Krieg, of the Department of Defence Studies at King's College London.⁶⁶

Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Eisa Al Khalifa flew to the Russian city of Sochi where he will hold talks with President Vladimir Putin. The talks will cover bilateral relations and ways to improve them in various areas as well as the latest regional events and developments, the Royal Court said as it announced the official visit. The visit to Russia will be the third by King Hamad. In October 2014, King Hamad visited Sochi where he met President Putin and senior officials in the latest indication of the close ties between the two countries. The visit by King Hamad to Moscow in December 2008 was seen as "a defining moment for bilateral relations and the final communique amounted to a real roadmap, stressing the importance of promoting relations".⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "Egypt Flooded Hamas Tunnels at Israel's Request, Minister Says", *Times of Israel*, February 6, 2016 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/minister-says-egypt-flooded-hamas-tunnels-at-israels-request/>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁶⁵ "South Africa's ANC Reaffirms Support for Palestinians", *Palestine Chronicles*, February 1, 2016 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/south-africas-anc-reaffirms-support-for-palestinians/>. Accessed March 1, 2016

⁶⁶ "Saudi Arabia Needs Turkey and Iran to Turn Syria War Around", *Gulf News*, February 6, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-arabia-needs-turkey-qatar-to-turn-syria-war-around-1.1666850>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

⁶⁷ "Bahrain King Travels to Russia, to Hold Talks with Putin", *Gulf News*, February 7, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-king-travels-to-russia-to-hold-talks-with-putin-1.1667532>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

India-West Asia

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **SUN Tv partners Yupp TV to offer content in West Asia and North Africa**

Sun TV Network Ltd announced that it will partner with *YuppTV*, the world's largest over-the-top (OTT) provider of Indian content, to launch 10 channels in four languages in West Asia and North Africa. Under the agreement *Yupp TV* will offer Sun TV, KTV, Sun Music, Adithya TV (Tamil channels), Surya and Kiran (Malayalam), Gemini TV, Gemini Movies and Gemini Comedy (Telugu) and Udaya (Kannada). "The partnership with Yupp is yet another initiative in line with our strategy to improve Sun TV's presence on digital networks and beef up distribution through a variety of OTT platforms worldwide," Mahesh Kumar, the president of *Sun TV Network*, said in a statement. The move will add more content to *Yupp TV*'s entertainment repertoire, which boasts of 25,000 hours of video content in its catalogue.⁶⁸

F. The United State of America

National

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Balance is at the heart of the fiscal 2017 defence budget request; Fiscal year 2017 defence budget request highlights defending against challenges posed by Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and terrorist groups; Fiscal year 2017 defence budget request takes the long view of funding the department; Defence budget request represents "the best possible balance of capacity, capability and readiness investments": Gen. Selva; Modernization took the biggest hit in the Defence Department's fiscal year 2017 budget request: McCord; F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter programme moving forward; Nuclear sustainment and modernization plan needed for effective deterrence; President Obama should not nominate a replacement for late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; Presidential hopefuls appealing to minority and evangelical Christian voters; Democratic presidential candidates held another debate; Bernie Sanders won big in the New Hampshire Democratic primary.**

Balance is at the heart of the fiscal 2017 defence budget request, the DoD comptroller, Mike McCord said during an interview on February 8. Budgeteers had to maintain balance among compensation, readiness, modernization and size of the force, said McCord, the department's chief financial officer. Balance is needed to ensure the military can fight the wars of today and the wars that could occur in the future, and the Defence Secretary Ash Carter wants a budget that focuses on both. When making the hard choices necessary to comply with last fall's budget agreement, senior leaders protected the readiness recovery plans developed by the four services. But that

⁶⁸ "SUN Tv Partners Yupp TV to Offer Content in West Asia and North Africa", *Live Mint*, February 2, 2016 at <http://www.livemint.com/Consumer/sNUzvaaqFC2iSjsIFxEcCaP/Sun-TV-partners-YuppTV-to-offer-content-in-West-Asia-North.html>

meant the department couldn't afford to fund all the modernization of our equipment that was planned, McCord said.⁶⁹

President Barack Obama's fiscal year 2017 defence budget request highlights defending against challenges posed by Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and terrorist groups, a senior defence official said on background. Each challenge requires different budgeting, resources, capabilities and capacities, all inside of the two-year budget agreement. Countering Russia and China is a return to great-power competition, which entails building a joint force that is ready -- and, more importantly, has the capacity -- to meet great power requirements today and in the future, the official explained. The fiscal 2017 request is pegged at \$582.7 billion, including an overseas contingency operations request of \$58.8 billion. The request calls for a 1.6 percent pay hike for military personnel and civilians, and puts readiness on the path for recovery by fiscal 2022. The budget continues the delicate task of balancing the readiness, capabilities and force structure of the U.S. military, the official said.⁷⁰

Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work said in Washington on February 9 that the fiscal year 2017 defence budget request takes the long view of funding the department. The request totals \$523.9 billion in the so-called base budget and \$58.8 billion in the overseas contingency operations fund, for a total of \$582.7 billion. The budget top-line sustains the national security and defence strategies, Work said, and the figures conform to the budget levels found in the bipartisan budget agreement signed in November. Defence Secretary Ash Carter asked Pentagon officials to look into the future to ensure the structures are in place today for excellence tomorrow, Work said.⁷¹

The vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also said that the fiscal year 2017 defence budget request represents "the best possible balance of capacity, capability and readiness investments based upon the resources available". At a Pentagon news conference, Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva said planners faced "the unenviable task" of addressing growing threats with constrained resources. The security environment today is the most unpredictable he has seen in his 35 years of service, the general said. "Our dedicated soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines have been battling terrorism around the globe for nearly 15 years," he added. "The pervasive threat posed by violent extremist organizations has been and remains an immediate threat."⁷²

Mike McCord, DoD's chief financial officer, told reporters at a February 9 Pentagon news conference that modernization took the biggest hit in the Defence Department's fiscal year 2017 budget request, but the \$102.5 billion in the procurement account can purchase a lot of capabilities. As part of the Bipartisan Budget Act signed in November, the Defence Department had to make up \$22 billion in its budget. Modernization took the biggest hit, McCord said. The act gave DoD

⁶⁹ Garamone, Jim, "Comptroller: FY2017 Defence Budget Request Seeks Balance", *DoD News*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/652883/comptroller-fy2017-defense-budget-request-seeks-balance>

⁷⁰ Garamone, Jim, "Obama's FY 2017 Budget Addresses Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, Terrorism", *DoD News*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/652896/obamas-fy-2017-budget-addresses-russia-china-iran-north-korea-terrorism>

⁷¹ Garamone, Jim, "Deputy Secretary: Fiscal 2017 Budget Request Takes Long View", *DoD News*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/653418/deputy-secretary-fiscal-2017-budget-request-takes-long-view>

⁷² Garamone, Jim, "Budget Request Balances Resources, Capabilities, Vice Chairman Says", *DoD News*, February 9, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/653430/budget-request-balances-resources-capabilities-vice-chairman-says>

two years of relief from sequestration and gave defence planners most of what they believed they needed for the years ahead, McCord said. Defence officials really didn't touch compensation, force structure or readiness in the fiscal year 2017 defence budget request. There are no civilian reductions-in-force or other cuts to personnel, "that would involve sort of flailing around and breaking things," McCord said.⁷³

The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter programme is moving forward while addressing various challenges, the programme's executive officer, Christopher C. Bogdan said on February 10. Bogdan said at a media roundtable in Arlington, Virginia that "In the big picture, I would tell you that the program right now is accelerating, growing and changing". He detailed a number of challenges in the programme, including incorporating fixes to address the current flight restrictions on lightweight pilots. "The mark of a good programme is you find the problems, you solve the problems and you keep the programme moving forward without derailing it," he said. The development programme, he said, is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2017.⁷⁴

Senior defence officials told Congress on February 10 that the administration's nuclear sustainment and modernization plan is what is needed for effective deterrence, and the plan is affordable if the Defence Department prioritizes it. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces were Robert M. Scher, assistant defence secretary for strategy, plans and capabilities, and Arthur Hopkins, acting principal deputy assistant defence secretary for nuclear, chemical and biological defence programmes. Effective deterrence, Scher said, requires that U.S. nuclear capabilities and posture allow the nation to implement U.S. defence strategy, preserve the strategy's credibility and reinforce overall strategic stability. The best way to do this is to sustain a full nuclear triad -- strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles -- and dual-role aircraft with a range of nuclear explosive yields and delivery modes, he added.⁷⁵

U.S. Republican presidential hopefuls said at a debate in the southeastern state of South Carolina on February 13 that President Barack Obama should not nominate a replacement for late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and instead leave the matter for his successor. Businessman Donald Trump, who leads in national polls, called Scalia's death hours before the debate a blow to conservatism in the United States and said it is up to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to delay the nominating process so that a justice cannot be confirmed before Obama leaves office next January. Florida Senator Marco Rubio, Texas Senator Ted Cruz, Ohio Governor John Kasich and neurosurgeon Ben Carson all said Obama shouldn't make a nomination. The candidates are trying to convince voters in South Carolina before the state's primary election on February 20, as they try to amass the support necessary to become the Republican Party's nominee for president.⁷⁶

⁷³ Garamone, Jim, "Budget Request Trims Modernization; Procurement Funds Buy Capability", *DoD News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/654652/budget-request-trims-modernization-procurement-funds-buy-capability>

⁷⁴ Ferdinando, Lisa, "F-35 Program Moving Forward, Addressing Challenges, Official Says", *DoD News*, February 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/654271/f-35-program-moving-forward-addressing-challenges-official-says>

⁷⁵ Pellerin, Cheryl, "DoD Officials Discuss Regional Deterrence, Nuke Modernization", *DoD News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/655073/dod-officials-discuss-regional-deterrence-uke-modernization>

⁷⁶ Hannas, Chris, "US Republican Candidates Spar at South Carolina Debate", *VOA News*, February 13, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-cruz-expected-swap-insults-debate/3189895.html>

U.S. presidential hopefuls are appealing to minority and evangelical Christian voters as they enter a critical two-week stretch in their campaign battle. Four Republican candidates — former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, Texas Senator Ted Cruz and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson — appeared on February 12 at the Faith and Family Presidential Forum at the fundamentalist Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. Evangelicals are a key voting bloc in South Carolina, which holds its Republican primary election February 20 and its Democratic vote a week later.⁷⁷

The two Democratic U.S. presidential candidates, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders — the self-described democratic socialist — held another debate on February 11 night in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as their race for the White House enters a new phase. Clinton had picked up a major endorsement earlier from the political fundraising arm of the Congressional Black Caucus a group representing African-American members of Congress. Black voters are expected to play a huge role in next week's South Carolina primary.⁷⁸

After Bernie Sanders won big in the New Hampshire Democratic primary, both he and rival Hillary Clinton are shifting their focus to the next contests in Nevada and South Carolina, states with many more Hispanic and African American voters. In South Carolina, black voters make up the majority of the Democratic primary electorate. Some African American lawmakers are lining up to support Clinton in the face of a perceived surge by Sanders.⁷⁹

International: Asia

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Afghan security forces need to develop four capabilities to be successful; Afghan security forces are a work in progress; US-Saudi Arabia discuss shared security challenges; Meeting in Munich as the International Syria Support Group (ISSG); Salviejo conducted basic first aid training with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion; Defence Department sent Congress its 2015 report on North Korea's military power; Obama speaks with President Park of the Republic of Korea; Obama speaks with Prime Minister Abe to discuss North Korea's missile launch; Gulf states perfect air defence strategies during Arabian Gulf Shield; North Korea highlights the serious nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, and ballistic missile threat; Secretary Kerry and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi discuss North Korea's missile launch; Indo-Asian Pacific nations' militaries and civilian organizations gathered during Exercise Cobra Gold 16; Cyber-security specialists met at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.**

Afghan security forces need to develop four capabilities to be successful, Resolute Support Mission spokesman Army Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner said on February 11. Shoffner spoke with reporters in the Pentagon via video teleconference from Kabul, Afghanistan. Afghan forces need to develop a readiness cycle, reduce the number of checkpoints, make leadership changes, and fill their ranks, he said. The force readiness cycle is the most important. Afghan forces have to

⁷⁷ Gallo, William, "Presidential Hopefuls Woo Minorities, Evangelicals", *VOA News*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/presidential-hopefuls-woo-minorities-evangelicals/3188794.html>

⁷⁸ Schwartz, Ken, "Clinton, Sanders Face Off in Wisconsin Debate", *VOA News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-sanders-debate/3187850.html>

⁷⁹ Saine, Cindy, "Clinton, Sanders Fight for African American Votes", *VOA News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/clinton-sanders-fight-for-african-american-votes/3187265.html>

develop a system where units are manned and trained, enter combat and then reconstitute. Afghan security forces need to make some difficult leadership changes. The Afghan government has already started this, he noted, by changing out 92 general officers across the services.⁸⁰

DoD witnesses testified to the House Armed Services Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee on February 12 that the Afghan security forces are a work in progress. The subcommittee is following up on testimony last week from Army Gen. John F. Campbell, the commander of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is based on the goal of not allowing the country to become a haven for extremists. To do that, there are two major American and coalition efforts. The first is anchored on training the Afghan forces to handle security in the country on their own. The second, is a small group of American special operations personnel conducting counterterrorism missions. Christine Abizaid, the deputy assistant secretary of defence for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, told the subcommittee that U.S. personnel in Afghanistan have the resources, authorities and guidance they need to accomplish their mission.⁸¹

Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in a readout of the meeting that Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Saudi Arabia's defence minister, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, met in Brussels on February 11 to discuss their nations' shared security challenges, including the effort to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The two leaders discussed the importance of accelerating the counter-ISIL campaign, Cook said.⁸² On February 13, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted two strikes using fighter aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 25 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.⁸³

Meeting in Munich on February 11 & 12, 2016, as the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the Arab League, China, Egypt, the EU, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States decided that humanitarian access will commence this week to besieged areas, and an ISSG task force will within one week elaborate modalities for a nationwide cessation of hostilities. The ISSG members unanimously committed to immediately facilitate the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously December 18, 2015. The ISSG reaffirmed their readiness to carry out all commitments set forth in the resolution, including to: ensure a Syrian-led

⁸⁰ Garamone, Jim, "Afghan Forces Need to Develop 4 Capabilities, General Says", *DoD News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/654745/afghan-forces-need-to-develop-4-capabilities-general-says>

⁸¹ Garamone, Jim, "DoD Officials Describe Afghan National Defence Forces As Work in Progress", *DoD News*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/655703/dod-officials-describe-afghan-national-defense-forces-as-work-in-progress>

⁸² "Carter Meets With Saudi Defence Minister", *DoD News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/654766/carter-meets-with-saudi-defense-minister>

⁸³ "Military airstrikes continue against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq", *US CENTCOM*, February 14, 2016, Release # 20160214-01, at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/feb.-14-military-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-and-i>; and, "Operation Inherent Resolve Counter-ISIL Strikes Continue in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, February 14, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/655960/operation-inherent-resolve-counter-isil-strikes-continue-in-syria-iraq>

and Syrian-owned political transition based on the Geneva Communiqué in its entirety; press for the end of any indiscriminate use of weapons; support and accelerate the agreement and implementation of a nationwide ceasefire; facilitate immediate humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas and the release of any arbitrarily detained persons; and fight terrorism.⁸⁴

Chief Hospital Corpsman Clifford L. Salviejo conducted basic first aid training with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 3 Seabees and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), 2nd NMCB, Naval Combat Engineering Brigade Seabees and Marines, Jan. 25, at Abaroan School District in Palawan, Philippines. The training is designed to enhance U.S. and Philippine Seabees and Marines' basic knowledge of how to treat an injury on a construction site. Comprised of relatively simple techniques that can be performed with rudimentary equipment, first aid is usually carried out by a layperson until professional medical assistance arrives. The purpose of first aid training is to minimize injury and future disability. In serious cases, first aid may be necessary to keep the victim alive.⁸⁵

Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis told reporters that the Defence Department sent Congress its 2015 report on North Korea's military power on February 12. The report, "Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," was originally mandated in 2012 to inform Congress and the public of DoD's analytical assessment of North Korea's activities based on continuous U.S. monitoring, according to DoD officials. The latest report does not contain North Korea's underground nuclear bomb detonation on January 6, or missile launch on February 7, but Davis confirmed the detonation. He however noted that North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons programme further "undermines peace and security in the broader region [and] represents serious threats to our interests, including the security of some of our closest allies".⁸⁶

The US President Barack Obama spoke by phone with President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea on February 8 to discuss North Korea's recent launch using ballistic missile technology. The two leaders condemned the launch, and they agreed that it represents yet another destabilizing and provocative action by North Korea in flagrant violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions. The President assured President Park that the United States stands in solidarity with the ROK and will take the necessary steps to fulfil our ironclad commitment to defend the ROK and our other allies in the region. The two leaders underscored the importance of a strong and united international response to North Korea's provocations, including through a robust UN Security Council Resolution.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ "Statement of the International Syria Support Group", Media Note by Office of the Spokesperson, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252428.htm>

⁸⁵ "Seabee Corpsman Conducts Basic First Aid Training with Philippine Navy and Marines", By Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Gomez, *US PACOM*, February 09, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/653155/seabee-corpsman-conducts-basic-first-aid-training-with-philippine-navy-and-mari.aspx>

⁸⁶ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Congress Receives DoD Report on North Korea", *DoD News*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/655832/congress-receives-dod-report-on-north-korea>

⁸⁷ "Readout of the President's Call with President Park Geun-Hye of the Republic of Korea", By the Office of the Press Secretary, *The White House*, February 09, 2016 at

President Obama also spoke by phone with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss North Korea's recent launch using ballistic missile technology. The two leaders condemned the launch, and they agreed that it represents yet another destabilizing and provocative action by North Korea in flagrant violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions. Obama assured Prime Minister Abe that the United States' commitment to the security of Japan is ironclad and that we will take any steps necessary to defend our allies. The two leaders underscored the importance of a strong and united international response to North Korea's provocations, including through a robust UN Security Council Resolution.⁸⁸

Training concluded in Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar on February 10 with a scenario designed to test Gulf Cooperation Council Liaison Officer (GCC LNO) procedures and connectivity to host nation Air Operations Centres. Participants from Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia used their new-found knowledge during exercise Arabian Gulf Shield (AGS) which centred on air and air defence strategies. Lt. Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., commander, U.S. Air Forces Central Command and Combined Forces Air Component, said that "This type of training is invaluable". He added, "We have been able to improve our interoperability with our partners in the Gulf region as well as increase the air and air defence capabilities within the Coalition."⁸⁹

The Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States of America (U.S.) have determined that today's long-range ballistic missile launch and recent nuclear test by North Korea highlights the serious nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, and ballistic missile threat they pose to the peace and stability of the ROK and the entire Asia-Pacific region. In response to the evolving threat posed by North Korea, the United States and the Republic of Korea have made an Alliance decision to begin formal consultations regarding improvements to the Alliance missile defence posture, specifically the viability of a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system operated by U.S. Forces Korea. This Alliance decision was recommended by General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea commander. The goal of the formal consultations is to bilaterally explore the feasibility of THAAD deploying to and operating on the Korean Peninsula at the earliest possible date.⁹⁰

On February 12, the US Secretary of State John Kerry met in Munich with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Meeting on the margins of the Munich Security Conference, the two ministers discussed ongoing efforts at the United Nations to enact measures which address continued violations by the DPRK of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions. The Secretary reaffirmed U.S. commitments to security and stability on the Korean peninsula and urged China to use their

<http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/653345/readout-of-the-presidents-call-with-president-park-geun-hye-of-the-republic-of.aspx>

⁸⁸ "Readout of the President's Call with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe", By the Office of the Press Secretary, *The White House*, February 09, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/653341/readout-of-the-presidents-call-with-japanese-prime-minister-shinzo-abe.aspx>

⁸⁹ "Gulf States Perfect Air Defence Strategies during Arabian Gulf Shield", Master Sgt. Joshua Strang, U.S. Air Forces Central Command, *US CENTCOM*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/gulf-states-perfect-air-defense-strategies-during-arabian-gulf-shield>

⁹⁰ "Republic of Korea-U.S. Joint Announcement", By U.S. Forces Korea, *US CENTCOM*, February 08, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/652295/republic-of-korea-us-joint-announcement.aspx>

influence in Pongyang to help the international community increase pressure on the DPRK. Both ministers reiterated their support for the six-party process and for achieving the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Secretary noted that the onus remains on the DPRK to return to that process.⁹¹

A multitude of Indo-Asian Pacific nations' militaries and civilian organizations gathered during Exercise Cobra Gold 16 to share knowledge and techniques about humanitarian assistance disaster response during the Medical Symposium, February 9 to February 12, at the K.P. Grand Hotel, Chanthaburi, Thailand. The theme of the symposium was "Regional Public Health Response in a HADR Event." The main goal of the symposium was to raise the level of awareness, understanding, and methods for mitigation and prevention of new and emerging disease threats.⁹²

More than 160 cyber-security specialists met at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, February 9-11, to discuss cyber readiness within the Pacific Fleet (PACFLT). The Cybersecurity Waterfront Training Symposium, hosted by PACFLT, provided Hawaii-based afloat and ashore leadership and civilian cybersecurity workforce personnel with training and a better understanding of cybersecurity initiatives. The theme of the event highlighted the importance of "Bringing Actionable Cyber Capabilities to the Fleet." Adm. Scott Swift, command of U.S. Pacific Fleet, kicked off the Navy information warfare-led event. The information shared during the event was geared toward understanding and familiarization of increased volume and sophistication of cyber threats and to prepare to defend against these types of threats.⁹³

India-US Relations

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **India and US sign Grant Agreement for India Aviation Safety Technical Assistance Phase II; CNO Richardson visits Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS McCampbell (DDG 85); China warns on South China Sea as US, India Consider Patrols.**

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) of India and United States Technical Development Agency (USTDA) signed the Grant Agreement for India Aviation Safety Technical Assistance Phase II in New Delhi today. P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation and Leocadia I. Zak, Director, U.S. Trade and Development Agency were present on the occasion. USTDA will be partially funding the assistance to the tune of US \$ 808,327 and contractor The Wicks Group'(TWG) will share the cost of assistance at US \$ 75,000. Government of India's contribution is for an amount of US \$ 446,866 with (i) In-kind Cost Share, valued at US\$ 196,866 for international roundtrip air travel on Indian air carriers between the US and India and in-country ground transportation for the Contractor during the duration of the assistance; and (ii) Cash Cost Share – US \$ 250000. Phase II of the current project is aimed at sustaining efforts undertaken

⁹¹ "Secretary Kerry's Meeting With Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Munich", Readout by Office of the Spokesperson, John Kirby, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252433.htm>

⁹² Nava, Jose O., "Indo-Asia Pacific Nations Work Together in Preparation for Disasters", *US PACOM*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/655538/indo-asia-pacific-nations-work-together-in-preparation-for-disasters.aspx>

⁹³ "PACFLT Cyber Security Conference Highlights Warfighting Capabilities", By Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Tamara Vaughn, *US PACOM*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/655528/pacflt-cyber-security-conference-highlights-warfighting-capabilities.aspx>

during 2014 for restoration of IASA Category 1 status and bringing in more systemic improvements in the area of operation, airworthiness and licensing.⁹⁴

Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John Richardson visited Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS McCampbell (DDG 85) during the India's International Fleet Review (IFR) 2016. While aboard McCampbell, CNO had lunch with junior officers and discussed various topics. Some of the discussions were related to his recently released "A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority," a document that addresses how the Navy will adapt to changes in the security environment and continue to fulfil its mission. CNO had an all-hands call with McCampbell Sailors where he answered several questions before his departure. McCampbell arrived in India, February 4, to participate in IFR 2016, which is an international military exercise hosted by the Indian Navy to help enhance mutual trust and confidence with navies around the world. Through February 8, more than 50 countries participated in the event.⁹⁵

On February 11, China responded to a *Reuters* report that the U.S. and India are discussing joint naval patrols in the disputed South China Sea, warning that interference from countries outside the region threatens peace and stability. "No cooperation between any countries should be directed at a third party," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in an emailed statement to *Reuters*, in response to a request for comment on the report published on February 10. "Countries from outside the area must stop pushing forward the militarization of the South China Sea, cease endangering the sovereignty and national security of littoral countries in the name of 'freedom of navigation' and harming the peace and stability of the region." The United States wants its regional allies and other Asian nations to adopt a more united stance against China over the South China Sea, where tension has spiked since China's construction of seven islands in the Spratly archipelago. China lays claim to most of the South China Sea, while Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have rival claims.⁹⁶

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Three Indian Ships on a four days visit to Maldives; Seventh joint military training exercise between the Indian Army and the Seychelles People's Defence Forces to be conducted in Seychelles.**

Indian Naval ships Vikramaditya, Mysore and Deepak are scheduled to visit Male from February 15–18, 2016 after participating in the International Fleet Review. These ships are part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet based at Mumbai. INS Vikramaditya, one of the two aircraft carriers of the

⁹⁴ "DGCA and USTDA sign Grant Agreement for India Aviation Safety Technical Assistance Phase II", *PIB*, February 9, 2016, Release ID :136238, at <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁹⁵ Kwon, Ensign Soon, "Chief of Naval Operations Visits McCampbell in India", *US PACOM*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/655008/chief-of-naval-operations-visits-mccampbell-in-india.aspx>

⁹⁶ "China Warns on South China Sea as US, India Consider Patrols", *Reuters*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-warns-on-south-china-sea-as-us-india-consider-patrols/3186376.html>

Indian Navy, is a state-of-the-art ship, whereas indigenously constructed INS Mysore is a frontline missile destroyer and INS Deepak is the Fleet Tanker. During the visit, the warships will have professional interactions with the MNDF for further enhancing the close co-operation between the two forces. India and Maldives are close maritime neighbours with strong and cordial defence and diplomatic relations. The Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard, in conjunction with MNDF, regularly undertake surveillance in the Maldivian EEZ.⁹⁷

The Seventh Joint Military Training Exercise between the Indian Army and the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) - LAMITYE 2016, will be conducted at Seychelles Defence Academy (SDA), Victoria, Seychelles from February 15 to February 28, 2016. In the fourteen days long exercise, the SPDF will be represented by 20 personnel from Tazar (Special Forces Unit) and 32 from Seychelles Infantry. The Indian contingent will comprise of an Infantry platoon and representatives from the Special Forces. India and Seychelles have been conducting joint exercises since 2001 & 'Exercise Lamitye', which means friendship is conducted biennially with the aim of enhancing military cooperation and interoperability between the two countries.⁹⁸

International

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters operating at 12 international locations complete more than 50,000 flight hours; Russia develops a new concept whereby a multicopter unmanned aerial vehicle has been adapted to the anti-tank role.**

According to reports, Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters operating at 12 international locations have accumulated more than 50,000 flight hours. The flight hours fell into two main categories: operational flying hours, flown by 155 jets delivered to six different nations; and System Development and Demonstration (SDD) flight test hours, flown by 18 aircraft assigned to the Integrated Test. Operational jets flew approximately 37,950 hours while SDD aircraft flew 12,050 hours, according to Lockheed Martin. More than 250 F-35 pilots and 2,400 maintainers from six nations have been trained. The 25,000 flight-hour milestone occurred in December 2014, and that number doubled in just more than one year.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, according to reports, Russia has introduced a new concept whereby a multicopter unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) has been adapted to the anti-tank role with the fitting of cameras and a shoulder-launched rocket system. The concept, which was demonstrated in a video of the Russian Armed Forces Robotics conference, shows a multicopter/anti-tank rocket combination that has been developed by United Instrument Manufacturing Corporation (Rostec) subsidiary Sitemprom. In the 44-second video that was released by the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD)

⁹⁷ "Visit of Indian Warships to Male, Maldives," *PIB*, February 14, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136396>

⁹⁸ "Indo Seychelles Joint Military Exercise (EX LAMITYE)," *PIB*, February 14, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136402>

⁹⁹ "F-35 Exceeds 50,000 Flying Hours, Completes Other Milestones in 2016," *IHS Jane's*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/57960/f-35-exceeds-50-000-flying-hours-completes-other-milestones-in-2016>

and posted online by the state-controlled RT news channel, the multicopter is shown engaging a number of simulated armoured targets at a variety of ranges, elevations, and azimuths.¹⁰⁰

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Hike in reward money for killing J&K militants raises concern; Five militants, two soldiers killed in Kupwara encounter; Militant killed in Pulwama encounter, J&K.**

With Jammu and Kashmir hiking the reward money for police personnel killing a militant by 25 per cent, human rights groups in the State have expressed the fear that there would be an increase in encounters rather than arrests. "This is an attempt to incentivise extrajudicial killings. When there is a reward money of Rs.12.5 lakh, why would they arrest a militant?" asked Khurram Pervez, coordinator of the Valley-based rights group, Jammu and Kashmir Coordination of Civil Society (J&KCCS), which has unearthed thousands of unmarked graves in the State. According to a J&KCCS survey, there was a sudden increase in the killing of militants from 1998 and decline in arrests, just months after the reward money for policemen in counter-insurgency was increased by almost 50 per cent by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. The revised policy on rewards, approved in November last year, enhanced the reward money from Rs.10 lakh to Rs.12.5 lakh for "A plus", the highest category of a wanted militant. Similarly, there is a hike in the categories of militants of "A", "B" and "C". Ironically, the police in Pulwama weaned away more than 34 youths from joining the militancy. "Such efforts fetch no rewards, despite being a tedious, multi-layer exercise," said a top police official on the condition of anonymity.¹⁰¹

Five militants and two soldiers were killed in an overnight operation in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. The Army said a group of militants were spotted in Chowkibal area of Kupwara on February 12 afternoon. The heavily armed militants, who were wearing Army fatigues, took refuge in an empty house at Marsari village. As soldiers from three different Army units and the Special Operations Group of the J&K Police searched the area, militants opened fire, triggering an encounter that lasted through the night. Officials said two soldiers, including an officer, were injured in the initial gunfight.¹⁰²

An unidentified militant was killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district of south Kashmir on February 14. "An encounter broke out in Kakapora area of Pulwama district

¹⁰⁰ "Russia Showcases Anti-Tank Multicopter Concept," *IHS Jane's*, February 11, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/57949/russia-showcases-anti-tank-multicopter-concept>

¹⁰¹ Ashiq, Peerzada, "Hike in Reward for Killing J&K Militants Raises Concern", *The Hindu*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/hike-in-reward-for-killing-jk-militants-raises-concern/article8224445.ece>

¹⁰² Ehsan, Mir, "Two Soldiers, Five Militants Killed in Encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara", *The Indian Express*, February 14, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/two-soldiers-four-militants-killed-in-encounter-in-jammu-and-kashmirs-kupwara/>

after a cordon and search operation was launched in the area," an Army official said. A militant was killed in an exchange of fire between the two sides, the official added.¹⁰³

Northeast India

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Wanted NDFB (S) rebel killed in encounter in Assam; Security forces nab two militants in Kokrajhar; Two Bodo militants shot dead in Assam.**

Uday Narzary alias Khilikhang, a self-styled platoon commander of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland NDFB(S), who was wanted by the NIA in connection with the massacre of adivasi settlers in Chirang district in December 2014, was killed in a joint operation of the Assam Police and Army in the wee hours on February 8. Narzary was 'eliminated' when the police and army laid an ambush in an area near Edenbari village in Chirang district on February 7, Guwahati-based defence PRO Lt Col Suneet Newton said.¹⁰⁴

Two hardcore militants belonging to the ULFA and National Santhal Liberation Army's anti-talk factions, were apprehended by security forces in Assam's Kokrajhar district on February 11. Acting on a tip off, a team of the Army and police launched a joint operation in Khashiabari village of the district on February 10 and nabbed an ULFA militant identified as Dipak Das, a defence spokesman said. A 7.62 mm pistol along with some ammunition were recovered from his possession. In a separate operation, the forces nabbed a senior cadre of the banned National Santhal Liberation Army identified as Everest Tudu alias Jambua from Siyalmari village. A pistol along with some ammunition and a mobile phone were recovered from his possession, the spokesman said.¹⁰⁵

Two Bodo militants -- wanted for the killing of Adivasis and abduction of Hindi-speaking people in Assam -- were gunned down by security forces in Kokrajhar district on February 14, police said. Security forces operating in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) killed the two cadres of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) faction opposed to peace talks at Auzarguri in Kokrajhar. One of them was identified as Sanjib Basumatary alias Khardes, while the second was identified as Jangswrang Basumatary alias Ladai, police said. Two 7.65 mm pistols, some ammunition and grenades were recovered from the slain cadres.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ "Militant Killed in Encounter with Security Forces in J&K", *The Times of India*, February 14, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Militant-killed-in-encounter-with-security-forces-in-JK/articleshow/50985101.cms>

¹⁰⁴ Kashyap, Samudra Gupta, "Wanted NDFB (S) Rebel Uday Narzary Killed in Encounter in Assam", *The Indian Express*, February 8, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/wanted-ndfb-s-rebel-uday-narzary-killed-in-encounter-in-assam/>

¹⁰⁵ "Two Hardcore Militants Apprehended in Kokrajhar", *Business Standard*, February 11, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/two-hardcore-militants-apprehended-in-kokrajhar-116021100783_1.html

¹⁰⁶ "Two Wanted Bodo Militants Shot Dead", *Business Standard*, February 14, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/two-wanted-bodo-militants-shot-dead-116021400522_1.html

Left-wing Extremism

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **One Maoist operative killed, one arrested in Jharkhand; More mobile towers for Naxal-hit districts; Three Maoists killed, four security men injured in Bastar encounters; Maoist militia 'deputy commander' held in Telangana; Five Maoists surrender in Odisha; Security forces seize Maoist' arms, ammunition in Chhattisgarh.**

In a five-hour long gun battle between a group of Maoists and the Police near Chatro-Chatti village in Bokaro district of Jharkhand, a Maoist operative was killed while a woman Maoist was arrested, Bokaro Superintendent of Police Y S Ramesh told reporters on February 8. Two rifles, bullets, blankets and medicines were recovered from the encounter site, he added.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the Centre's ambitious project to install 2,199 mobile towers in nine states affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), installation of 175 more towers have been sanctioned recently. According to home ministry sources, of the 2,199 towers that were sanctioned earlier, 1,356 mobile towers have been set up by state-run BSNL. The maximum number have been installed in Jharkhand, with the primary focus on 35 districts in the country that are worst affected by LWE. The towers are powered by solar energy, and have been set up either inside police premises, camps set up by the police or paramilitary forces, or adjoining areas, due to the threat of being targeted by Maoists. The project to install mobile towers to improve connectivity in Maoist-affected states was approved by the Cabinet at a cost of Rs 3,046 crore, three years ago. Over 200 mobile towers have been brought down by Maoists in the past few years to disrupt the communication of security forces. Absence of proper connectivity in remote Maoist-affected areas has affected operations of security forces and delayed rescue efforts in the past.¹⁰⁸

Three Maoists were killed and four security personnel were injured during different encounters in restive Bastar region of Chhattisgarh on February 13. "Three dead bodies of the Maoists were recovered after an encounter at Sendra village in Bijapur district on Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border on February 13. The number of Maoists killed is likely to increase. Our parties are still inside the operational area and more encounters are expected," Bastar range Inspector-General of Police, S.R.P. Kalluri said in a statement. Five weapons, including one 303 rifle, were recovered from the spot of the encounter. In a separate incident, three CRPF personnel were injured when a pressure IED exploded in Dantewada district. The incident took place on Jagargunda-Aranpur road when the CRPF team was out to provide security to road construction works. In another incident, a BSF jawan was attacked by the Maoists in Pankhanjur town of Kanker district. The BSF jawan Harikesh, who sustained two bullet injuries, reportedly died after reaching hospital.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ "One Maoist Operative Killed, One Arrested", *Business Standard*, February 8, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/one-maoist-operative-killed-one-arrested-116020800842_1.html

¹⁰⁸ "More Cellphone Towers To Be Set Up in Naxal-Hit Districts", *The Indian Express*, February 11, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bsnl-jharkhand-more-cellphone-towers-to-be-set-up-in-naxal-hit-districts/>

¹⁰⁹ Dahat, Pavan, "Three Maoists Killed, Four Security Men Injured in Bastar Encounters", *The Hindu*, February 13, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maoists-killed-securitymen-injured-in-bastar-encounters/article8233755.ece>

A Maoist militia 'deputy commander' operating in Telangana's Khammam district was arrested and a weapon used in mine blasts was seized from his possession on February 13, police said. Muka Sodi alias Mukkaiah, who was allegedly involved in three offences including murder of a villager, exchange of fire with a police party and planting explosive material on a road, was apprehended by a joint team consisting of Telangana Police and CRPF personnel, Venkatapuram Police Station Circle Inspector Sai Ramana said. "A directional mine was recovered from his possession," the Inspector added.¹¹⁰

Five Maoists surrendered in Malkangiri district of Odisha on February 12. Police said the surrendered rebels joined the Maoist organization between 2008 and 2010 and were working for the Kalimela area committee of the Malkangiri division. "The extremists were on our wanted list since long for their involvement in several offenses, including murders," said SDPO (Malkangiri) M S Sampad. "They will be rehabilitated according to the government policy," he added.¹¹¹

Security forces have seized a huge cache of arms, ammunition and materials, used in making explosives, from a Maoist dump in the forest area of Chhattisgarh's Gariyaband district on February 13. Acting on a tip off, a joint team of security personnel from Chhattisgarh and Odisha unearthed the dump from the hills adjoining Nagrar village under Mainpur police station limits, Inspector General of Police (Raipur Range) GP Singh told reporters at Raipur on February 14. The seizure includes two 303 bore rifles, as many muzzle loading guns, one country-made pistol, a country-made gun, 16 detonators, a walkie-talkie, gelatin stick, two remotes, live cartridges of 12 bore gun, a mobile phone, four tiffin bombs and other materials used in making explosives, besides daily use items, the IG added.¹¹²

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **India reaffirms role for CSD; UN-Women needs funds: India; India pushes for more cooperation on violent extremism.**

At the 54th session of the UN Commission for Social Development, India aligned itself with the G 77 group's position and said that the Commission will remain an important stakeholder in the frame work of the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development Goals.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ "Maoist Militia 'Deputy Commander' Held in Telangana", *Business Standard*, February 13, 2016 at http://wap.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/maoist-militia-deputy-commander-held-in-telangana-116021300819_1.html

¹¹¹ "5 Maoists Surrender in Malkangiri", *The Times of India*, February 13, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/5-Maoists-surrender-in-Malkangiri/articleshow/50970466.cms>

¹¹² "Huge Cache of Arms, Ammunition Seized From Maoist Dump", *Business Standard*, February 14, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/huge-cache-of-arms-ammunition-seized-from-maoist-dump-116021400380_1.html

¹¹³ "Statement by Mayank Joshi, First Secretary, on Agenda Item 3 (a) Rethinking and strengthening Social Development in the Contemporary World" at the 54th Session of the Commission for Social Development at United Nations General Assembly, February 8, 2016, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2372>

At the first session of UN-Women Executive Board, First Secretary, Noor Rahman Sheikh, emphasised the need for regular funding for the organisation and the need for countries to have national action plans for empowerment of women. He explained that India had adopted such a plan in 2001.¹¹⁴

Reacting to the Secretary General's report on combating violent extremism that was discussed in the General Assembly, India's Ambassador to the UN Syed Akbaruddin said the action plan spelt out in the report is not holistic as it says very little about the role of the UN in helping member states curb violent extremism and international cooperation for the same.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ "Statement by Mr. Md. Noor Rahman Sheikh, First Secretary, at the 1st Regular Session of the UN-Women Executive Board", February 09, 2016, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2373>

¹¹⁵ "Statement by Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, Permanent Representative, on the Secretary General's report on Preventing Violent Extremism, at the United Nations General Assembly", February 12, 2016, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2375>