

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

February 15 – February 21, 2 (3), 2016

Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Yaqoob-ul Hassan

Gulbin Sultana

Gunjan Singh

Niranjan C. Oak

Rajorshi Roy

Manpreet Sohanpal

Saroj Bishoyi

Rajbala Rana

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives

China

Southeast Asia and Oceania

Russia and Central Asia

Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

United States of America

Internal Security Reviews

Follow IDSA



Facebook



Twitter



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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

Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

CONTENTS

In This Issue	Page
I. COUNTRY REVIEWS	2-29
A. South Asia	2-7
B. East Asia	7-8
C. Southeast Asia and Oceania	9-15
D. Russia	15-20
E. West Asia	20-23
F. United States of America	23-29
II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS	30-32

I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Deadly clashes erupting between rival Taliban groups; Implement Mujahideen's suggestions; New Chairman of Afghan High Peace Council; Russia pulls back from cooperating with U.S. on Afghanistan.**

Deadly clashes have been erupting between two rival groups of Taliban in central Ghazni province of Afghanistan, officials said on February 15. The provincial governor said that one group belongs to Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and the other one to Mullah Mohammad Rasoul. According to Mohammad Aman Hamim, the clashes which started in the jurisdiction of Nawa District earlier this morning have so far left 27 militants killed. Head of the Provincial Council of Ghazni also reported clashes between the followers of Mullah Mansour and Mullah Rasoul. Khaliqdad Akbari said both groups clashed in Muqur District last night leaving several killed and wounded. Fractions happened in Taliban after the group's Supreme Leader was confirmed dead last year. Following the news, two major groups formed under the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and Mullah Mohammad Rasoul. Another group has also announced its split from the main group under the leadership of Mullah Obaidullah in Paktika province however it does not have as many followers as Mullah Mansour and Mullah Rasoul have.¹

Mohammad Ismail Khan, a prominent Jihadi leader and former Minister of Energy and Power has urged government to get the assistance of Mujahideen for security. While talking to a gathering in western Herat province, Ismail Khan said that government has failed to maintain security and therefore it should adopt changes in the rankings of security institutions. Government's strategies have failed in maintaining the security, there for it should listen to Mujahideen, Ismail Khan said in the presence of several former Mujahideen and residents of Herat. The former Jihadi leader did not go into specifics but warned government that the situation would worsen if it does not implement a draft presented by the Mujahideen. This comes as another prominent Jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayaf made a similar suggestion in Kabul. Sayaf said that government should not marginalize Mujahideen when it comes to national defence and interests but give them a larger role.²

An influential political and religious figure Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani has been appointed as the new Chief of the Afghan High Peace Council. The former Afghan Vice President Karim Khalili has been appointed as the Deputy Chief of the High Peace Council along with Mawlavi Ata-ur-Rehman, Mawlavi Khaibar and Habiba Surabi. The new appointments comes days after the major international donors suspended aid to the council due to the lack of the leadership. The council officials said earlier this month that the major donors that have suspended financial aid included

¹ "Deadly Clashes Erupting Between Rival Taliban Groups in Ghazni", *Khaama Press*, February 16, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/severe-clashes-erupting-between-rival-taliban-groups-in-ghazni-3-killed-27-wounded-4582>

² "Ismail Khan Urges Government To Implement Mujahideen's Suggestions for Security", *Khaama Press*, February 16, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/ismail-khan-urges-government-to-implement-mujahideens-suggestions-for-security-4580>

the United States Agency for International Development and the government of the United Kingdom. A senior member of the council, Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar, confirmed that the donors have suspended financial support to the High Peace Council since the beginning of the year, citing lack of chairman for almost a year and issues within the secretariat of the council. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani was previously serving as the chairman of the council while the acting Minister of Defence Masoom Stanikzai was the secretariat chief. The Afghanistan High Peace Council was formed by the former President Hamid Karzai in mid-2010 to provide a platform for reconciliation talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban group.³

For all the conflicts in the world in which Washington is at odds with Moscow, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan has been one area where the Obama administration's interests and Russia's concerns coincide. Disputes over the wars in Ukraine and Syria had not stopped the governments from cooperating on counter-narcotics and securing military supply lines. But after initial success on those fronts, Russia now seems to be disengaging with both the United States and the American-backed Afghan government. On an old Cold War battlefield where Russia fought a nearly decade-long war against United States-supplied fighters, Moscow has a new strategy: the cold shoulder. "We won't join the useless events, and we've already told the Americans," President Vladimir V. Putin's envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir N. Kabulov, told Russian state news media this month. Russia, he said, would sit out any talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government in Kabul, backed by the United States, Pakistan and China. "Honestly speaking, we're already tired of joining anything Washington starts," Mr. Kabulov said. The Kremlin, he added, "has no desire to participate in what the Americans organize 'on the fly' just for their own pre-election interests and where they give us the role of extras on the set. The government of Mr. Putin has instead decided to address on its own what it sees as the immediate security threat from the chaos in Afghanistan and the emergence there of militants other than the Taliban, especially those from the Islamic State."⁴

Pakistan

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Army chief visits CPEC division.**

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Raheel Sharif visited on February 19 the headquarters of the newly raised Special Security Division (SSD) for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to a press release issued by the ISPR, the COAS was given a detailed briefing on progress in raising the force and wide-ranging security aspects regarding the CPEC. Gen Sharif reiterated the army's commitment to providing security for CPEC and the workforce involved in the project, terming it a game-changer for the country which had the potential to transform the lives of its people. He stressed the need for ensuring a peaceful environment for executing the planned development projects. "We are totally aware of all campaigns against the corridor and the security forces are ready to pay any price to turn this long-cherished dream into reality." He said all possible measures must be taken in coordination with law-enforcement agencies and other stakeholders to make the CPEC a success and beneficial for all. ISPR Director General Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa

³ "Syed Ahmed Gilani Appointed New Chairman of Afghan High Peace Council", *Khaama Press*, February 21, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/syed-ahmed-gilani-appointed-new-chairman-of-afghan-high-peace-council-0131>

⁴ "Russia Pulls Back From Cooperating With U.S. on Afghanistan, Report", *Khaama Press*, February 21, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/russia-pulls-back-from-cooperating-with-u-s-on-afghanistan-report-4587>

said in a tweet that the division raised for protecting the CPEC was “coming up well” and “timelines” were being met.⁵

Bangladesh

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Thailand keen to get its army trained by Bangladesh; British Immigration Minister at the Home Office James Brokenshire visits Bangladesh; Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas makes stopover in Dhaka.**

Thailand expressed interest in training its army officers in the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (Bipsot) before deploying them to UN peacekeeping missions. During a call on by Bangladesh Ambassador Saida Muna Tasneem on February 15, Royal Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Teerachai Nakwanich conveyed the interest and praised Bangladeshi peacekeepers' professionalism and leadership in UN operations. Tasneem invited the army chief to visit Bangladesh later this year and senior and mid-ranking army officers to take up courses offered by National Defence College, and the Defence Services Command and Staff College. She also urged providing short term professional training and post-graduate courses to Army Medical Corps personnel in Thai universities. The duo discussed on holding an annual staff level consultation between the armies and periodic joint exercises of special and counterterrorism forces.⁶

The United Kingdom (UK) will work closely with Bangladesh to address shared issues and threats, including tackling illegal migration and organised crime, countering the risk of terrorism and improving aviation security. British Immigration Minister at the Home Office James Brokenshire said this before leaving Bangladesh following a 24-hour visit on February 15, 2016.⁷

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made a nearly two-hour stopover at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on February 14 while continuing his tour of three other Asian countries, including Japan. Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmood Ali welcomed Abbas at the VVIP terminal. They had a meeting in the airport lounge later where they exchanged views on different bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. Abbas briefed Ali on the updates on the Israeli atrocities against Palestinian people and land as well as the longstanding impasse regarding the peace process. In response, the Bangladesh foreign minister reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of Bangladesh to the Palestinian people for their struggle for an independent homeland. President Abbas expressed sincere thanks for offering opportunities of higher studies for a good number of students as well as training of armed forces members of Palestine in Bangladesh. The Palestinian president was accompanied, among others, by his country's Foreign Minister Reyad Al Malki, President's Spokesman Nahel Abu Rodani, Diplomatic Adviser Majdi Al Khaldi and Economic Adviser Mustafa Abu Al-Rub. From the Bangladesh side, State Minister for Power,

⁵ “Army Chief Visits CPEC Division”, *Dawn*, February 20, 2016, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1240761/army-chief-visits-cpec-division>

⁶ “Thailand Keen To Get Its Army Trained by Bangladesh”, *The Daily Star*, February 16, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/thailand-keen-get-its-army-trained-bangladesh-511783>.

⁷ “Tackling Illegal Migration, Terrorism: UK to Work Closely with Bangladesh”, *The Daily Star*, February 16, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/uk-work-closely-bangladesh-511885>.

Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid and senior officials from the foreign ministry were present.⁸

Sri Lanka

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **President Sirisena visits Germany and Austria; US to go ahead with anti-dumping probe on tyres from Sri Lanka.**

President Maithripala Sirisena returned from his two state visits to Germany and Austria on February 21, 2016. During his visit to Germany from February 16-18, he met the Federal Chancellor Anjela Merkel and the President of Germany Joachim Gauck and had fruitful discussions to enhance the cooperation between the two countries in various fields. He also had bilateral discussions with the Foreign Minister Frank Walter and the Economic Affairs Minister Gerd Muller. Two MoUs were signed to enhance the economic and technical cooperation between Germany and Sri Lanka. Accordingly, Germany will provide a donation of 18million Euros to Sri Lanka. Under this grant 6 million Euros will be provided for the support of National Park and Buffer Zone Management of Wilpatthu while 4 million Euros will be provided for the Vocational Training in North of Sri Lanka. Funds will also be granted for the small and medium enterprises sector development and for the facilitation for initiatives for social cohesion and transformation in Sri Lanka.

An MoU with the German Association for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (BVMV) on Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development signed and it covers the area of technical capacity development in the apparel sector in specific areas such as: management techniques, fashion changes, capacity consuming etc. involves technical skill development, technology transfer, using IT platforms, market research, multidisciplinary studies in the apparel sector. A business meeting which was attended by the representatives of 250 leading companies in Germany was held with participation of President Sirisena. He invited the German entrepreneurs to invest in Sri Lanka which is now coming forward in the competitive world economy. The President invited the Sri Lankan expatriates in Germany to return Sri Lanka and build the motherland, experiencing the coexistence and the reconciliation which has been established in Sri Lanka after the end of terrorism. After concluding the state visit to Germany, the President left for Austria for two days state visit on February 18. He had productive bilateral discussions with the President of Austria Heins Fischer. He visited the historical art museum in Vienna during this visit. The business meeting headed by President Sirisena revealed that large number of leading Austrian companies are keen to invest in Sri Lanka. The President also met the Sri Lankan expatriates in Austria who had been organised a colourful festival to welcome the President.⁹

A US investigative body has decided to go ahead with its anti-dumping investigations into a certain category of tyres imported from India and Sri Lanka that may have a damaging effect on the US domestic industry even as it let China off the hook, the *Press Trust of India* reported. All six

⁸ "Abbas Thanks Bangladesh: Expresses Gratitude for Supporting Palestinians", *The Daily Star*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/abbas-thanks-bangladesh-511306>.

⁹ Karunanayake, Samanmali, "President Returns after Successful Visits to Germany & Austria", *PMD News*, February 21, 2016, at <http://www.pmdnews.lk/president-returns-successful-visits-germany-austria/>. Samanmali Karunanayake, "Germany will Give Every Support To Build Sri Lankan Economy – German Economic Affairs Minister", *PMD News*, February 18, 2016, at <http://www.pmdnews.lk/germany-will-give-every-support-build-sri-lankan-economy-german-economic-affairs-minister/>.

commissioners of the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) voted to determine that there is a reasonable indication that the US industry is materially injured by imports of certain new pneumatic off-the-road tyres from India that are allegedly sold in the country at less than fair value and subsidised by the governments of India and Sri Lanka. According to a statement, the Commission further determined that imports of these products from China are negligible. Following the Commission's affirmative determinations, the US Department of Commerce will continue to conduct its investigations on imported products from India and Sri Lanka, with its preliminary countervailing duty determinations due on April 4 and its preliminary anti-dumping duty determinations due on June 16. As a result of the Commission's finding of negligibility, the investigations on imports of these products from China will be terminated, USITC said. This is the first time that anti-dumping investigations have been launched into tyres coming to the US from India, while Chinese tyres have faced a similar probe in the past.¹⁰

Maldives

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **British-Maldives APPG delegates visit Maldives; United Nations assistant secretary-general for political affairs visits Maldives; Imran's sentencing represents a backward step: Hugo Swire; INS Vikramaditya visits Maldives; India 'Health Expo 2016' begins.**

Delegates from British-Maldives All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) arrived in Maldives on February 14. Spokesperson of the President's Office, Ibrahim Muaz Ali said that the British-Maldives All Party Parliamentary Group believes that economic agenda by the President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is a good and effective agenda. Muaz Ali tweeted a quote from MP Sir David Amess, leader of the delegation, which say that the British-Maldives APPG agrees that President Yameen's economic agenda is effective. Reportedly, Sir David Amess said that travel bans to the Maldives is not necessary. Sir David Amess said that the APPG has also met with the Economic Minister and the Tourism Minister and the Maldives is not perceived well in the international community. The British MP said that sanctions against a country that is dependent on the tourism, like the Maldives, would only lead to the suffering of the people. Sir David Amess also visited the Maafushi Prison where the former President Mohamed Nasheed was staying.¹¹

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenca made an official visit to the Maldives from February 20 to February 22, 2016 upon invitation of Maldivian Government. During the visit, he met high-ranking government officials including President Abdulla Yameen and Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon. At their meeting at the President's Office on February 21, Miroslav Jenca and President Yameen discussed the political state of the Maldives.¹²

¹⁰ "US To Go Ahead With Anti-dumping Probe on Tyres from Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, February 20, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/02/20/us-to-go-ahead-with-anti-dumping-probe-on-tyres-from-sri-lanka/>.

¹¹ "British-Maldives APPG Delegates visit Maldives", *SunOnline*, February 14, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36271>. "Amess: Nasheed Was In Prison in a Comfortable Place", *SunOnline*, February 19, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36345>. "Spokesperson: British-Maldives APPG Agreed That President Yameen's Economic Agenda is Effective", *SunOnline*, February 18, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36339>.

¹² "UN Assistant Secretary-General Arrives in Maldives", *SunOnline*, February 20, 2016 at <http://english.sun.mv/36363>; and, "UN Assistant Secretary-General Leaves Maldives", *SunOnline*, February 22, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36398>. "UN to Assist Maldives in Hastening the Talks", *SunOnline*, February 21, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36388>.

British Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire has said that the conviction of Adhaalath Party leader Abdulla Imran represented a backward step in Maldivian Government living up to its international human rights commitments. Swire released a press statement on February 17 saying that Imran was the second opposition political leader to be convicted on terrorism charges during the span of a year, and that it raised worrying questions regarding freedom of speech, rule of law, and Maldivian government's commitment to democracy. Imran was sentenced to 12 years in prison on February 16 for terrorism. The charge against him was that he had incited violence during the speech he gave in opposition protest on May 1, 2015.¹³

Indian Navy's largest aircraft carrier – INS Vikramaditya – made a four day trip to Maldives on its second trip outside India on February 15. The 258 meter long, 60 meter wide INS Vikramaditya made its maiden trip out of India to Sri Lanka. Commenting on the visit to the Maldives, Second Commander of INS Vikramaditya, Janath Dhevli said that the purpose of the visit was to strengthen the ties between India and Maldives in the field of defence and security. INS Vikramaditya was also joined by INS Maisoor and INS Deepak in the trip.¹⁴

India 'Health Expo 2016', the biggest event planned during India-Maldives Health and Wellness Week, began at Dharubaaruge on February 12, 2016. The event was inaugurated by Maldivian Health Minister Iruthisham Adam and Indian High Commissioner to Maldives Akilesh Mishra. During the inauguration ceremony, Minister Iruthisham noted the assistance provided by India to develop and improve Maldivian health sector, and expressed gratitude for the assistance. She said that Indian government suggestion to hold the Expo in Maldives was perfect as it coincided with a time when Maldivian government was planning and executing projects to develop Maldivian health sector. Ambassador Mishra said that health sector was the focal point of the close relationship between India and Maldives, and that Indian government was dedicated to remain steadfast in providing assistance to Maldives in that area. Over 20 specialists from 18 Indian hospitals – including Apollo Hospital, NU Hospital, KIMS Hospital, Colombia Asia and Basavantharam India American Cancer Hospital - participated in the event. Other events planned for India-Maldives Health and Wellness Week include a medical camp at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) from February 14-18, and India-Maldives Health Partnership Dialogue.¹⁵

B. East Asia

China

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Chinese and Pakistani officials discuss OBOR; President Xi Jinping visit various media houses; China upset with US actions in the South China Sea; China calls for caution while**

¹³ "UK: Imran's Sentencing Represents a Backward Step", *SunOnline*, February 17, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36316>.

¹⁴ "Public Access Given On-board India's Largest Aircraft Carrier", *SunOnline*, February 16, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36295>.

¹⁵ "India Health Expo 2016 Begins", *SunOnline*, February 13, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36257>.

dealing with the Korean Peninsula; Chinese Foreign Minister meets with the Foreign Minister of Australia.

Chinese and Pakistani officials and experts came together to discuss the potential for strategic cooperation under the One Road One Belt Initiative. During the meeting Zhao Baige, member of the NPC Standing Committee, Deputy Director Commissioner of NPC Foreign Affairs Committee and Chairwoman of Advisory Committee of CASS-RDI said that, "One Belt and One Road is by no means a strategy of China on its own. Instead, it connects the development of China with that of countries along the Silk Road and creates a community with common responsibilities and interests for the future".¹⁶

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the *People's Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency* and *China Central Television*. This was done in order to enhance media's role in informing people. He also met with reporters and editors.¹⁷

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei, asserted that China strongly criticizes the US air and naval patrols of the South China Sea as China has no intention to pursue militarization of the Nansha Islands. Hong Lei said that, "China is serious about its commitment not to pursue militarization of the Nansha Islands".¹⁸

The Chinese government called for more cautious approach after the US administrations approved new sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The US President Barack Obama signed into law a bill on February 18. This law, "strengthens and expands statutory sanctions" on DPRK. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said, "China believes it's impossible to solve any hotspot issues through simply imposing sanctions or pressure".¹⁹

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met the Foreign Minister of Australia Julie Bishop. They co-chaired the third round of bilateral diplomatic and strategic dialogue on February 17 in Beijing. They discussed ways to improve the bilateral relationship. During the meeting Wang said, "The two countries can enhance integration and docking between their major development initiatives and strategies, as well as open up new areas for economic cooperation since a free trade agreement has come into force".²⁰

¹⁶ "China, Pakistan To Facilitate Pragmatic Cooperation of OBOR", By Wang Ting, *China Daily*, February 21, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-02/21/content_23575133.htm, accessed on February 22, 2016

¹⁷ "President Xi Reaches Out with New Media", By Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, February 20, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-02/20/content_23564133.htm, accessed on February 22, 2016

¹⁸ "China Accuses US of Militarizing South China Sea", *China Daily*, February 19, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-02/19/content_23561967.htm, accessed on February 22, 2016

¹⁹ "China Calls for Cautious Approach on Korean Peninsula", By Wang Qingyun, *China Daily*, February 19, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-02/19/content_23560064.htm, accessed on February 22, 2016

²⁰ "Chinese FM Calls for Enhanced Ties with Australia", *China Daily*, February 17, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-02/17/content_23527218.htm, accessed on February 22, 2016

C. Southeast Asia & Oceania

ASEAN

(February 15-21, 2015)

- **ASEAN, EU held informal talks on aviation; Obama, ASEAN discuss South China Sea tensions, but no joint mention of China.**

ASEAN Transport Ministers had an informal meeting with European Union (EU) Commissioner for Transport, Ms. Violeta Bulc, on February 14 in Singapore on the sidelines of the Singapore Airshow. Both sides exchanged views and updates on transport developments, including the European Commission's recently-adopted Aviation Strategy for Europe. The ASEAN Ministers noted that the European Commission had proposed to negotiate EU-level comprehensive aviation agreements with key partners including ASEAN, and reiterated ASEAN's unanimous interest in swiftly concluding such an agreement which would be the first region-to-region agreement of its kind. The ASEAN Ministers expressed hope that the European Commission would be granted a mandate by the EU Member States to commence negotiations on such an agreement shortly.²¹

U.S. President Barack Obama said on February 16 that he and leaders of Southeast Asian countries discussed the need to ease tensions in the South China Sea, and agreed that any territorial disputes there should be resolved peacefully and through legal means. But a joint statement agreed on after a two-day summit with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at the Sunnylands retreat in California did not include the specific mentions Washington had been seeking regarding China and its assertive pursuit of territory in the South China Sea. Obama said that leaders at the meeting reaffirmed "our strong commitment to a regional order where international rules and norms and the rights of all nations, large and small, are upheld." "We discussed the need for tangible steps in the South China Sea to lower tensions including a halt to further reclamation, new construction and militarization of disputed areas," Obama said. "When ASEAN speaks with a clear and unified voice, it can help advance security, opportunity and human dignity." After a first day discussing trade and economic issues with the 10 ASEAN states, U.S. officials had been hoping to arrive at a common position on the South China Sea, where China and several ASEAN states have conflicting claims. Rather than turning a spotlight on China, the joint statement reiterated broad key principles of U.S.-ASEAN cooperation, including "mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality and political independence of all nations ... and a shared commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes."

It also reaffirmed "a shared commitment to maintain peace, security and stability in the region, ensuring maritime security and safety, including the rights of freedom of navigation and overflight." Obama said the two sides made progress on trade and investment and had agreed to launch a new effort to help all ASEAN nations meet the criteria of the Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal, of which four are so far members along with the United States. Obama announced an initiative,

²¹ "ASEAN, EU Held Informal Talks on Aviation", *ASEAN official website*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.asean.org/asean-eu-held-informal-talks-on-aviation/>

dubbed U.S.-ASEAN Connect, which he said would involve a network of hubs across the region to better coordinate economic engagement.²²

Southeast Asia

(February 15-21, 2015)

- **Myanmar General's term extended by 5 years; East Timor to Malcolm Turnbull: Let's start talks on maritime boundary; Chinese naval ships arrive in Thailand for goodwill visit; Vietnam Protests China's Paracels Missile Deployment**

Myanmar's military commander-in-chief will have his term extended for five years, as a fragile power-sharing arrangement with the incoming government of Aung San Suu Kyi's party develops. Min Aung Hlaing, who has led Myanmar's armed forces—known as the Tatmadaw—since 2011, reaches the official military retirement age of 60 this year. But his term will be extended for another five years. NLD central executive committee member Han Thar Myint welcomed news that the general would continue in his role, calling it “a good thing” to have consistency in dealings with the military. “At the moment, we don't have any big issues or problems in our discussions with him,” he said. The extension of the general's term will ensure some continuity in negotiations between Ms. Suu Kyi's party and the military.²³

East Timor's Prime Minister wrote to his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull asking him to open talks on a permanent maritime boundary between the two countries. At stake are multibillion-dollar oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea that East Timor's government believes would be located overwhelmingly in its territory if the boundaries were set according to international law. Two months before East Timor became an independent nation in 2002, Australia withdrew from the dispute-settling jurisdiction under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Since then, it has also refused to negotiate a bilateral agreement on a permanent boundary with East Timor. Instead, the two countries have signed two treaties - in 2002 and 2007 - sharing oil and gas revenues. East Timor's ambassador to Australia Abel Guterres, who announced the correspondence from Dr Araujo on February 15 at a symposium at Monash University, said that his country signed the treaties under duress.²⁴

The 21st Chinese naval escort taskforce composed of the guided-missile frigates Liuzhou, Sanya and the comprehensive supply ship Qinghaihu arrived on February 17 at Laem Chabang Port, Thailand, for a five-day goodwill visit. The Thai Navy held a grand welcome ceremony for the visiting Chinese naval ships. Thailand is the fifth leg of the taskforce's foreign port calls. En route for China, the taskforce had visited Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India. Commanding officers of the Chinese naval taskforce will call on leading Thai Navy officials and exchange views with them on relations between the two navies and situations in the region. The two navies will hold a seminar on anti-piracy operations. In addition, a dock reception will be held on the Chinese frigate Liuzhou and friendly soccer matches between sailors of the Chinese naval taskforce and the Thai Navy have

²² Mason, Jef and Wallace, Bruce, “Obama, ASEAN Discuss South China Sea Tensions, But No Joint Mention of China”, *Reuters*, February 17, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asean-idUSKCN0VP1F7>

²³ Mahtani, Shibani and Myo, Myo, “Myanmar General's Term Extended 5 Years”, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/myanmar-generals-term-extended-5-years-1455525864>

²⁴ Allard, Tom, “East Timor to Malcolm Turnbull: Let's Start Talks on Maritime Boundary”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/east-timor-to-malcolm-turnbull-lets-start-talks-on-maritime-boundary-20160215-gmugd1.html>

also been arranged. After its visit to Thailand, the 21th Chinese naval escort taskforce will head to Cambodia for goodwill visit.²⁵

Vietnam lodged a formal protest on February 15 against China's deployment of surface-to-air missiles to the disputed Paracel Islands chain in the South China Sea. Citing "serious infringements of Vietnam's sovereignty over the Paracels," Hanoi's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Le Hai Binh released a statement describing letters his department issued to China's Vietnamese embassy and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. China's state-run *Global Times* newspaper on February 14 confirmed the presence of unspecified weapons on Woody Island, part of the Paracels chain. Vietnam called on the UN to condemn Beijing's move, saying it "threatens peace and stability in the region as well as security, safety and freedom of navigation and flight." During a recent meeting with President Barack Obama on the sidelines of this week's ASEAN summit in California, Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung urged Washington to play a greater role in preventing militarization and island-building in the South China Sea, the government said.²⁶

Oceania

(February 15-21, 2015)

- **Fiji becomes first country in the world to ratify Paris agreement; Russian ambassador officially hands weapons over to Fiji; Australian deal with New Zealand paves way for more Kiwis to become citizens.**

Fiji became the first country in the world to formally approve the UN climate deal agreed by 195 nations in Paris in December 2015. The island nation's parliament unanimously agreed to ratify the Paris agreement on February 12. The motion was proposed by the country's attorney general, Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum. He told parliament that it would need to ratify the treaty ahead of a signing ceremony in April in New York, where Fiji's Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama, will formally sign the document on behalf of the country. He said tackling climate change was a major priority for the archipelago, which could face wide-scale flooding, fiercer tropical storms, and depleting fish stocks as a result of the world's changing climate. The process marks the beginning of an expected wave of ratification votes as other countries prepare for their attendance at the New York ceremony. Under its national climate action plan, Fiji pledged to generate 100 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. It also promised to cut overall emissions from its energy sector by 30 per cent by 2030 compared to business-as-usual, conditional on it receiving climate finance from industrialised nations.²⁷

Russia's Ambassador to Fiji officially handed over the weapons his country has donated to Fiji's military. He officially handed over 8.8 million US dollars worth of weapons on February 16, which were set to be used by Fijian peacekeepers in the Golan Heights, between Israel and Syria. When the weapons arrived in January, the Fiji Labour Party accused the government of secrecy and the parliamentary opposition said the agreement had not been sanctioned by parliament. Fiji has

²⁵ "Chinese Naval Ships Arrive in Thailand for Goodwill Visit", *Chinamil*, February 18, 2016, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/18/content_6918001.htm

²⁶ Mi, Tra, "Vietnam Protests China's Paracels Missile Deployment", *The Voice of America*, February 19, 2016, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/vietnam-protests-china-paracels-missile-deployment/3198586.html>

²⁷ "Fiji Becomes First Country in The World To Ratify Paris Agreement", *The Guardian*, February 15, 2016, at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/15/fiji-becomes-first-country-in-the-world-to-ratify-paris-agreement>

proactively sought closer relations with Russia as part of its official "Look North" policy, adapted in the years following the 2006 coup, while turning away from Australia and New Zealand.²⁸

New Zealanders who have lived and worked in Australia for more than five years will find it easier to access citizenship under a deal reached by the leaders of the two countries. The Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, announced the "new pathways to citizenship" after hosting a meeting with his counterpart, John Key, in Sydney on February 19. But the Turnbull government did not take up New Zealand's offer to resettle about 150 refugees a year from Australia's offshore detention camps, even as Key said it "still stands". The leaders also discussed rising tensions in the South China Sea after Beijing appeared to install a surface-to-air missile system on Woody Island, and urged all parties from militarising the contested region. The citizenship deal applies to those who hold a special category visa, the one that lets people stay and work in Australia for as long as they remain New Zealand citizens. Turnbull said a special category visa holder who had been earning more than \$54,000 a year – the current minimum pay for a skilled migrant – could seek to become an Australian citizen. "This will enable a large number of New Zealanders who are here and have been working here for five years, to be able to apply for citizenship," he said. "They will obviously be subject to the usual health and security checks in the normal way. I think this is a very important recognition of the very close ties between Australia and New Zealand." Key said that the deal was in response to advocacy "for the plight of New Zealanders living in Australia who have been in a particular category that hasn't allowed them to become Australian citizens". "This step today will help tens of thousands of those New Zealanders to one day potentially become Australian citizens," he said.²⁹

India and Southeast Asia

(February 15-21, 2015)

- **Two Indian warships call at Myanmar port; India setting up 9 border trade points with Myanmar; India-Myanmar sign SOP on joint patrol; India-ASEAN connectivity can be game changer for northeast: Sushma Swaraj; NE the only viable natural land route to ASEAN, says Zeliang.**

Two Indian Navy warships called at Myanmar's International Terminals Thilawa in Yangon. The vessels, INS Saryu and INS Bitra, which arrived at the Yangon port on February 16, between them carry 174 officers and crew members. The visit of the two ships, set to stay in Myanmar till February 18, came after that of an Indian Coast Guard vessel in mid-January. That ship, designed to carry a Chetak helicopter, was regularly undertaking anti-smuggling, anti-poaching patrol in addition to tasks related to preservation and protection of marine environment and search and rescue at sea. An Indian Navy ship had previously called at Yangon in May 2015.³⁰

²⁸ "Russian Ambassador Officially Hands Weapons Over To Fiji", *Radio New Zealand*, February 17, 2016, at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/296707/russian-ambassador-officially-hands-weapons-over-to-fiji>

²⁹ Hurst, Daniel, "Australian Deal With New Zealand Paves Way For More Kiwis To Become Citizens", *The Guardian*, February 19, 2016, at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/19/australian-deal-with-new-zealand-paves-way-for-more-kiwis-to-become-citizens>

³⁰ "Two Indian Warships Call at Myanmar Port", *Business Standard*, February 17, 2016, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/two-indian-warships-call-at-myanmar-port-116021700412_1.html

Keen to boost border trade between Northeast India and the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, the Indian government is setting up nine border haats or markets along the border with Myanmar. Addressing the inauguration of the Delhi Dialogue VIII in New Delhi, Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), said that negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) mega trade agreement were going on satisfactorily. He said that with the US-led Trans Pacific Partnership deal, between 12 nations, becoming a reality, it was essential to conclude the RCEP soon. In his keynote address, Wadhwa said that under an MoU on border haats along the India-Myanmar border, inked in 2012, it had been agreed to set up nine border haats in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. "We have two Land Customs Stations at Tamu-Moreh in Manipur and Rhi-Zowkhathar in Mizoram, and the Land Customs Station at Moreh (Manipur) is being upgraded into an Integrated Check Post," said Wadhwa.

On the RCEP, being negotiated between the 10-member ASEAN and its six Free Trade Agreement partners, including India, he said, "If the technical negotiations which are underway are completed swiftly, RCEP may turn into a dynamic reality very soon, particularly if we succeed in forming regional value chains and production networks. With the TPP becoming a reality, expediting RCEP is in our interest." He said that ASEAN was India's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade between both sides crossing \$76.53 billion in 2014-15. Among the ASEAN members, Indonesia was the largest trading partner of India, with bilateral trade of \$19.03 billion in 2014-15, followed by Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Wadhwa said that boosting trade with ASEAN was a priority under the new Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-India partnership for peace, progress and shared prosperity (2016-20). The Plan of Action envisages a number of steps in the areas of trade and investment, finance, transport, food, agriculture, forestry, information and communication technology, tourism, science, technology and innovation, and mining and natural resources management, he added. He said that a significant achievement had been completion of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area with the entry into force of the ASEAN-India Agreements on Trade in Services and Investment on July 1, 2015. He further said that the ASEAN-India Trade Negotiating Committee had been tasked to undertake a review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement, which came into effect on January 1, 2010, in order to optimize its utilisation and bring it up-to-date with today's standards. On the connectivity projects being undertaken, he said that the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-modal Project were progressing. "We are also at the final stages of a Motor Vehicles Agreement between India, Myanmar and Thailand which will address soft connectivity issues," he pointed out.³¹

Fourth edition of India-Myanmar Coordinated Patrol (IMCOR) was conducted jointly by ships of both navies along the International Maritime Boundary Line in the Andaman Sea.

Indian Navy ships Saryu and Bitra along with Union of Myanmar ships Aung Zeya and FAC 563 participated in the four-day IMCOR that concluded on February 16. Naval Component Commander from the Tri-Service HQs in Port Blair Cmde Girish Garg was embarked on board INS Saryu. During the closing ceremony of the IMCOR, the standard operating procedure (SOP) for IMCOR was also signed between Indian Navy and Myanmar Navy. Cmde Atul Anand from Indian Navy and Cmde Aung Zaw Hlaing from Myanmar Navy signed the document in the presence of Indian Ambassador

³¹ "India Setting Up 9 Border Trade Points with Myanmar", *The Statesman*, February 17, 2016, at <http://www.thestatesman.com/news/world/india-setting-up-9-border-trade-points-with-myanmar/124227.html#yAuEfi5GZCyQ3Hjm.99>

to Myanmar Gautam Mukhopadhyaya. This was only the third country with which India had signed a formal agreement for maritime coordinated patrols. It reflected growing naval interaction between India and Myanmar. The signing of the SOP would facilitate smooth conduct of coordinated patrols between two friendly neighbours that share a long maritime boundary.³²

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said on February 18 that enhancing connectivity between India and Southeast Asia could be a game changer for India's northeast. "Enhancing connectivity is a strategic priority for both India and ASEAN," Ms. Sushma Swaraj said in her keynote address at the ministerial session of the eighth edition of the Delhi Dialogue. "For India's northeastern region, it can be a game changer. India has been working with ASEAN to enhance physical connectivity via our northeast as well as our eastern seaboard," she said. The Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual track 1.5 diplomatic event to discuss the politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ms. Swaraj said that the Kaladan Multi Modal Transport project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Rih Tedim Project in Myanmar were in progress to enhance connectivity between India and ASEAN nations via the northeast. "The Rih-Tedim Road project will provide all weather connectivity between eastern Mizoram and western Myanmar," the external affairs minister said, adding that work on enhancing air connectivity between the northeast and the ASEAN region was also on. "Besides these projects, at the 13th ASEAN-India Summit in November 2015, Prime Minister Modi announced a line of credit of \$1 billion to promote projects that support physical and digital connectivity between India and ASEAN. We will look forward to receiving proposals from ASEAN member states for utilisation of this line of credit."

Ms. Swaraj said that through its 'Act East Policy', India had been giving a renewed focus to its engagement with ASEAN and other countries in the east. "It is not a coincidence that since Prime Minister Modi's government came to power in May 2014, we have had visits by the president, vice president and prime minister of India to nine out of 10 ASEAN countries... The Philippines, as the next chair of ASEAN, will soon be on the list," she said. Describing India and ASEAN as two bright spots of optimism amidst ongoing global economic uncertainties, she said that the ASEAN Community had opened up a whole new world of opportunities for shared socio-economic growth. "India would like to be part of this growth and in this sense; the development of an ASEAN-India Economic Community would be a logical evolution. We also encourage the ASEAN member states which are yet to ratify the ASEAN-India Agreements on Trade in Services and Investments to do so at the earliest," she said. "The ASEAN-India Trade Negotiating Committee has also been commissioned to undertake a review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement. Together these will facilitate a qualitative shift in our trade and investment relationship."

According to the external affairs minister, a balanced and ambitious Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, if concluded this year, would further boost India's economic and commercial engagement with ASEAN and the wider Asia-Pacific. Stating that peace and stability were essential pre-requisites for progress and development, she stressed on the importance of ensuring maritime security, "which has emerged as an important area of concern in recent times". "The oceans and seas, including the South China Sea, are pathways to our prosperity and security. The security of sea routes in the Asia-Pacific is essential for India's economy as a

³² "India-Myanmar Sign SOP on Joint Patrol", *The Hindu*, February 19, 2016, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/indiamyanmar-sign-sop-on-joint-patrol/article8256109.ece>

majority of our global trade flows across the straits of Malacca and beyond," Ms. Swaraj said. "Moreover, the development of a Blue Economy and optimum utilisation of marine resources can only take place within the ambit of internationally recognised rules and norms." Emphasising on the need to resolve disputes peacefully, without threat or actual use of force, the external affairs minister said: "In this regard, I would also like to stress that we support the evolution of an inclusive, balanced, transparent and open regional architecture for security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific." Stating that the deep and abiding socio-cultural links between India and ASEAN dates back two millennia, Ms. Sushma Swaraj hoped that people-to-people exchanges would engender research tie-up between the universities and think tanks of the two sides to produce a credible repository of knowledge for the benefit of posterity. "To further enhance understanding at the popular level, exchange programme of students, journalists, farmers, scholars, diplomats, parliamentarians and others are progressing apace," she said.³³

Nagaland chief minister T.R. Zeliang said that the North East Region was the only viable natural land route, for creating pathways to a shared future between India and the ASEAN countries. Addressing the 'Delhi Dialogue VIII' on the theme 'ASEAN-India Relations: A New Paradigm' held at Delhi on February 18, Zeliang in this regard pointed out that the first priority was construction of highways and railways within the region, and connecting it with mainland India, as well as with the ASEAN countries. Zeliang was also optimistic that the geographical isolation of the region would become a thing of the past and become the central and strategic point for international trade and development. Zeliang reiterated that the most feasible road and rail connectivity between India and South East Asian countries is through Nagaland to Moreh border town via Imphal. For this, he opined that the East-West corridor had to be extended from Doboka junction to Moreh via Kohima and Imphal.³⁴

D. Russia

Russia: National

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Russian Defence Ministry postpones expansion of Airborne Force divisions; Majority of Russians back continuation of Syrian campaign; Russia's Eastern Military District begins military exercises; Gazprom dissolves Sibir Energy Limited as part of its asset-restructuring programme; Putin lauds progress in Russian judicial reforms; Sberbank CEO says Russia will spend half of its Reserve Fund in 2016 with average oil price at US\$ 40 per barrel; OPEC agreements allow 1.9 per cent oil output increase in Russia in 2016; Economic Development Minister says Rosneft will be privatised in the future.**

Russia's Defence Ministry has postponed the plans for massive expansion of divisions of the Airborne Forces (VDV) for at least 4 years. It was earlier announced that the number of airborne personnel will be increased by one-third - from 45,000 to nearly 60,000 troops. There were also plans

³³ "India-Asean Connectivity Can Be Game Changer For Northeast: Sushma", *Business Standard*, February 18, 2016, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-asean-connectivity-can-be-game-changer-for-northeast-sushma-116021801181_1.html

³⁴ "NE the Only Viable Natural Land Route to ASEAN, Says Zeliang", *Nagaland Post*, February 19, 2016, at <http://www.nagalandpost.com/ChannelNews/State/StateNews.aspx?news=TkVXUzEwMDA5MzYwNQ%3D%3D>

to restore the 104th Airborne Assault Division, which would have consisted of three regiments (based in Ulyanovsk, in Orenburg and in Engels) and a new assault airborne brigade (in Voronezh). The Russian Airborne Forces now comprise of four divisions, four air assault brigades and a special operations brigade.³⁵

According to a poll conducted by the independent Levada Centre, a majority of Russians want their country's military campaign in Syria to continue. Approx. 18 per cent categorically back Russia's involvement in the conflict while 41 per cent back at least Russia's air strikes on Islamic State positions. The poll was conducted towards the end of January in 48 Russian regions among 1,600 people aged between 18 and 48. The margin of error did not exceed 3.4 per cent.³⁶

Over 1,500 troops with Russia's Eastern Military District (EMD) reconnaissance forces have, on February 15, launched exercises across the seven Far East and Siberia regions. These include the regions of Buryatia, Zabaikalsky, Khabarovsk, Primorsky, Kamchatka Territories, Amur and Sakhalin regions.³⁷

Gazprom has dissolved Sibir Energy Limited as part of its asset-restructuring programme. A company spokesperson stated that 'the decision on company's liquidation was made on September 14, 2015 by Sibir Energy board of directors and the decision was made after all assets of the group were transferred to the Russian jurisdiction'. Gazprom Neft took full ownership of Sibir Energy Limited in 2011, which was followed by integration of its assets into a structure owned by Gazprom Neft and the group's corporate restructuring.³⁸

President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia is gradually overcoming the problems that prompted the judicial reforms in the country in the first place. He stated that as part of the reforms that started in 2014, important steps have been taken to ensure single interpretation of law and achievement of the uniform judicial practice. He also demanded that the cases of abuse of law against business should be ruled out.³⁹

The Chief Executive Officer of Russia's Sberbank, German Gref has said, on February 16, that the Russian government will spend half of its Reserve Fund in the event of average annual oil price being US\$ 40 per barrel. Russia's Reserve Fund stood at 3.7 trillion roubles (US\$ 46.6 billion) as of February 1, 2016 whereas it equalled 5.8 trillion roubles (US\$ 75.2 billion) in the previous year.⁴⁰

Deputy Energy Minister Kirill Molodtsov has said, on February 18, that agreements with OPEC 'do not exclude the growth of oil production in Russia in 2016 by 1.9 per cent'. He stated 'as of January 11 we have recorded oil production growth of 1.9 per cent. We have a tendency of production

³⁵ "Russian Defence Ministry Postpones Expansion of Airborne Force Divisions — Source", *Itar-Tass*, February 18, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/857623>

³⁶ "Majority of Russians Back Continuation of Syria Campaign", *The Moscow Times*, February 15, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/majority-of-russians-back-continuation-of-syria-campaign/559596.html>

³⁷ "Over 1,500 Russia's East Military District Recon Forces Begin Drills", *Sputnik News*, February 15, 2016 at <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160215/1034761400/russia-east-military-district-drill.html#ixzz41BSkvyMt>

³⁸ "Gazprom Dissolves Sibir Energy Limited Within Asset-Restructuring Programme", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/857035>

³⁹ "Putin Lauds Progress in Russian Judicial Reform", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/857070>

⁴⁰ "Bank CEO: Russia will Spend Half of Its Reserve Fund in 2016 with Average Oil Price at \$40", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/857068>

growth, and we can retain it. It is possible to increase production in connection with the introduction of new fields'.⁴¹

Economic Development Minister Alexey Ulyukayev has said, on February 20, that the decision on the privatization of shares of Rosneft oil-company has been taken and all the revenues from privatization will be transferred to Russia's federal budget. He added that diamond mining company Alrosa and oil companies Bashneft and Rosneft are likely to be privatized in the first place. Earlier, Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin had said that it was necessary to wait until the price of oil touched US\$ 100 per barrel for the effective privatization of Rosneft. In 2015, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov had reported that Russia could raise up to 550 billion roubles (US\$ 760 million) from the privatization of 19.5 per cent stake of Rosneft. He said that foreign companies, in particular Chinese companies, may take part in privatization. Rosneftegas, which manages the assets of the Russian government in oil and gas industry, owns more than 69.5 per cent of shares of Rosneft while British BP owns 19.75 per cent of shares of the company.⁴²

Russia: International

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Putin and Saudi King discuss Syrian crisis; Putin meets the Iranian Defence Minister; Russia welcomes EU's decision to lift sanctions on Belarusian President Lukashenko; Russia and Belarus to adopt new military doctrine of Union State; Russian Foreign Ministry says Japan misinterprets historical facts on peace treaty; Russia likely to supply its agriculture products to Arab countries via UAE; Patriarch Kirill hopes meeting with Pope will lower tension between Russia and NATO; Russian Defence Minister dispatches expedition to Kuril Islands; Russia says there is no 'direct restriction' on military-technical cooperation with Iran; Russia to supply first four Su-35 fighter jets to China by the end of 2016; Marine Le Pen's party asks Russia for € 27 million loan; Kazakhstan MPs want to raise Russia's rent for military sites; Putin criticises EU statements on sanctions relief.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in a phone conversation held on February 19, called for resolving the crisis in Syria and ensuring stability and security in Middle East and Northern Africa.⁴³

Russian President Vladimir Putin has, on February 16, met with Iranian Defence Minister Hosein Dehqan in Moscow. The details of the meeting were not released.⁴⁴

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has, on February 16, welcomed European Union's (EU) decision to lift sanctions on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and said that this move once again demonstrates the senseless and flawed nature of the sanctions policy. The EU had made a decision to partially lift its sanctions on Belarus, which had been in effect for more than 13 years. However,

⁴¹ "OPEC Agreements Allow 1.9% Oil Output Growth in Russia in 2016 — Official", *Itar-Tass*, February 18, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/857548>

⁴² "Decision on Russia's Rosneft Privatization Taken — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, February 20, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/858002>

⁴³ "Putin, Saudi Arabia King Discuss Syria Crisis — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, February 19, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/857852>

⁴⁴ "Putin Holds Meeting with Iranian Defence Minister — Kremlin Spokesman", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/857126>

it also extended for another 12 months its embargo on the delivery of weapons and special police equipment to Belarus, as well as visa restrictions on four Belarusian security officials.⁴⁵

Belarus and Russia will soon adopt a new military doctrine of their Union State. This was stated by Zygmund Valevach who is a member of Belarus's Standing Committee of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly (lower house of parliament). He stated 'the Union State's new Military Doctrine will be worked out on the basis of the 2015 Russian Military Doctrine and 2016 Belarusian doctrine'. He added that its adoption is planned in view of the NATO expansion and increased number of NATO member countries.⁴⁶

Russian Foreign Ministry has said that Japan 'allows a distorted interpretation of historical facts when speaking about the problem of the peace treaty with Russia'. The statement was issued in response to a statement made by a Japanese diplomat on the peace treaty problem.⁴⁷

Deputy Minister of Agriculture Sergei Levin has said, on February 21, that Russia will supply its agricultural products to Arab countries via the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He stated 'UAE re-exports 80 per cent of products supplied here, thus we consider Dubai as a most important strategic direction to promote our agricultural products in the Arab world'.⁴⁸

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill has hoped that his recent meeting with Pope Francis will lower the tensions between Russia and NATO. He added that it was 'a meeting of two people, concerned about what is happening in the world, hence the huge tension between the East and the West, or rather between Russia and NATO, to be precise. This very concern resulted in a serious discussion, which was characterized by very high common understanding of the issues, which only yesterday seemed complicated for any accord between the pope and the patriarch'. The Patriarch also said that the re-unification of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, should it ever happen, will be a divine miracle.⁴⁹

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said, on February 18, that Russia's Geographical Society will dispatch an expedition to the Island of Matua in the Kuril chain where Japan built a network of military fortifications before World War II. The expedition will include military specialists, speleologists and underwater world explorers. Mr. Shoigu stated that 'there are many enigmas and a lot of interesting as the island is mysterious. As for the military aspect, there are a lot of various puzzles there. No one has been able to answer up to this day where a large number of military hardware and ammunitions prepared to repeal Soviet troops had gone and where two-thirds of the island's garrison had gone'.⁵⁰

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has said, on February 20, that there are no longer any direct restrictions on cooperation with Iran in the military-technical sphere. She stated

⁴⁵ "Kremlin Welcomes EU's Decision To Lift Sanctions on Belarusian President Lukashenko", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/857023>

⁴⁶ "Belarus, Russia To Adopt New Military Doctrine of Union State", *Itar-Tass*, February 16, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/857049>

⁴⁷ "Russian Foreign Ministry: Tokyo Misinterprets Historical Facts on Peace Treaty with Russia", *Itar-Tass*, February 20, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/858232>

⁴⁸ "Russia May Supply Its Agriculture Products To Arab Countries via UAE – Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, February 21, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/858271>

⁴⁹ "Patriarch Kirill Hopes Meeting with Pope will Lower Tension Between Russia, NATO", *Itar-Tass*, February 21, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/858260>

⁵⁰ "Russian Defence Minister Dispatches Expedition To 'Mysterious' Kuril Island", *Itar-Tass*, February 18, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/857565>

'it is alleged that a ban on delivery of weapons and military equipment to Iran imposed by the UN Security Council is still in effect and that this arms embargo has been imposed by Resolution 2231 of the UN Security Council passed in support of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This is not true. Resolution 2231 provides for the permission-based procedure of supplying military products to Iran by obtaining consent of the UN Security Council. This rule is set for the period until 2020'. She stressed that Russia will act in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 2231.⁵¹

Russia will supply the first four Su-35 jets to China by the end of this year in accordance with a contract signed in 2015. Moscow and Beijing had signed a contract on delivery of 24 Su-35 jets to China worth at least US\$ 2 billion. China is the first foreign country to purchase this new generation aircraft. The contract is expected to be completed in three years.⁵²

France's far-right National Front party has asked Russia for a 27-million-euro (US\$ 30 million) loan, claiming that the party needs it to finance its election campaigns in 2017. Le Pen's party received a loan of 11 million euro from a bank with ties to Russia in 2014.⁵³

Members of Kazakhstan's parliament have pressed the government to make Russia pay more rent for the usage of its military facilities. Earlier, Deputy Defence Minister Okas Saparov had testified in Kazakhstan's Senate, and received some criticism for the fact that Russia appears to be paying less than prevailing market rates for the rent of its four military facilities. These include the Kapustin Yar test firing range, the Sary Shagan and Emba missile testing sites, and the 929th State Test Flight Centre. Russia pays about US\$ 24 million in rent to Kazakhstan.⁵⁴

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed as "nonsensical" the European Union's statement that the return of Crimea will be a pre-condition for lifting sanctions against Moscow. EU leaders had initially said that sanctions could be lifted if the Minsk deal is implemented.⁵⁵

India-Russia Relations

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Sukhoi in talks with Tatas to manufacture spares for Sukhoi Superjet 100.**

Senior Vice President of Sukhoi, Yevgeny Andrachnikov has said, on February 19, that the company is likely to sign an agreement with Tata Advanced Systems (part of the Tata Group), for the manufacture of spare parts of passenger aircraft Sukhoi Superjet 100 (SSJ-100). The company is also

⁵¹ "Moscow Says There're No Direct Restrictions on Military-Technical Cooperation with Iran", *Itar-Tass*, February 20, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/858186>

⁵² "Russia will Supply First Four Su-35 Fighters To China By End Of 2016 — Source", *Itar-Tass*, February 19, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/857813>

⁵³ "Marine Le Pen's Party Asks Russia for €27 Million Loan", *The Moscow Times*, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/marine-le-pens-party-asks-russia-for-27-million-loan/560066.html>

⁵⁴ "Kazakhstan MPs Want To Raise Russia's Rent For Military Sites", *The Moscow Times*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/kazakhstan-mps-want-to-raise-russias-rent-for-military-sites/559857.html>

⁵⁵ "Putin Blasts EU Statements On Sanctions Relief", *The Moscow Times*, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putin-blasts-eu-statements-on-sanctions-relief/559969.html>

holding talks with Indian carriers, to supply these aircraft to them and hope to sell 50 such jets within the next five years.⁵⁶

E. West Asia

Iran

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Operation to retake Mosul has already started, says US envoy.**

Russia is set to increase its customs cooperation with Iran and sign pertinent documents of collaboration in near future, said Andrey Belyaninov Head of the Federal Customs Service of Russia in his meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanaei. The two officials met in Moscow on February 10, the *IRNA news agency* reported. Belyaninov said a delegation of Russian customs administration would visit Tehran in near future to finalize customs agreements, adding that development of an Iran-Russia green corridor would facilitate trade between the two sides. He further noted that the two countries' customs could expand collaboration through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).⁵⁷

Iraq and Syria

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Operation to retake Mosul has already started, says US Envoy; Obeidi heads to Belgium to attend international conference against ISIS; Sending Saudi troops to Syria “big adventure and gamble”, Information Minister says; Parliament speaker and PM stress need to reinforce military victories and improve economic indicators.**

The U.S. envoy to the international coalition Brett Magrec, said, that the liberation operation of Mosul has started, already, while noted that the international coalition is holding consultations to coordinate with the Peshmerga forces as well as Sunni forces as part of the preparations to attack ISIS inside Mosul. Magrec said in a press statement obtained by *IraqiNews.com*, “The coalition will work this year to accelerate the raids against [ISIS] in order to achieve more progress,” noting that, “The coalition will focus on retaking Mosul in its operations.”⁵⁸

The Iraqi Ministry of Defence announced, that Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi travelled to Belgium to attend an international conference against ISIS that will be attended by more than 60 Defence Ministers from all the countries that participate in the international coalition against the terrorist organizations. The Defence Ministry said in a statement followed by *IraqiNews.com*, “Obeidi will deliver a speech at the international conference revealing the Iraqi role in fighting

⁵⁶ “Tatas To Make Spares for Sukhoi Superjet 100”, *Russia and India Report*, February 19, 2016 at http://in.rbth.com/economics/cooperation/2016/02/19/tatas-to-make-spare-for-sukhoi-superjet-100_569083

⁵⁷ “Russia Set to Enhance Customs Co-op with Iran”, *Tehran Times*, February 13, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252927. Accessed on March 2, 2016

⁵⁸ “Operation To Retake Mosul Has Already Started, Says US Envoy”, *Iraqi News*, February 10, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/147933/>. Accessed on March 1, 2016

terrorism on behalf of the whole world, as well as the great victories achieved by the Iraqi forces against the terrorist organizations."⁵⁹

Speaker of the People's Assembly Mohammad Jihad al-Laham highlighted the need to keep pace with and reinforce the military achievements made by the Syrian Arab Army in many areas across the country through securing supply lines of food and services to the locals in those areas. Chairing the first session within the new legislative term, al-Laham called for more efforts to provide the necessary services to residents in the areas to which the army recently restored security in Homs, Aleppo, Latakia and Daraa so as for the social, economic and agricultural life there to be back to normal, SANA reported. Al-Laham said the current stage is a critical moment in the history of Syria, and that Syria's enemies are in a state of confusion that is evident in their failure to form a unified delegation for negotiations.⁶⁰

Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi stressed that the Syrian Arab Army is determined to restore security and stability to Aleppo City, describing what the Saudi regime says about sending troops to Syria as a "big adventure and gamble" that the Saudi cannot bear its results. Minister al-Zoubi told Reuters in an interview that the battles to restore security and stability to Aleppo City are being conducted on different axes through military plans and there are a number of axes where terrorists' supply routes have been completely cut off and became under the control of the Syrian army, SANA reported. He indicated that the terrorist organizations in Aleppo are big, well-finance and armed with modern arms, adding that these organizations, in addition to Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, "have received US-made TOW anti-armor missiles."⁶¹

Israel and Palestine

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Netanyahu may meet Obama in March to ink aid deal, US envoy confirms; Over 40 Palestinian homes, structures demolished in Jordan valley.**

US President Barack Obama may sit down with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu next month to clinch a massive 10-year aid package, the American envoy to Israel said. Jerusalem and Washington have been attempting to hammer out the details of the military aid deal before the current package of \$3 billion annually expires in 2018. The White House reportedly wants to wrap up the deal before Obama leaves office in 11 months, but Netanyahu has intimated he is considering holding out for a better deal with whoever wins the presidency. "There's a chance [Netanyahu and Obama will meet]," Ambassador Dan Shapiro told Channel 2 news. "However, there still remains an issue of timing. We'll see in the next few weeks how it works out."⁶²

⁵⁹ "Obeidi Heads to Belgium to Attend International Conference against ISIS", *Iraqi News*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/obeidi-t-heads-to-belgium-to-attend-international-conference-to-combat-isis/>. Accessed on March 4, 2016

⁶⁰ "Parliament Speaker and PM Stress Need to Reinforce Military Victories and Improve Economic Indicators", *Syria times*, February 7, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22087-parliament-speaker-and-pm-stress-need-to-reinforce-military-victories-and-improve-economic-indicators>. Accessed on 5th March 2016

⁶¹ "Sending Saudi Troops to Syria "Big Adventure And Gamble", Information Minister says", *Syria Times*, February 11, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22153-sending-saudi-troops-to-syria-big-adventure-and-gamble-information-minister-says>. Accessed on March 5, 2016

⁶² "Netanyahu May Meet Obama in March to Ink Aid Deal, US Envoy Confirms", *Times of Israel*, February 12, 2016 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-may-meet-obama-in-march-to-ink-aid-deal-us-envoy-confirms/>. Accessed at March 5, 2016

Israeli forces destroyed over 40 Palestinian homes and structures in the Tubas district of the occupied West Bank as ongoing Israeli policies in the Jordan Valley continue to drive Palestinians out of their homes. A Palestinian official from the governor's office in Tubas, Mutaz Bsharat, told Ma'an that Israeli forces and bulldozers stormed the Palestinian communities of al-Farisiya and Khallet al-Khader and demolished seven homes, displacing seven families. Forces also demolished 35 structures in the Bardala and Ein al-Baida communities, Bsharat added.⁶³

The Gulf

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Bahrain, Russia keen on widening cooperation; Saudi Arabia intercepts more scuds from Yemen.**

Bahrain and Russia have agreed to bolster their relations and cooperation as King Hamad Bin Eisa Al Khalifa and President Vladimir Putin held talks in the Russian city of Sochi. "Both leaders discussed the strong ties binding both countries and ways of boosting bilateral cooperation to achieve the aspirations of the two friendly peoples," a report carried by *Bahrain News Agency (BNA)* said. "They expressed satisfaction with the advanced level of Bahraini-Russian relations, underlining keenness on more cooperation in various fields. They also discussed regional and international developments, stressing the need to maintain global peace and security, to preserve regional stability and to fight terrorism."⁶⁴

Saudi air defences intercepted a Scud missile fired at Khamis Mushait city where a major airbase is located, the coalition fighting in Yemen said. The interception occurred "this morning at about three o'clock," Brigadier General Ahmad Al Assiri, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, said. "They are still targeting the cities," he said. Roughly 100 kilometres from the Yemeni border, the King Khalid Air Base, near the city of Khamis Mushait, is at the forefront of Saudi-led air operations against Al Houthi rebels and their allies, elite troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. The coalition said in a statement that Royal Saudi Air Defence Forces intercepted the missile at dawn as it headed toward the southwestern Saudi region of Asir.⁶⁵

India-West Asia

(February 8-14, 2016)

- **Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi calls on the President.**

Welcoming the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President conveyed that India shares UAE's desire for a closer partnership between the two countries. India appreciates the vision of the Crown Prince's father, HH Sheikh Zayed and the personal commitment of the Crown Prince to strengthen bilateral ties with India. President said it

⁶³ "Over 40 Palestinian Homes, Structures Demolished in Jordan Valley", *Palestine Chronicles*, February 11, 2016 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/over-40-palestinian-homes-structures-demolished-in-jordan-valley/>. Accessed on March 5, 2016

⁶⁴ "Bahrain, Russia Keen on Widening Cooperation", *Gulf News*, February 9, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-russia-keen-on-widening-cooperation-1.1669276>. Accessed on March 5, 2016

⁶⁵ "Saudi Arabia Intercepts More Scuds from Yemen", *Gulf News*, February 16, 2016, at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/yemen/saudi-arabia-intercepts-more-scuds-from-yemen-1.1668268>. Accessed on March 5, 2016

was a matter of great satisfaction that the two countries have decided to elevate their relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The President said the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to UAE has resulted in increasing mutual understanding and bonds of friendship between the two nations. The Joint Statement issued during that visit reflects the desire to intensify cooperation between the two countries in a wide range of sectors – political, economic, security as well as on regional and multilateral issues. The President remarked the Crown Prince's visit and its timing will contribute to this end. The President expressed happiness over the establishment of good institutional mechanisms including a Joint Commission between India and the UAE. He said close collaboration through these institutional dialogues and mechanisms will address pending issues and progress cooperation to the desired levels. On economic relations, the President said India attaches high priority to enhancing bilateral investment ties with the UAE. He added that through bilateral trade ties between the two countries are growing satisfactorily, UAE investment in FDI in India – of about US \$ 3 billion – is far below the existing opportunities and potential.⁶⁶

F. The United State of America

National

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Programme for building cyber proficiency in service academy; Apple computers resisting U.S. government order to unlock encrypted iPhone software; Republican candidates respond cautiously to Pope-Trump clash; "Superdelegates" could have enormous influence over presidential nomination; Trump and Clinton are big winners in the latest round of primary voting.**

Three years into a programme for building cyber proficiency in service academy midshipmen and cadets, the annual Cyber Stakes competition has proven its worth as an important learning tool for these high-tech skills. The Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency launched the competition as a pilot programme in 2014, and this year transitioned its sponsorship to the Office of the Secretary of Defence, which expanded the program's scope. DoD hosted the event February 5-7 at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Pittsburgh. Each service academy sent its best students: 14 from the U.S. Air Force Academy, 14 from the U.S. Military Academy, 14 from the U.S. Naval Academy and 10 from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. A team of four active-duty members of a cyber protection brigade also participated for the first time. Also at the competition were expert mentors from DoD, the National Security Agency, the services and Carnegie Mellon University.⁶⁷

Apple computers is resisting a U.S. government order to unlock its encrypted iPhone software to help the FBI examine a phone used by the militants who killed 14 people in a terrorist-style attack in California in December. Apple's chief executive officer, Tim Cook, posted an open letter to the company's millions of customers on February 17 declaring the firm would challenge a court's order to devise new software that can defeat Apple's own security measures. The government's move is

⁶⁶ "Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi calls on the President", *Press Information Bureau (PIB)* at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=136333>. Accessed on March 5, 2016

⁶⁷ Pellerin, Cheryl, "Service Academy CyberStakes Proves Worth as Learning Tool", *DoD News*, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/656181/service-academy-cyberstakes-proves-worth-as-learning-tool>

unprecedented and an "overreach," Cook said, and it has "chilling" implications for citizens' personal privacy.⁶⁸

In the midst of a U.S. presidential campaign that has already defied precedent and expectations, a sharp exchange on immigration between Republican front-runner Donald Trump and the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis, is now dominating the conversation. On a flight back to Rome after visiting Mexico, a reporter asked the pope about Trump's plans to build a massive wall on the U.S. border with Mexico. Pope Francis said: "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian." At a campaign rally in South Carolina on February 19, billionaire Donald Trump responded swiftly, saying the pope questioning his faith is "disgraceful." At a nationally televised Republican town hall on February 19 evening on *CNN*, Trump appeared to soften his stance.⁶⁹

As the race for the Democratic presidential nomination heats up between Senator Bernie Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the close contest is drawing attention to the nomination process and the people called "superdelegates" who could have enormous influence over its outcome. The Democratic nomination will be determined by 4,763 total delegates — 4,051 chosen by the voters and 712 superdelegates. The superdelegates include all of the party's governors, the president and vice president, all of its members in Congress, and also all members of the Democratic National Committee. That includes elected representatives, like mayors and county executives, as well as presidents of various Democratic organizations. The Republican Party nomination will be determined by 2,472 total delegates, of whom 168 are superdelegates. There are, however, big differences in how much power each party allows its superdelegates. The Democratic superdelegates can vote for whomever they want at the convention, with no obligation to voters' preferences. In contrast, the Republican Party requires its superdelegates to support the candidate their state supports, just like regular delegates.⁷⁰

Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton were the big winners in the latest round of U.S. presidential primary voting. It was a clear victory for Trump in South Carolina after a brutal primary campaign in which the top contenders traded charges of lying and political dirty tricks. The billionaire businessman outpaced rivals Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, who effectively tied for second, as Rubio surged to a strong finish with help from Nikki Haley, South Carolina's popular governor. In the Democratic race, former Secretary of State Clinton held off a last-minute surge by rival Democrat Senator Bernie Sanders and won a narrow victory in the Nevada caucuses.⁷¹ Clinton won the caucuses, defeating Sanders 52.7 percent to 47.3 percent in the race for the party's 2016 presidential nomination. Analysts said Clinton's win showed that her national network of support

⁶⁸ "Apple: 'US Wants Us to Hack Our Customers'", *VOA News*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/judge-orders-apple-to-help-fbi-access-california-shooter-phone/3194350.html>

⁶⁹ Saine, Cindy, "Other Republican Candidates Respond Cautiously to Pope-Trump Clash", *VOA News*, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/other-republican-candidates-respond-cautiously-to-pope-trump-clash/3197747.html>

⁷⁰ Nordwall, Smita, "Superdelegates Could Affect US Presidential Nominee Selection", *VOA News*, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/superdelegates-could-affect-united-states-presidential-nominee-selection/3194321.html>

⁷¹ Malone, Jim, "Trump, Clinton Big Winners in US Presidential Contests", *VOA News*, February 21, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-clinton-big-winners-in-us-presidential-contests/3200344.html>

remained formidable, and that Sanders must do more to appeal to Democrats beyond the young people who have formed the core of his campaign.⁷²

International: Asia

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Obama says a pivot of U.S. foreign, military, and economic policy toward Asia is paying off; Critics say Obama administration's Asia rebalance strategy oversold; CENTCOM: U.S.-led coalition's air campaign continues to degrade the ISIL; U.S. military's airstrike on ISIL training camp; Defence Secretary Carter condemned a bomb attack on Turkish capital of Ankara; Situation in Syria remains volatile; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff meets with senior Egyptian military leaders in Cairo; US Army, Navy practice personnel recovery in the Arabian Gulf; Obama has signed legislation imposing new sanctions against North Korea; U.S. F-22 Raptors conducted a combined formation flight alongside South Korean F-15K Slam Eagles; Obama reaffirms American commitment to a regional order; New era of US, ROK Navy alliance begins in Busan; U.S., partner nations come together for first multilateral silver flag exercise; US has deployed an additional ballistic missile defence asset to South Korea; US and Japan negotiate an amendment to their Open Skies agreement.**

President Barack Obama says a pivot of U.S. foreign, military, and economic policy toward Asia is paying off and will continue. But critics say the trade deal that is the most important economic component of this so-called rebalancing of Washington's attention and resources is in serious trouble. Speaking in California at a recent meeting of leaders from Southeast Asia, Obama said efforts to improve the rule of law will encourage more trade and investment between the United States and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.⁷³

Five years after U.S. President Barack Obama committed to a strategic rebalance to Asia, shifting diplomatic and military resources to the globe's economic engine, critics say the move was oversold and, so far, it has under delivered. At a time when Beijing's assertive moves to claim territory in the South China Sea draw headlines and worried responses from regional countries, some say China appears to be outmanoeuvring its rivals in the race to assert claims over the vast strategic sea. For decades, the U.S. Navy has protected key shipping routes in the Pacific. The U.S. Navy is still the supreme ocean power, but China has moved to enforce its claims and expand its presence in the South China Sea – without putting its official military forces in the foreground.⁷⁴

The commander of U.S. Air Forces Central Command said on February 18 that as the U.S.-led coalition's air campaign to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria brings its capabilities to the fight, joint interoperability continues to degrade the terrorist organization. Air Force Lt. Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., who also serves as Combined Forces Air Component commander for Operation Inherent Resolve, briefed Pentagon reporters on progress in the coalition's counter-ISIL air operations via teleconference from an air operations centre in Al Udeid, Qatar. The interoperability among the coalition nations is built upon "years of combined

⁷² Saine, Cindy, "Clinton Celebrates Victory in Nevada; Trump Takes South Carolina", *VOA News*, February 21, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/polls-open-south-carolina-republicans-nevada-democrats-caucus/3199788.html>

⁷³ Randle, Jim, "Obama: Greater US Focus on Asia Pays Off, Will Continue", *VOA News*, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-greater-us-focus-on-asia-pays-off-will-continue/3198443.html>

⁷⁴ Padden, Brian, "Obama's Asia Pivot Increases US Influence But Fails to Stop China", *VOA News*, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-asia-pivot-increases-us-influence-but-fails-to-stop-china/3197746.html>

training and multilateral exercises [that have] been key to our continued success in the air campaign," Brown emphasized.⁷⁵

Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in a news conference on February 19 that the U.S. military's airstrike on an ISIL training camp on February 19 near rural Sabratha, Libya -- a strike that also targeted a senior ISIL facilitator -- was conducted after surveillance showed both were threats to U.S. national security. Cook told reporters the airstrike was a success in targeting the camp and high-value operative Nouredine Chouchane, also known as "Sabir," a Tunisian national. Chouchane was a suspect in the deadly March attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis, Cook said, and he reportedly moved potential ISIL-affiliated foreign fighters from Tunisia to Libya and other countries. He was associated with the Sabratha camp in particular, Cook added. The press secretary emphasized that officials determined removing Chouchane as an ISIL leader "would make a difference to the organization of ISIL in Libya."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq.⁷⁷

Defence Secretary Ash Carter condemned a bomb attack that killed more than two dozen people and injured scores more in the Turkish capital of Ankara on February 17. Carter said in a written statement that "We strongly condemn this cowardly attack, which appears to have targeted buses carrying Turkish military personnel". He added, "We stand with our Turkish allies in the face of this horrific act, which only strengthens our resolve to deepen our ongoing cooperation in the fight against terrorism."⁷⁸

The spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve said February 17 that the situation in Syria remains volatile, even as the region prepares for a cessation of hostilities so nongovernmental agencies can feed starving civilians. Army Col. Steve Warren laid the responsibility for that suffering at the feet of the Bashar Assad regime. Russia's intervention on the side of the regime has only made matters worse, he said. The colonel updated Pentagon reporters on coalition airstrikes against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant financial targets. These are like ISIL banks that pay terrorists' salaries and finance terror operations, and Warren estimated the strikes have cost ISIL hundreds of millions of dollars.⁷⁹

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with senior Egyptian military leaders in Cairo on February 20. According to a Defence Department statement, Dunford visited Cairo to demonstrate U.S. commitment to strengthening the security partnership between Egypt and the United States. In meetings with Minister of Defence General Sedky Sobhy and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Hegazy, the statement said Dunford

⁷⁵ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Air Power Vital to Counter-ISIL Success, Commander Says", *DoD News*, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/658294/air-power-vital-to-counter-isil-success-commander-says>

⁷⁶ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Strike on ISIL Camp Protected National Security, Pentagon Press Secretary Says", *DoD News*, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/659116/strike-on-isil-camp-protected-national-security-pentagon-press-secretary-says>

⁷⁷ "Coalition Continues Counter-ISIL Strikes in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, February 21, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/670091/coalition-continues-counter-isil-strikes-in-syria-iraq>

⁷⁸ "Carter: Attack in Turkey Strengthens Resolve in Fight Against Terrorism", *DoD News*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/657543/carter-attack-in-turkey-strengthens-resolve-in-fight-against-terrorism>

⁷⁹ Garamone, Jim, "Syrian Situation Remains Volatile, Inherent Resolve Spokesman Says", *DoD News*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/657052/syrian-situation-remains-volatile-inherent-resolve-spokesman-says>

affirmed his intent to deepen the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Among the issues the leaders discussed was the challenge of terrorism, where cooperation could be especially beneficial for both sides.⁸⁰

U.S. Army Central Soldiers partnered with Sailors from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 26 during a search and rescue exercise in the Arabian Gulf, February 2. The units tested their ability to cooperate in a joint personnel recovery effort during a downed aircraft scenario. The exercise put the Soldiers in an isolated state, using a carefully controlled environment to ensure their safety, while still making the training as realistic as possible, said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Metoyer, the brigade aviation mission survivability officer with 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade. The unit simulated an UH-60 crew that crashed in the Arabian Gulf.⁸¹

U.S. President Barack Obama has signed legislation imposing new sanctions against North Korea in response to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests. The bill calls for imposing mandatory sanctions on anyone assisting Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programmes, cyberattacks and human rights abuses. The expanded sanctions are designed to deny North Korea the money it needs to develop miniaturized nuclear warheads and the long-range missiles needed to deliver them. The measure also authorizes \$50 million over five years to transmit radio broadcasts into North Korea and support humanitarian assistance programmes.⁸²

Four U.S. F-22 Raptors conducted a combined formation flight alongside South Korean F-15K Slam Eagles and U.S. F-16 Fighting Falcons on February 17 to demonstrate the capabilities of both nations in response to recent provocative actions by North Korea. Air Force Lt. Gen. Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, the United Nations Command Korea and U.S. Forces Korea deputy commander and U.S. 7th Air Force commander, told reporters that "The F-22 Raptor is the most capable air superiority fighter in the world, and it represents one of many capabilities available for the defence of this great nation. The U.S. maintains an ironclad commitment to the defence of the Republic of Korea". Lt. Gen. Lee Wang-keon, the South Korea Air Force Operations Command commander, spoke about the strength of the alliance's air combat capabilities during his brief remarks.⁸³

Along with the leaders of the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations, President Barack Obama on February 16 reaffirmed their commitment to a regional order in which international rules and norms and the rights of all nations, large and small, are upheld. The president spoke at the end of the U.S.-ASEAN conference in Rancho Mirage, California. ASEAN members are Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei and Burma. Obama said, "When ASEAN speaks with a clear, unified voice, it can help advance security, opportunity, and human dignity, not only for the more than 600 million people across ASEAN, but for people

⁸⁰ "Dunford, Egyptian Defence Leaders Discuss Bilateral Relationship", *DoD News*, February 20, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/669109/dunford-egyptian-defense-leaders-discuss-bilateral-relationship>

⁸¹ "Army, Navy practice personnel recovery in Gulf", By Sgt. David Beckstrom, U.S. Army Central, *US CENTCOM*, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/army-navy-practice-personnel-recovery-in-gulf>

⁸² "US Imposes New Sanctions Against N. Korea", *VOA News*, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-imposes-new-sanctions-against-north-korea/3197140.html>

⁸³ "U.S., South Korean Fighter Jets Fly in Formation to Demonstrate Capabilities", *DoD News*, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/658106/us-south-korean-fighter-jets-fly-in-formation-to-demonstrate-capabilities>; and, "US Fighter Jets Fly to South Korea", *VOA News*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-fighter-jets-fly-to-south-korea/3194383.html>

across the Asia-Pacific and around the world". The leaders discussed many issues, from economic development to reinforcing the rule of law to security, the president said.⁸⁴

Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea (CNFK) conducted a ribbon-cutting ceremony February 19, officially opening its headquarters in Busan and ushering in a new era of U.S. and Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) alliance. The ceremony, attended by dignitaries and senior U.S. and ROK military leaders, marked the completion of CNFK's relocation to Busan making it the only U.S. military headquarters in Korea located on a ROK base. The relocation from Seoul to Busan enhances the alliance between the ROK and U.S. navies by enabling closer collaboration and communication and reinforces the strong relationship between the partner navies.⁸⁵

Engineers from the Royal Australian Air Force, Republic of Singapore Air Force, Republic of Korea Air Force and the Japan Air Self-Defence Force began the first multilateral partner-nation Silver Flag exercise February 13, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. Led by engineers from the 554th RED HORSE Squadron, Silver Flag is a U.S. Pacific Command multilateral subject matter expert exchange event designed to build partnerships and promote interoperability through the equitable exchange of civil engineer-related information. After an in-brief, 54 multinational students divided into groups based on their specialties, which includes command and control, electrical, power production, heavy repair and emergency management. During their first hands-on training scenario, the exercise cadre shared techniques with the students on how to build tents during contingency operations.⁸⁶

The United States, in close coordination with the Republic of Korea, has deployed an additional ballistic missile defence asset to South Korea. This deployment is part of an emergency deployment readiness exercise conducted in response to recent North Korean provocations. D Battery, 1-43 Air Defence Artillery from Ft. Bliss, Texas is conducting ballistic missile defence training with elements of Eighth Army's 35th Air Defence Artillery Brigade at Osan Air Base.⁸⁷

On February 18, delegations representing the governments of the United States and Japan announced in Tokyo that they have successfully negotiated an amendment to their Open Skies agreement. The proposed amendment provides for the first time since 1978 daytime services by U.S. and Japanese air carriers between the United States and Tokyo International Airport (Haneda), the busiest in Japan and the closest to downtown Tokyo. These flights are expected to begin as early as fall 2016. Under the current agreement, U.S. airlines have a total of four slot pairs (four arrivals and four departures) for service to and from Haneda, which are now restricted to use during night-time

⁸⁴ Garamone, Jim, "U.S., Southeast Asian Nations Reaffirm Support for Regional Order", *DoD News*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/656790/us-southeast-asian-nations-reaffirm-support-for-regional-order>

⁸⁵ "New Era of US, ROK Navy Alliance Begins in Busan", By Naval Forces Korea Public Affairs, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea, US PACOM, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/659317/new-era-of-us-rok-navy-alliance-begins-in-busan.aspx>

⁸⁶ "U.S., Partner Nations Come Together for First Multilateral Silver Flag Exercise", By Senior Airman Joshua Smoot, *US PACOM*, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/658144/us-partner-nations-come-together-for-first-multilateral-silver-flag-exercise.aspx>

⁸⁷ "U.S. Patriot Missile System Deploys to South Korea", By U.S. Forces Korea Public Affairs, United States Forces Korea, US PACOM, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/656582/us-patriot-missile-system-deploys-to-south-korea.aspx>

hours. Under the proposed amendment, these four slot pairs would be transferred to daytime hours.⁸⁸

India-US Relations

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **India and US to discuss clean energy investment efforts; Assistant Secretary for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Frank A. Rose to visit India.**

On February 16, the US State Department in a media note informed that Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Amos Hochstein will travel to India from February 17–18 to discuss clean energy investment efforts with key officials. Envoy Hochstein and the Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR) engage with India through the U.S.-India Clean Energy Finance Task Force in support of the implementation of India's Paris clean energy commitments. It stated that the United States fully supports India's ambitious clean energy goals and Special Envoy Hochstein will be discussing with his counterparts the importance of using public finance to leverage private investment if India is to meet its target of 175 GW of installed renewable energy capacity by 2022. It also pointed out that a leader level initiative, the U.S.–India Clean Energy Finance Task Force is a government-to-government forum that works to identify creative yet practical ways to leverage public funds to attract large, untapped sources of capital, both domestic and international, to help achieve India's ambitious renewable energy targets. It is complemented by the private-sector led Clean Energy Finance Forum which develops recommendations on policy and innovative financing and investment products.⁸⁹

The US State Department informed on February 19 that Assistant Secretary for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Frank A. Rose will visit India, Singapore, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, February 19– March 6, for discussions on space security, strategic stability, and arms control. On February 22, Assistant Secretary Rose will meet with the leadership of the Indian Space Research Organisation in Bangalore, India. On February 23, he will hold meetings with the Indian Ministries of External Affairs and Defence and with Members of Parliament. On February 24, the Assistant Secretary will lead the U.S. delegation to the second U.S.-India Space Security Dialogue and will deliver keynote remarks at the Observer Research Foundation Conference.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "U.S.-Japan Aviation Talks To Bring Daytime Trans-Pacific Flights to Haneda", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, February 18, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252608.htm>

⁸⁹ "Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Amos J. Hochstein Travels to India To Discuss Clean Energy Investment and Energy Security", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252518.htm>

⁹⁰ "Assistant Secretary Frank Rose To Travel to India, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, February 19, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/253073.htm>

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Kashmir remains tense over civilian killings; HM militant held, hideout busted in Kashmir; Hizbul Mujahideen militant arrested in Budgam district of J&K; Pampore encounter: Two Army captains among six killed, gunfight rages on.**

The situation in the Kashmir Valley remained tense even as a magisterial probe was ordered by Governor N N Vohra on February 15 into the killing of two students near an encounter site in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on February 14. A local militant was also killed, while two fled. More than a dozen civilians sustained bullet wounds in security forces' action later. Curfew-like restrictions were imposed in parts of Srinagar and Pulwama on February 15 to curb protests. Defying the restrictions, protesters clashed with security forces in Kakapora area and pelted stones. Meanwhile, life was disrupted in the entire Valley in response to the separatists' shutdown call against the killings.⁹¹ In the wake of this, the J&K Police have issued a public advisory, asking people not to venture near encounter sites. "The residents of nearby area within the radius of two kilometres should stay inside their homes and need not venture out as any stray bullet can hit and cause damage," the police advisory said, adding, the residents should also avoid peeping out of windows during such times. The police statement said Section 144 immediately comes into force at an encounter site and around it.⁹²

A Hizbul Mujahideen militant was arrested and a militant hideout busted in two separate operations by the security forces in Kashmir valley, police said in Srinagar on February 19. Abid Ahmad Bhat, a resident of Kanihama village in Shopian, was arrested from nearby Habdipora area in a joint operation of army and police, police said. In a separate operation, troops of CRPF conducted a search operation in an orchard in Lar area of Ganderbal district following information about an ammunition dump of militants there, police said. Four electric detonators, two IED remote controls, one AK magazine and 30 AK rounds along with a wireless set were recovered from there, they added.⁹³

⁹¹ "J&K on the Boil after Killing of Civilians", *The Hindu*, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/jk-on-the-boil-after-killing-of-civilians/article8242086.ece>

⁹² "Stay Away From Encounter Sites, Says J&K Police", *The Indian Express*, February 19, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pulwama-stay-away-from-encounter-sites-says-jk-police/>

⁹³ "Hizbul Mujahideen Militant Held, Hideout Busted in Kashmir", *The Economic Times*, February 19, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/hizbul-mujahideen-militant-held-hideout-busted-in-kashmir/articleshow/51056274.cms>

A Hizbul Mujahideen militant was arrested and an AK assault rifle seized during an operation in Budgam district of central Kashmir on February 20, police said. Ishfaq Ahmad Wani alias Molvi, a resident of Chechilloora, was arrested at village Peth Makhama in Magam area, a police officer said.⁹⁴

With militants taking the “advantageous position” in the seven-storey Entrepreneurs Development Institute (EDI) at Sempora in Pulwama district of south Kashmir for more than 28 hours, three Army personnel, including two Captains, of elite 9 PARA lost their lives while trying to storm the floor where militants are holed up. One militant was also killed. Three CRPF jawans and a civilian were killed on February 20. The Army has deployed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to locate the position of the militants, thought to number three, in the government building. Several attempts to storm the building before sunset failed. “It is a 100-plus-room building. It will take time to sanitise it. The operation is on,” Inspector-General of Police (Kashmir) Syed Javaid Mujtaba Gillani told The Hindu.⁹⁵

Northeast India

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **ASAK cadre killed in South Garo Hills: Police; Four militants gunned down along Assam-Arunachal border; Union Cabinet recommends revocation of President’s rule in Arunachal Pradesh.**

An unidentified ASAK cadre was killed in an encounter with the police’s SWAT team near Kemdang village under Baghmara Police Station in Meghalaya on February 14. He was part of a group of about five-six cadres led by the outfit’s commander-in-chief, Reding T Sangma. According to police, based on a tip-off, the SWAT team launched an operation near Kemdang on February 13 night. A chance encounter took place on February 14 after which the militants fled. During a search of the area, one unidentified cadre along with one pistol, some live ammunition and sim cards were recovered, said IGP (Law and Order), GHP Raju.⁹⁶

The security forces gunned down four militants at Lohit District near Assam and Arunachal Pradesh border on February 16. Out of the four slain militants, three belong to the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) (NSCN (K)) while one belongs to the United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) (ULFA (I)). The security personnel have also recovered one AK-56 rifle and two pistols in the operation. The operation is still underway.⁹⁷

The Union Cabinet, on February 17, recommended revocation of President's Rule in Arunachal Pradesh, a day after the Supreme Court refused to restrain the Governor from swearing in a new

⁹⁴ “Hizbul Mujahideen Militant Arrested in J&K”, *The Times of India*, February 20, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jammu/Hizbul-Mujahideen-militant-arrested-in-JK/articleshow/51067638.cms>

⁹⁵ Ashiq, Peerzada, “3 Army Men Dead in J&K Gunfight”, *The Hindu*, February 21, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/army-officer-killed-in-encounter-with-militants-in-kashmir/article8264060.ece>

⁹⁶ “Militant Killed in South Garo Hills”, *The Assam Tribune*, February 15, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=feb1516/oth053>

⁹⁷ “Four Militants Gunned Down Along Assam-Arunachal Border”, *Business Standard*, February 16, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/four-militants-gunned-down-along-assam-arunachal-border-116021600315_1.html

government in the state. The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recommended to the President to revoke central rule imposed in the state on January 26.⁹⁸

Left-wing Extremism

(February 15-21, 2016)

- **Eight Naxals arrested in Sukma; Jharkhand: Four Naxals killed in encounter with Police; Suspected Naxal gunned down in Chhattisgarh.**

Eight suspected Naxals were arrested from Tokanpalli village of Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Sukma district on February 15, police said. "The cadres were nabbed from their native village under the Chintagufa police station limits," Sukma Additional Superintendent of Police Santosh Singh said. Of the eight, Madvi Sitaram, 24, Madkam Bheema, 25, Muchaki Kosa, 33, Sodhi Dewa, 30, and Madvi Nanda, 32, were allegedly involved in an improvised explosive device blast in August 2014 near Gadgadmeta village in Chintagufa region in which a jawan was injured, Mr Singh said. Besides, the other three were allegedly involved in some local incidents of violence, the ASP added.⁹⁹

Four Naxals, including a woman ultra, were killed in an encounter with security forces at Ghagrabeda village on Ranchi-Jamshedpur National Highway 33 on February 18, Superintendent of Police (Rural), Raj Kumar Lakra said on February 19. Acting on a tip-off about the movement of a group of Naxals who had assembled in the jungle, security personnel comprising district armed police and CRPF rushed to the spot, Lakra said. The rebels opened fire on them and the security personnel retaliated killing four Naxals including a woman, he said, adding that the bodies have been recovered and two SLRs and two 303 rifles were recovered.¹⁰⁰

A suspected Naxal was gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Kondagaon district on February 19, police said. The skirmish occurred in the forests of Heeramandal under Kondagaon police station limits between a team of District Reserve Group (DRG) and rebels, Inspector General of Police Bastar Range SRP Kalluri told *PTI*. The slain Maoist was identified as Baldev alias Janesh, who was active as member of military company number 6 of Maoists, he said, adding the rebel had earlier served as a member of Mandgao Local Organisation Squad. Two muzzle loading guns and commodities of daily use were also recovered from the spot, the IG added.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ "Cabinet Recommends Revocation of President's Rule in Arunachal", *Deccan Chronicle*, February 17, 2016 at <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/politics/170216/union-cabinet-recommends-revocation-of-president-s-rule-in-arunachal.html>

⁹⁹ "Eight Naxals Held in Chhattisgarh", *The Hindu*, February 16, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/business/eight-naxals-held-in-chhattisgarh/article8243121.ece>

¹⁰⁰ "4 Naxals Killed in Encounter with Police in Jharkhand", *The Times of India*, February 19, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/4-naxals-killed-in-encounter-with-police-in-Jharkhand/articleshow/51053924.cms>

¹⁰¹ "Naxal Gunned Down in Encounter with Police", *Business Standard*, February 19, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/naxal-gunned-down-in-encounter-with-police-116021900205_1.html