

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Infighting among Taliban leaders in Herat province; China Expanded Military Aid to Afghanistan; India pledges \$20.4 million in fresh development aid to Afghanistan; drugs more dangerous than terrorism in Afghanistan; construction of railway from Chabahar to Herat talks underway.**

At least 26 Taliban militants were killed in the latest infighting among two top Taliban leaders in western Herat province of Afghanistan. According to the local security officials, clashes between the two top Taliban leaders, Mullah Samad and Mullah Nangialai, broke out on Monday afternoon in Shindand district. A local security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said at least 15 militants belonging to Mullah Nangialai and 11 militants belonging to Mullah Samad were killed. The official further added that the deadly infighting erupted due to differences on group's leadership. This comes as over 50 Taliban insurgents were and as much others sustained injuries during a deadly infighting among the supporters of Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansoor and dissident Taliban leader MULLAH Rasool early in the month of December last year. The Taliban factions are occasionally engaging in deadly infighting, mainly due to differences over the group's leadership, which changed following the death of the group's founder Mullah Mohammad Omar. Mullah Mansoor assumed charge of the Taliban group in July last year following the announcement of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar's death.¹

China has offered the Afghanistan army expanded military aid to combat the Taliban, according to the Afghan Defence Ministry, a move that reflects Beijing's readiness to deepen its engagement with the war-torn country, *The Wall Street Journal* reports. The offer was made during a rare, high-level visit at the end of February by a Chinese military delegation headed by General Fang Fenghui, chief of the Joint Staff Department of the People's Liberation Army, Afghan officials said. China has been wary of publicly supporting the Afghan military against the Taliban, as it nurtures relations with the militant group in an effort to be seen as a neutral party in the conflict and help the peace process. However, deteriorating security and the emergence of Islamic State has prompted China to take a more active role in Afghanistan. The timing of General Fang's recent trip was seen as a strong show of support for the Afghan government at a time when it is losing control over parts of the country following the withdrawal of most foreign troops in 2014. The Taliban now control nearly a third of the country, according to U.S. and allied officials. "A commission has been assigned to make the wish list," Mohammad Radmanish, the defence minister's deputy spokesman, told *The Wall Street Journal*. The list might include light weapons, aircraft parts and uniforms, he said. China's total

¹ "Infighting Among Taliban Leaders Leave 26 Dead in Herat Province", *Khaama Press*, March 8, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/infighting-among-taliban-leaders-leave-26-dead-in-herat-province-0280>

military aid offered to Afghanistan, including the latest one, amounts to just over \$70 million and was originally promised on the side-lines of a conference in Russia last year.²

The government of India and Afghanistan signed 12 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on March 9 as India pledged \$20.4 million in fresh development aid to Afghanistan. The MoUs were signed by the Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Manpreet Vohra and a number of the Afghan cabinet ministers, in the presence of Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. Welcoming India's comprehensive support in different sectors in the country, CEO Abdullah said India remains a strategic and committed friend of Afghanistan, implementing major development projects in the country, noting the construction of the new parliament building. CEO Abdullah called on the relevant ministries to properly allocate the funds, considering transparency, efficiency and balance in the performance of their work. Meanwhile, the Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr. Manpreet Vohra, said India has invested over \$2 billion in various sectors in Afghanistan since 2001, emphasizing on friendly relations between the two nations. He said the government of India is hopeful that the funds are spent in a transparent and precise way so that it can bring changes in the lives of the Afghan people in different sectors.³

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime officials say narcotics finance the war machines used in Afghanistan and the region. They told a two-day seminar the UNODC organized in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan that drug smugglers and mafia earned \$68 billion annually from narcotics produced in Afghanistan. Hashim Wehdatyar, UNODC spokesman based in Kabul, told Pajhwok Afghan News on the side-lines of the conference that they conduct surveys and research aimed at investigating cultivation, trade and smuggling of narcotics in Afghanistan. He said bulk of the \$68 billion income (\$65 billion) from drugs went to international drug mafia gangs and Afghan growers and smugglers only pocketed about \$3 billion. "A major part of the money (\$3 billion) ends up in hands of insurgents and criminals who finance their activities with the drug money." He said diseases and incidents linked to drugs consumption claimed 200,000 lives each year while terrorist attacks killed 32,000 people in the same period, calling drugs more dangerous for humans than terrorism. But despite this, he said, terrorism had been preferred over drugs.⁴

Negotiations are underway between the Afghan, Iranian and Indian officials for the construction of railway from the strategic Chabahar port to the western Herat province of Afghanistan. According to the officials in the Ministry of Public Works of Afghanistan, the government of India is mulling the support the construction of the railway from Chabahar to Herat. The officials further added that the railway will help Afghanistan connect with the Chabahar port, a move that has been welcomed by the officials in Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI). Chabahar transit corridor is defined as ambitious for India as the port will facilitate direct access to Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan besides providing investment opportunities for the Afghan businessmen and being a critical alternative trade route for Afghanistan. Afghanistan is expected to have sea-land access through the strategic Chabahar port in Iran by the end of next year as the work on the port has already begun by a joint venture of Kandla Port Trust (KPT) and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). The port will enable access to Afghanistan through Garland highway using the existing

² "China Offers Afghanistan Army Expanded Military Aid", *Khaama Press*, March 9, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/china-offers-afghanistan-army-expanded-military-aid-4724>

³ "India Pledges \$20.4 Million in Fresh Development Aid To Afghanistan", *Khaama Press*, March 9, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/india-pledges-20-4-million-in-fresh-development-aid-to-afghanistan-0294>

⁴ "Afghan Drugs More Dangerous Than Terrorism: UNODC", *Pajhwok*, March 12, 2016, at <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/03/12/afghan-drugs-more-dangerous-terrorism-unodc>

Iranian road network and the Zaranj-Delaram road, constructed by India in 2009. As a result a direct road access will be established to four of the major cities of Afghanistan – Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Mazar-e-Sharif.⁵

Pakistan

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **US notifies sale of eight F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan; Need to consolidate military gains for long-term stability.**

The United States has formally notified the intended sale of eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan, officials said March 6. Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said that the notification is part of internal process of the US government, Radio Pakistan reported. He said the process entails Congress response in 30 days. The spokesperson said F-16s are meant for enhancing Pakistan's precision strike capability in fight against terrorism. He said terrorism is a global challenge facing all the countries and Pakistan and the United States are cooperating in this regard. Earlier, the US government formally published federal notification for the sale of eight F16 fighter jets to Pakistan, thus glossing over concerns by India and some lawmakers in the Washington. "This proposed sale contributes to US goals by helping to improve the security of a strategic partner in South Asia," said the notification, which was published along with a copy of the February 11 letter the Defence Security Cooperation Agency wrote to the House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan. "The proposed sale improves Pakistan's capability to meet current and future security threats from terrorists." The Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees foreign arms sales, said it had notified lawmakers about the possible deal. The agency said the F-16s would allow Pakistan's Air Force to operate in all-weather environments and at night while improving its self-defence capability and bolstering its ability to conduct counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. Lawmakers have 30 days to block the sale, although such action is rare since deals are well-vetted before any formal notification.⁶

Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif emphasised on March 14 said that as the military moves towards conclusion of large-scale kinetic operations in FATA, there is a need to look ahead and consolidate gains for long term. According to a Tweet of ISPR Director General Lt Gen Asim Bajwa, addressing the Corps Commanders Conference at General Headquarters, General Raheel stressed increasing the pace of intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across the country to eliminate the entire infrastructure of terrorism. He directed more effective border management and continued proactive dominance of the cleared areas to maintain the writ of state in FATA. The temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) return must complete as per laid down time-line, he added. Gen Raheel said operation Zarb-e-Azb is in its last stages and attention should now be paid towards rehabilitation. "Terrorists network should be removed from all over the country. Intelligence operations should be expedited against terrorists," he added.⁷

⁵ "Talks Underway for the Construction of Railway from Chabahar To Herat", *Khaama Press*, March 15, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/talks-underway-for-the-construction-of-railway-from-chabahar-to-herat-0331>

⁶ "US Notifies Sale of Eight F-16 Fighter Aircraft To Pakistan", *Daily Times*, March 7, 2016, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/07-Mar-2016/us-notifies-sale-of-eight-f-16-fighter-aircraft-to-pakistan>

⁷ "Need To Consolidate Military Gains For Long-Term Stability, Says COAS", *Daily Times*, March 15, 2016, at <http://dailytimes.com.pk/e-paper/2016-03-15/lahore/2728/5402>

Bangladesh

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **BGB-BSF joint exercise begins in Sundarbans; Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir visits Bangladesh; Deal for \$2billion Indian credit line signed; UK bars direct air cargo from Dhaka; Dhaka opens mission in Addis Ababa.**

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will conduct a three-day joint exercise along the international border in the Sundarbans area on March 12, 2016. Officials said a company-level (about 100 personnel) strength of the BSF and the BGB each along with their equipment, floating border posts and patrol boats will take part in the exercise, which will end on March 14. The two forces will undertake joint “long range” patrolling on mechanised vessels, mutual checking of cargo vessels deep inside border areas before they go in international waters, and exchange common information and communication. A decision to hold such an exercise was made during the director general-level talks between the two sides in Dhaka in December 2014.⁸

During a meeting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir in Dhaka on March 8, 2016, it was made clear that Bangladesh would not participate in any military operation in any part of the world if not mandated by the UNSC. Hasina, however, gave a positive response regarding extending support to the Arab country in countering terrorism and religious extremism. She welcomed the Saudi initiative to form a 34-nation coalition of like-minded Islamic countries to fight terrorism but at the same time cited the government's policy that requires UN approval for its participation in any military operation of the alliance. The Saudi foreign minister paid the visit to Dhaka reportedly to know how Bangladesh could militarily assist the Middle Eastern country. At the meeting, Hasina told the Saudi minister that her country joined the Saudi-led Islamic Alliance (Dhaka calls it “Counter-Terrorism Centre”) along with other Muslim countries as per its “zero tolerance” policy to fight terrorism and extremist ideology. The Saudi minister did not directly seek military support from Bangladesh, but he expressed the hope that the government would come forward if Saudi Arabia and the custodian of the two holy mosques there were threatened. The PM in response assured him of Bangladesh's strong support if any such situation arises. During the meeting, Prime Minister Hasina and the Saudi foreign minister agreed to deepen the bilateral cooperation in all fields, including defence, security, fight against terrorism, trade and investment and manpower, according to highly placed sources.⁹

Bangladesh signed an agreement with the Exim Bank of India for \$2 billion in low-cost loans for more than a dozen social and development projects on March 9, 2016. The funds will be used for 14 projects in railway, road transport, power, education, vocational training, health, ICT, shipping, and economic zones. The credit carries one per cent interest rate with a repayment period of 20 years and a grace period of five years.¹⁰

The UK has banned air cargo directly from Dhaka until further notice as Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport failed to meet some international security requirements. Only the Biman

⁸ “BGB-BSF Joint Exercise Starts Today in Sundarbans”, *The Daily Star*, March 12, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bgb-bsf-joint-exercise-starts-today-sundarbans-790063>.

⁹ Karim, Rezaul, “Saudi Arabia: Dhaka To Consider It Only If UN Approves”, *The Daily Star*, March 11, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/dhaka-consider-it-only-if-un-approves-789655>.

¹⁰ “Deal for \$2b Indian Credit Line Signed”, *The Daily Star*, March 10, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/deal-2b-indian-credit-line-signed-789118>.

Bangladesh Airlines carries cargo directly to the UK in its four weekly passenger flights but it now would not be able to do so due to the ban, according to officials of the national flag carrier. An average of 25 tonnes of cargo -- mostly apparels, vegetables and agricultural products -- is flown to the UK in each flight. "The ban will have a disastrous impact on our exports as the UK is a very big market of the EU. The UK is the second biggest garment export destination for Bangladesh after Germany," said Siddiqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. A web post on the UK government's website on March 8 says, "As part of a set of interim measures, cargo will not be allowed on direct flights from Dhaka to the UK until further notice." Earlier on December 19, 2015, Australia banned air cargo from Bangladesh, citing security concerns.¹¹

Bangladesh has opened its resident Mission in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, on March 1 to usher newer avenues for trade and commerce, and social development. Hanif Khan, the chargé d'affaires will be conducting the day-to-day business while Ambassador-Designate to Ethiopia M. Monirul Islam is expected to join by March 15, said a foreign ministry press release.¹²

Sri Lanka

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Sri Lanka to get \$1.5 billion IMF loan; Ministerial delegation heads to China to boost ties; Resolution on Constitutional Assembly passed by Parliament; Canada and Sri Lanka discuss cooperation between MPs; Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera visit to the Republic of Korea.**

Sri Lanka will receive a loan of one and a half billion US dollars from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to boost foreign exchange reserves and avert a balance of payments problem, a Government minister said on March 7, 2016. The government was originally looking for a loan of \$2 billion from the global lender, said junior finance minister Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena. "But now we will get about \$1.5 billion in a number of disbursements," Abeywardena told Reuters. "This is to boost foreign exchange reserves." The loan conditions, such as revising taxes to increase the government revenue, have yet to be finalised, however, he added.¹³

A Ministerial delegation from Sri Lanka headed by State Minister of National Policy and Economic Development Niroshan Perera left for China to boost ties between both countries, Sri Lanka's National Policy and Economic Development Ministry said on March 9, 2016. The Ministry said that the delegation was heading to China on the instructions of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and on an invitation from the Chinese Government.¹⁴

¹¹ Islam, Shariful, "UK Bars Direct Air Cargo from Dhaka", *The Daily Star*, March 10, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/uk-suspends-cargo-flights-dhaka-788935>.

¹² "Dhaka Opens Mission in Addis Ababa", *The Daily Star*, March 8, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/dhaka-opens-mission-addis-ababa-787957>.

¹³ "Sri Lanka To Get \$1.5 Billion IMF Loan To Avert Balance of Payments Woes", *Colombo Gazette*, March 7, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/03/07/sri-lanka-to-get-1-5-billion-imf-loan-to-avert-balance-of-payments-woes/>.

¹⁴ "Ministerial Delegation Heads to China to Boost Ties", *Colombo Gazette*, March 9, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/03/09/ministerial-delegation-heads-to-china-to-boost-ties/>.

The resolution on the Constitutional Assembly was passed by Parliament on March 9 with amendments and without a vote. Under the resolution, Parliament will be converted into a Constitutional Assembly to draft a new Constitution.¹⁵

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Canada Ahmed Jawad met with Geoff Regan, the Speaker of the House of Commons and discussed opportunities for further developing cooperation between the Sri Lankan and Canadian Members of Parliament (MP), the Sri Lankan High Commission in Canada said. The deeply strained relations between Sri Lanka and Canada were given a fresh start following talks between President Maithripala Sirisena and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Malta last year. Canada's relationship with Sri Lanka under former President Mahinda Rajapaksa declined as a result of human rights concerns in Sri Lanka.¹⁶

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, on an official visit to the Republic of Korea, expressed Sri Lanka's commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations for mutual benefit. Minister Samaraweera's sentiments were reciprocated by Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister was accompanied on the visit by the Minister of Foreign Employment Thalatha Atukorale, demonstrating the importance attached to labour relations with Korea by the Sri Lankan Government. This was the first official visit to Korea by a Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka since the inauguration of the Government in 2015. During bilateral discussions, the two Foreign Ministers underscored the importance of Sri Lanka - Korea relations which are longstanding. They also discussed the further consolidation of bilateral ties, including the exchange of high-level visits, in the context of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations scheduled for 2017. Minister Samaraweera underscored the interest of Sri Lanka to broaden and deepen economic relations with Korea, with particular emphasis on investment and trade.¹⁷

Maldives

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **European Investment Bank grants a loan of US\$ 50 million to Maldivian government.**

European Investment Bank has granted Maldivian government a loan of US\$ 50 million to lower expenditure on oil, and improve quality of electricity provided to citizens of the country. The agreement was signed in a ceremony held at Stelco on March 8, 2016, which was attended by Maldivian Finance Minister Abdulla Jihad, and Loan Officer for European Investment Bank, Dr. Tao Ren. Managing Director of Stelco, Abdul Shukoor and Managing Director of Fenaka Corporation, Mohamed Nimal signed the agreement to run the project. State Environment Minister Abdul Matheen Mohamed said that the loan would be used to carry out renewable energy projects, improve quality of electricity in the atolls, and to link electricity systems in Male' and Hulhumale'. Matheen said that they aimed to have 30 per cent of electricity provided to atolls to run on renewable

¹⁵ "Resolution on Constitutional Assembly passed by Parliament", *Colombo Gazette*, March 9, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/03/09/resolution-on-constitutional-assembly-passed-by-parliament/>.

¹⁶ "Canada and Sri Lanka Discuss Cooperation between MPs", *Colombo Gazette*, March 11, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/03/11/canada-and-sri-lanka-discuss-cooperation-between-mps/>.

¹⁷ "Government Joins Korea in Condemning DPKR Nuclear Test", *Colombo Gazette*, March 13, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/03/13/government-joins-korea-in-condemning-dpkr-nuclear-test/>.

energy within the next three years. And that the loan would also be used to fund the project. The loan has an interest rate of 3.31 per cent and is repayable within 15 years.¹⁸

B. East Asia

China

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **The new SOE reforms call for no massive layoffs; More financial support for Xinjiang; Blue print for the development of Yangtze River belt released; Family Planning Policy not to be relaxed fully; Increased financial support for Tibet; China upset with US remarks over human rights.**

According to Xiao Yaqing, the head of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, “China will not experience another upsurge in layoffs like the one seen in the 1990s during the ongoing reform to revitalize inefficient and overstaffed State-owned enterprises” He made the statement on the side-lines of the annual parliamentary session on March 12.¹⁹

During the annual session of the National People’s Congress, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang asserted increased support to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. He argued that infrastructure development plays a very important role in the national security and local development.²⁰

Three Chinese ministers issued a blue print which is designed for the development of the Yangtze River economic belt on March 9. It is argued that “by the year 2030 the belt will lead the world in innovation and become a major engine to drive the economic transformation and upgrading of the whole country”.²¹

Lin Bin, the head of the Chinese National Health and Family Planning Commission, said that China is not planning to fully change the family planning policy in the foreseeable future. Shee said that, “China's per capita economic output was "considerably low" as was the average living standard. Our resources pale in comparison with our vast population. Until (these) changes, we will continue with the current family planning policy”.²²

On March 7, the Chinese financial authorities asserted that China will be continuing its policy of preferential financial policies towards Tibet. It further added that financial institutions will be

¹⁸ “USD 50 Mn Loan To Lower Expenditure On Oil, Improve Service”, *SunOnline*, March 8, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36616>.

¹⁹ “No Massive Layoffs Expected In Soe Reform: Official” *China Daily*, March 13, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016twosession/2016-03/13/content_23847447.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

²⁰ “Support Pledged for Xinjiang”, By Zhang Yue, *China Daily*, March 11, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016twosession/2016-03/11/content_23820230.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

²¹ “China Issues Blue Print Promoting Development of Yangtze River Economic Belt”, *China Daily*, March 9, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-03/09/content_23802132.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

²² “China Not To Fully Relax Family Planning Policy: Minister”, *China Daily*, March 8, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016twosession/2016-03/08/content_23785916.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

encouraged to open branches in Tibet. Increased support for infrastructure, environmental protection and agriculture was also promised.²³

China expressed its anger with regard to the US criticism of its Human Rights record on March 11. According to Hong Lei, the Foreign Minister Spokesperson, “China expresses firm opposition and will never accept [such criticism]”. He further added that the US should refrain from getting involved in the Chinese internal matters.²⁴

Japan

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **ODA white paper stressed that Japan will now pursue quality and quantity both and expand aid to Asian nations; Japan, Finland strengthens strategic partnership; Defence ministry enhances measures for intelligence and surveillance following North Korea’s ballistic missiles launch; U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon may come to Japan in May for Group 7 summit.**

The latest white paper on ODA stressed that Japan will now pursue quality and quantity together in terms of outcome and that ASEAN nations are very important “from both political and economic perspectives” as they are situated along crucial sea lanes and have robust economic connections with many Japanese firms working in those countries. The white paper also indicated consolidating the rule of law, maritime security, cybersecurity and peace-building measures, among others, as methods of increasing Japanese relations with Southeast Asia. Reports suggest that there is certainly an effort towards a cohesive approach to deal with Chinese influence in the South China Sea and ODA is part of this. In 2015, Japan accepted a fresh ODA development cooperation charter that permits transfer of military equipment if used for non-military drives.²⁵

On March 10, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had a summit meeting with President Sauli Niinistö and issued a joint statement on *Strategic Partnership between Japan and the Republic of Finland as Gateways in Asia and Europe* which established their intents to uphold strategic cooperation in a wide range of areas, including political and security issues, economy, and the Arctic. Furthermore, both sides reiterated their plans to cooperate for an quick conclusion of negotiations related to the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA).²⁶

On March 18, Japanese defence ministry issued a statement saying that North Korea launched two ballistic missiles in an east-northeasterly direction from proximity of Nampo on the west coast of North Korea. The missiles reportedly travelled about 500 km and fell into the Sea of Japan. The

²³ “Chinese Central Government To Continue Financial Support for Tibet”, *China Daily*, March 7, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-03/07/content_23774810.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

²⁴ “China Refutes US-led Criticism on Human Rights Record”, *China Daily*, March 11, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-03/11/content_23832347.htm, accessed on March 14, 2016

²⁵ Mie, Ayako and Johnson, Jesse, “Amid South China Sea Spat, Japan Foreign Aid White Paper Stresses Importance Of Sea Lanes”, *The Japan Times*, March 11, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/11/national/politics-diplomacy/amid-south-china-sea-spat-japan-foreign-aid-white-paper-stresses-importance-sea-lanes/#.VxhszNR961t>

²⁶ “Japan-Finland Summit Meeting”, *MOFA Japan*, March 10, 2016 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/we/fi/page4e_000395.html

Minister of Defence provided instructions to keep employing all probable measures for intelligence and surveillance. The MOD also convened a senior official's meeting chaired by the Minister.²⁷

Reports suggest that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expected to come to Japan in May as Group 7 summit debates on issues of international concern.²⁸ On March 27, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs is co-hosting the Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons OB/OG Hiroshima Forum with Hiroshima Prefecture and Hiroshima City at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as a pre-event for the G7 Hiroshima Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The objective is to share the knowledge of atomic bomb survivors across generations in the middle of the steady aging of survivors. There are 100 Youth Communicator members.²⁹

C. Southeast Asia & Oceania

Southeast Asia

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network Forum in Vietnam; ASEAN-New Zealand Dialogue Held in Indonesia; Australia-Cambodia Refugee Deal under Criticism; Myanmar's Political Theatre Changing; Thaksin Shinawatra on Thai Politics; India hosted EXERCISE Force 18; India Giving Importance on LPAI.**

The 2nd ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN) Forum was conducted in Ha Noi, Vietnam on March 5 where over 500 small and medium-size enterprises owners (all women entrepreneurs) from ten ASEAN Member States participated. The objectives of the forum were to share experiences and exchange views on strategies to nurture women entrepreneurs. Several enterprises and business associations from within and outside ASEAN shared their business models for women's participation in financial sector, corporate social responsibility, and economic empowerment of women. Coca Cola, Women in International Trade Los Angeles, IMEX Pan Pacific, GREAT Women Philippines, Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Indonesia, TH Group, and many more business houses marked their participation in the event. H.E. Nguyen Thi Doan, Vice State President of Viet Nam and ASEAN Secretary General H.E. Le Luong Minh awarded six extraordinary women entrepreneurs. The AWEN was established by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women to serve as a platform for ASEAN women entrepreneurs to escalate their business management and skills as well as improve their access to financial institutions, market and business opportunities. Initiated in April 2014, the AWEN is right now coordinated by the Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs' Council for the initial two years.³⁰

ASEAN and New Zealand Senior Officials met for the 23rd ASEAN-New Zealand Dialogue organised in Bali, Indonesia where they confirmed to explore prospects to further reinforce

²⁷ "North Korea's Missile Launch, Ministry of Defence", March 18, 2016 at <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/pressrele/2016/160318.html>

²⁸ "U.N. Chief May Visit Japan For G-7 Summit-Related Talks in May", *Kyodo*, MAR 12, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/12/national/politics-diplomacy/u-n-chief-may-visit-japan-g-7-summit-related-talks-may/#.VxhsNNR961t>

²⁹ Press Conference by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, March 8, 2016, 8:18 am Front Entrance Hall, Prime Minister's Office, MOFA Japan, March 8, 2016 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken4e_000245.html#topic1

³⁰ "ASEAN to Foster Women Entrepreneurs in Advancing the AEC Development", *ASEAN.org*, March 5, 2016, at <http://www.asean.org/asean-to-foster-women-entrepreneurs-in-advancing-the-aec-development/>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

cooperation for mutual benefit. New Zealand was acknowledged as a strategic partner of ASEAN at the ASEAN-New Zealand Summit held in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur where they also commemorated the 40th Anniversary of the relationship. Both New Zealand and ASEAN agreed that their relations are now considerable and multi-faceted. The ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and cooperation in sectors like defence and security, disaster risk management, connectivity, maritime cooperation and non-traditional security areas have deeper influence on ASEAN and New Zealand relations. New Zealand is involved in regional mechanisms like East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus. It conveyed strong support for 'ASEAN Centrality' in the regional architecture. In the Dialogue, both sides discussed regional and international issues which included recent developments in the South China Sea, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, trafficking in persons, cyber-crime etc. Both sides spoke about peaceful resolution of disputes, respect for legal and diplomatic processes and maintenance of International Law such as the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Brook Barrington, Chief Executive and Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand co-chaired the meeting.³¹

According to local news agencies, a married Iranian couple, who were amongst the five to be resettled in Cambodia under a refugee deal signed between Cambodia and Australia, has already left the country for their home in Iran. The Australia-Cambodia refugee deal was signed in 2014 and through this accord Australia has to pay \$55 million to Cambodia for resettlement of refugees who had earlier fled to Australia from different parts of the world to avoid persecution. With the recent development, the refugee deal is facing another fresh wave of difficulties as very few of the refugees were ready to leave Australia for resettlement in Cambodia. Most of those refugees are originally from Myanmar and Iran and according to media reports; they are ready to return to their home countries despite existing fear of persecution than resettling in Cambodia. The Australian authority is discussing the possibilities of third-country resettlement with other Asia-Pacific nations as well. Elaine Pearson, Australian Director for Human Rights Watch mentioned,

“Cambodia’s track record of poorly integrating refugees over the last five years was well-known, but the Australian government refused to listen and thought it could throw money at the problem to fix it. Now the cost of this human experiment is not only a wasted \$55 million, but it’s also placing recognised refugees in the perilous position of returning to home countries where they faced persecution.”³²

After National League for Democracy’s landslide victory in the November 2015 election, Myanmar is all set to select its new president. Under the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD’s founder leader and chairperson cannot be the country’s president as both of her sons have British citizenship. Under the current rule, the lower and upper houses of the parliament will select two candidates and the military will name another candidate. In the final vote, where both the houses will participate, the winner will be declared the next president of the country and the second and third nominees will be the two vice-presidents. NLD has chosen Htin Kyaw as their

³¹ “ASEAN, New Zealand To Enhance Cooperation”, *ASEAN.org*, March 4, 2016, at <http://www.asean.org/asean-new-zealand-to-enhance-cooperation/>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

³² Doherty, Ben, “More Refugees Leave Cambodia, Further Straining \$55m Deal with Australia”, *The Guardian*, March 8, 2016, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/08/more-refugees-leave-cambodia-further-straining-55m-deal-with-australia>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

presidential candidate and he is most likely to win the race in a parliament where his party has a majority now.³³

Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra appeared in New York after several years of unknown and lesser known whereabouts and gave a detailed interview where he spoke about the Thai *junta* and its rule. He mentioned that he may stay out of Thailand as the *Junta* has revoked his Thai passport and with his Montenegro passport, he can travel to any country except Thailand. During his tenure in government, Thaksin was accused by his opponents of corruption. However, Thaksin termed his family's wealth as modest and estimated it at about US\$1 billion.³⁴

Indian Army, along with the 300 foreign participants and observers from ASEAN Plus countries participated in the "Exercise Force 18", the largest ground forces operation ever conducted on Indian soil at Aundh Military Station from March 2 to March 8. Terming the exercise as a 'watershed event', Indian Army Chief General Dalbir Singh noted, "It has showcased perfect harmony among the ASEAN Plus Nations in the field of humanitarian mine action and peacekeeping operations." He further said, "The menace of landmines haunts many of our South East countries. This in turn has adversely affected the security and economic development of the region." He also appreciated ASEAN members like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam for making significant progress towards the disposal of explosives remnants of war (ERW). He mentioned that these initiatives have been strongly supported by the international community. He also specifically mentioned about the 6th Expert Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action which has contributed towards bringing "synergy" among the ASEAN Plus Nations. Besides ASEAN and India, countries like China, US, Russia and Australia participated in the exercise.³⁵

While addressing the 4th foundation day of the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), Union Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "Intra-regional trade and prosperity are directly linked. There is a need to explore new trade routes to ensure more productive contacts with our neighbours, especially in the north-east, where all the states share their borders with neighbouring countries." At the occasion, he spoke about the 'Bharat Mala' project, which aims at connecting India's borders and its coastal peripheries with each other through highways. LPAI came into reality on March 1, 2012. It was established under Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010 and works as a statutory entity under the administrative control of the Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs. Much in the fashion of the Airports Authority of India, LPAI is directed to deliver better administration and management at border crossings on India's land borders. It is also authorised to construct, manage and maintain Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) on the land borders of India. In the process, it coordinates with several ministries, departments and agencies concerned for regulating the entry and exit of passengers and goods at the borders.³⁶

³³ Fisher, Jonah, "Myanmar Begins Presidential Selection As Aung San Suu Kyi Ruled Out", *BBC News*, March 10, 2016, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35770535>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

³⁴ Loh, Sebastian, "Thaksin Says He Will 'Never' Give up on Thailand, But Is Prepared To 'Stay Out'", *Asian Correspondent*, March 10, 2016, at <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2016/03/thaksin-says-he-will-never-give-up-on-thailand-but-is-prepared-to-stay-out/>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

³⁵ "ASEAN Plus Military Exercise "Watershed Event": Dalbir Singh, Army Chief", *The Economic Times*, March 8, 2016, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/asean-plus-military-exercise-watershed-event-dalbir-singh-army-chief/article>, accessed on April 18, 2016.

³⁶ "India To Make Efforts To Boost Land Border Trade: Kiren Rijiju", *The Economic Times*, March 8, 2016, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-03-08/news/71309649_1_lpai-border-management-international-border, accessed on March 18, 2016.

D. West Asia

Iran

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Zarif: Certain Muslim states rapprochement with Israel is shameful; India working towards undersea Iran gas plan.**

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told a conference of Muslim states that Iran will continue its policy of supporting Palestinians, noting that it is “shameful” that certain Muslim states are seeking to approach Israel. Officials from 57 countries met in the Indonesian capital for a special summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that focused on Palestine and al-Quds (Jerusalem). The Middle East quartet – consisting of the UN, Russia, U.S. and European Union – and permanent members of the UN Security Council are also represented in the summit. Pressure exerted against Iran during the past decades was a result of support for the Palestinian cause, however Iran will continue this policy, he reiterated in his speech to the participants. He said that the Zionist regime of Israel has violated the most important principles of international law in occupied lands. The chief diplomat slammed the UN Security Council for not taking any action in this respect.³⁷

Three major Indian gas buyers will be visiting Iran early next month to discuss a long-proposed undersea pipeline which New Delhi sees as an alternative to a similar project via Pakistan, a press report said. Executives of Gail and Indian Oil Ltd (IOL) will meet Iranian officials to discuss the price of gas to be used in the pipeline which has to pass through the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea, *The Economic Times* reported. The proposed pipeline estimated to cost \$4.5 billion would bypass Pakistan and transport up to 31 million cubic meters of gas per day, the New Delhi-based daily said. *The Economic Times*, citing persons familiar with the project, said India might also use the 1,400 km-pipeline to import gas from Turkmenistan. Under the plan, gas from the Central Asian country would be transferred to Iran which would deliver the same amount to India under a swap deal, it added. The paper said Oman might join the pipeline at a later stage, making it a trilateral initiative given its geopolitical proximity both to both India and Iran. Iran and Oman have already signed a deal worth \$60 billion to build an undersea pipeline to ship 20 million cubic meters per day of gas to the sultanate for a period of 25 years.³⁸

Iraq and Syria

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Russia offers help to Iraq in the case of Mosul Dam; Masum arrives in Cairo on official visit to meet Egyptian President; Russia Doing Europe Favour by Fighting Terrorist Organizations in Syria; Syrian-Iranian talks discuss broadening trade cooperation basis.**

³⁷ “Zarif: Certain Muslim States Rapprochement with Israel Is Shameful”, *Tehran Times*, March 9, 2016 at <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/300150/Zarif-Certain-Muslim-states-rapprochement-with-Israel-is-shameful>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

³⁸ “India Working Towards Undersea Iran Gas Plan”, *Iran Daily*, February 29, 2016 at <http://www.iran-daily.com/News/137567.html>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

The Deputy Speaker of Parliament Humam Hamoudi called Russia to boost military and intelligence cooperation between Baghdad and Moscow, stressing the need for joint coordination between all the nations of the world in the exchange of intelligence information in order to eliminate the so-called ISIS, while the Russian ambassador to Iraq Elijah Murgunov expressed his country's readiness to help in the case of Mosul Dam. Hamoudi's media office said in a press statement followed by *IraqiNews.com*: "During the meeting with the Russian ambassador to Iraq (Elijah Murgunov), Hamoudi has called Russia to boost military and intelligence cooperation, while also admired Russia's role in providing weapons and confronting terrorism," adding that, "Hamoudi stressed the necessity of joint coordination between all the countries in the region and the world in the field of intelligence that accelerate the elimination of ISIS."³⁹

The Iraqi President Fouad Masum arrived in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, on an official visit that will last for three days. Masum was received by his Egyptian counterpart the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi at the presidential palace. The Presidential information office said in a statement obtained by *IraqiNews.com*, [sic] "Today the Iraqi President Fouad Masum arrived in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, along with a delegation including the Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Agriculture Minister Falah Hassan Zaidan, National Security Adviser Faleh al-Fayad, in addition to a number of Iraqi officials."⁴⁰

Russia is doing Europe a favour by fighting terrorist organizations in Syria, because this terrorism poses serious threat to all, particularly Europe, the Presidential Political and Media Advisor Bouthaina Shaaban has underlined. Interviewed by BBC, Shaaban said the Russia air force have targeted and destroyed the terrorists' oil tankers convoys, while the so-called US-led Coalition never targeted any of the tankers which cross Syria carrying stolen Syrian oil into Turkey and then to Europe." She added that history will write down that the Russian government has exerted great effort in the anti-terror war not to serve peace in Syria only, but to serve peace in Europe and the entire world.⁴¹

Prime Minister Wael al-Halaqi discussed with the Iranian Assistant Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Farhad Zargar the mechanisms needed to activate agreements signed between the two countries. The prospects of signing new agreements to further broaden the basis of trade cooperation and exchanged investments, especially in the fields of agriculture, communications, transportation and oil, were also discussed, SANA reported. Al-Halaqi clarified that the growing economic, trade and development relations between Syria and Iran have contributed to reducing the bad effects of the economic blockade imposed on the Syrian people and the global terrorism war waged against them since 2011. The Premier said the Iranian economic and trade delegation's visit to Syria is important to the effect of discussing new chances and prospects to enhance cooperation. For his part, Zargar expressed his country's keenness to continue providing support to meet the needs of the Syrian people to help them more firmly stand their ground. He referred to the possibility of reaching a technical and practical framework to develop the standing agreements and

³⁹ "Russia Offers Help To Iraq In The Case of Mosul Dam", *Iraqi News*, March 8, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/russia-offers-help-iraq-case-mosul-dam/>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

⁴⁰ "Masum Arrives in Cairo on Official Visit to Meet Egyptian President", *Iraqi News*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/masum-arrives-cairo-head-delegation-included-al-jaafari-fayad/>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

⁴¹ "Russia Doing Europe Favor by Fighting Terrorist Organizations in Syria", *Syria News*, March 12, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22718-russia-doing-europe-favor-by-fighting-terrorist-organizations-in-syria>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

sign new ones. Syria and Iran signed in May 2015 a number of agreements in the fields of investment, health, electricity and industry, while others were previously signed in March of the same year covering the areas of energy, industry, agriculture and joint investments.⁴²

Israel and Palestine

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Israelis prefer Hillary for president, survey finds; Hamas Delegation Leaves Gaza to Egypt for Talks.**

Israelis favour Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton to succeed US President Barack Obama, but narrowly say Israel's interests would be better served if controversial Republican candidate Donald Trump was to be voted in as the next commander-in-chief, according to a new poll. The survey, commissioned by the Walla news site found 38 percent of Israelis supporting a Clinton victory in the November 2016 race for president, followed in second place by Trump with 23 per cent. Runner-up candidates Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio trailed far behind with 7 per cent, 5 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively. Republican contender John Kasich was not among the names polled. Nearly one-quarter of respondents, or 23 per cent, said they did not know who they preferred.⁴³

A high-profile Hamas delegation left the Gaza Strip to Cairo, where they plan to meet with Egyptian officials, Gaza security sources said. Sources who preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons told Ma'an that the delegation included senior Hamas leaders Mahmoud al-Zahar, Imad al-Alami, and Khalil al-Hayyah. They will be joined by exiled Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouq who reportedly arrived in Cairo following an invitation from Egyptian general intelligence. The invitation came after Hamas denied Egyptian accusations of involvement in the murder of Egyptian Attorney-General Hisham Barakat. The Hamas officials will submit reports in defence against the Egyptian minister of interior's accusation concerning the June 2015 car bombing that killed Barakat. Hamas has suffered poor relations with the Egyptian government ever since the democratically-elected Muslim Brotherhood, with whom they were closely allied, was thrown out of power in Egypt in July 2013. The Egyptian government has in the past accused Hamas of assisting the insurgency that has spread throughout the Sinai Peninsula, although Hamas strongly denies the allegations.⁴⁴

The Gulf

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **GCC ministers reject Iranian interference.**

The fifth joint ministerial meeting of the foreign ministers of the GCC member states, Jordan and Morocco concluded in Riyadh. The ministers emphasised the importance of reaching a political solution in Yemen, based on the GCC initiatives, the outcome of the comprehensive national

⁴² "Syrian-Iranian Talks Discuss Broadening Trade Cooperation Basis", *Syria News*, March 9, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22679-syrian-iranian-talks-discuss-broadening-trade-cooperation-basis>

⁴³ "Israelis Prefer Hillary for President, Survey Finds", *The Times of Israel*, March 11, 2016 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israelis-prefer-hillary-for-president-study-finds/>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

⁴⁴ "Hamas Delegation Leaves Gaza to Egypt for Talks", *Palestine Chronicles*, March 12, 2016 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/hamas-delegation-leaves-gaza-to-egypt-for-talks/>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

dialogue and Riyadh Conference, and the unconditional implementation of the Security Council's resolutions. They also renewed their countries' commitment to continue the efforts to alleviate the plight of the Syrian people, calling on the international community to shoulder and share responsibilities of supporting refugees and ensuring their return as also of the displaced Syrians to their homes. Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, headed the UAE delegation to the meeting. The ministers issued a final communique in which they expressed satisfaction regarding the ongoing joint work and achieve a strategic partnership in accordance with the work plans adopted at the previous meetings of the foreign ministers of the GCC member states, Jordan and Morocco.⁴⁵

India-West Asia

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **India reiterates support for Syria in fighting terrorism; Saudi Aramco mulls Indian refinery in plan to boost Asia footprint.**

India's Minister of Minority Affairs Najma Heptulla has stressed India's support for Syria in the confrontation of Terrorism. Heptulla, who made the remarks during her meeting with Syria's Mufti Badreddin Hassoun, said "fighting terrorism everywhere is an urgent need." She added that the forthcoming intra-Syrian dialogue in Geneva will hopefully come up with some results that would restore security and stability to Syria and preserve the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On his part, Hassoun hailed India's support for Syria in the face of terrorism and highly appreciated the Indian government's stress on attaining political solution to crisis in Syria and on not interfering in the Syrian internal affairs. Syria's Mufti is visiting India at the invitation of "The Art of Living" international institution to take part in the 3rd World Culture Festival that concluded and in which delegations from 150 countries participated. In a speech at one of the festival's activities, Hassoun stressed that the Syrian people love life and peace and reject wars. They seek disseminating a message of amity and peace in the world, he said. Hassoun also called for fighting the division policy adopted by the western countries to divide other countries as to weaken them and dominate their resources. The Mufti hailed India's old civilization and its current technological and economic development.⁴⁶

The world's largest crude exporter plans to invest in Asian refineries to ensure it has plenty of buyers in the fastest-growing region for fuel demand. Saudi Arabian Oil Co. is adding India to the list of Asian countries where it plans to build new refineries as part of a plan to almost double its global refining capacity, Chief Executive Officer Amin Nasser told Bloomberg in Jubail, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Aramco, as the company is known, is also considering plants in China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. The Dhahran, Saudi Arabia-based company is considering expanding its refining capacity to find new outlets for Saudi crude oil, Nasser said in a speech during a Saudi refining conference in Jubail. The company already owns a stake in a refinery in China's Fujian province along with Exxon Mobil Corp. and China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. It's still in talks with another partner, China National Petroleum Corp., to build a new joint-venture refinery. "Talks

⁴⁵ "GCC Ministers Reject Iranian Interference", *Gulf News*, March 9, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/gcc-ministers-reject-iranian-interference-1.1687391>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

⁴⁶ "India Reiterates Support for Syria in Fighting Terrorism", *Syria News*, March, 13, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/22746-india-reiterates-support-for-syria-in-fighting-terrorism>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

are good and ongoing,” he said. Aramco has a refining capacity of around 5.4 million barrels a day now, and it will almost double that to between 8 million and 10 million, he said, without specifying a time frame for the expansion. Saudi Arabia produced 10.2 million barrels of oil a day in February, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.⁴⁷

E. The United State of America

National

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **PPB, process covers not only today’s wars, but planning for the future; Defence Department will deploy Windows 10 department wide; U.S. military authorized to begin integrating women across all occupations; U.S. military aims to counter threats presented by potential adversaries Russia and China; Critical to modernize the nuclear deterrent capabilities that underpin national security.**

The DoD comptroller said at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies on March 7 that the Defence Department’s planning, programming and budgeting, or PPB, process covers not only today’s wars, but planning for the future, and it’s a daunting task. Mike McCord, as the department’s chief financial officer, detailed how strategy turns into financial decisions during an event that examined the PPB process. Defence Secretary Ash Carter gave budgeteers clear guidance on what to plan for in the fiscal year 2017 defence budget request -- Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and terrorism. McCord said, “It’s not acceptable to say I can only afford to do three or four of these. We have to be able to do them all”.⁴⁸

According to a February 26 memo by Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work, the Defence Department will deploy Windows 10 department wide by January to strengthen cybersecurity and streamline the information technology operating environment. Work addressed the memo to secretaries of the military departments, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defence undersecretaries, defence agency directors, DoD field activity directors and other senior leaders. “This decision,” he added, “is based on the need to strengthen our cybersecurity posture while concurrently streamlining the IT operating environment.” The secure host baseline approach to the transition was developed in partnership with the military departments and other DoD components, including the DoD Chief Information Office, National Security Agency and Defence Information Systems Agency.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Saudi Aramco Mulls Indian Refinery in Plan to Boost Asia Footprint”, *Gulf News*, March 9, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/business/sectors/energy/saudi-aramco-mulls-indian-refinery-in-plan-to-boost-asia-footprint-1.1687228>. Accessed on 1 April 2016

⁴⁸ Garamone, Jim, “Comptroller Explains All-Inclusive DoD Needs”, *DoD News*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/687639/comptroller-explains-all-inclusive-dod-needs>; and, Garamone, Jim, “Strategy-Driven Processes Behind Budget Request, Official Says”, *DoD News*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/687504/strategy-driven-processes-behind-budget-request-official-says>

⁴⁹ Pellerin, Cheryl, “DoD-Wide Windows 10 Rapid Deployment to Boost Cybersecurity”, *DoD News*, March 8, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/688721/dod-wide-windows-10-rapid-deployment-to-boost-cybersecurity>

According to a Defence Department statement released on March 10, after “exceptionally thorough work” by all of the services, the U.S. military is authorized to begin integrating women across all occupations and specialties immediately. Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook briefed reporters on Defence Secretary Ash Carter’s decision and the accompanying statement. Cook said, Carter “formally approved the final implementation plans prepared by the military services and U.S. Special Operations Command to integrate women into all combat roles”. In the statement, Carter said the department must handle the change “the right way, because the combat effectiveness of the world’s finest fighting force is paramount.”⁵⁰

The vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Paul J. Selva, said on March 10 in his remarks at the annual McAleese & Associates and Credit Suisse 2017 Defence Programmes conference that the U.S. military aims to counter threats presented by potential adversaries Russia and China through its Third Offset Strategy. Selva said, “Given the asymmetric approaches of China and Russia, what do we change that allows us to apply technology, operational concepts and organizational structures to defeat their advantage in offensive, long-range precision strike systems?”. The Third Offset, he said, “is about figuring out what we do differently that unhinges their advantages with the goal of maintaining conventional deterrence.” Following two previous strategies, the Third Offset exploits the vulnerabilities of potential foes and capitalizes on the United States’ existing adaptable assets such as tanks, fighter aircraft, and ships, he said.⁵¹

Navy Adm. Cecil D. Haney testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Stratcom's fiscal year 2017 budget, stressing that it’s critical to modernize the nuclear deterrent capabilities that underpin national security. Haney said that adversaries and potential adversaries challenge U.S. democratic values and security and are modernizing and expanding their nuclear capabilities, developing and testing counter-space and cyberspace technologies and advancing conventional and asymmetric weapons. “Given all of this,” the admiral said, “the missions of U.S. Strategic Command remain important to our joint military forces, to our nation and our allies and partners.” Comprehensive strategic deterrence and assurance and escalation control are more than nuclear weapons and platforms, Haney said, adding that deterrence includes a robust intelligence apparatus, space, cyberspace, conventional and missile defence capabilities and comprehensive plans that coherently link organizations.⁵²

International: Asia

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles were handed over to the Nepal; ISIL contained to one district in Afghanistan and the Taliban is fracturing into separate groups; U.S.-led coalition has launched multiple airstrikes against the ISIL terrorist group’s chemical weapons capabilities; U.S.-led coalition continue to work with the Iraqi security forces; U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists; U.S. and South Korean**

⁵⁰ Parrish, Karen, “DoD Gives Final Go-Ahead to Open All Military Jobs to Women”, *DoD News*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/690381/dod-gives-final-go-ahead-to-open-all-military-jobs-to-women>

⁵¹ Lyle, Amaani, “Vice Chairman Discusses Defence Deterrence Strategy”, *DoD News*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/692212/vice-chairman-discusses-defense-deterrence-strategy>

⁵² Pellerin, Cheryl, “Strategic Deterrence Requires Long-Term Approach, Stratcom Commander Tells SASC”, *DoD News*, March 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/691759/strategic-deterrence-requires-long-term-approach-stratcom-commander-tells-sasc>

troops began their annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises; US-Japan completed the annual bilateral training exercise Multi Sail 2016; US, Philippines and Japan trilateral talks aim to grow and strengthen relationships.

Ten High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles were handed over to the Nepal Army during a ceremony February 5 at AM General's military Humvee factory in Mishawaka, Indiana. The vehicles are part of a foreign military sales case facilitated by the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command and will be shipped via freight-forwarder to Nepalese United Nations peacekeeping operations in the South Sudan in central Africa. Matt Starner, the USASAC country programme manager for Nepal, attended the handover ceremony along with the Defence and Military Attaché from the Nepal Embassy in Washington, D.C. The visit included an overview of AM General and Humvee vehicles as well as a factory tour, to include survey of Nepal's Humvees, before signing the vehicles over to Nepal's attaché.⁵³

The deputy chief of staff for communication for NATO's Resolute Support Mission, Wilson A. Shoffner, said on March 10 that fighters affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are contained to one district in Afghanistan and the Taliban is fracturing into separate groups. Shoffner briefed the Pentagon press corps via teleconference from Kabul. Shoffner said Afghan forces are keeping pressure on the Taliban and, thanks to new legal authority granted in January to conduct strikes against ISIL militants in Afghanistan, also on ISIL fighters in that country. The NATO coalition characterizes ISIL as operationally emergent, meaning they aren't able to orchestrate operations in more than one part of the country at a time, Shoffner said. When ISIL tries to generate revenue streams in Afghanistan, they often muscle in on Taliban activities, Shoffner said, "whether it's illegal checkpoints or the narco trade or trade in other illicit goods."⁵⁴

Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook told reporters on March 10 that the U.S.-led coalition battling the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has launched multiple airstrikes against the terrorist group's chemical weapons capabilities. Cook said the strikes were based, in part, on information provided by an ISIL captive. During an operation in Iraq in February coalition forces captured Sulayman Dawud al-Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud, ISIL's "emir" of chemical and traditional weapons manufacturing. His capture removed a key ISIL leader from the battlefield and provided the coalition with important information about ISIL's chemical weapons facilities, production, and the people involved, the press secretary noted. Dawud was transferred into the custody of Iraq's government.⁵⁵

Combined Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters on March 11 that the 82nd Airborne Division relinquished command of the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command - Iraq, to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) March 8 in Baghdad. Warren announced the hand-off to the Pentagon press corps in his weekly Operation Inherent Resolve briefing by teleconference from Baghdad. Warren said, together with the U.S.-led

⁵³ "Nepal Peacekeeping Vehicles on Way to Mission", By Ms. Michelle Miller (USASAC), *US PACOM*, March 09, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/689576/nepal-peacekeeping-vehicles-on-way-to-mission.aspx>

⁵⁴ Pellerin, Cheryl, "Official Says ISIL Contained, Taliban Fracturing in Afghanistan", *DoD News*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/690520/official-says-isil-contained-taliban-fracturing-in-afghanistan>

⁵⁵ Parrish, Karen, "Information From Captured ISIL Leader Enables Counter-Chemical Strikes", *DoD News*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/690456/information-from-captured-isil-leader-enables-counter-chemical-strikes>

coalition, the 101st's Screaming Eagles will continue to work with the Iraqi security forces to make gains against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. In Mosul, where ISIL fighters remain in control, the U.S.-led coalition assisted Iraqi security forces by making an airdrop this week to deliver tens of thousands of leaflets over the city to contact the city's residents, he said.⁵⁶

Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on March 13 that U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted six strikes in Syria and twelve strikes in Iraq, coordinated with and in support of Iraq's government.⁵⁷

On March 7, U.S. and South Korean troops began their annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises, which Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said are conducted to maintain South Korea's preparedness. Davis told reporters that the exercises also will include troops from United Nations Command mission nations Australia, Canada, Denmark, France and Great Britain. DoD officials said about 7,700 American and 10,000 South Korean troops will participate in the exercises. He said, "As you know, we continue to ask [North Korea] to refrain from provocative actions and statements that only serve to aggravate tensions". He added that the exercises are "purely defensive," Davis said. "Certainly, any statements that imply hostile offensive action by North Korea are not only unhelpful ... they're contrary to ... what we're doing". Both exercises involve air, ground, naval and special operations support, Davis said, noting that Key Resolve is a command-post exercise and that Foal Eagle is focused on field training.⁵⁸

Commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, Commander, Task Force (CTF) 72, and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) completed the annual bilateral training exercise Multi Sail 2016 March 11. The six-day exercise consisted of torpedo and missile shoots, surface action group manoeuvres, anti-submarine training, special operations force training and various other events that tested warfighting capabilities of each participant.⁵⁹

Three B-2 Spirits deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, to the U.S. Pacific Command area of operations on March 8. While in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, the B-2s will integrate and conduct training with ally and partner air forces, and conduct a radio communications check with a U.S. air operations centre. This deployment will ensure bomber crews maintain a high state of readiness and crew proficiency, and will provide opportunity to integrate capabilities with key regional partners.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Cronk, Terri Moon, "OIR Spokesman: 82nd Airborne Division Completes Iraq Mission", *DoD News*, March 11, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/691914/oir-spokesman-82nd-airborne-division-completes-iraq-mission>

⁵⁷ "Inherent Resolve Strikes Target ISIL Terrorists in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, March 13, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/692222/inherent-resolve-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

⁵⁸ Cronk, Terri Moon, "U.S., South Korea Begin Annual Large-Scale Exercises", *DoD News*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/687679/us-south-korea-begin-annual-large-scale-exercises>

⁵⁹ "US Navy, Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force Complete Annual Bilateral Training Exercise Multi Sail 2016", By Ensign Soon Kwon, *US PACOM*, March 11, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/691756/us-navy-japan-maritime-self-defense-force-complete-annual-bilateral-training-ex.aspx>

⁶⁰ "B-2 Spirits on Deployment to Indo-Asia-Pacific", *US PACOM*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/690799/b-2-spirits-on-deployment-to-indo-asia-pacific.aspx>

Leaders from U.S. 7th Fleet, the Philippine Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force met March 5 aboard the 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) during a scheduled port visit. The trilateral talks aim to grow and strengthen relationships between the three nations. Leaders from each country expressed their concerns about tensions in the South China Sea, the impact of natural and man-made disasters on operations, and discussed ways to collectively promote peace and stability throughout the Indo Asia Pacific.⁶¹

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Two militants killed in Kashmir encounters; Don't interfere in military operations, Army warns J&K residents; Explosive detected on J&K road.**

Two militants were killed in Kashmir Valley as encounters between militants and security forces broke out in Ganderbal and Pulwama districts. The security forces trapped at least six militants in south Kashmir's Pulwama district in the afternoon. "A search operation was launched in several villages after militants opened fire on the security forces in Wandakhpura village and fled to a nearby government plant nursery," said a senior police officer.

The police claim that a meeting of Lashkar-e-Taiba militants was under way in the area. Two militants were killed in several hours of gunfight. One of the slain militants was identified as Abu Okasha, who was wanted by the National Investigation Agency in the August 5 Udhampur attack on a BSF convoy on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. Police sources said several militants escaped into the civilian areas. Earlier in the day, militants and security forces exchanged fire in Khimber's Hadoora-Wanihama area of Ganderbal district, adjoining Srinagar city. The militants left behind an AK-47 and fled.⁶²

Army, on March 10, issued a strong warning to those trying to take law in their hands during security operations across the Valley. In a new trend seen lately, locals assemble at encounter sites, try to break the security cordon in a reported bid to provide an escape route to trapped militants. "In case the crowd takes law in its hands and threatens life and property, security forces will be constrained to initiate appropriate action to counter it," said an Army spokesperson in a statement. He was responding to allegations over the Ashimuqam incident where residents have accused Army of opening fire on civilians without any provocation.

Two civilians were injured in the incident, and one of them is critical. "A joint operation was launched by the Army and J&K Police in Ashimuqam on March 8 based on specific information regarding presence of some militants in Magrey Mohalla. As the operations were in progress, a large

⁶¹ "Trilateral Talks Enhance Cooperation between U.S., Philippines and Japan", *US PACOM*, March 09, 2016 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/689599/trilateral-talks-enhance-cooperation-between-us-philippines-and-japan.aspx>

⁶² "2 Militants Killed in Kashmir Encounter", *The Hindu*, March 10, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/2-militants-killed-in-kashmir-encounter/article8333576.ece>

crowd of approximately 1000 people gathered at the site to disrupt the operations in clear violation of existing orders which had also been recently reiterated by the police," said the spokesperson.⁶³

Northeast India

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Militant arrested in Manipur; Operation Hillstorm-3: Meghalaya seeks more Central forces; Dams on Brahmaputra will not affect water flow: China; Assam's expert panel wary of dam renewal at Lower Subansiri; DoNER Ministry calls for monitoring of Northeast projects through satellite images.**

Based on specific inputs regarding movement of an underground cadre in T Jangnum village in Chandel district of Manipur, Assam Rifles troops launched an operation and apprehended an active cadre of People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleikap (Pro) on March 5, according to a press release. The arrested cadre revealed that he had joined the outfit in April 2015 and received military training at Prepak (Pro) camp in Tamu (Myanmar) from April-May 2015. Incriminating articles were recovered from his possession, the release added.⁶⁴

In order to further strengthen its ongoing operations against the outlawed Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) militants, the Meghalaya Police have sought additional 12 companies of central armed police forces, apart from the newly inducted Special Forces (SF-10) in the insurgency-hit Garo Hills region. The state police department has also decided that the current combat operation, code-named 'Hillstorm 3' will be extended for the next three months, police spokesperson GHP Raju said on March 9. Operation Hillstorm-3 was launched by the state police on February 24 in the Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya, which are hotspots of militant activities. As many as four GNLA camps were busted and 70 IEDs, 1,475 detonators and 500 gelatin explosive materials have been seized so far during the operation, Raju added.⁶⁵

The four-member expert panel of Assam has in its final report on the Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project "refused" to give its consent for construction of the 2,000MW dam in its present design and form. Work on the project had been kept in abeyance following the constitution of an expert panel comprising the four experts of Assam, besides another group of experts recommended by the Government of India in December 2014.⁶⁶

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Dr Jitendra Singh has mooted the idea of monitoring of various projects in Northeast through satellite images. Presiding over a meeting of DoNER Ministry in New Delhi on March 12, Dr Jitendra Singh said, satellite images using Space Technology can be effectively used for planning and evaluating the progress of various developmental projects in the North-Eastern States. Considering

⁶³ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K Encounters: Don't Interfere in ops, Army Warns Residents", *The Indian Express*, March 11, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-encounters-dont-interfere-in-ops-army-warns-residents/>

⁶⁴ "Ultra-Held in Manipur", *The Assam Tribune*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar0716/oth051>

⁶⁵ "Meghalaya Seeks More Central Forces", *The Times of India*, March 11, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/shillong/Meghalaya-seeks-more-central-forces/articleshow/51354771.cms>

⁶⁶ "Expert Panel Against Dam at Lower Subansiri", *The Assam Tribune*, March 12, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar1216/at054>

the fact that the Department of Space already has its establishment in Shillong by the name North-Eastern Space Application Centre (NESAC), this should not be a difficult proposition, he added.⁶⁷

Left-wing Extremism

(March 7-13, 2016)

- **Mining workers killed, policeman injured in Maoist attack in Bastar; PLFI Maoist killed in Jharkhand encounter; Maoists surrendered with arms in Chhattisgarh; Maoist' sympathisers withdrew their support in Malkangiri, Odisha; Two BSF men killed, four critical in Kanker Maoist encounter; Woman Maoist surrenders in Odisha.**

Two mining workers were killed and one policeman was injured in a Maoist attack in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on March 6. "Two villagers belonging to Balod and Kanker district of Chhattisgarh were killed in a blast and firing by the Maoists in Amdai Ghati of Narayanpur. Both were working for Neko Jaiswal Company in Amdai Ghati mining project," said Abhishekh Meena, SP, Narayanpur.⁶⁸

A Maoist guerrilla was killed in a gun battle with security forces in Jharkhand's Palamau district on March 7. The encounter took place in a jungle area under Paki police station of Palamau district, said a police official. The guerrilla belonging to the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) was killed. Three rifles, live cartridges and some incriminating documents were seized from his possession, the official added.⁶⁹

Ten Maoists, including one involved in the deadliest Tadmetla massacre of 76 CRPF personnel in 2010, surrendered with arms in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on March 8. Police said six of the surrendered were carrying a cash reward of total 15 lakh on their heads.⁷⁰ In yet another incident on March 11, as many as 56 Maoists, carrying a total reward of Rs.14 lakh, laid down their arms before Bastar's Inspector General S.R.P. Kalluri, the superintendent of police and the district collector.⁷¹ While in a separate incident in Sukma district, five CRPF men, including two officers of 217 Cobra Battalion, were left badly wounded when an explosives-laden tunnel engineered by the Maoists exploded between Murliguda and Banda. The team was heading to a village to provide security for an under construction road.⁷²

In Odisha's Malkangiri district, forty Maoist sympathizers of Kirmiti village under Mathili police station limits withdrew their support to the CPI (Maoist) on March 7 and announced to support the

⁶⁷ "Dr Jitendra Singh Calls For Monitoring of Northeast Projects Through Satellite Images", *PIB* Release ID: 137858, March 12, 2016 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁶⁸ Dahat, Pavan, "Two Mining Workers Killed in Bastar Maoist Attack", *The Hindu*, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/mining-workers-killed-in-bastar-maoist-attack/article8321862.ece>

⁶⁹ "Maoist Guerrilla Killed In Jharkhand Gun Battle", *Business Standard*, March 7, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/maoist-guerrilla-killed-in-jharkhand-gun-battle-116030700764_1.html

⁷⁰ Drolia, Rashmi, "Maoist Involved in Tadmetla Massacre Of 76 Crpf Jawans Surrender with Nine Others In Chhattisgarh", *The Times of India*, March 8, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Maoist-involved-in-Tadmetla-massacre-of-76-CRPF-jawans-surrender-with-nine-others-in-Chhattisgarh/articleshow/51317722.cms>

⁷¹ "56 Maoists Surrender in Chhattisgarh", *Business Standard*, March 11, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/56-maoists-surrender-in-chhattisgarh-116031101282_1.html

⁷² "Five CRPF Men Injured in IED Blast in Chhattisgarh", *Business Standard*, March 11, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/five-crpf-men-injured-in-ied-blast-in-chhattisgarh-116031100347_1.html

administration in development activities. This came two days after 225 Maoist supporters surrendered before police in the district.⁷³

Two Border Security Force (BSF) jawans were killed and four others were critically wounded in an encounter with the Maoists in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh on March 12. The encounter took place in Becha forests of the district.⁷⁴

A 30-year-old woman Maoist, who was considered to be an explosive expert, surrendered before the police at Bonai in Odisha's Sundergarh district on March 11. Susanti alias Muli Munda had left the outlawed outfit months ago but was hiding from both Maoists and police fearing threat to her life. She had joined the CPI (Maoist) in 2010 and was part of the Anmol alias Samarjee group operating in Saranda Division, the police said. "She was involved in several activities in Saranda jungle area between 2010-15, particularly the Kolan area," Additional Superintendent of Police R. Panigrahi said.⁷⁵

⁷³ "Rebels Lose 40 Villagers' Support", *The Times of India*, March 8, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/Rebels-lose-40-villagers-support/articleshow/51299070.cms>

⁷⁴ Dahat, Pavan, "Two BSF Men Killed, Four Critical in Kanker Maoist Encounter", *The Hindu*, March 12, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/kanker-maoist-encounter/article8345093.ece>

⁷⁵ "Woman Maoist Surrenders in Odisha", *The Hindu*, March 12, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/woman-maoist-surrenders-in-odisha/article8343766.ece>