

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

April 6 – April 12, 4 (2), 2015

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Afghanistan

(March 30-April 12, 2015)

- **Taliban kill three ex-colleagues in Jawzjan; New Defence Minister for Afghanistan; Troops battle ISIS in Afghanistan; Regional countries are fighting proxy war in Afghanistan; Optimism about peace negotiations; MoD contract corruption exceeds \$200mln; Poor air support, mismanagement resulted high casualties.**

Militants killed three former Taliban fighters, who had renounced violence and joined peace process in northern Jawzjan province, said a local official. Jawzjan police spokesman, Abdul Manan Rauf, said that the three former insurgents were killed in an ambush of the Taliban the other day. "The three people were on their way from Darzab district to Qoush Tapa district when they were attacked by the Taliban militants," he said, adding that four other people sustained injuries in the incident. None including the Taliban has claimed the responsibility of the blast so far. Experts believe that repetition of such incidents will discourage other Taliban fighters who are willing to renounce violence and join the peace process. They said that the government should spare no efforts to ensure safety of those former militants have laid down their arms and joined the process.<sup>1</sup>

Gen. Afzal Ludin was nominated as minister of defence on April 6 and will soon be introduced to Parliament for a vote of confidence, said presidential spokesman Ajmal Obaid Abidi. The Presidential Palace said in a statement that President Ashraf Ghani has announced Gen. Afzal Ludin as the minister of defence. They said that "he will soon be introduced to Parliament officially." Gen. Ludin is a professional military cadre in the country and has held numerous posts within the Ministry of Defence. His last position was as military advisor in the National Security Council office. This move comes after President Ashraf Ghani introduced 16 new cabinet nominees to Parliament for the confidence vote. Three parliamentary commissions have begun assessing the nomination documents of the 16 cabinet nominees and they are expected to finish this week. Once that has been done, the voting process will start, said Parliament officials.<sup>2</sup>

Security forces fought rebels linked to the militant group of ISIS aka Daesh for the 'first time' after the insurgents attacked their check point in western Farah province, said security official on April 7. Abdul Rauf Rahmani, spokesman for Second Unit of Afghan National Army (ANA) in Farah said that the battle occurred in Poshrod district, leaving 28 militants dead, who had links to

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<sup>1</sup> "Taliban Kill Three Ex-Colleagues In Jawzjan For Joining Peace", *Afghanistan Times*, April 6, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/taliban-kill-three-ex-colleagues-in-jawzjan-for-joining-peace/>

<sup>2</sup> "Gen. Ludin Nominated as Minister of Defence," *Daily Outlook*, April 7, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=11941](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=11941)

Daesh. He said the clash continued almost 24 hours, adding that the rebels used new warfare tactics. According to him, five local policemen were killed and 18 others wounded in the conflict. He added that they have called for air support to defeat the militants in the attack. Though there are a number of concerns about presence of militants linked to Daesh in Farah but local officials said presence of the rebels group was nothing but a myth. Farah governor, Mohammad Asif Nang, in his recent interview with *Radio Azadi* termed Daesh a weak and incapable militant group. "Daesh is a myth. It has no place here. We will eliminate it in one day, not more," he said. According to officials in Interior Ministry, ISIS has no presence in Afghanistan, however, a number of rebel groups claim to have joined the group and create hurdles for people through this way.<sup>3</sup>

Chairman of strategic studies at the MoFA, Faramarz Tamanna, told a session in a conference held in Kabul that Pakistan was not honest in its attempts to bring the Taliban to the table of negotiations. Faramarz raised the issue of the proxy war by regional countries in Afghanistan, and said regional countries should put aside their economic and political issues to restore peace in Afghanistan. "The fact is that we do not trust the neighbouring countries," he said. "We should have a clear understanding of who we are going to talk with about the reconciliation process," he added. Faramarz expressed the ideas in a session titled 'Mobilizing Public Mind set for Peace'. Participants of the ceremony warned the government not to trust Islamabad. However, other participants of the session including member of the High Peace Council (HPC) said they were optimistic about the peace negotiations with the Taliban. Peace talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban were due to start in early March. However, the talks were postponed due to some reasons.<sup>4</sup>

Amidst the Afghan government's efforts to bring the Taliban militants to the table of negotiations and ensure lasting peace in the country, Government Media Information Centre (GMIC) on April 12 said now is the time to use the present opportunities and situation for making the peace dream real. "It seems that militants have also realized that war is not the solution," said Sifatullah Safi, chairman of GMIC. Addressing a ceremony titled 'Mobilizing Public Mind set for Peace'; he said all parties have positive views about peace negotiations. "Current environment for ensuring peace in Afghanistan is better than any other time in the past, thus it should be used effectively," he added. He said anti-government elements have realized the fact that war is not the solution and differences should be overcome through negotiation. Majority of critics believe that the current opportunity for peace is odd, hence it should be used thoroughly and the government should take its advantage in favour of peace in the country. The remarks come as recently the Pakistani government asked the Taliban to start peace negotiations with the Afghan government, and warned them that they will not be allowed to use their soil for insecurity in Afghanistan. In the meantime, regional countries including Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey and a number of other countries have said they were prepared to support the peace process in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Troops Battle ISIS for 'First Time' As They Attack Security Check Point In Farah; 28 Rebels Killed", *Afghanistan Times*, April 7, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/troops-battle-isis-for-first-time-as-they-attack-security-check-point-in-farah-28-rebels-killed/>

<sup>4</sup> "Regional Countries Are Fighting Proxy War in Afghanistan: MoFA", *Afghanistan Times*, April 13, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/regional-countries-are-fighting-proxy-war-in-afghanistan-mofa/>

<sup>5</sup> "All Parties Optimistic About Peace Negotiations", *Afghanistan Times*, April 13, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/all-parties-optimistic-about-peace-negotiations/>

Officials from the Fuel Importing Companies Organization on April 12 claimed that documents indicate the alleged Ministry of Defence contract scandal involves far more money than originally estimated and that it exceeds the \$200 million USD mark. These officials claim that senior government officials are involved. As such they have asked for government to launch an investigation into the matter. Meanwhile, the National Economy Commission in the House of Representatives has also asked for a government probe. MPs have said that all government officials and companies involved in this scandal must be legally pursued. The commission reviewing the fuel contracts in the Ministry of Defence has confirmed the corruption to the amount of \$100 million USD in MoD contracts, but officials at the Fuel Importing Companies Organization said that based on the documents that they have received, the level of corruption is over \$200 million USD.<sup>6</sup>

As insecurity mounts in different parts of the country, particularly the northeastern Badakhshan province, the Internal Security and Defence Commission of the Wolesi Jirga on April 14 held an extraordinary session with high ranking security officials including the Interior Minister, the Chief of Army Staff and the chief of National Directorate of Security (NDS). During the session, the security officials said poor air support and mismanagement of the Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel had resulted in high casualties among security troops in Badakhshan's Jurm district clashes. Hinting at the recent firefight in Badakhshan, the Chief of Army Staff, Sher Mohammad Karimi, told lawmakers that around 250 militants wearing black clothes attacked ANA check posts and captured them after killing of some of the soldiers. He said the commanders of the ANA battalions were on unofficial leave when the attack occurred and that's why the troops were faced with mismanagement and their reaction was weak which resulted in more casualties among them. He added that both the commanders have been arrested for incompetence and reluctance in Jurm clash. "Locals have cooperated with militants in their conflicts with the security forces in Wardooj and Jurm districts," Karimi said. However, a number of lawmakers rejected the remarks.<sup>7</sup>

## Pakistan

(March 30-April 12, 2015)

- **Force is not a solution to Balochistan; Sri Lankan president's Pakistan visit; US billion-dollar arms sale to Pakistan; Five Maj Gens promoted to Lieutenant General rank; Parliament in favour of neutrality in Yemen conflict; UAE warns Pakistan of 'heavy price'; China gets 40-year management rights on Gwadar port.**

Former Balochistan chief minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani on April 3 said that peace in Balochistan cannot be restored through use of force or deployment of Frontier Corps personnel. In an interview, the former chief minister said peace cannot be brought in Balochistan through the barrel of a gun, rather all-out efforts should be made for meaningful dialogue to address the grievances of people. "I was not given the mandate to resolve problems in Balochistan or talk to

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<sup>6</sup> "MoD Contract Corruption Exceeds \$200mln" , *Daily Outlook*, April 14, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=11983](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=11983)

<sup>7</sup> "Poor Air Support, Mismanagement Resulted High Casualties Among ANA Troops In Badakhshan Clash: Karimi", *Afghanistan Times*, April 14, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/poor-air-support-mismanagement-resulted-high-casualties-among-ana-troops-in-badakhshan-clash-karimi/>

disgruntled Baloch leaders," Nawab Raisani said when asked about initiating dialogue with exiled-Baloch leaders as chief minister. Raisani, however, termed solution of the Kashmir issue integral for peace in Balochistan. "Resolve the Kashmir issue, the Balochistan issue would be automatically resolved," Nawab Raisani said. The former chief minister termed cordial relations with Iran, Afghanistan and India essential for durable peace in the country. Raisani admitted that there was worsening law and order situation in Balochistan in general and Quetta in particular. He revealed that members of the Hazara community were murdered during his tenure every day.<sup>8</sup>

Sri Lanka's new president Maithripala Sirisena arrived in Pakistan on April 5 for a three-day state visit. In a joint press conference with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on April 6, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the signing of six memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between the two countries. "The six agreements signed a few moments ago will intensify cooperation in the fields of disaster management, sports, shipping, cooperation in atomic energy for socio-economic development, anti-narcotics and academic cooperation. We agreed to take steps to further improve our economic and trade relations," Sirisena said. Moreover, an agreement signed between the two countries is expected to enhance bilateral trade up to \$1 billion per annum. The Sri Lankan premier also welcomed Pakistani investment in his country and invited the Pakistan International Airlines to re-commence flights to Sri Lanka.<sup>9</sup>

The US State Department has approved Pakistan's request for a billion dollars' worth of military hardware and equipment, identifying Pakistan as a country of vital importance for US foreign policy and national interests. According to diplomatic sources Pakistan had submitted its request last year, stating that the weapons were needed for fighting insurgents in the country's mountainous regions. The US Defence Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale. "This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a country vital to US foreign policy and national security goals in South Asia," the certification said. "This proposed sale of helicopters and weapon systems will provide Pakistan with military capabilities in support of its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in South Asia," it added.<sup>10</sup>

Five Major Generals of Pakistan Army have been elevated to the rank of Lieutenant General. According to Inter Service Public Relations, Maj Gen Omar Mahmood Hayat, Maj Gen. Zafar Iqbal, Maj Gen Malik Javed Mehmood Bukhari, Maj Gen Anwar Ali Hyder and Maj Gen Shahid Baig Mirza have been promoted to Lieutenant General Rank.<sup>11</sup>

On day five of the joint parliamentary session on Yemen, lawmakers approved a draft resolution proposing that Pakistan "should maintain neutrality in the conflict so as to be able to play a

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<sup>8</sup> "Use of Force Cannot Bring Peace in Balochistan: Raisani", *The Dawn*, April 4, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1173891/use-of-force-cannot-bring-peace-in-balochistan-raisani>

<sup>9</sup> "Sri Lankan President Arrives in Islamabad", *The News*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-180502-Sri-Lankan-president-arrives-in-Islamabad>

<sup>10</sup> "US Approves Billion-Dollar Arms Sale to Pakistan", *The Dawn*, April 8, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1174606/us-approves-billion-dollar-arms-sale-to-pakistan>

<sup>11</sup> "Five Maj Gens Promoted To Lieutenant General Rank in Pak Army", *The News*, April 9, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-180905-Five-Maj-Gens-promoted-to-Lieutenant-General-rank-in-Pak-Army>

proactive diplomatic role to end the crisis". Although implying that Islamabad should refrain from assisting Riyadh militarily, the resolution added that Pakistan should stand shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia to protect the latter's territorial integrity. No direct clarity was provided on whether Pakistan would, or would not involve itself militarily at any point. The lawmakers okayed the resolution unanimously on the fifth day of the joint parliamentary session on the Saudi-led offensive against Houthi rebels in Yemen.<sup>12</sup>

The UAE on April 11 strongly condemned the Pakistani decision to stay out of the conflict in Yemen, rejecting Saudi request to join its military coalition against Houthi rebels. "The Arabian Gulf is in a dangerous confrontation, its strategic security is on the edge and the moment of truth distinguishes between a real ally and an ally of media and statements," Dr Gargash tweeted after the unanimous resolution passed by the joint session of Pakistan's Parliament that opted for neutrality against the Saudi request to join strikes on rebels in Yemen. Gargash, quoted by *Khaleej Times*, said Pakistan was required to show a clear stand in favour of its strategic relations with the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council as contradictory and ambiguous views on this serious matter will have to pay a price. "This is nothing but another chapter of laggard impartial stand," Gargash said in reference to Pakistan's parliament resolution that desired impartiality in the wake of turmoil in Yemen. "The vague and contradictory stands of Pakistan and Turkey are an absolute proof that Arab security, from Libya to Yemen, is the responsibility of only Arab countries, though the crisis is a real test for the neighbouring countries," the UAE minister asserted.<sup>13</sup>

With strong military possibilities, China has won the right to operate Pakistan's Gwadar port for a period of 40 years. This move will give China access to Gulf countries, and the possibility of building a naval base on the Arabian Sea in future, sources revealed. Dostain Khan Jamaldini, chairman of the Gwadar Port Authority, on a Hong-King based news channel was quoted to have said the port could be put into full use by 2015 end because the infrastructure construction was nearly complete. China has both financed and constructed the port because it opens up a route for transporting Middle East oil by a 3,000-km long land route from Gwadar port to Kashgar, the northwestern Chinese city. The TV report further added that oil from the Middle East could be offloaded at Gwadar and transported to China by rail and road. Located right at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the Gwadar port is just outside the Strait of Hormuz, which is the gateway for about 20 percent of the world's oil.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "Parliament Calls For Neutrality In Yemen Conflict", *The Dawn*, April 10, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1175090/parliament-calls-for-neutrality-in-yemen-conflict>

<sup>13</sup> "UAE Warns Pakistan Of 'Heavy Price' For Ambiguous Stand", *The Nation*, April , 12, 2015, at, <http://nation.com.pk/national/12-Apr-2015/uae-warns-pakistan-of-heavy-price-for-ambiguous-stand>

<sup>14</sup> "China Gets 40-Year Management Rights On Gwadar Port, Access to Arabian Sea", *The Express Tribune*, April 15, at, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/870183/china-gets-40-year-management-rights-on-gwadar-port-access-to-arabian-sea/>

## B. East Asia

### China

(March 30-April 12, 2015)

- **China and US agree to cooperate on repatriate; China upset with US remarks on South China Sea; China supports early ceasefire in Yemen; Chinese Vice Premier meets with the Crown Princess of Thailand; Chinese navy ready to get three nuclear submarines; China disapproves of the United States sanctions programme with respect to cyber-attacks; China upset with Japanese remarks on East China Sea; Li Keqiang meets the President of Uganda.**

According to the China News Services, China and the United States have decided to streamline the process to repatriate Chinese corrupt officials. Both sides agreed to simplify the procedure as per a statement released on April 11. It was asserted that the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will be working with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security.<sup>15</sup>

As a response to the comments made by the United States President Barack Obama, with respect to the South China Sea, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that, "I think everybody can see who has the biggest size and muscle in the world". It was further asserted that, "We [China] hope the US can respect the efforts made by China and ASEAN in resolving the South China Sea issue, and genuinely play a positive, constructive and responsible role in promoting peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region".<sup>16</sup>

While responding to the situation in Yemen, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that, "China is deeply concerned about the situation in Yemen. We hope all parties will declare ceasefire soon to avoid more civilian casualties". China also wants the parties involved to follow the international law.<sup>17</sup>

Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong met with the Thai crown princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on April 5 in Beijing. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand.<sup>18</sup>

As per media reports, three cutting-edge nuclear powered submarines have been manufactured and will soon be commissioned by the Chinese navy. China had established its nuclear powered submarine force in 1970.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "US Backs China's Campaign to Hunt down Fugitives", *China Daily*, April 12, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/12/content\\_20412570.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/12/content_20412570.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>16</sup> "China Opposes Obama's Criticism On South China Sea Issue", *China Daily*, April 10, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/10/content\\_20407892.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/10/content_20407892.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>17</sup> "China Calls for Ceasefire in Yemen", *China daily*, April 7, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/07/content\\_20020003.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/07/content_20020003.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>18</sup> "Chinese Vice Premier Meets Thai Princess", *China Daily*, April 5, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/05/content\\_20006031.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/05/content_20006031.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>19</sup> Lei, Zhao, "Navy to Get 3 New Nuclear Subs", *China Daily*, April 3, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/03/content\\_19989094.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/03/content_19989094.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

China voiced its concern with regard to the idea of imposing sanctions on individuals and entities who indulged in cyber-attacks. As a response to the United States new sanctions programme, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that, "Cyber security concerns the common interests of all countries. The international community should jointly solve the issue of cyber-attacks through dialogue and cooperation, and based on mutual respect and trust".<sup>20</sup>

The Chinese Foreign Ministry responded to the Japanese accusations of China "unilaterally" changing the situation in the East China Sea, by stating that it is Japan and not China which is doing so. As per Hua Chunying, "It is nobody but Japan itself who has taken unilateral measures to change the status quo and create trouble".<sup>21</sup>

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met the President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni on March 31. During the meeting Li said that, "China is ready to work with Uganda to consolidate their friendship, deepen cooperation and elevate their bilateral ties to a new high".<sup>22</sup>

## Japan

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Japan releases its Diplomatic Bluebook; Senior foreign policy and defence officials from Japan and India hold talks in Delhi.**

On April 7, the Japanese Foreign Ministry released its annual report on Japanese diplomacy, also known as the Diplomatic Bluebook for the current year. In this report, Japan expresses its continued commitment to pursue the path as a peace-loving nation. In the opening of the report, it notes that Japan will contribute to global stability and prosperity from the position of "proactive contribution to peace." The report assures that Japan would work towards global issues like peace-building, disaster prevention, human rights, and development of the security legislation to deal with the current volatile international security environment. It also insists that Japan will focus on boosting the three main pillars of its diplomacy: the Japan-US alliance, cooperation with neighbouring states and economic diplomacy.<sup>23</sup>

On April 6, senior foreign policy and defence officials from Japan held talks with their Indian counterparts in New Delhi on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the defence sector. They also exchanged their views on China's involvement in the East China Sea, the South China Sea and the

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<sup>20</sup> "China Disagrees with US Sanctions Program on Overseas Cyber Attackers", *China Daily*, April 2, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/02/content\\_19984303.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/02/content_19984303.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>21</sup> Shengnan, Zhao, "China Rips Japan's Draft Policy Report", *China Daily*, April 2, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/02/content\\_19979328.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/02/content_19979328.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>22</sup> "Chinese Premier Meets Ugandan President", *China Daily*, March 31, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-03/31/content\\_19965192.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-03/31/content_19965192.htm), accessed on April 15, 2015

<sup>23</sup> "Diplomatic Bluebook Stresses Peaceful Path/Plan On Security Legal Framework Mentioned", *The Yomiuri Daily*, April 7, 2015 at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002064122>

Indian Ocean region. At present both Tokyo and New Delhi are exploring the possibility of India's purchase of the US-2 amphibious rescue aircraft from Japan.<sup>24</sup>

## South Korea

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Inter-Korea talks take place over wage dispute in the Kaesong joint industrial park; South Korea-US launched joint air defence drill; US Defence Secretary visits South Korea.**

On April 7, officials from the two Koreas held talks to resolve the ongoing dispute over the labour wage in the Kaesong joint industrial park. The dispute emerged in the wake of Pyongyang's unilateral decision to raise labour wage by 5.18 percent to \$74 per month. The new wages are expected to be paid from March onwards to around 53000 North Korean employees currently employed by South Korean firms at the industrial park. Concerned South Korean businessmen recently met with President Park Geun-hye and insisted on holding an emergency meeting with the North Korean side. This pushed Seoul to hold the recent meeting.

In the talk, the South Korean side was represented by the officials from the Kaesong Industrial District Management Committee, while North Korea was represented by its Central Special Development Guidance Bureau. However, the meeting failed to realize any breakthrough. While the South Korean side insisted that the decision regarding wage hike should have been taken through inter-Korean talks, the North argued that it was an issue of sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

On April 10, the air forces of South Korea and the US launched their biannual joint air defence drill-Max Thunder-in the South Korean air space. The main objective of such large-scale aerial exercise is to bolster the two forces' joint defence capabilities. It is to continue till April 24. In this exercise, around 100 aircraft (including 50 South Korean aircraft) and 1400 service personnel are to take part.<sup>26</sup>

On April 9, US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter arrived at Seoul on a three-day long official trip. During his visit, Carter met with his South Korean counterpart Han Min-ko to discuss ways to improve the two countries' joint capability to deal with North Korea's military provocations. He also met with the US troops stationed at Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek and visited the Korea Air and Space Operations Centre. Carter might also discuss with the South Korean leaders regarding the deployment of the controversial Terminal High altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system on the Korean peninsula. However, officials in both Seoul and Washington seem to insist that the issue would not be part of the agenda during Carter's visit.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Japan, India Agree To Enhance Coop", *The Yomiuri Daily*, April 7, 2015 at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002063004>

<sup>25</sup> "Koreas Hold First Meeting Over Wage Dispute Without Progress", *The Korea Herald*, April 8, 2015 at [http://www.koreaherald.com/common\\_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20150408000717&dt=2](http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20150408000717&dt=2)

<sup>26</sup> "S. Korea, US Kick Off Large-Scale Air Defence Drill", *The Korea Herald*, April 10, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150410000492>

<sup>27</sup> "US Defence Chief Visits S. Korea for N. K talks", *The Korea Herald*, April 9, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150409000975>

## North Korea

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **North Korea vows to take action against South Korean activists' leaflet campaign; North Korea issues no fly, no sail zone in the East China Sea.**

In the wake of a South Korean activist group's recent attempt to resume anti-Pyongyang leaflets campaign, North Korea has vowed to take punitive action against it. Despite South Korean government's recent request to restrain, on April 9, the activists led by Park Sang-hak tried to send leaflets carrying anti-Pyongyang slogans along with the DVDs of the controversial US movie "The Interview" across the inter-Korean border with the help of balloons.

Recently the leaflet campaign seems to have turned the inter-Korean relationship all the more tenuous. While the South Korean government pledged to suspend the leaflet campaign last March, it does not seem to be taking any measure despite the activists' attempt to resume it. While Pyongyang argues that such move was tantamount to a declaration of war, Seoul insists that it is unable to take any measure against the activists as they have a basic right of expressing the freedom of speech.<sup>28</sup>

On April 1, North Korea issued a no-fly, no-sail zone in the East Sea, prohibiting its ships and planes from entering that area. The South Korean military officials suspect that Pyongyang might be planning to launch a mid-range ballistic missile into the East Sea. While it is not yet sure for how long the ban would last, observers in South Korea seem to believe that it might continue till at least April 15, the birthday anniversary of North Korea's former leader Kim Il Sung.<sup>29</sup>

## C. Southeast Asia

### Southeast Asia

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **China accused of hacking efforts in Southeast Asia; Tsubasa bridge inaugurated in Cambodia; Timor Leste hopeful about ASEAN membership; modern-day slavery still a problem in Indonesia; Malaysia passed an anti-terrorism bill; Debate over constitutional reforms and electoral system going on in Myanmar; Russia's premier visited Vietnam and Thailand.**

A US-based cybersecurity agency claimed that China's hackers target governmental websites of Southeast Asia and India to get information relating to political and military issues. In fact, the

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<sup>28</sup> "N. Korea Vows To Retaliate Against Leaflet Launch", *The Korea Herald*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150410000912>

<sup>29</sup> "North Declares No Fly, No Sail Zone", *Korea Joongnag Daily*, April 7, 2015 at <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3002811>

report, published by a California based agency, claimed that these efforts started way back in 2005 and continues even today. The report says, the hacking efforts include sending emails in native languages along with documents that appear valid and legitimate, but contain malware. FireEye, the US cybersecurity agency mentioned, "Such a sustained, planned development effort, coupled with the group's regional targets and mission, lead us to believe that this activity is state sponsored most likely by the Chinese government." The Cyber Space Administration of China did not respond to the questions asked on this issue. ASEAN also maintained silence on the same.<sup>30</sup>

The 2.2-km Tsubasa Bridge was inaugurated by the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on April 6 at Loek Dek District, Cambodia. The bridge will connect Phnom Penh with the provinces of Svay Rieng and Prey Veng as well as neighbouring country, Vietnam. The bridge was built with the financial assistance from Japan. The bridge is a part of a long road connectivity project between Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok via Phnom Penh and Poipet City, a segment of the ASEAN Highway 1. The Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA), which has funded the bridge, mentioned that the proposed highway is supposed to be completed by 2020.<sup>31</sup>

Timor Leste's Ambassador to Malaysia, Jose Antonio Amorim Dias, said that after 13 years of independence, his country is now ready to join ASEAN. He believes that the country now has sufficient manpower to represent Timor Leste in numerous annual meetings and events of ASEAN. It has also opened embassies in all ASEAN member nations. Timor Leste applied for ASEAN membership in 2011 under the chairmanship of Indonesia. Right now a working group is looking at the matter. Amb. Dias said that Timor Leste will be benefited from the ASEAN membership in terms of trade, connectivity and cultural exchanges; however, his country is not seeking financial help from other ASEAN countries. He also said that Timor Leste is ready to take up the duties and responsibilities that will come along with the ASEAN membership.<sup>32</sup>

Near about 550 people have been rescued from a remote Indonesian fishing island, Benjina as an investigation by the *Associated Press* revealed that these people, along with many others, are forced to live life as modern-day slaves without access to proper food, sanitation and other basic human rights. Many of these people came from Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. When the Indonesian government came for their rescue, many chose to hide in the jungles as they were afraid to speak about their fate and some others wanted to stay back in the island with the hope that they would be able to collect their payment from their recruiters. However, most of them said that they want to go back to their home. Embarrassed over the situation, the Indonesian

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<sup>30</sup> Purnell, Newley, "China's Hackers Run 10-Year Spy Campaign in Asia, Report Finds", *The Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2015 available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-hackers-run-10-year-spy-campaign-in-asia-report-finds-1428854482>, accessed on 15 April 2015.

<sup>31</sup> "At Bridge Opening, Hun Sen Praises Japan, Self, Ouch Sony and Matt Blomberg", *The Cambodia Daily*, April 7, 2015 available at <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/at-bridge-opening-hun-sen-praises-japan-self-81528/>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> "Timor Leste Ready To Join Asean", *The Sun Daily*, April 11, 2015 available at <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/1381066>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

government has mentioned that it would investigate the matter. Global Slavery Index identified Indonesia as one of the top ten countries with enslaved population.<sup>33</sup>

Malaysia has passed an anti- terrorism bill which will reintroduce indefinite jail term without trial. The Malaysian prime minister said that this is important to fight the Islamic extremism. The new legislation will allow a board to punish the suspects for two years without trial. The judiciary will have lesser role in deciding the punishment. The bill is expected to get sanction from the Senate. In 2012, Malaysia revoked its Internal Security Act which permitted indefinite jail sentence for the suspects without trial as the public statements went against the act. The new bill, if implemented as a law or act will be a blow to the democracy in the country, mentioned an opposition law-maker.<sup>34</sup>

Few days ahead of the high-level six-party talk on constitutional reform, President Thein Sein hosted a discussion with representatives from 42 political parties including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at his home in Nay Pyi Taw on April 8 to deliberate on matters relating to the nation-wide ceasefire agreement and upcoming presidential election. The chairman of the Union Election Commission was also present in the meeting and he pledged to hold a free and fair election. Two days later, on April 10, the six-party talk was arranged where President Thein Sein, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defence Service Min Aung Hlaing, Upper House Speaker Khin Aung Myint, lower house speaker Shwe Mann and Arakan National Party leader Aye Maung were present. The question of amendments to the 2008 Constitution which bars Suu Kyi from participating in the presidential election as her two sons are foreign nationals is still unclear. Lawmakers are of the opinion that the referendum may not take place in May 2015 as scheduled and without it, the amendment will not eventuate before this year's election. The other point of discussion was introduction of proportional representation system in the upcoming election. So far, 14 political parties have endorsed the system in a hearing concluded in the Upper House and they hoped that this system would end discrimination against smaller ethnic parties. But 16 political parties including the National League for Democracy (NLD) have rejected the idea. On the other hand, the ruling party, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) want to introduce the proportional representation system as they fear a landslide victory by the NLD in the upcoming general election.<sup>35</sup>

Dmitry Medvedev, the Prime Minister of Russia, visited Vietnam and Thailand on April 6-8. In Vietnam, Mr. Medvedev and his counter-part, Nguyen Tan Dung closed a deal that would facilitate Vietnam's entry into a Russia-led free trade bloc, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). EEU also includes Belarus and Kazakhstan. Very soon the trade pact would be signed and the Russian

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<sup>33</sup> Phillip, Abby, "Nearly 550 Modern-Day Slaves Were Rescued from Indonesia's Fish Trade. and That's Just The Beginning", *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2015, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/04/10/nearly-550-modern-day-slaves-were-rescued-from-indonesias-fish-trade-and-thats-just-the-beginning/>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> "Malaysia Passes Controversial Anti-Terror Bill," *BBC News*, April 7, 2015 available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32194636>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> "Myanmar's Thein Sein Holds Rare 42-Party Talks on Elections, Peace Pact", *Radio Free Asia*, April 8, 2015, available at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/talks-04082015144849.html>, accessed on April 16, 2015.

premier expressed his hope of enhancing trade between Vietnam and Russia in the coming years. Last year, the bilateral trade was estimated at \$2.5 billion. Vietnam has also signed an oil and gas agreement with Russia which will enable the later to assist the former in oil exploration in East Sea (South China Sea).<sup>36</sup>

In Thailand, Mr. Medvedev and his counter-part, Prayuth Chan-ocha discussed various issues including energy, culture, politics and economy to boost bilateral ties between Russia and Thailand. Russian premier was accompanied by the Industry and Trade Minister of Russia, Denis Manturov who discussed issues including civil aircraft manufacturing, the automotive industry, nuclear engineering, and oil and gas industry equipment with his Thai counter-part. Thailand and Russia signed several agreements during this two-day trip by the Russian premier.<sup>37</sup>

## D. Russia

### National

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **State Duma approves budget cuts; Russia's international reserves fall by US\$ 5.5 billion over the week; Aerospace Defence Forces to start operations in June; Security Council preparing a new doctrine on information security; Fire breaks out on the Oryol nuclear submarine; Russia's shadow labour market grows by 5 per cent; Russia starts military drills in North Caucasus; Russia to triple production of missiles for air and missile defence in 2015.**

Members of the State Duma have voted, on April 10, on the 2015 federal budget. Budget items will be slashed by 10 per cent on average. This is the first budget subjected to sequestration since 1998.<sup>38</sup>

Russia's Central Bank has reported, on April 9, that its international reserves comprising primarily gold and foreign exchange fell by US\$ 5.5 billion in the week of March 27-April 3 to US\$ 355.3 billion.<sup>39</sup>

The Russian Aerospace Defence Forces (VKO) will start operations from June 2015. This new branch will bring together VKO and the Air Force.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Medvedev: Vietnam Close to Deal With Russian-Led Trade Area, Tran Van Minh", *ABC News*, April 6, 2015, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/medvedev-vietnam-close-deal-russian-led-trade-area-30113786>, accessed on April 16, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> "Russian PM to Visit Thailand Tuesday", *Bangkok Post*, April 6, 2015, available at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/519643/russian-pm-to-visit-thailand-tuesday>, accessed on April 16, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "Russian Parliament To Approve Budget Cuts", *Itar-Tass*, April 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/788456>

<sup>39</sup> "Russia's International Reserves Fall By \$5.5 Billion Over Week — Central Bank", *Itar-Tass*, April 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/788293>

<sup>40</sup> "Russian Aerospace Defence Forces to Start Operating in June — Commander", *Itar-Tass*, April 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787590>

Russia's Security Council has begun preparing a new edition of Russia's Information Security Doctrine. A press statement released by the Security Council stated that 'the new edition will be based on updated approaches to protecting national interests in the information field with due account for today's realities'. 'Among the priorities are strengthening state guarantees of privacy, improving the competitiveness of Russian products, creating conditions for their wide use in formation of national information systems and networks, as well hardware and software crucial to maintaining information security of national information infrastructure facilities'. The current Information Security Doctrine was adopted in September 2000.<sup>41</sup>

A fire and source of smoke on-board the Oryol nuclear submarine at the Zvyozdochka shipyard in north-western Russia has been fully extinguished on April 8. Russia's Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Defence Ministry have set up a commission to investigate the circumstances of the accident and assess the damage. There were no armaments or fuel on-board the submarine and the nuclear reactor had been shut down before the fire erupted.<sup>42</sup>

Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodets has said, on April 7, that Russia's shadow labour sector has grown by 5 per cent from last year amid negative developments in the Russian economy.<sup>43</sup>

The press service of Russia's Southern Military District has stated, on April 10, that more than 1,000 troops and around 200 pieces of equipment have taken part in artillery drills in Russia's North Caucasus and South Ossetia republic.<sup>44</sup>

Russia's defence-industrial complex will triple the production of missiles for air defence and missile defence complexes in 2015 as compared to the previous year. The deputy commander of Russia's Air and Space Defence Force, Major-General Kirill Makarov, had said that the risk of a potential global strike by the United States was the main reason behind the measures for strengthening the air and anti-missile defence. He added that the development of air and anti-missile defence systems was a priority.<sup>45</sup>

## International Affairs

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **President Putin meets the Prime Minister of Greece; Prime Minister Medvedev visits Thailand and Vietnam; Russia criticises the new Nordic defence pact; CSTO meets in**

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<sup>41</sup> "Russian Security Council Preparing New Doctrine of Russia's Information Security", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787625>

<sup>42</sup> "Fire on Russian Nuclear Submarine Fully Extinguished – Shipyard", *Itar-Tass*, April 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787845>

<sup>43</sup> "Russia's Shadow Labour Market Grows 5% Amid Crisis — Vice-Premier", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787741>

<sup>44</sup> "North Caucasus Drills Involve Over 1,000 Troops, 200 Pieces Of Military Equipment", *Itar-Tass*, April 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/788454>

<sup>45</sup> "Russia to Triple Production Of Missiles For Air And Missile Defence In 2015 — Source", *Itar-Tass*, April 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/788218>

**Tajikistan to discuss the IS threat; Foreign Minister Lavrov says Iran has good prospects to join the SCO; Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministers discuss bilateral ties; Russia-China joint passenger plane project to cost US\$ 1.4 billion; CSTO member troops participate in joint military exercises in the Arctic; Belarus seeks stronger defence industry cooperation with Russia; Russia to allocate US\$ 30 million for extending the life of Armenian nuclear plants; Russia and Iraq discuss developments in the Middle East; Russia to lower gas price for Ukraine.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin met the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Moscow on April 8, 2015. They discussed 'a broad range of bilateral cooperation matters, especially in the trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian fields'. They also exchanged views on the international agenda. A Joint Action Plan and a Joint Statement on the 70th anniversary of Victory Day was issued along with the signing of a Joint Memorandum on holding the Year of Russia in Greece and the Year of Greece in Russia in 2016.<sup>46</sup>

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has paid an official visit to Vietnam and Thailand during April 6-8, 2015. In Vietnam, Medvedev stated that Russia is counting on signing a framework agreement to build a nuclear power plant (NPP) in the near future. The two sides confirmed their plans to boost bilateral trade in the next five years to US\$ 10 billion. They also guaranteed the development of Vietnamese and Russian offshore oil and gas projects. Gazprom Neft and the Oil and Gas Corporation of Vietnam have signed a memorandum of understanding to acquire a 49 per cent share of Vietnam's Binh Son Refining and Petrochemicals. In total, Russia and Vietnam signed 17 priority projects for 2015 including the supply of equipment for Vietnamese power plants, construction and technology upgrades for enterprises and the creation of industrial clusters.<sup>47</sup>

In Thailand, investment and tourism were the key issues discussed. The two countries plan to increase annual trade to US\$ 10 billion by 2016 from the present US\$ 4 billion. Medvedev's visit was the first official trip of a Russian head of cabinet to Bangkok in 25 years. Some key deals signed include an agreement between Russian Railways Corporation with Thai company Banpu Public Company Limited for the construction of railway infrastructure and a marine coal terminal on the island of Borneo. Mr. Medvedev also said that Russia is ready to supply its weapons to Thailand in exchange for agricultural output.<sup>48</sup>

Russia's Foreign Ministry has criticised the proposed Nordic defence pact between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden on the ground that 'it is directed against Russia' and amounts to a 'confrontational approach' on the Ukraine crisis. It also voiced 'concern' that Finland and Sweden, that are not Nato members, are showing 'increasingly strong convergence' with the

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<sup>46</sup> "Meeting with Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras", *President of Russia*, April 8, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49217>

<sup>47</sup> "Time for Russia & Vietnam to Think Of Switching To Local Currencies – Medvedev", *RT*, April 7, 2015 at <http://rt.com/business/247373-russia-vietnam-local-currencies/>

<sup>48</sup> "Russia and Thailand will Increase Annual Trade To \$10 Billion", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, April 10, 2015 at [http://rbth.com/business/2015/04/10/russia\\_and\\_thailand\\_will\\_increase\\_annual\\_trade\\_to\\_10\\_billion\\_45129.html](http://rbth.com/business/2015/04/10/russia_and_thailand_will_increase_annual_trade_to_10_billion_45129.html)

alliance and these developments can undermine the positive engagement accumulated over the past decade.<sup>49</sup>

Members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) have met in Tajikistan on April 9 to discuss the threat posed by the rise of the Islamic State (IS) group in Afghanistan. The members also exchanged views on creating a joint air and missile-defence system.<sup>50</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said, on April 8, that Iran has good prospects to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) provided it concludes the nuclear deal.<sup>51</sup>

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has paid an official visit to Moscow on April 7, 2015. The key aim of the visit was to prepare for the upcoming visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Moscow on May 9. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that 'special attention will be paid to bilateral cooperation in the international affairs which constitutes one of the most important spheres of Russian-Chinese strategic partnership'. It added that 'Moscow and Beijing share equal or similar approaches to most international problems and plan to continue close coordination of its foreign policy efforts'.<sup>52</sup>

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, on April 7, that the joint Russia-China wide-body passenger plane project will cost 80 billion roubles (US\$ \$1.4 billion). He added that the project remains a priority even though it has not received budget financing for 2015. The two sides still need to work on the passenger carrying capacities of the aircraft that is expected to be rolled out from 2021 onwards.<sup>53</sup>

Paratroopers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states have participated in military exercises in the Arctic from April 7-14. This is the first international humanitarian search and rescue expedition to the North Pole by airborne troops of CSTO.<sup>54</sup>

Chairman of the Belarusian State Military-Industrial Committee Sergey Gurulev has said that Belarus and Russia should strengthen defence industry cooperation to improve the quality and marketability of products destined for foreign markets. He highlighted the important role of research and development programmes financed by the Russia-Belarus Union State in promoting

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<sup>49</sup> "Nordic Pact Heightens Tension with Russia", *EU Observer*, April 12, 2015 at <https://euobserver.com/foreign/128297>

<sup>50</sup> "CSTO Meets In Tajikistan To Discuss IS Threat", *Radio Free Europe*, April 9, 2015 at [http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-csto-islamic-state-threat/26947425.html?utm\\_source=Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=335d6f4e9b-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f95a626cec-335d6f4e9b-204234821](http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-csto-islamic-state-threat/26947425.html?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=335d6f4e9b-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-335d6f4e9b-204234821)

<sup>51</sup> "Iran Has Good Prospects To Join SCO — Russian FM", *The Times of Central Asia*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15174-iran-has-good-prospects-to-join-sco-russian-fm>

<sup>52</sup> "Russia-China Strategic Partnership On Agenda At Talks Of Foreign Ministers in Moscow", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787576>

<sup>53</sup> "Russia-China Passenger Plane Project Estimated At \$1.4 Bln — Vice-Premier", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/787658>

<sup>54</sup> "100 Paratroopers From Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan Air Dropped to North Pole", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787823>

integration processes. At present, around 99 Belarusian enterprises supply Russia with 1,880 different defence-related products while around 940 Russian enterprises delivered 4,000 items to 67 companies in Belarus. Belarusian supplies account for 15 per cent of the Russian defence order<sup>55</sup>

Russia will grant US\$ 30 million to Armenia for extending the life of its nuclear power plants. Meanwhile, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan has said, on April 7, that Yerevan will seek to coordinate its foreign policy with Russia and confirmed his participation in the 'Victory Day' celebrations scheduled to be held in Moscow on May 9.<sup>56</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives Salim al-Jabouri have discussed, in Moscow on April 6, the situation in Iraq and Yemen. They "stressed the importance of consolidation of all responsible political forces of the country in the face of common challenges and search for mutually acceptable solutions taking into account the interests of all ethnic and religious groups of the Iraqi society". They also appealed to all parties involved in the Yemen conflict to end all combat operations and launch an inclusive inter-Yemeni dialogue.<sup>57</sup>

Gazprom has agreed to supply gas to Ukraine at US\$ 247.18 per tcf. It will also not fine Kiev for its not adherence to the "take or pay" conditions of the 2009 contract that called upon to Kiev to annually purchase 41.6 billion cubic meters of Russian gas. Ukraine bought 14 billion cubic meters of Russian gas in 2014.<sup>58</sup>

## E. Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

### Iran

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Khamenei criticizes Saudi airstrikes, nuclear agreement; Iran's Defence Minister rejects of granting access to military sites in nuclear agreement; Turkish PM on key visit to Tehran; Erdogan meets Rouhani amid deepening Yemen crisis.**

In a meeting with orators, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei criticised Saudi airstrikes on Yemen and stressed his previously drawn red lines regarding the nuclear talks. He made it clear that Iran and Saudi Arabia are fighting a war despite the fact there has been no Iranian bullet

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<sup>55</sup> "Belarus Seeks Stronger Defence Industry Cooperation with Russia", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787802>

<sup>56</sup> "Russia to Allocate \$30 Mln For Life Extension Of Armenian Nuclear Plants", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787751>

<sup>57</sup> "Lavrov, Iraqi Speaker Discuss Situation in Iraq, Yemen", *Itar-Tass*, April 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787556>

<sup>58</sup> "Meeting with Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller", *President of Russia*, April 8, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49221>

shot as of yet. On the outcome of recent talks, I'm neither for nor against it," Khamenei said, explaining that there were no substantial measures taken and nothing binding. "All sanctions should be removed just when the deal is reached – if sanctions removal depends on another process, then why did we start to talk?"<sup>59</sup>

Iran's Defence Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan categorically rejected as a "lie" a *Guardian* report alleging that Tehran has granted access to its military facilities under the recent framework agreement with the world powers. "No such agreement has been made; principally speaking, visit to military centres is among our redlines and no such visit will be accepted," Gen. Dehqan stressed on April 8, rejecting "the report by foreign media outlets, such as the *Guardian*" as "untruthful allegations".<sup>60</sup>

Erdogan's one-day visit to Iran comes as relations between Ankara and Tehran have been strained by events in Yemen, where both countries have backed rival sides in the conflict. Erdogan has backed a Saudi-led military campaign against Houthi rebels fighting for the control of Yemen. Tehran, which is said to be supporting the rebels, is against the operation. The two countries have also been at odds over the war in Syria. The two presidents signed eight agreements and took pains to emphasise the need for greater economic cooperation, with Erdogan saying Turkey and Iran were far behind a target to lift trade volume to \$30bn. Trade between the two totalled around \$14bn in 2014.<sup>61</sup>

## Iraq & Syria

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **ISIS seizes Yarmouk camp, Palestinians join to fight back with Syrian Army assistance; Mass graves of 1,700 Iraqi soldiers found in Tikrit; ISIS attacks capital of Iraq's Anbar province.**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for action to prevent a massacre of Palestinian refugees in Syria's Yarmouk camp, just after all Palestinian factions agreed with the Syrian government to use military force to expel Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters from the embattled Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus. "What is unfolding in Yarmouk is unacceptable," Ban told reporters at UN headquarters on April 9. "We simply cannot stand by and watch a massacre unfold." <sup>62</sup>

Iraqi forensic teams have begun to exhume suspected mass graves containing up to 1,700 Iraqi soldiers captured and killed by the Islamic State group (IS). The 12 sites were found in the city of

<sup>59</sup> Hashem, Ali, "Khamenei Criticizes Saudi Airstrikes, Nuclear Agreement", *Al-Monitor*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/iran-khamenei-saudi-airstrikes-yemen.html>

<sup>60</sup> "Iran DM Rejects Report on Inspection of Military Centres Based on Lausanne Understanding", *Fars News Agency*, April 8, 2015 at <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13940119001411>

<sup>61</sup> "Erdogan Meets Rouhani Amid Deepening Yemen Crisis", *Aljazeera*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/erdogan-meets-rouhani-deepening-yemen-crisis-150407142042829.html>

<sup>62</sup> "Palestinians to Join Fight Against ISIL in Yarmouk", *Aljazeera*, 9 April, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/palestinians-join-fight-isil-yarmouk-150409174009461.html>

Tikrit, near the former US Army base, Camp Speicher, shortly after the city was recaptured from IS by the Iraqi army and Shia militias following a month-long siege. The killing in June 2014 of mainly Shia soldiers from Camp Speicher became a notorious symbol of IS brutality, after the group posted videos and photographs of the execution by machine gun on social media.<sup>63</sup>

Islamic State militants attacked the capital of Iraq's vast Anbar province on multiple fronts seizing two areas on the city outskirts in a setback for a government campaign to retake the desert terrain. The jihadists deployed vehicle and suicide bombs to tear through Iraqi government lines north of the city of Ramadi overnight before attacking on foot, said security officials and a hospital source. The head of Anbar's provincial council, Sabah Karhout, called on Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to send urgent military reinforcements and supplies to fighters, saying they were running low on ammunition.<sup>64</sup>

## The Gulf

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Pakistan parliament backs neutrality in Yemen conflict; UN: Majority of Yemen war victims are civilians.**

Pakistan's parliament unanimously passed a resolution affirming the country's "neutrality" in the Yemen conflict, in a move that indicates the South Asian country will not be joining a Saudi-led military coalition that is currently fighting Houthi rebels in Yemen. A joint session of parliament been debated the issue in the capital Islamabad all week, and unanimously passed the resolution, presented by Ishaq Dar, the finance minister. The resolution expresses the "desire that Pakistan should maintain neutrality in the Yemen conflict", while reaffirming Pakistan's "unequivocal support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".<sup>65</sup>

Aid agencies have warned of a growing humanitarian crisis in Yemen as the UN says the majority of people killed in the conflict are civilians, blaming both the Saudi-led coalition and Houthi rebels. "Over 600 people [have been] killed [in the conflict], but more than half of them are civilians. This is particularly concerning," Ivan Simonovic, UN's deputy secretary-general for human rights, told *Al Jazeera*. "So far we can say with confidence that both sides have not exercised sufficient restraint. There were some unselective targeting and we are very concerned about that. Simonovic said it was essential not to allow "the acute crisis evolve into a chronic one". "There is still a window of opportunity when fighting and killing in Yemen could be stopped," he said.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> "Mass Graves Of 1,700 Iraqi Soldiers Found In Tikrit", *Alaraby Al-Jaded*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/4/7/mass-graves-of-1-700-iraqi-soldiers-found-in-tikrit>

<sup>64</sup> "ISIS Attacks Capital Of Iraq's Anbar Province, Hundreds Of Families Flee Area", *Huffingtonpost.com*, April 10, 2015 at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/10/isis-anbar-attack\\_n\\_7041656.html?ir=India](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/10/isis-anbar-attack_n_7041656.html?ir=India)

<sup>65</sup> Hashim, Asad, "Pakistan Parliament Backs Neutrality In Yemen Conflict", *Aljazeera*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/pakistan-rules-military-operations-yemen-150410074921586.html>

<sup>66</sup> "UN: Majority Of Yemen War Victims Are Civilians", *Aljazeera*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/majority-yemen-war-victims-civilians-150413133325397.html>

## F. The United State of America

### National

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Air Force Chief Welsh describes air force's future missions; Thompson says, preventing child abuse is everyone's responsibility; Dy Defence Secretary Work: better buying power 3.0 strives to enhance U.S. tech edge; Commercial IT fuels DoD Information environment, official says; Obama criticizes partisan jabs at nuclear deal with Iran.**

In the future, the Air Force's core missions will probably not change, but the way they are carried out will, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III said on April 8. Welsh, speaking to the Defence Writers Group, said the Air Force's missions include air and space superiority, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, rapid global mobility, global strike and command and control. Those missions "are what the joint force requires to be successful," the general said. But there will be more traditional jobs, too, Welsh said. "We're going to get the same kind of people who we've gotten for years," the general said. "They want to fly the F-22, the F-35, the X-wing fighter. Those people still want to come do this and we'll have options for them in the future." Some of the systems the Air Force has in the current inventory will still be in use in 2035, but what is carried aboard these platforms will bring new capabilities to the service, the joint force and the nation, Welsh said.<sup>67</sup>

The Defence Department observes April as the Month of the Military Child, and also recognizes this time of year as it pertains to a more sobering topic: National Child Abuse Prevention Month. In a recent DoD news interview, Barbara Thompson — director of DoD's Office of Family Readiness — stressed that anyone aware of red flags and potential cases of abuse has an obligation to bring the concerns to light. Learning how to support parents, identify risks and mitigate those risks are critical elements in child abuse prevention, she added. "We have a role, each and every one of us, to support children's health and safety," Thompson said. DoD has taken a multipronged approach to help parents provide a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for their children, Thompson said. Through military treatment facilities, she added, perinatal nurses and doctors can support military families' unique needs. Pediatricians are among the most trusted sources of information for parents, she noted.<sup>68</sup>

The United States must maintain technological superiority over potential adversaries and competitors, and the latest iteration of the Defence Department's Better Buying Power initiative is designed to maintain that edge, Deputy Defence Secretary Robert Work said in Washington, on April 9. Called Better Buying Power 3.0, the programme builds on previous versions, Work told Pentagon reporters. Other countries have been investing heavily in advanced capabilities,

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<sup>67</sup> Garamone, Jim, "Welsh Describes Air Force of the Future", *DoD News*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128548>

<sup>68</sup> Lyle, Amaani, "Preventing Child Abuse is Everyone's Responsibility", *DoD News*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128552>

DoD's acquisition chief said, while the U.S. military's modernization account has been the department's emergency fund. Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, added that modernization dollars have been raided to pay for readiness in the face of sequestration and flat budgets. Changing that is key to military dominance, Kendall told reporters. Research and development is what powers new technologies, new capabilities and new capacities, he noted.<sup>69</sup>

Defence Department Chief Information Officer Terry Halvorsen is leading a charge to modernize the department's information technology-cyber enterprise using every available tool, especially those in commercial markets, David A. Cotton, acting deputy CIO for information enterprise said. Cotton recently spoke to an audience at the FedScoop 2015 Mobile Gov Summit about how DoD is leveraging the power of commercial IT to give its workforce access to information at the point of need. The department has 1.4 million active-duty men and women, 718,000 civilians and 1.1 million National Guard and Reserve members. More than 450,000 of those employees, he noted, are overseas or outside the continental United States. The department, he added, has several hundred thousand buildings, and structures at more than 5,000 locations on 30 billion acres of land. The framework for the department's IT-cyber modernization is the Joint Information Environment, or JIE, which Cotton calls a vision for the future and something the department always will be trying to achieve. Within the JIE are shared IT infrastructure, common configurations and management, and a common set of enterprise services and capabilities, all with a single security architecture so the system will be more secure, more effective and more efficient, Cotton said.<sup>70</sup>

U.S. President Barack Obama said on April 11 that partisan wrangling over nuclear negotiations with Iran and on other foreign policy matters has gone too far. "It needs to stop," he declared during a press conference at the close of the Summit of the Americas in Panama. He said that when he heard some members of Congress, like Republican Senator John McCain suggested that Secretary of State John Kerry "is somehow less trustworthy in the interpretation of what's in a political agreement than the supreme leader of Iran, that's an indication of the degree to which partisanship has crossed all boundaries."<sup>71</sup>

## International: Asia

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Carter discusses U.S. rebalance strategy and China's growing influence in the Asia Pacific region; Defence Secretary Carter says, future is in Asia-Pacific region; Combat support agency counters worldwide IED threats; Leaders reaffirm U.S.-Saudi Arabia defence ties; US: failure to amend Myanmar constitution 'raises questions' on reform; Carter, Japanese Prime Minister**

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<sup>69</sup> Garamone, Jim, "Work: Better Buying Power 3.0 Strives to Enhance U.S. Tech Edge", *DoD News*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128558>

<sup>70</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "Commercial IT Fuels DoD Information Environment, Official Says", *DoD News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128564>

<sup>71</sup> "Obama Criticizes Partisan Jabs at Nuclear Deal with Iran", *VOA News*, April 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-rakes-partisanship-over-iran-nuclear-deal/2715939.html>

**discuss bilateral and regional issues in Tokyo; Carter, Japan's Defence Minister conduct alliance talks; Defence Secretary Carter, South Korea President Geun-hye reaffirm alliance; Obama concerned China bullying South China Sea nations.**

U.S. re-emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region makes sense regionally and globally, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said at Arizona State University on April 6. The secretary spoke at the John McCain Institute in Tempe, Arizona, as the first part of a trip that takes him to Japan, South Korea and Hawaii. The secretary's speech aimed to push for quick passage of the Trade Promotion Authority for President Barack Obama, "so that he can ensure America gets the best deal in a historic new trade agreement with eleven other Asia-Pacific countries: the Trans-Pacific Partnership." Carter stressed that while the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region has a military component, it is a whole-of-government approach. On China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific, Carter said, "I reject the zero-sum thinking that China's gain is our loss because there is another scenario in which everyone wins — and it is a continuation of the decades of peace and stability anchored by a strong American role, in which all Asia-Pacific countries continue to rise and prosper. This is the scenario we seek in the ongoing rebalance." Yet, many observers are concerned about the scope of China's military modernization efforts, China's actions in cyberspace, and Chinese behaviour in the East and South China Seas, the secretary said.<sup>72</sup>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter thanked U.S. troops at Osan Air Base, South Korea, for their service and spoke to them about the importance of the Asia-Pacific region. Traveling on his first official visit to the region as defence secretary, Carter held a troop talk on April 9 and told a group of gathered service members it was a privilege to be with them. He assured them that their presence in such a dangerous location was not taken for granted. The secretary told the troops the region they help defend "is the part of the world where, more than any other single part of the world, the future lies." He noted that half of the world's people and half of the global economy reside in the region, and he said it's very important that peace be kept.<sup>73</sup>

The organization that has fought for a decade to defeat improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by American enemies in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has become a combat support agency, its director said in a recent interview to DoD News. The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization – known as JIEDDO – was realigned under the defence undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics on March 11 and is "here to stay," Army Lt. Gen. John D. Johnson said. Johnson said he wants to ensure every commander and war fighter is aware of the agency's capabilities to support those in the field. There was some thought that JIEDDO might cease to exist following the end of the two wars, Johnson said, but that is not the case. He said, "IEDs have proliferated around the world, and they challenge security forces across the globe. Now we're back helping the Iraqis with the problems there, and our enemies are using IEDs in greater numbers all the time".<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Garamone, Jim, "Carter Discusses U.S. Rebalance to Asia-Pacific Region", *DoD News*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128536>

<sup>73</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Future is in Asia-Pacific Region, Carter Says", *DoD News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128562>

<sup>74</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "Combat Support Agency Counters Worldwide IED Threats", *DoD News*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128532>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter spoke by telephone with Saudi Arabian Defence Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman on April 6 and praised the countries' strategic relationship, Pentagon officials said in a written statement. Carter underscored the U.S. commitment to the region and Saudi Arabia's security, emphasizing the importance of limiting civilian casualties when conducting airstrikes, the statement said. "The two leaders agreed on the need to work toward a political solution in Yemen, and they discussed the importance of continuing to combat al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula," the statement said.<sup>75</sup>

The United States said on April 7 Myanmar's failure to amend a military-drafted constitution raised questions about the credibility of reforms, but did not go so far as to say it would undermine the legitimacy of upcoming elections. Myanmar emerged from 49 years of military rule in 2011 and its semi-civilian government has carried out wide-ranging democratic reforms, including freeing political prisoners and allowing the formation of political parties. But concern is growing that the reform programme is stalling or even sliding back. The U.S. embassy said the constitution should be amended to allow civilian control of the military and provide "the right of citizens to elect freely the leaders of their choice." "Failure to amend the constitution will raise questions about the credibility of democratic reform going forward," an embassy spokesman told *Reuters*.<sup>76</sup>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on April 8 in advance of the prime minister's visit to Washington later this month, according to a Defence Department statement. The two leaders reaffirmed the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the importance of its contributions to peace and security both in the Asia-Pacific region and around the globe. They agreed that the revision of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defence Cooperation is a historic moment for the U.S.-Japan Alliance, the statement said, opening new opportunities for security and defence cooperation, including on issues like responding to pandemic health crises and providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief around the world.<sup>77</sup>

On the initial overseas stop of his first Asia-Pacific trip as defence secretary, Ash Carter met with Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani in Tokyo on April 8 to discuss the alliance and mutual world interests. As the U.S. military rebalances its focus in that part of the world, Carter told reporters in a joint press conference he and Nakatani reaffirmed their nations' strong alliance, and Carter spoke of his personal interest in cultivating those ties. The leaders talked about defence cooperation guidelines, security legislation, space, cyberspace, equipment and science technology cooperation, in addition to the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. Nakatani said that the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region encourages agreements to oppose attempts at changing the status quo by force in the East China Sea and elsewhere. The new defence guidelines detail how both governments will continue to work together around the world and in new domains

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<sup>75</sup> "Leaders Reaffirm U.S.-Saudi Arabia Defence Ties", *DoD News*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128539>

<sup>76</sup> "US: Failure to Amend Myanmar Constitution 'Raises Questions' on Reform", *Reuters*, April 07, 2015 <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-us-failure-to-amend-myanmar-constitution-raises-questions-on-reform/2710162.html>

<sup>77</sup> "Carter, Japanese Prime Minister Discuss Issues in Tokyo", *DoD News*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128543>

such as space and cyberspace, and Nakatani said it would ensure Japan's peace and security and help it respond flexibly "to the full scope of challenges we face," both in the region and around the world.<sup>78</sup>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with South Korea President Park Geun-hye in Seoul and reaffirmed the strength and importance of the enduring alliance between the United States and South Korea, according to a Defence Department statement issued on April 10. Carter is on first trip to the Asia-Pacific region as defence secretary. The meeting took place as a precursor to Park's upcoming visit to Washington, the release stated. The leaders discussed the importance of their countries' partnership, both in deterring North Korean threats to security and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and in helping assure continued peace and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region, according to the release. They also covered a wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues relevant to the U.S.-South Korea alliance, including broadening allied security cooperation into new domains like space and cyberspace, the release said.<sup>79</sup>

In a joint press conference after meeting with South Korean Minister of Defence Han Min-koo on April 10, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said that the U.S.-South Korea alliance has a global reach based on mutual trust and common values. Carter also reaffirmed the United States' resolve and support for the alliance and the defence of the Republic of Korea, and he emphasized America's unwavering commitment to its rebalancing strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>80</sup>

President Barack Obama says Washington is concerned China is using its "sheer size and muscle" to push aside smaller nations with claims to areas of the South China Sea. Speaking at a town hall meeting during a visit to Jamaica on April 9, Obama said Washington is concerned that China is not necessarily abiding by international norms and rules, forcing countries into subordinate positions. China's rapid reclamation projects around reefs in the Spratly islands of the South China Sea have alarmed other claimants such as the Philippines and Vietnam. "We think this can be solved diplomatically, but just because the Philippines or Vietnam are not as large as China doesn't mean that they can just be elbowed aside," said Obama.<sup>81</sup>

## Indo-US Relations

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Pushing India to embrace renewable energy and combat climate change; Modi says India to strike own path in climate battle; US, Israel slam release of Mumbai attacks mastermind Lakhvi.**

The US, China and India are the three largest carbon emitters and thus, it's no surprise that after the United States and China reached a historic climate change deal in November 2014, attention

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<sup>78</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter, Japan's Defence Minister Conduct Alliance Talks", *DoD News*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128551>

<sup>79</sup> "Carter, South Korea President Reaffirm Alliance", *DoD News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128559>

<sup>80</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter, South Korea's Han Solidify Alliance", *DoD News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128565>

<sup>81</sup> "Obama Concerned China Bullying South China Sea Nations", *VOA News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-concerned-china-pushing-around-south-china-sea-nations/2713784.html>

quickly turned towards India. While India and the US did announce a modest agreement on clean energy during Obama's visit, the Modi Sarkar did not announce a cut in carbon emission. India under the Modi regime does not want to follow the US & China to fight the climate change but more than willing to surpass the two countries in what led to the climate change.<sup>82</sup> The 2016 presidential candidates will spend the next 18 months trying to look like leaders capable of protecting America from looming international threats. Climate change belongs on that list; the U.S. military has already said as much. Here, U.S. leadership can push India to embrace renewable energy and combat climate change.<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi signalled on April 6 that he would not bow to foreign pressure to commit to cuts in carbon emissions, instead pledging to use more clean energy and traditional methods to lead the fight against climate change. India, the world's No.3 emitter of greenhouse gases, has come under pressure to tackle its rapidly rising emissions since the United States and China committed last November to start cutting their own emissions after a "peak year". United Nations climate talks will be held in Paris later this year to look at ways to limit a damaging rise in global temperatures. Getting India to agree to a strategy to lower its own emissions is vital if the talks are to be judged a success. "The world guides us on climate change and we follow them? The world sets the parameters and we follow them? It is not like that," Modi said at an event in Delhi. "We can lead the world." The Indian government has said it needs to emit more to industrialize and lift millions out of poverty.<sup>84</sup>

The US, France and Israel have joined India in criticising the release on bail of LeT commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks, with Washington saying it was "gravely concerned" by the development. Shortly after Lakhvi walked out of a jail in the Pakistani garrison city of Rawalpindi, the issue figured in talks between French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is in Paris. Hollande described the release of the Lashkar-e-Taiba's operations commander as "deeply shocking". The US State Department said it had conveyed its concerns over Lakhvi's release to Pakistan and urged Islamabad to deliver on its commitment to prosecute those responsible for the Mumbai attacks, which left 166 people dead, including six Americans. "We are gravely concerned about the release on bail of alleged Mumbai attack mastermind Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi. We have communicated that concern to senior Pakistani officials over the course of many months," State Department spokesperson Jeff Rathke told a news briefing on April 10.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> "India & Climate Change - Running for Catastrophe?", *IBN Live*, April 8, 2015 at <http://ibnlive.in.com/blogs/gauravpandhi/3745/65565/india-climate-change-running-for-catastrophe.html>

<sup>83</sup> See Wheelan, Charles, "Convince India to Ditch Coal", *US News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/charles-wheelan/2015/03/30/us-leadership-can-push-india-and-china-to-address-climate-change>

<sup>84</sup> "Modi Says India To Strike Own Path In Climate Battle", *Reuters*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/06/us-india-climatechange-idUSKBN0MX0FF20150406>

<sup>85</sup> HT Correspondents, "US, Israel slam release of Mumbai attacks mastermind Lakhvi", *Hindustan Times*, April 11, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/us-isreal-slam-release-of-mumbai-attacks-mastermind-lakhvi/article1-1336033.aspx>; And, also see Tanzeem, Ayesha, "US Denounces Release of Alleged Mumbai Attack Mastermind", *VOA News*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pakistan-frees-suspected-mumbai-attack-mastermind/2713866.html>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Indian Naval Ships evacuated 2671 persons including 964 foreign nationals from 30 countries from Yemen; First of the Indian Navy's Scorpene class stealth submarines Kalvari undocked.**

Indian Naval Ship Tarkash evacuated 464 personnel of different nationalities from the war torn city of Aden, Yemen on April 10, 2015. 46 Indians nationals and 422 persons hailing from 14 countries were evacuated in this trip from the port city of Aden and disembarked at Djibouti on April 11, 15. It was learnt from the evacuees that the city Aden continues to remain under siege by the Houthis and the situation there was grim with continuous shelling and firing taking place. Despite the difficult conditions, embarkation continued to be undertaken by Indian Navy. Till now Indian Naval Ships Mumbai, Tarkash and Sumitra deployed in Gulf of Aden have evacuated 2671 persons including 964 foreign nationals from 30 countries. Evacuation operations as part of Op Rahat continues to be progressed by the Indian Navy Ship deployed off the coast of Yemen.<sup>86</sup>

Kalvari, first of the Indian Navy's Scorpene class stealth submarines being built under the Project 75, under collaboration with M/s DCNS, France, achieved a major milestone on April 6 with her undocking at the Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL). It is considered to be a major milestone for Indian Navy's Project 75. The project 75 which has already seen a delay of almost 40 months has now been brought on track and the delivery schedule for the successive submarines has been reduced. Kalvari, upon its scheduled commissioning in 2016, would lend an enormous fillip to the Indian Navy's underwater capability. The remaining five boats of the Project 75 would be delivered by the yard to the Navy by 2020 and would form the core of the Navy's submarine arm for the next two decades.<sup>87</sup>

### International

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Sweden to send 120 troops to northern Iraq to train Iraqi and Kurdish fighters as part of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State group; Israel critical of framework agreement between the P5+1 world powers and Iran.**

Reports say that Sweden will send up to 120 troops to northern Iraq to train Iraqi and Kurdish fighters as part of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State group. The Swedish troops will

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<sup>86</sup> "Evacuation Operations from Yemen - 'Operation Raahat'," *PIB*, April 12, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118176>

<sup>87</sup> "First of Scorpene Submarines-Kalvari 'Undocked'," *PIB*, April 06, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117981>

provide military advice and training only and not act as combat units. They will focus on Kurdish peshmerga forces. The Swedish forces are expected to be in place in June and will be under US command. No end-date for their participation has been announced. The international coalition fighting IS in northern Iraq – which includes Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Finland – has been in place since August and has carried out airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, Israeli leaders have continued efforts to discredit the framework agreement between the P5+1 world powers and Iran. Israeli leaders are insisting that there are strong and viable alternatives to the deal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeated his two formidable alternatives on April 12. He suggested a better deal must “significantly roll back” Iran’s nuclear capabilities. One way of doing so, he argued, would be to “shut down the illicit underground facilities that Iran concealed for years from the international community.” Additionally, he called for easing restrictions to Iran’s nuclear programme only if Iran puts an end to its “aggression” in the Middle East, “its worldwide terrorism and its threats to annihilate Israel.” Iran’s insistence on immediate removal of sanctions, stalling the inspection process and increased presence in Yemen and elsewhere are the most pressing concerns for Netanyahu.<sup>89</sup>

### III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

#### Jammu & Kashmir

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Three terror attacks in a day in J&K, 3 policemen killed; Pakistan ISI tells militants to target forces; 4000 Kashmir youth in PaK, Pakistan: J&K Govt.; Parties up in arms against “Composite townships” for ‘Kashmiri Pandits.**

Militants on April 6 shot dead three unarmed policemen – one head constable and two constables – who had gone for investigating a crime at Ashipora village in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir. There have been three attacks by terrorists in a span of four hours in the Kashmir valley. Earlier in the day, Sub Inspector Ghulam Mustafa was shot at and critically injured by two pistol-borne militants in a bus which was on its way to Pattan area of Baramulla district, a police official said. In yet another earlier incident on the same day, a civilian was injured in Tral in south Kashmir.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> “Sweden To Join Coalition Against Islamic State,” *Defence News*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/04/09/sweden-join-us-led-coalition-islamic-state/25549413/>

<sup>89</sup> “Israeli Leaders Weigh In on Looming Iran Deal,” *Defence News*, April 12, 2015 at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/04/12/israeli-leaders-weigh-in-on-looming-iran-deal/25677597/>

<sup>90</sup> “3 Policemen Killed In Militant Attack in J&K’s Shopian”, *Deccan Chronicle*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/150406/nation-current-affairs/article/3-policemen-killed-militant-attack-jks-shopian>

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence has directed militants operating in Jammu and Kashmir to direct their attacks on Indian security personnel and establishments, rather than civilian targets, Union Home Ministry officials said on April 6. Quoting intelligence inputs from last week, the official said the directive from Pakistan's Army to terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen comes in the wake of international pressure. Global powers have joined hands against terrorist violence aimed at innocent civilians, he said.<sup>91</sup>

In written reply to a question submitted by Bashir Ahmad Veeri of National Conference, the Chief Minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed informed the Legislative Council that 4,000 persons who crossed the LOC for arms training are presently in Pakistan administered Kashmir (PAK) and Pakistan. The CM also revealed that 453 persons have returned to the State after the Union Home Ministry notified the policy for their return in 2010.<sup>92</sup>

The ruling PDP-BJP coalition in Jammu and Kashmir seemed headed for another confrontation with chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed denying talk of separate clusters for Kashmiri Pandits who wished to return while Union home minister Rajnath Singh insisted the plan stood. "We won't make separate clusters for Kashmiri Pandits," Sayeed assured the opposition in the assembly, asking separatists, too, not to politicise the issue. The government had on April 8 issued a similar clarification, a day after Singh asked Sayeed to provide land in the state for "composite townships" and reportedly got a positive response from the CM.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, separatists in the valley have joined ranks to call for a shutdown on April 11 over the proposed township for Kashmiri Pandits. However, the community (KP) has refused to accept any such offer saying they are not ready to return under threat from militant outfits. Different Pandit organisations said they are not ready for either composite or separate settlement unless the state and central government take up confidence-building measures.<sup>94</sup>

## Northeast India

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Another NSCN outfit born in Nagaland; Centre begins peace talks with NLFT-B; One 'ULFA (I) cadre' killed in East Garo Hills; Arunachal CM seeks review of extension of AFSPA; One killed and three injured in grenade blast in Assam.**

The Wangtin-led NSCN group has been christened as NSCN-Reformation or NSCN-R. A press note from the group said, a joint council meeting chaired by Y Wangtin at Mon was attended by

<sup>91</sup> "ISI Has Told Militants To Target Security Forces", *The Hindu*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/isi-forcing-militants-to-attack-indian-security-forces-says-mha/article7074270.ece>

<sup>92</sup> Maqbool, Umer, "4000 Kashmir Youth in PaK, Pakistan: Govt.", *Greater Kashmir*, April 6, 2015 at <http://epaper.greaterkashmir.com/Details.aspx?id=6076&boxid=113238452>

<sup>93</sup> "Rajnath Bats For Kashmiri Pandit Clusters in Valley after CM Rejects Idea", *Hindustan Times*, Apr 10, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rajnath-bats-for-kashmiri-pandit-clusters-in-valley-even-after-cm-says-he-is-against-it/article1-1335636.aspx>

<sup>94</sup> Thakur, Pradeep, "Pandits Reject Offer As Separatists Call Stir", *The Times of India*, April 10, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Pandits-reject-offer-as-separatists-call-stir/articleshow/46870105.cms>

members from both the 'Naga Army' and the civil set up and it was unanimously resolved to name the National Socialist Council of Nagaland led by Y Wangtin Naga and P Tikhak as National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Reformation) or NSCN(R) and the Government will be known as Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland or GPRN.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, the NSCN (K) has cautioned people of Nagaland against tax collection by its breakaway faction.<sup>96</sup>

To pave the way for enmasse surrender of outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) cadres, a tripartite meeting involving the Centre, State Government and the outfit was held in Shillong. While Tripura DGP K Nagraj and Director of Tribal Welfare L Darlong represented the State Government, three rebel leaders—Utpal Debbarma, Kajal Debbarma and Karna Debbarma and two IB officials representing the Centre joined the meeting held on April 2, according to highly placed sources. NLFT's peace talks offer came at a time when they are under immense pressure in Bangladesh. According to security analysts, the NLFT has no option other than peace talks because it has been facing a lot of problems in running the show. The number of its cadres has reduced to 30/45 due to an onslaught by Bangladesh law enforcement agencies.<sup>97</sup>

A suspected United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) cadre was killed in an encounter with security personnel near Nokrek Peak in the Durama Hills. The encounter, which took place at about 2:30 pm on April 7 also led to the busting of a major training camp, though only few arms and ammunition could be recovered from there.<sup>98</sup>

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Nabam Tuki on April 9 called on the Centre to urgently review the decision of extending the Armed Forces Special Powers' Act (AFSPA) to all the districts of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam. Terming the Centre's decision as unilateral, he pointed out that it was not taken in consultation with the State Government. The Chief Minister argued that Arunachal Pradesh has been the most peaceful State in the region with no history of home-grown insurgency.<sup>99</sup>

One person was killed and three others were injured in a grenade blast on April 12 in Udalguri district of Assam. The grenade exploded near a market in Rowta area killing one person on spot while three others sustained serious injuries. The deceased was identified as Ram Chandra Barman, a scrap dealer, police said.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> "Breakaway Faction Christened as NSCN-R", *The Assam Tribune*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr0715/oth055>

<sup>96</sup> "NSCN (K) Warns Breakaway Faction", *The Assam Tribune*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr0815/oth052>

<sup>97</sup> "Peace Talks With NLFT-B Begins", *The Assam Tribune*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr0715/oth057>

<sup>98</sup> "'ULFA (I) Cadre' Killed in East Garo Hills", *The Assam Tribune*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr0815/oth051>

<sup>99</sup> "Tuki Seeks Review Of Extension of AFSPA", *The Assam Tribune*, April 11, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1115/oth052>

<sup>100</sup> "1 killed, 3 Injured in Grenade Blast in Assam", *The New Indian Express*, April 12, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/1-killed-3-Injured-in-Grenade-Blast-in-Assam/2015/04/12/article2760685.ece>

## Left-wing Extremism

(April 6-12, 2015)

- **Policeman 'surrenders' before Maoists; Maoist-hit states take lessons from Odisha; BSF inducts two Mi-17 helicopters; Naxalite ambush kills 7 policemen in Chhattisgarh.**

Amid claims by the Bastar Police that hundreds of Maoists have surrendered in the past year, a "reverse surrender" of a police constable has taken place, the CPI (Maoist) has said. "Michche Vadda, 37, a police constable posted in the Farasgav police station of Narayanpur, has surrendered before the Kutul area Janatana Sarkar of the CPI (Maoist). He worked for the police for more than 10 years since 2005. He was being harassed by his senior officers and was pained over the continuous atrocities by security forces on the tribal people in Bastar," said a statement issued by Rajmand Mandavi, secretary of the Mad divisional committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist).<sup>101</sup>

Senior police officers of eight Maoist-hit states visited Odisha on April 8 to study its success model against the ultras. At a brainstorming session with top Odisha cops at Bhubaneswar, the touring police personnel from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka discussed measures to improve their intelligence wings. Senior officers from the ministry of home affairs (MHA) also participated.<sup>102</sup>

The Border Security Force (BSF) has inducted two Russian-built Mi-17 V5 medium lift choppers to carry out air support missions along the border and for anti-Naxalite operations in the hinterland. The choppers were formally inducted into the fleet on April 16. The BSF currently operates a mixed fleet of six older MI-17s, six Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters and a Cheetah helicopter. The new choppers are armed with latest avionics and night-flying capabilities that have been a long-time requirement of the BSF which is increasingly undertaking operations in Naxal violence affected zones.<sup>103</sup>

Seven personnel of Chhattisgarh's elite Special Task Force were killed and 10 injured in a Maoist ambush on April 11 in Sukma in south Bastar, in the biggest attack on security forces this year in the state. The spot of the ambush, in forests near Pidmel village, is about 11 km from the Kankerlanka police camp. This is the STF's single-biggest casualty in a day in several years. The men, numbering around 60, were attacked between 9 am and 10 am by cadres suspected to belong to the CPI (Maoist)'s South Bastar battalion, headed by Hidma. The STF personnel were forced to retreat, leaving the dead behind. Maoists also looted several quality weapons and ammunition.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dahat, Pavan, "Policeman 'Surrenders' Before Maoists", *The Hindu*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/policeman-surrenders-before-maoists/article7070919.ece>

<sup>102</sup> "8 Maoist-hit States Take Lessons from Odisha", *The Times of India*, April 9, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/8-Maoist-hit-states-take-lessons-from-Odisha/articleshow/46862133.cms>

<sup>103</sup> Peri, Dinakar, "BSF Inducts Two Mi-17 Helicopters", *The Hindu*, April 10, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/bsf-inducts-two-mi17-helicopters/article7086019.ece>

<sup>104</sup> Bhardwaj, Ashutosh, "Naxals Kill 7 Of Elite Force in Sukma", *The Indian Express*, April 12, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/seven-stf-personnel-killed-11-injured-in-maoist-attack-in-chhattisgarh/>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### United Nations

(March 30-April 12, 2015)

- **Syria gets \$3.8b aid, conflict grips the Yarmouk camp, second round of intra-Syrian talks begin; Yemen simmers amidst resolutions and their counter at the UNSC, UN bodies deliver humanitarian assistance to Yemen; UN seeks \$174 m to aid refugees fleeing the Boko Haram; Kenya seeks removal of UN refugee camp after Garissa University tragedy; Sudan National Dialogue stalls; UNFCCC received INDCs of US, Russia and Gabon; UN records success in Myanmar and Mali; Three UN reports released: Al Qaeda's recruiting grounds, North Korea's humanitarian requirements and status of primary education in the world.**

At the Third International Pledging Conference for Syria held in Kuwait, the UN raised \$3.8 billion as aid for addressing humanitarian issues in Syria. Some of the largest contributions were made by the European Union (\$1.2 b), United States (\$507 m), Kuwait (\$ 500 m) and Saudi Arabia (\$ 60 m).<sup>105</sup> The Yarmouk camp on the outskirts of Damascus that had been home to Palestinian families suffered as the Islamic State attacked it in its pursuit of rival insurgents. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) urged for restraint.<sup>106</sup> The second round of intra-Syrian talks commenced in Russia and a representative of the UN special envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura is also present in these talks.<sup>107</sup>

The crisis in Yemen continued to seize the attention of the UN. As the number of civilian casualties rose, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini raised an alarm that Yemen was on the verge of collapse.<sup>108</sup> On April 3, Russia called for an emergency session of the UNSC to discuss the provision "humanitarian pauses" in the Saudi-led air strikes in Yemen.<sup>109</sup> The call for "humanitarian pause" of several hours every day was made by the UN on April 10. Also, Jordan urged for the adoption of a UNSC resolution to ban all supply of arms to the Houthis and their supporters in Yemen.<sup>110</sup> Russia and Venezuela objected saying the ban on arming should apply

<sup>105</sup> Staff Writer, "U.N.: Syria Donors Pledge \$3.8 Billion At Crisis Meeting", March 31, 2015 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/03/31/U-N-seeks-billions-for-Syria-at-Kuwait-donors-meet-.html>

<sup>106</sup> Sandford, Alasdair, "Syria: Civilians in 'Acute Danger' At Yarmouk Refugee Camp, Warns UN", April 5, 2015 at <http://www.euronews.com/2015/04/05/syria-civilians-in-acute-danger-at-yarmouk-refugee-camp-warns-un/>

<sup>107</sup> "Sputnik, UN welcomes intra-Syrian talks", April 7, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150407/1020592276.html>

<sup>108</sup> "Senior UN Officials Deeply Concerned Over Civilian Casualties In Wake Of Recent Fighting in Yemen", *UN News Centre*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50464#.VS9EndyUcpQ>

<sup>109</sup> Campbell, Jamie, "Russia calls an emergency UN council over Yemen crisis", April 04 2015 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russia-calls-an-emergency-un-council-over-yemen-crisis-10155392.html>

<sup>110</sup> Lederer, Edith M., "Jordan Circulates UN Resolution Aimed At Ending Yemen Fight", April 7, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/jordan-circulates-un-resolution-aimed-ending-yemen-fight-174326644.html>

to all parties in the conflict.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, the UNICEF and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) managed to provide humanitarian assistance, especially medical aid, amidst the continuing conflict.<sup>112</sup>

The Boko Haram carried out attacks in Chad on April 3 and Niger on April 5. The UNSC condemned these attacks and urged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to cooperate and coordinate better to deal with the threat posed by the group.<sup>113</sup> The UN appealed for an aid to the tune of \$174 million for helping the 200,000 Nigerians who have fled to save themselves from the Boko Haram.<sup>114</sup>

Following the deadly attack by the al-Shabaab killing 148 students at the Garissa University, Kenya has urged the UNHCR to close down its Dadaab camp, which in addition to giving refuge to the Somalis was being used by the militant group to operate in Kenya.<sup>115</sup>

In a set back to the UN supported, African Union led efforts to mediate the conflict in Sudan by setting up a Sudan National Dialogue, a pre-dialogue among all stakeholders in the conflict fell through as the ruling National Congress Party and allies decided to stay away from the meeting.<sup>116</sup>

The UN observer mission in Myanmar witnessed a moment of cheer with the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the government of Myanmar and sixteen ethnic rebel groups after sixty years of conflict. It hailed the agreement as "historic and significant".<sup>117</sup> A similar success came in Mali with a peace and reconciliation accord between the Malian Government, armed groups and an international mediation team. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) which has been under attacks can hope that the situation will improve gradually.<sup>118</sup>

In the lead up to the Paris Summit of December 2015 where an international climate change agreement is hoped to be arrived at, the US submitted Intended Nationally Determined

<sup>111</sup> "Russia Objects To U.N. DRAFT BANNING ARMS TO Houthis," *Associated Press*, April 9, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/09/Russia-objects-to-draft-banning-arms-to-Houthis-.html>

<sup>112</sup> "Yemen: UN Relief Agencies Rush Assessment Teams, Supplies To Crisis-Torn Country," *UN News Centre*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50515#.VS-T29yUcpQ>

<sup>113</sup> "Security Council condemns Boko Haram attacks in northeast Nigeria, Chad," *UN News Centre*, April 7, 2015", <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50511#.VS-Tf9yUcpQ>,

<sup>114</sup> "UN in \$174m Appeal for Nigeria's Boko Haram Refugees", *AFP*, April 9, 2015, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/africa/2015/04/09/un-in-174m-appeal-for-nigeria-s-boko-haram-refugees>

<sup>115</sup> Miriri, Duncan, "After Al Shabab Attack, Kenya Demands Huge UN Refugee Camp Be Removed", *Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 2015 at <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/2015/0411/After-Al-Shabab-attack-Kenya-demands-huge-UN-refugee-camp-be-removed-video>

<sup>116</sup> "Secretary-General Disappointed At Cancellation Of Meeting To Establish Sudan National Dialogue", *UN News Centre*, April 04, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50502#.VS-EkNyUcpQ>

<sup>117</sup> "Myanmar Ceasefire Draft 'Historic And Significant': United Nations", *PTI*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/myanmar-ceasefire-draft-historic-and-significant-united-nations/16104246>

<sup>118</sup> "Mali: Security Council Welcomes Political Agreement As 'Historic' Step Towards Peace", *UN News Centre*, April 10, 2015 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50541#.VS-jNdyUcpQ>

Contribution (INDC) to cut greenhouse gas emissions 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025 to the UNFCCC. This was followed by Russia.<sup>119</sup> Russia made its submission the following day. Gabon became the first African nation to submit its INDC.<sup>120</sup>

Experts of the Al Qaeda sanctions committee reported to the UN Security Council that Iraq and Syria have become 'international finishing schools' for extremists. There were reportedly 22,000 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, 6,500 in Afghanistan and several hundred in Yemen, Libya, Pakistan and Somalia.<sup>121</sup> The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) presented its assessment of the humanitarian issues in North Korea and claimed that an estimated \$ 1.1 billion will be required to address them.<sup>122</sup> The UNESCO's latest annual report states that only a third of the 164 countries who had pledged in 2000 to provide basic education to all its people have succeeded in doing so. Several European countries, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia are among the achievers.<sup>123</sup>

## India and the UN

(March 30-April 12, 2015)

- **India joins anti-terrorism group at UN; India urges support to mass manufacturing in developing countries; India calls for genuine dialogue on nuclear disarmament; India re-elected to four UN bodies; PM addresses the UNESCO.**

India joined the 30-nation "Group of Friends against Terrorism", an initiative led by Morocco to coordinate and give impetus to the UN's fight against terrorism. The group has representative from African countries (Morocco, Ethiopia, Egypt, Chad, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa), Western Europe (Spain, Germany, Norway and Turkey), from Eastern Europe (Czech Republic and Bulgaria), Asia (India, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates), Latin America (Argentina, Brazil and Colombia) and Oceania (New Zealand and Australia).<sup>124</sup>

India's Permanent Representative (PR) to the UN, Asoke Mukerji, made an appeal to predominantly agricultural developing countries to engage in mass manufacturing and industrialisation to reap the demographic dividend. Speaking at a meeting of the ECOSOC, he

<sup>119</sup> Fiona Harvey and Suzanne Goldenberg, "US Pledges Emissions Cuts Of Up To 28% Ahead Of Global Climate Treaty", March 31, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/31/us-set-to-propose-emissions-cuts-of-28-ahead-of-global-climate-treaty>

<sup>120</sup> *Uwaegbulam, Chinedum*, "Gabon Becomes First African Country to Submit UN Climate Action Plan", April 6, 2015 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504061331.html>

<sup>121</sup> Nichols, Michelle, "Syria, Iraq a 'Finishing School' For Foreign Fighters: U.N. Report", *Reuters*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/31/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state-un-idUSKBN0MR2NP20150331>

<sup>122</sup> "UN Calls For \$111 Million To Address Urgent Humanitarian Priorities in DPR Korea", *UN News Centre*, April 8, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50523#.VS-Wt9yUcpQ>

<sup>123</sup> "Only a Third of Countries Reach 2015 Education Goals: UN", *AFP*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.mb.com.ph/only-a-third-of-countries-reach-2015-education-goals-un/>

<sup>124</sup> "India, 29 Nations Join Hands against Terrorism", *Zee News*, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-29-nations-join-hands-against-terrorism\\_1571504.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-29-nations-join-hands-against-terrorism_1571504.html)

highlighted the manner in which India is focusing on skill development to do this. He said, "India's policy aims to boost the share of manufacturing in the country's Gross Domestic Product from 16 per cent to 25 per cent by 2022 and to create 100 million additional jobs by 2022 in the sector."<sup>125</sup>

Speaking at a session of the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), India's PR to the forum DB Venkatesh Varma urged for a meaningful dialogue among nuclear weapon states to bring about nuclear disarmament.<sup>126</sup>

India was re-elected to four UN bodies for their next terms: the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for three years beginning January 2016, the Executive Board of the World Food Programme for the 2016-2018, to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) for a three-year term, beginning January 2016 and to the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for the term 2016-2019.<sup>127</sup>

At the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the importance of the UNESCO and the value India places on its partnership with the organisation. He underscored the importance of the UNESCO in carrying forward the goals of sustainable development, the post-2015 agenda, climate change and peace and security.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> "Need Production By The Masses: India to United Nations", *PTI*, April 2, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/need-production-by-the-masses-india-to-united-nations-751666>

<sup>126</sup> "India Wants Meaningful Dialogue among Nations Possessing Nukes", *Zee News*, April 8, 2015, [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-wants-meaningful-dialogue-among-nations-possessing-nukes\\_1575234.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-wants-meaningful-dialogue-among-nations-possessing-nukes_1575234.html)

<sup>127</sup> "India Elected To Four Key U.N. Bodies", *PTI*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-elected-to-four-key-subsidiary-bodies-of-un/article7084318.ece>

<sup>128</sup> "Full Text of the Prime Minister's Speech at UNESCO", *The Times of India*, April 10, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Full-text-of-Modis-speech-at-Unesco/articleshow/46878969.cms>