

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

June 1 - June 7, 6 (1), 2015

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

### A. South Asia

#### Afghanistan

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Will respond to force with force; Seeks decisive action against Taliban; Appointed as first deputy Afghan intelligence chief; Won't talk peace from a weak position; National interests not to be compromised: Afghan aid workers killed with their 2 guards in Balkh. Karzai distancing himself from NUG; Afghanistan not alone target of terrorists; Taliban take control of Yamgan district; Afghan forces retake area in Zabul after over a decade; Australia pledges \$300m in aid over next 3 years.**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said on June 1 that the Afghan people will respond to force with force while calling the ongoing violence in the country an 'imposed war'. The remarks by President Ghani were made during a trip to western Herat province of Afghanistan while he was speaking during a gathering attended by the Afghan National Security Forces. He said the enemies of Afghanistan are looking to weaken Afghanistan but the Afghan government and people will never negotiate from a weak position. "Enemy wants us weaken us but we are negotiating from a position of strength," President Ghani said. He also pledged to increase benefits for the families of the fallen members of the Afghan National Security Forces. In regards to the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force, President Ghani said he is personally working on plans to boost the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force. President Ghani's unannounced visit to Herat province comes amid deteriorating security situation across the country as the Taliban-led insurgency have been rampant since the group announced its summer offensive.<sup>1</sup>

In a fresh overture, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has asked Islamabad to take pragmatic measures against Afghan Taliban using Pakistani soil. A well-placed source in the government told *Pajhwok Afghan News* that the president had dispatched a letter recently to civilian and military officials of the neighbouring state. Another source said that the president had demanded Pakistan to initiate eight steps against Taliban in the next three weeks and demonstrate sincerity to move the stalled Afghan peace process forward. In the letter, the source added, Ghani urged Pakistan to put Taliban leaders under house arrest, barring them from any activity. Pakistan must also conduct operations against Haqqani network, destroy Taliban safe havens on its soil and should not treat wounded Taliban fighters, were among other demands mentioned in the letter. Pakistan should also issue formal statement condemning Taliban's spring offensive codenamed Azm, the source added. No formal statement has been issued from Pakistani side so far. The Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> "Ghani: Afghans will Respond To Force With Force", *Khaama Press*, June, 1, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/ghani-afghans-will-respond-to-force-with-force-1157>

Army in a statement, however, has said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended an important meeting at the ISI headquarters along with Chief of Army Staff Gen. Raheel Sharif.<sup>2</sup>

Adib Fahim assumed charge as the First Deputy Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief. He is the eldest son of the former Afghan Vice President Mohammad Qasim Fahim who passed away earlier last year. Fahim assumed charge of the post during a gathering attended by high level government officials, including Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. This comes as President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani appointed Ajmal Obaid as the Deputy Head of the Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS). Abidy was serving as spokesperson for President Ghani and was appointed for the post earlier in February this year. President Ghani confirmed his appointment through an online message posted on his *Twitter* account. In a separate message, President Ghani said Hamdullah Mohib “will be covering media until we appoint a new spokesperson. I hope media colleagues will extend their full support to him.”<sup>3</sup>

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on June 1 made it clear his government would not hold talks with Taliban under duress or from a position of weakness. During his visit to western Herat province, Ghani expressed these views in his meeting with officials of the Zafar Military Corps in Shindand district on June 1. War in Afghanistan was a foreign war and was imposed on Afghans, he added. “The enemies of Afghanistan do not want the country to stand on its own feet. Enemy wants us weak but we are negotiating from a position of strength,” Ghani added. The president praised achievements of Afghan security forces during their operations. Heading a high -level delegation, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met with residents and to evaluate overall governance in the province, an official said. Ehsanullah Hayat, the governor’s spokesman, told *Pajhwok Afghan News* the president held detailed meeting with officials of Zafar Military Corps this morning. Ghani, he said would also meet with a 16-member delegation of tribal elders from Shindand district to hear their problems and grievances. Ghani is accompanied by Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, Mines Minister Daud Shah Saba, Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) head Ghulam Jailani Popal and some other officials.<sup>4</sup>

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on June 1 said his country would not sign any agreement in contravention to national interest. Chairing meeting of council of ministers; the CEO said government would reject every deal, which was posing threat to national security. Earlier, reports said that Afghanistan and Pakistan intelligence agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for sharing information, training of Afghan spy service members and fight anti-state actors on both sides of Durand Line. He said the issue spread uproar among people and everyone was worried but the people should trust their leaders would never compromise over national interest and security. Afghan politicians, members of parliament and

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<sup>2</sup> “Ghani Seeks Pakistan’s Decisive Action Against Taliban”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June, 1, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12217](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12217)

<sup>3</sup> “Adib Fahim Appointed As First Deputy Afghan Intelligence Chief”, *Khaama Press*, June 1, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/adib-fahim-appointed-as-first-deputy-afghan-intelligence-chief-9454>

<sup>4</sup> “President Ashraf Ghani :Govt. Won’t Talk Peace from a Weak Position”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 2, 2015 at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12228](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12228)

analysts criticised signing of the agreement with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and termed the MoU against the interest of Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

Unknown gunmen have shot dead at least seven aid workers and their two security guards in northern Balkh province of Afghanistan. Sediq Sediqi, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior (Moi) confirmed that the victims were working for a non-governmental organization and were shot dead late on June 1 night. Earlier it was reported that the victims were employees of Ministry of Rural Development and were beheaded by the gunmen. However, an official in the Ministry of Rural Development said the victims were working assisting a National Solidarity Programme implemented by the ministry. A local security official confirmed that the nine aid workers were shot by the assailant gunmen who initially attacked the compound and killed their security guards. The official further added that a woman was also among the 9 aid workers killed in the attack. No group has so far claimed responsibility behind the incident.<sup>6</sup>

Former president Hamid Karzai on June 4 blasted the National Unity Government on how it dealt with the Pakistan issue and said he was distancing himself from the leaders. In an interview with the *Voice of America*, he called the intelligence-sharing agreement reportedly signed between Afghanistan and Pakistan's spy agencies as "embarrassing and contrary to the country's national sovereignty." Karzai said he has distanced himself from the NUG leaders after Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) last month signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which would see both countries work closely together to fight terror. Based on the agreement – which was exposed by *TOLO news* – ISI would train and equip the NDS. In addition, Afghanistan and Pakistan would each fight terrorism and both institutions would investigate accused individuals behind any terror incident within their respective countries. However, a public outcry ensued following reports of the agreement. Soon after reports of the deal emerged, Karzai warned that the MoU was unacceptable to the people of Afghanistan. He asked the government to terminate the agreement. "In fact they [Pakistan] always want to have Afghans give up their rights to Pakistan, therefore, this document should be invalidated," Karzai stressed. He rejected the term "Pak-Afghan friendship" and called the so-called friendly relations with Pakistan as meaningless. "Friendship builds when attacks against us are stopped," Karzai maintained. In addition, he welcomed government's efforts to begin peace talks with the Taliban but strongly criticized the NUG's approach towards Pakistan. "I absolutely support peace with the Taliban, but a peace which surrenders Afghanistan to Pakistan is not acceptable to me," Karzai warned.<sup>7</sup>

Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani has warned the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) of dangerous consequences at regional and international levels if the organisation avoided cooperation against terrorism in Afghanistan. "Terrorism is a great threat both at regional and international level and has threatened innocent human lives and peace without knowing any

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<sup>5</sup> "National Interests Not to be Compromised: Abdullah", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 2, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12227](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12227)

<sup>6</sup> "7 Afghan Aid Workers Killed With Their 2 Guards in Balkh", *Khaama Press*, June, 2, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/gunmen-kill-9-aid-workers-in-northern-balkh-province-9455>

<sup>7</sup> "Karzai Says He is Distancing Himself from NUG", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June, 6, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12259](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12259)

state boundaries," Rabbani told the SCO foreign ministers' meeting in Moscow. He said Afghanistan was one of the frontline states against terrorism for the last two decades. He said terrorism in Afghanistan not an entirely internal phenomenon but closely linked with regional affairs. "Our security forces fight against Taliban militants, the Haqani Network, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Uzbekistan Islamic Movement, al-Qaeda and now Daesh," Rabbani said. He added Afghanistan was not the only target of these militants groups but they had regional and international targets, with Afghan forces sacrificing their lives on a daily basis to prevent their advance. Rabbani said Afghan security forces were not sacrificing their lives to protect only the Afghan people but to protect lives and peace at regional and international levels. "Afghanistan can't stand alone against terrorism and it is high time to stand and cooperate against terrorism together," he added. Meanwhile, Rabbani held talks with his Tajik counterpart Sirojiddin Aslov and Iranian counterpart on the sidelines of the SCO meeting, according to Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry.<sup>8</sup>

Dozens of Taliban insurgents attacked Yamgan district of north-eastern Badakhshan province early June 6 and have taken control of the district, say officials. The attack took place when Taliban insurgents including foreigners stormed the district and started clashing with security forces, the officials said. According to the military officials the security forces have tactically retreated from the district so as to prevent civilian casualties. This comes after clashes lasted several hours between security forces and insurgents. Before this the Provincial Acting Governor, Shah Wali Adeb said "the Taliban insurgents have surrounded the security forces in the district and clashes are ongoing." He said he has called on central government to send in reinforcement troops to help the local security forces. Local officials have said that so far there were no civilian nor military casualties in the attack.<sup>9</sup>

Afghan National Security Forces have pushed back Taliban from Tabakhsur Tapa area in the capital of southern Zabul province after 13 years. Officials say Tabakhsur Tapa which is located in the northern part of Qalat is strategically an important location for militants from where they could conduct their supply to four northern districts. Tabaskhur Tapa was in the hands of Taliban for 13 years and this area was also a hideout for the militant group. Asif Khan Tokhi, commander of police operations in Zabul said that the area has several small jungles and gardens which militants were using as their hiding places. Tokhi said that army and police have been deployed to Tapaskhur Tapa which will also reduce security threats in this part of Kabul-Kandahar highway. Local residents of Tabaskhur Tapa said that because of the longer presence of armed insurgents and clashes in this area they were disappointed from their lives, even some women and children developed mental illnesses. Ata Jan Haqbayan, head of the provincial council of Zabul province urged government for a medical facility and to provide opportunities for the children of this area to study since the area does not have a school.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Afghanistan Not Alone Target of Terrorists: Rabbani to SCO", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 6, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12261](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12261)

<sup>9</sup> "Taliban Take Control of Yamgan District", *Daily outlook Afghanistan*, June, 6, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12269](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12269)

<sup>10</sup> "Afghan Forces Retake Area In Zabul After Over A Decade", *Khaama Press*, June 7, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-forces-retake-area-in-zabul-after-13-years-3446>

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) official in Kabul Scott Kelleher on June 6 said Afghanistan would remain among the top four aid receivers from his country. Kelleher, who called on President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani at the Presidential Palace, assured his country's continued support for Afghanistan. He said his country would provide Afghanistan with \$100 million in aid per year over the next three years. A statement from the Presidential Palace said the aid would be focused on agriculture, public finance management, support for women and children and construction of roads. President Ghani expressed his gratitude to Australia's support in various sectors, insisting that Afghanistan wanted to develop its infrastructure. Ghani also sought Australia's expertise in sustainable urban planning and development in Kabul City and support for women's shelters. The president said an all-women's university would be launched soon.<sup>11</sup>

## Pakistan

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **PML-N Minister and son killed; Ghani seeks detention of leaders; Pakistan leaders vow to free Balochistan of terrorism; Economically suffered for role in US war against terror; not to be allowed Proxy against Pakistan; Indian terror threat calls for vigilance; Increase in defence budget; Want right on Gwadar, other resources; Zarb-i-Azb to ensure enduring peace in region.**

A PML-N member of Punjab Assembly, his son and a friend were killed and his nephew was injured in an attack in Kamoki area on May 31. Police said MPA Rana Shamshad Ahmed Khan, along with his son Shahbaz Ahmed Khan, nephew Ali Wakeel and friend Shaikh Shakir, was returning from his agricultural farm on GT Road in a jeep when gunmen armed with automatic weapons started firing on their vehicle near Raja Balleh. The MPA died on the spot and his son succumbed to injuries suffered in the attack on way to hospital and the friend in the hospital. Rana Shamshad's nephew was said to be in critical condition. The motive for the attack could not be ascertained. Rana Shamshad was elected thrice to the assembly — twice on the PML-Q ticket and the last time from the PML-N platform.<sup>12</sup>

The government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has leaked a confidential letter to the foreign media demanding Pakistan detain the Taliban leaders in Quetta and Peshawar as well as members of the Taliban-allied Haqqani network responsible for recent terror attacks. In the letter, Ghani asks the Pakistani civilian leadership to deny insurgents sanctuary on their side of the border. The contents of the letter made public by AFP has caused considerable embarrassment to the government here and comes a day after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif together with Chief of the Army Staff General Raheel Sharif visited the ISI headquarters where the PM criticised the designs of "foreign intelligence agencies" to destabilise Pakistan. Though Sharif did not name the countries involved, the understanding was that he was pointing towards India and Afghanistan. "We have

<sup>11</sup> "Australia Pledges \$300m in Aid over Next 3 Years", *Daily outlook Afghanistan*, June, 8, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=12273](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12273)

<sup>12</sup> "PML-N MPA and Son Killed In Kamoki", *Dawn*, June 1, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1185406/pml-n-mpa-and-son-killed-in-kamoki>

seen the media reports. Pakistan will fulfil all its commitments. I would refer you to the prime minister's statement at the joint press stakeout in Kabul on May 12. He very clearly said that the enemy of Afghanistan will be considered the enemy of Pakistan. We are committed to enhancing cooperation with Afghanistan and significantly support the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process," the spokesman at the Foreign Office told *The News* when asked to comment on Ghani's letter.<sup>13</sup>

Terrorists would be dragged out of their dens and eliminated, Commander Southern Command Lt General Nasir Khan Janjua, expressing the resolve of the political and military leadership to end terrorism, said on May 31. He was addressing a ceremony in remembrance of the 22 victims of the Mastung tragedy outside the Balochistan Assembly. Janjua was flanked by Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, Chief Secretary Saifullah Chattha, Inspector General Frontier Corps Maj Gen Shair Afgan, IG Police Aamlesh Khan, Home Secretary Akbar Hussain Durrani, provincial ministers Nawab Muhammad Khan Shahwani, Sardar Aslam Bizenjo, Opposition Leader Maulana Abdul Wasey and others. Gen Janjua said that the Mastung tragedy was an act of cowardice in which labourers and daily wagers were gunned Raheel Sharif, Pak Military, Frontier Corps, Police and all law enforcement agencies and myself, strongly condemn the terrorism of Khud Kocha and salute the martyrs," he said, adding that they all shared the grief and sorrow of the families of the martyrs.<sup>14</sup>

Ever since becoming a part of the US led war against terror in 2001, Pakistan has suffered direct and indirect losses to the tune of over \$107 billion. This startling disclosure has been made part of the upcoming *Economic Survey 2014-15*, which will be launched by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on June 4. After launching the offensive Zarb-e-Azb against the militants to clear the North Waziristan Agency (NWA), Pakistan has rendered innumerable sacrifices of men and suffered huge material losses. Now the government is all set to kick-start the reconstruction work by allocating Rs100 billion in the conflict-hit area of Fata in the coming budget for 2015-16. Top guns of the incumbent regime have confirmed that the Economic Advisory Wing of Finance Ministry calculated the latest estimates in close collaboration with the Foreign Office and Ministry of Interior. Finally, it was decided by the government to make these figures a part of the upcoming Economic Survey for 2014-15.<sup>15</sup>

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif, said on June 3 that Pakistan was opposed to using proxies against other countries and it would not allow any country to use proxies against it. Addressing the participants of a course at the National Defence University (NDU) here, the army chief said Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of partition of the Sub-Continent, adding that Pakistan and Kashmir are inseparable. "While we wish peace, stability in region, we

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<sup>13</sup> "Kabul Seeks Detention Of Taliban, Haqqani Network Leaders", *The News*, June 1, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37773-Kabul-seeks-detention-of-Taliban-Haqqani-network-leaders>

<sup>14</sup> "Civil, Military Leaders Vow To Free Balochistan Of Terrorism", *The News*, June 1, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37776-Civil-military-leaders-vow-to-free-Balochistan-of-terrorism>

<sup>15</sup> "Rs8,264 bn Losses Suffered For Role in US War Against Terror", *The News*, June, 4, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37839-Rs8264-bn-losses-suffered-for-role-in-US-war-against-terror>

want Kashmir's just resolution in the light of the United Nations resolutions and as per the aspirations of Kashmiris to bring a lasting peace in the region," he said.<sup>16</sup>

President Mamnoon Hussain called on June 4 for a constant national vigilance against what he called a threat to use terrorism as a weapon against Pakistan, in remarks aimed at India. He did not name India for hurling such a threat, but, in his address to a joint sitting of parliament marking the opening of the new parliamentary year, he was obviously referring to Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar's recent remarks that "you have to neutralise terrorist through terrorist only". President Hussain's was the highest level comment on the issue from Pakistan that he made after praising a consensus reached at a recent conference of political parties chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the route of what is known as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).<sup>17</sup>

The government on June 5 allocated an amount of Rs781 billion for defence in the federal budget 2015-2016. The new allocation shows an increase of around 11.1 percent compared to the outgoing fiscal year 2014-2015. The enhanced budgetary allocation will enable the armed forces to meet their growing needs and challenges being faced by the country on internal and external fronts. Taking into account the 4.8 percent inflation, the raise in budget allocation for the year 2015-2016 would be 6.3 percent. The government had allocated Rs700 billion for the year 2014-2015, which was later revised to Rs719.6 billion. For the year 2015-2016, the Pakistan Army would receive Rs371.047 billion, Pakistan Air Force Rs164.237 billion and Pakistan Navy Rs84.917 billion. The DP Establishment/ISOs would get Rs160.79 billion.<sup>18</sup>

Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch said on June 7 that the Baloch want full rights on the Gwadar port and other resources rather than acting merely as chowkidars (guards). The chief minister said foreign hands, particularly Indian involvement, behind the Balochistan insurgency couldn't be ruled out. Flanked by president National Party Senator Hasil Bizenjo, the chief minister, while addressing the Punjab convention of the NP and later talking to media stated that the Baloch were peace-loving people and the better option to address their issue was dialogue instead of using force. "Foreign hands are active in Balochistan but Indian involvement is higher behind the prevailing trouble," said the chief minister while responding to a question regarding the involvement of Indian spy agency RAW in the province battling insurgency.<sup>19</sup>

Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif said on June 7 that Operation Zarb-i-Azb had been started to bring enduring peace and stability in Pakistan and the region. According to a statement issued here, the COAS was speaking at a reception hosted at Colombo by the Quetta Alumni Association (QAA). The QAA is an effective body of Sri Lankan military students trained in Pakistan. Paying tribute to Sri Lankan armed forces for their resilience and sacrifices in war against terrorism, he

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<sup>16</sup> "Proxy War Not To Be Allowed Against Pakistan: COAS", *The News*, June, 4, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37835-Proxy-war-not-to-be-allowed-against-Pakistan-COAS>

<sup>17</sup> "President Says Indian Terror Threat Calls For Vigilance", *Dawn*, June, 5, 2015, at, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1186268/president-says-indian-terror-threat-calls-for-vigilance>

<sup>18</sup> "11.1pc Increase In Defence Budget", *The News*, June 6, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37880-111pc-increase-in-defence-budget>

<sup>19</sup> "Baloch Want Right On Gwadar, Other Resources: Dr Malik", *The News*, June 8, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37927-Baloch-want-right-on-Gwadar-other-resources-Dr-Malik>

said Sri Lanka had fought a long war against terrorism and its model of counterinsurgency and later efforts for sustainable peace were a textbook case study. "States that suffered from internal conflict collapsed because their institutions, particularly armed forces, were unable to sustain. Pakistan and Sri Lanka have shown resilience in fight against terrorism for bringing peace and stability in the region," he said.<sup>20</sup>

## Bangladesh

(June 1-7, 2015)

### ● Modi visits Bangladesh; Bangladesh re-elected as the member of three important regional institutions of UN ESCAP.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a state visit to Bangladesh on June 6, 2015. During the visit, both the countries signed 22 deals. Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar and his Bangladeshi counterpart Md Shahidul Haque signed the protocol to ratify the Land Boundary Agreement in the presence of Modi, Hasina and Mamata Banerjee. Prior to his one-to-one talks with Prime Minister Hasina and the signing of the deals, Prime Minister Modi had a meeting with Mamata, who arrived in Dhaka directly from Kolkata a day ahead of Modi. At the PMO in Dhaka, both the Prime ministers along with Mamata Banerjee formally inaugurated Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati and Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala bus services. The two PMs also unveiled foundation stones for construction of Khulna-Mongla railway line, rehabilitation of Kalaura-Shahbajpur section of Bangladesh Railways, Bangladesh-India Friendship Building at National Police Academy in Sardah, Rabindra Bhaban at Kuthibari in Shilaidaha, and construction of Bangladesh-India Friendship Bridge-1 over Feni River. They also inaugurated upgraded laboratories at the BSTI and Tarapur-Kamlasagar Border Haat. The two leaders then led delegation-level talks where the two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern. Prime Minister Modi called on President Abdul Hamid and also met leader of the opposition Raushan Ershad and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. During his stay, Modi visited the national memorial at Savar to pay tribute to the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War, the house of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi, and toured the memorial where Bangabandhu along with most of his family members was brutally killed, Dhakeshwari temple and Ramakrishna Mission.<sup>21</sup>

Bangladesh has been re-elected as the member of three important regional institutions of UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), garnering the second highest number of votes, during its 71 session. The institutions are: Asia Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), Centre for the Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA), and Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM). Based in Incheon, Korea, APCICT works to strengthen efforts of ESCAP's member countries to use ICT in their socio-economic development through building

<sup>20</sup> "Zarb-i-Azb to Ensure Enduring Peace In Region: Army Chief", *Dawn*, June 8, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1186838/zarb-i-azb-to-ensure-enduring-peace-in-region-army-chief>

<sup>21</sup> "Rezaul Karim with Shakhawat Liton, "Dawn of a New Era", *The Daily Star*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/dawn-new-era-93235>.

human and institutional capacity. CAPSA, based in Bogor, Indonesia, aims to strengthen South-South Dialogue and intra-regional learning on poverty, food security and sustainable agriculture. The vision of CSAM, based in Beijing, China, is to achieve production gains, improved rural livelihood and poverty alleviation through sustainable agricultural mechanisation for a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable Asia and the Pacific.<sup>22</sup>

## Sri Lanka

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif visits Sri Lanka; Prominent Members of the German Parliament visits Sri Lanka.**

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif made a four day official visit to Sri Lanka on June 5 on the invitation of his Sri Lankan counterpart Lieutenant General A. W. J. C. De Silva. During his stay in Sri Lanka, General Raheel Sharif met President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe. General Sharif also met the top leadership of Sri Lanka's Armed forces. Focus of the discussions was to find ways to further broaden and deepen the security relationship between the two countries.<sup>23</sup>

Germany has expressed willingness to work with Sri Lanka to promote greater peace and prosperity for the Sri Lankan people, the German Embassy in Colombo said on June 5. Prominent Members of the German Parliament Dagmar Wöhrl and Dr. Peter Ramsauer visited Sri Lanka from May 30 – June 4, 2015 to meet with government officials, political leaders, civil society, religious and business leaders. They heard about the progress and challenges in ensuring good governance, democracy, and sustainable economic development, as well as a desire for reconciliation, justice and accountability. Mrs. Wöhrl and Dr. Ramsauer also reviewed the ongoing development cooperation projects carried out by GIZ in Kilinochchi, which included visits to the Sri Lankan-German Training Institute construction site, and the NAITA Phase 1 training centre.<sup>24</sup>

## Maldives

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **US urges the Maldivian government to take steps to restore confidence in democracy and the rule of law.**

United States have raised concerns about the charges against the President of Adhaalath Party, Sheikh Imran, Deputy Leader of Jumhooree Party Ameen Ibrahim and the Foreign and Public

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<sup>22</sup> "Bangladesh Re-Elected To UNESCAP's 3 Regional Institutions", *The Daily Star*, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-re-elected-unescaps-3-regional-institutions-91705>.

<sup>23</sup> "Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Arrives in Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, June 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/05/pakistans-chief-of-army-staff-arrives-in-lanka/>.

<sup>24</sup> "Germany to Work with Lanka to Promote Peace", *Colombo Gazette*, June 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/05/germany-to-work-with-lanka-to-promote-peace/>.

Relations of Jumhooree Party, Sobah Raheed. A tweet from the Official U.S. Embassy in Colombo said that they want to see the Maldivian government take steps to restore confidence in democracy and the rule of law. The state charged the three leaders with terrorism for encouraging conflict and violence between security forces and the protestors in their speech at the opposition rally on May 1 leading to conflict between the Police and the protestors.<sup>25</sup>

## B. East Asia

### Japan

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Japan-China financial dialogue discussed the prospects of infrastructure development in Asia; Japan and Philippines discuss a “visiting forces agreement”; Japan and Australia deepens defence cooperation; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits Ukraine; Chinese vessel performed survey in Japanese EEZ near the contested Senkaku Islands; Japan targets 26 per cent reduction of GHG emissions from 2013 level by 2030.**

On June 6, Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso and his Chinese counterpart Lou Jiwei held the first Japan-China financial dialogue in Beijing after three years<sup>26</sup> where they agreed to cooperate to facilitate development of infrastructure in Asia. Moreover, the two leaders also discussed the challenges of the international economy, tax and fiscal systems, the threats posed by unstable commodity prices and economic policy spill over of the developed economies. The talks were last held in April 2012 and subsequently it was suspended following the escalation of tensions in the bilateral relations. Besides, during this visit Aso met Vice-Premier *Zhang Gaoli* in Beijing and both agreed that China and Japan will carry on dialogue at different levels and strengthen trust.<sup>27</sup>

Philippines President, Benigno S. Aquino III was on a State Visit to Japan from June 2-5. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Benigno S. Aquino III held summit meeting on June 4 where they acknowledged that the bilateral relation has entered the stage of Strengthened Strategic Partnership<sup>28</sup> Reports indicate that both leaders agreed to initiate discussion on a “visiting forces agreement” that will permit Japan to utilize Philippine bases for refuelling aircraft and vessels. Such a development at a time when Japan is reportedly deliberating on conducting joint air patrols

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<sup>25</sup> “U.S. Raises Concerns about the Charges against Imran, Ameen and Sobah”, *SunOnline*, June 3, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30159>.

<sup>26</sup> “Japan, China Hold 1st Financial Dialogue in 3 Yrs”, *NHK*, June 6, 2015 [http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150606\\_29.html](http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150606_29.html)

<sup>27</sup> “Japan, China Finance Chief Agree to Promote Infrastructure Development in Asia, Kyodo”, June 6, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/06/business/japan-china-finance-chief-agree-to-promote-infrastructure-development-in-asia/#.VXQ9LUZbhgB>

<sup>28</sup> President of Philippines Visits Japan, (June 2 - 4, 2015), MOFA Japan, June 4, 2015 [http://www.mofa.go.jp/s\\_sa/sea2/ph/page3e\\_000344.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea2/ph/page3e_000344.html)

with the US forces given the critical regional maritime security concerns is noteworthy. Philippines presently have such agreements with the US and Australia.<sup>29</sup>

Japan-Australia defence ministerial meeting was held on June 3 in Tokyo. Australian Defence Minister Kevin Andrews and his Japanese counterpart Nakatani agreed to enhance defence ties through improved cooperation on various issues including the submarine deal replacing the Collins-class submarines with Japanese Soryu class submarines and the South China Sea reclamation work by the Chinese. Both leaders stressed that Japan and Australia is against any unilateral attempts to alter the status quo through the use of force. Additionally, Japan informed Australia on the freshly revised US-Japan defence cooperation guidelines along with the Japanese security bills expanding the scope of SDF operations overseas.<sup>30</sup>

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during his meeting with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on June 6 in Kiev urged for complete implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the separatists and the Ukrainian government. This is the first time for a Japanese prime minister to visit Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the timing of the visit is just ahead of the G-7 summit scheduled in Germany where Ukraine will feature as a critical issue. Abe reiterated that Japan does not support any effort to alter the status quo by force and that it suggested Russia to perform a positive role concerning separatists in Ukraine. Japan has provided support to Ukraine, by way of promising \$1.8 billion in economic and humanitarian aid. Moreover, Japan decided to offer more than 100 billion yen-loans to assist Ukraine overhaul their sewage treatment facilities.<sup>32</sup>

Reports in Japanese Media, *NHK*, on June 7 indicated that a Chinese vessel has been identified by the Japanese Coast Guard for three days conducting survey in the Japanese EEZ approximately 60 kms north of Kuba Island.<sup>33</sup>

Japan committed to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 26 per cent from 2013 levels by the year 2030. Prime Minister Abe will present it to the UN in July. Abe underscored that the reduction goal is internationally comparable and ambitious and involves tangible actions and technologies. However, the environmental campaigners perceive the set target as inadequate. Japan intends to reduce emissions equal of approximately 1.04 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2030.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Masaaki Kameda, Tokyo, Manila Eye 'Visiting Forces' Pact to Rein in China", *The Japan Times*, June 5 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/05/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-will-help-boost-philippine-coast-guard-abe/#.VXRASEZbhgB>

<sup>30</sup> "Masaaki Kameda, Japan, Australia Defence Ministers Pledge To Boost Cooperation", *The Japan Times*, June 4, 2015 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/04/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-australia-defense-ministers-pledge-to-boost-cooperation/#.VXUS91K6a1t>

<sup>31</sup> "Abe Makes 1st Visit To Ukraine By Japan Leader", *The Japan News*, June 6, 2015 <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002203745>

<sup>32</sup> "Abe Tells Ukraine Leader Japan Will Work For Peace", *NHK*, June 7, 2015 [http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150606\\_35.html](http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150606_35.html)

<sup>33</sup> "Chinese Ship Conducting Survey in Japan's EEZ", *NHK*, June 7, 2015 at [http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150607\\_12.html](http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150607_12.html)

<sup>34</sup> "Japan Aims To Cut Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 26% by 2030, Kyodo", June 2, 2015 at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-aims-to-cut-greenhouse-gas-emissions-by-26-by-2030>

## Korean Peninsula

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **ROK and China sign the Free Trade Agreement; ROK test-fired longer-range ballistic missile; US-ROK hold anti-submarine drill; Two Koreas agree to cooperate on cultural issues; Lawmakers meet to discuss the challenge of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).**

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and Chinese Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng on June 1 met in Seoul and signed a free trade agreement. This is expected to increase bilateral trade and strengthen relations in several areas including investment, people-to-people exchange, legal harmonization, and the elimination of non-tariff barriers. South Korean government now will initiate groundwork for domestic complementary steps and ratification of the FTA by the National Assembly.<sup>35</sup> In November 2014 the agreement was settled which enabled eventual elimination of tariffs on 90 per cent of the goods traded between the two countries. FTA is likely to come into force in the latter half of 2015 when both legislatures approve it.<sup>36</sup>

South Korea on June 3 test-fired a ballistic missile from Taean (south Chungcheong province) having a range of around 500 km capable of reaching most parts of North Korea. They developed the missile, part of Kill Chain, started in October 2012. This missile has the capacity to hit nuclear and missile bases across. President Park Geun-hye who witnessed the launch stressed that South Korea possess considerable deterrence to resist North Korea. This will enable South Korea to undertake a pre-emptive attack against North Korea in case it perceives a threat.<sup>37</sup>

The US and South Korea held a joint anti-submarine naval exercise near Jeju Island in the first week of June aimed enhancing underwater capacity to safeguard the southern maritime space and dealing with threats emanating from North Korea. North Korea in the recent past have test fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile. The drill witnessed over 10 vessels together with the Aegis destroyer *Seoae Ryu Seong-ryong*, two submarines and a P-8 Poseidon US surveillance plane.<sup>38</sup>

South and North Korea are deepening cooperation on cultural issues prior to President Park Geun-hye's scheduled visit to the US. Both Koreas together established a taskforce on June 1 to recover historic relics from Manwoldae Palace which featured in the UNESCO world heritage 2013 list. Observers indicate that the ongoing North-South cooperation may support the Park administration to bargain a breakthrough in its relations with the North Korean regime. The two

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<sup>35</sup> Foreign Minister Meets with Chinese Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, June 1, 2015 [http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp?boardid=302&typeID=12&tableName=TYPE\\_ENGLISH&seqno=315290](http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp?boardid=302&typeID=12&tableName=TYPE_ENGLISH&seqno=315290)

<sup>36</sup> "Shannon Tiezzi, It's Official: China, South Korea Sign Free Trade Agreement", *The Diplomat*, June 02, 2015 at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/its-official-china-south-korea-sign-free-trade-agreement/>

<sup>37</sup> "S. Korea Successfully Test-Fires Longer-Range Ballistic Missile", *The Korea Times*, June 3, 2015 at [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/116\\_180099.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/116_180099.html)

<sup>38</sup> "S. Korea, U.S. Start Joint Anti-Submarine Naval Drill," *Yonhap News Agency*, June 1, 2015.

Koreas are dealing with political and cultural matters independently. Both Koreas have decided to work for the following six months on recovering the historical relics.<sup>39</sup> Mayor Park Won-soon of Seoul held an emergency meeting on June 5 to discuss the initiatives to deal with the MERS which killed four South Koreans till then. Moreover, the health executives said that additional five individuals are infected with the MERS, summing up the total to 41 till June 5.<sup>40</sup> In a related development, New Politics Alliance for Democracy leader, Moon Jae-in and the lawmakers of the ruling party met on June 7 to discuss the challenge posed by the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The meeting was attended by Kim Moo-sung affiliated to the ruling Saenuri Party, and Yoo Seong-min.<sup>41</sup>

## C. Southeast Asia

### ASEAN

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **South China Sea remained main issue at the Shangri La Dialogue; Malaysian PM argues for ASEAN centrality in resolving the migrant crisis; President Obama met the young leaders from ASEAN; 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN competition conference held in Vietnam.**

US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter attended the Shangri La Dialogue (14th Asian Security Conference), held in Singapore. He spoke about the U.S. vision for a resilient regional architecture in the Asia-Pacific in an order that shared challenges comprising five elements (reaffirming long-standing rules and norms, strengthening regional institutions, modernizing alliances and partnerships, enhancing capacity-building and improving connectivity) can be addressed. Carter also announced about a new Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative, which will be taken up by the US Department of Defence. He declared that a new Defence Adviser to the US Mission in ASEAN, based in Jakarta, would be appointed. He reiterated that US will continue playing prominent role in the South China Sea.<sup>42</sup> Admiral Sun Jianguo, Deputy Chief of the People Liberation Army's (PLA's) General Staff Department, who led China's delegation at the Shangri La Dialogue asserted that situation in South China Sea is peaceful and there has never been any problem in practising freedom of navigation. However, Southeast Asian leaders like Singapore's

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<sup>39</sup> "Yi Whan-Woo, Seoul, Pyongyang Seek To Enhance Cultural Exchanges", June 1, 2015 at [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/485\\_179946.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/485_179946.html)

<sup>40</sup> "Seoul City meeting on MERS", *Photo News Yonhap News Agency*, June 5, 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2602000000.html?query=MERS>

<sup>41</sup> "Lawmakers Meet To Discuss Ways To Tackle MERS", *Photo News Yonhap News Agency*, June 7, 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2602000000.html?query=MERS>

<sup>42</sup> Parameswaran, Prashanth, "US Launches New Maritime Security Initiative at Shangri-La Dialogue 2015", *The Diplomat*, June 1, 2015, at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/us-launches-new-maritime-security-initiative-at-shangri-la-dialogue-2015/>.

PM Lee Hsein Loong, Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein advocated for the urgent implementation of the Code of Conduct to bring stability in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak expressed his concern over the Asian migrant issue (the recent boat people issue in particular) and the discovery of graves of human trafficking victims along Perlis- Thailand border over the last couple of days. At the opening of 29<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Roundtable at Hilton Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Razak spoke about the need for frank and open discussion on the issue. He also suggested that the international community and other countries should come forward to resolve the issue; however, ASEAN should take the lead role in the process. Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah (Sultan of Perak), Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy (Chairman of ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies- ASEAN ISIS) and Tan Sri Rastam Mohd. Isa (Chief Executive of ISIS- Malaysia) were present at the Roundtable amongst others.<sup>44</sup>

75 emerging leaders from ASEAN countries met the US President Obama on June 1 as a part of Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. This interaction aimed at enhancing leadership skills of the government officials from Southeast Asia and enabling them to work with their American counterparts in fields like economic empowerment, good governance, natural disaster management etc. in their respective home countries. Amongst many other issues, President Obama spoke about Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and sustainable development. The interaction was held at the White House.<sup>45</sup>

ASEAN convened the ASEAN Competition Conference (ACC) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on June 4-5. The theme of this year's ACC was Advancing Competition Policy and Law Post-2015: Progress, Opportunities and Challenges. Since 2011, the ACC has served as a worthwhile platform for experts and relevant stakeholders to network and share best practices and discuss emerging issues on Competition Policy and Law (CPL) in the region. It aims at building regional awareness on the importance of CPL towards strengthening ASEAN's economic integration. It focuses on fair competition as an important prerequisite to foster regional market integration following the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by the end of 2015. Hosted by the Viet Nam Competition Authority (VCA) and sponsored by ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, this year's ACC is the fifth edition since its inception in 2011.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Wong, Kelvin, "Shangri-La Dialogue: China dismisses International Pressure On South China Sea Reclamation Efforts", *IHS Jane's 360*, June 4, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/51986/shangri-la-dialogue-china-dismisses-international-pressure-on-south-china-sea-reclamation-efforts>.

<sup>44</sup> Ariff, Syed Umar, "Migrant Issue Should Be Resolved at Asean Level: PM Najib", *New Straits Times Online*, June 1, 2015 at <http://www.nst.com.my/node/86583>.

<sup>45</sup> Brayton, Jenna, "President Obama Hosts a Question-and-Answer Session with Young Southeast Asian Leaders", *The White House Blog*, June 1, 2015, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/06/01/president-obama-hosts-question-and-answer-session-young-southeast-asian-leaders>.

<sup>46</sup> "ASEAN Continues to Enhance Competition Policy and Law Beyond 2015", *ASEAN Secretariat News*, June 3, 2015, at <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-continues-to-enhance-competition-policy-and-law-beyond-2015>.

## Southeast Asia

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Myanmar captures another boat with 727 Illegal Migrants; US-Vietnam defence cooperation; Russia announced plan to hold first joint military exercise with Brunei; Vietnam and Cambodia clash over border land; Thai general arrested for alleged involvement in human trafficking case.**

Myanmar Navy seized one boat having around 727 illegal migrants. The Myanmar Navy reported that the people on the board are from Bangladesh and their identities are being checked. Myanmar is planning to send them back to Bangladesh. Marie Harf, a spokeswoman from the US Department of States, said that the boat people should be allowed for disembarkation and provided with immediate humanitarian assistance. Myanmar has not permitted the reporters to speak freely with these boat people. However, one navy official, who wished to remain unnamed, mentioned that some of these 727 migrants can speak Rakhine, a language which is not very popular in Bangladesh. Phil Robertson, Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division, said that Myanmar should allow the international community to directly communicate with the captured migrants and the country's rapid identification process raises questions over its legitimacy.<sup>47</sup>

US Secretary of Defence promised to provide Vietnam with \$18 Million in an attempt to help the country procure patrol vessels. The announcement came shortly after Ashton Carter boarded a Vietnamese military vessel at Hai Phong. This move is in consistence with carter's efforts to build up cooperation with countries having troubled relations with China in the wake of the latter's aggressive behaviour in South China Sea. Though Vietnam has shown interests in buying military equipment from the US, there are some problems which may impede US-Vietnam defence partnerships. As Vietnamese officials are trained in using Russian technology, it will take much time for them to adopt US technologies. Second, Vietnam is economically far behind China, South Korea and Japan and henceforth, it has limited option to buy new technologies from the US.<sup>48</sup>

Russian Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov announced that Russia would conduct its first joint military exercise with Brunei in 2016. Russia has announced its concerns over US involvement in South China Sea disputes which is intended to contain China and Russia systematically, mentioned Mr. Antonov in Shangri La Dialogue held in Singapore. He even said that US involvement would likely to bring in 'colour revolutions' in the Asia-Pacific, similar to West Asia and this may jeopardise the stability in the region. While countries like Russia and India are ready to deploy naval warships in the South China Sea, a far-away country like Switzerland has offered to play a mediator in the territorial disputes involving South China Sea islands.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Migrant Boat Still Being Held off Myanmar coast: Government", *Reuters*, June 2, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/Migrant-boat-still-being-held-off-Myanmar-coast-Government/articleshow/47508540.cms>.

<sup>48</sup> Mehta, Aaron, "US Providing Vietnam \$18M for Coast Guard Vessels", *Defence News*, June 1, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/budget/2015/06/01/us-providing-vietnam-18m-in-coast-guard-vessels/28290871/>.

<sup>49</sup> Yenko, Athena, "WWIII: Russia Joins South China Sea Dispute as Ally to China and Brunei", *Morning News USA*, June 2, 2015, at <http://www.morningnewsusa.com/wwiii-russia-joins-south-china-sea-dispute-as-ally-to-china-and-brunei-2322235.html>.

Cambodian and Vietnamese soldiers fought with each other over control of a land in a border district. Some 500 Cham minorities from Cambodia along with the representatives from the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP-opposition party in Cambodia) claimed that 40 acres of land in Choeung village of Chorn commune in Memot district, Tbong Khmum province belongs to Cambodia. They also claimed that in the last month, Vietnam used chemical sprays to pollute the soil and destroy crops in the fields in the said area. As the Vietnamese soldiers began targeting them, the Cambodians returned from the land. In late April 2015, Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Hor Namhong declared that the land belongs to Vietnam. But the local villagers and CNRP raised their protest against the announcement and mentioned that the land comes under the Cambodian territory. CNRP leader Sam Rainsy, who is presently in the US, said that he would initiate a dialogue process with the Cambodian PM Hun Sen to reconsider the issue.<sup>50</sup>

Lieutenant General Manas Kongpan is being charged with alleged involvement in the trafficking of Rohingya migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh. General Kongpan was arrested by the Thai Police as a part of Thailand's latest effort to minimise the problem of human trafficking in the country. He is the first member from the Thai military who has been arrested in human trafficking case under the rule of *Junta* in Thailand. The Thai Police has not mentioned about the exact charges under which General Kongpan was booked.<sup>51</sup>

Indonesia has urged the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to withdraw its suspension and is seeking for a chance to re-join the group. In 2008, Indonesia itself requested OPEC to suspend its membership. Right now, Indonesia is the only net-importer country in the grouping and it is the fourth smallest oil producer country. However, Indonesia's Energy Minister, Sudirman Said mentioned that producing less amount of oil would not be a problem for Indonesia to re-join the grouping. OPEC's General Secretary Abdalla El-Badri also mentioned that Indonesia's membership was never terminated; henceforth, it would not be a problem to accept the country as a member in OPEC.<sup>52</sup>

## India-Southeast Asia Relations

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Indian Naval Ships visited SE Asia and Australia; Northeast India's connectivity with neighbouring countries; Secretary (East) spoke about better economic ties between India and Malaysia.**

INS Ranvir, a guided missile destroyer and INS Shakti, a sophisticated fleet tanker and support ship arrived in Indonesia as a part of an operational deployment of Indian naval ships in Southeast

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<sup>50</sup> Moniroth, Morn, "Cambodians and Vietnamese Clash Over Borderland", *Radio Free Asia*, June 2, 2015, at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/clash-with-vietnamese-over-borderland-06022015152907.html>.

<sup>51</sup> "Thai Court Charges Army Officer over Rohingya Trafficking", *BBC*, June 2, 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32970764>.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, Grant *et. al.*, "Indonesia Seeks Return to OPEC Seven Years after Leaving", *Financial Review*, June 5, 2015, at <http://www.afr.com/news/world/indonesia-seeks-return-to-pec-seven-years-after-leaving-20150604-ghh69a>.

Asia and Southern Indian Ocean, mentioned a statement by the Indian mission in Jakarta. The embassy statement said, the four-day visit "... is aimed at further strengthening its already robust bilateral ties between the two countries and fostering inter-operability between the navies of these two friendly nations". Activities like official calls, professional interaction between personnel of both the navies, reception on board and ship visits were planned. On departure, the Indian ships exercise ways for improving interoperability in maritime operations and search and rescue with the Indonesian Navy. They departed from Jakarta on June 4. Before Indonesia, Indian naval ships visited Singapore and participated in SIMBEX. After Jakarta, they will visit Freemantle (Australia), Kuantan (Malaysia), Sattahip (Thailand), and Sihanoukville (Cambodia). INS Satpura and INS Kamorta reached Australia on June 4. This visit to Australia is aimed at reinforcing bilateral ties and augmenting inter-operability between navies of the two nations.<sup>53</sup>

42 additional Border Outposts (BOPs) will be established along the Northeast India-China border and those borders will be manned by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).<sup>37</sup> BOPs will be set up in Arunachal Pradesh and rest of the five will be set up in Sikkim. Besides, Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) will be set up at Kaladan and Kawrpuichhuah in Mizoram along Myanmar border, one at Moreh, Manipur along Myanmar border, one at Pangsau Pass, Arunachal Pradesh along Myanmar border, one at Dawki, Meghalaya along Bangladesh border, two in Assam at Dhubri and Karimganj along Bangladesh border, one at North West Assam along the border with Bhutan.<sup>54</sup> These steps will enhance Northeast India's connectivity with its neighbours and the region's stake in India's border trade will be augmented too.

At the Global Business Forum, held at Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India said that though India and Malaysia share close economic ties, in the last couple of years there has been a pause in the bilateral relations between these two countries. Mr. Wadhwa said that the international economic slowdown and domestic political processes within India and Malaysia have caused this respite in the bilateral relations between India and Malaysia. The bilateral trade stands at USD 13.82 Billion as of 2014. Mr. Wadhwa mentioned that the two countries should set a target of USD 200 billion bilateral trade to be reached by the end of 2022. In the Forum, Mr. Wadhwa also spoke about India's assistance in IT training and skill enhancement programmes in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV), India's connectivity with ASEAN countries, the Act East Policy and India's own economic development as well as Make in India and Digital India programmes.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Indian Naval Ships In Indonesia For Annual Bilateral Exercise", *Zee News*, June 2, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/indian-naval-ships-in-indonesia-for-annual-bilateral-exercise\\_1606186.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/indian-naval-ships-in-indonesia-for-annual-bilateral-exercise_1606186.html), and "Indian Naval Ships Enter Freemantle (Perth), Australia", *Business Standard*, June 4, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/indian-naval-ships-enter-freemantle-perth-australia-115060400904\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/indian-naval-ships-enter-freemantle-perth-australia-115060400904_1.html).

<sup>54</sup> "Centre to set up 42 more BOPs along China border in NE", *The Shillong Times*, June 4, 2015, at <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2015/06/04/centre-to-set-up-42-more-bops-along-china-border-in-ne/>.

<sup>55</sup> "India Calls for Better Economic Ties between India, Malaysia", *Business Standard*, June 7, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-calls-for-better-economic-ties-between-india-malaysia-115060700703\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-calls-for-better-economic-ties-between-india-malaysia-115060700703_1.html).

## D. Russia

### National

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Russia's Central Bank to create new payment system in 2017; Russia says foreign debt payment poses no threat to rouble's stability; Russia sets a target of increasing international reserves to US\$ 500 billion; Duma factions agree to move next parliamentary elections to September 2016; Lack of Ukrainian components stalls construction of ships for the Russian Navy; More than 1,300 Ukrainian citizens move to Sakhalin; Speaker of the upper house says issue of retirement age needs nationwide discussion.**

The Deputy Chairperson of Russian Central Bank Olga Skorobogatova has said, on June 5, that the Bank plans to launch a pilot project, creating a new payment system instead of the current BESS system (Banking Electronic Speed Payment) in 2017. The new payment system will handle accounts directly through the payment processing network of the Russian Central Bank.<sup>56</sup>

A representative of the Ministry of Economic Development has said, on June 4, that Russia's foreign debt repayments do not threaten rouble stability at present. He added that the 'peak of payments has passed and the repayment schedule will be softer further on'. Earlier, the Chairman of the Bank of Russia Elvira Nabiullina had said that repayments of foreign debt of Russian companies and banks may total US\$ 40 billion by 2015 year-end.<sup>57</sup>

The Russian Central Bank has set task to increase the country's international reserves to US\$ 500 billion within the next few years. Earlier, the Bank had decided to regularly purchase foreign currency on the domestic foreign exchange market in order to replenish international reserves. This decision was made taking into account the normalization of the situation in the domestic foreign exchange market. Operations will be carried out on a daily basis in the amount of US\$ 100-200 million.<sup>58</sup>

All the four factions in the Russian lower parliament house, the State Duma, agree that the date of the next parliamentary elections should be moved from December to the third Sunday of September 2016. Under the current laws, next elections to the State Duma are to take place on December 4, 2016. However, many politicians have been suggesting parliamentary elections should be held on the second Sunday in September. Earlier, Duma Speaker Sergey Naryshkin had supported this initiative since the Duma adopts the country's budget in the autumn.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Russian Central Bank Plans To Create New Payment System In 2017 Instead of BESS System", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/799068>

<sup>57</sup> "Foreign Debt Payments No Threat To Ruble Stability At Present — Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798900>

<sup>58</sup> "Russian Central Bank Sets Task To Increase International Reserves To \$500 Bln In Few Years", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798772>

<sup>59</sup> "Russia's Duma Factions Agree To Move Next Parliamentary Elections To Sep 2016 — Lawmaker", *Itar-Tass*, June 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798306>

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, on June 3, that Russia cannot complete the construction of some naval ships as Ukraine has suspended supplies of gas-turbine engines. He said within the import substitution plan slated to be fulfilled by 2018, Russia plans to launch the production on 186 items that were earlier produced in Ukraine, first of all gas-turbine engines. Admiral Grigorovich class frigates (Project 11356) and Admiral Gorshkov class frigates (Project 22350) in particular use Ukrainian gas-turbine engines.<sup>60</sup>

More than 1,300 Ukrainian citizens, who were forced to leave their homeland, have arrived in Russia's Far Eastern Sakhalin region since August 2014. Most of them are qualified builders, mining experts, financiers and social workers. The state programme of voluntary resettlement of compatriots to the Sakhalin region has been implemented since 2011. Thousands of highly qualified professionals have moved to the island region over this period.<sup>61</sup>

The speaker of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko has said that issue of the retirement age should be widely discussed in society to avoid possible shocks when a final decision is taken.<sup>62</sup>

## International

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Putin says integration of Silk Road and Eurasian Union projects meet the interests of regional countries; Russia and Ukraine likely to revise terms of nuclear waste removal from Ukrainian nuclear power plants; Russia does not envision SCO being a military-politico bloc; Russian and Greek Presidents discuss Turkish Stream project; Russia says Kiev responsible for the deterioration of situation in eastern Ukraine; Duma Speaker says West has started a new propaganda campaign against Russia; Moldova expresses interest in renewing economic cooperation with Russia; Kazakhstan suggests setting up SCO expert group to study Islamic State; Russia ready for close cooperation with Afghanistan's new government; Ukraine will not lift Donbas blockade till border is under Kiev's control while Poroshenko rules out Ukraine's federalization; Moscow calls upon the international community to influence Baltic states 'infringing' of Russian-speakers rights; CSTO defence ministers agree to change military-technical policy; Russia reinforces its naval task force in the Mediterranean; China shows interest to participate in oil and gas projects in Crimea; Russia and Indonesia sign MOU on nuclear cooperation.**

President Putin has said, on June 3, that the integration of the Silk Road and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) projects meets the mutual interests of the regional countries. He spoke during a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries. He added that 'Russia is intensively working on combining these two projects and it

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<sup>60</sup> "Lack of Ukrainian Components Stalls Construction Of Ships For Russian Navy — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798374>

<sup>61</sup> "More Than 1,300 Ukrainian Citizens Move To Sakhalin", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798062>

<sup>62</sup> "Russian Upper House Speaker Says Problem Of Retirement Age Needs Nationwide Discussion", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798053>

plans to expand its transport network in the east of the country.<sup>63</sup>

Ukraine's state run nuclear corporation Energoatom has said, on June 5, that Russia and Ukraine are likely to revise the term of removal of nuclear waste from Ukrainian nuclear power plants in 2015. Annual price growth in 2014 was five percent on the price of the previous year, which was much below the inflation both in Russia and in Ukraine. At present Nuclear waste is being removed from Ukrainian nuclear power plants to Russia under the agreement on cooperation in the nuclear energy sector signed by the two countries on January 14, 1993. Russia also remains the key nuclear fuel supplier to Kiev.<sup>64</sup>

Russian presidential envoy to the SCO Bakhtier Khakimov has said, on June 5, that 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is not planning to become a military-political bloc and doesn't move that way'. Nevertheless, he did refer to the contacts between military agencies and recalled that anti-terrorist exercises were held regularly within the framework of the organization.<sup>65</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation with Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras on June 5. The Kremlin press release stated that 'practical steps were discussed to implement agreements reached during the recent working visit of Alexis Tsipras to Russia, particularly the planned construction of the gas transport infrastructure across the territory of Turkey and Greece'. The two leaders also agreed to meet during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum scheduled to be held during June 18-20.<sup>66</sup>

Russian Presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has said, on June 5, that the deterioration of the situation in Ukraine's south-east is due to Kiev's 'provocative actions' and its refusal to fully implement the Minsk agreements. He added that Russia is deeply concerned about Ukraine's continuing violations of ceasefire agreements.<sup>67</sup>

The chairman of the State Duma Sergey Naryshkin has said, on June 5, that the 'West' has started a new propaganda campaign against Russia. He was quoted as saying 'everything is piled: regular lies about the alleged Russian trace in the crash of the Malaysian Boeing, about the [alleged] dispatch of our troops to Ukraine's southeast, our 'ardent' desire to confront Europe, etc'. 'The fact that the current campaign to defame Russia, timed to the June summit of the EU, where the issue of sanctions could be raised again, is made in USA again and is coordinated from there, is absolutely clear'.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> "Integration of Silk Road and EAEU Projects Meets Interest Of Regional Countries — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798488>

<sup>64</sup> "Ukraine, Russia May Revise Terms Of Nuclear Waste Removal from Ukrainian NPPs — Energoatom", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/799143>

<sup>65</sup> "SCO has no Plans Of Becoming A Military-Political Bloc — Russia's Envoy", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/799117>

<sup>66</sup> "Putin and Tsipras Discussed Turkish Stream, Agreed To Meet at SPIEF — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/799077>

<sup>67</sup> "Escalation in Ukraine Caused By Kiev Actions — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/799038>

<sup>68</sup> "Russian Lawmaker Convinced West Started New Propaganda Campaign Against Russia", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798970>

Moldovan Prime Minister Kirill Gaburich has spoken, on June 4, in favour of resuming the work of the Russian-Moldovan inter-governmental commission for trade and economic cooperation. Its last session took place in 2013. This subject was discussed at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev held on May 29 on the sidelines of a session of the Council of the Heads of Government of the CIS member states in Astana. He expressed hope that there will be lifting restrictions on exports of Moldovan products to Russia.<sup>69</sup>

Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov has, on June 4, suggested setting up within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure an expert group to study the phenomenon of the Islamic State terrorist group. Meanwhile, SCO Secretary General Dmitry Mezentsev has confirmed that the SCO was ready to go ahead with the setting of such a group.<sup>70</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, in Moscow on June 4, that 'Russia is ready to work with Afghanistan's government in Kabul across all areas of activity'. During talks with his Afghan counterpart Salahuddin Rabbani, on the sidelines of a conference on security and stability in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) region, Lavrov stated that 'our countries have a long-standing good relationship. We cherish our history. We want Afghanistan to overcome the hardships and challenges it has had to face lately. We will do everything to help stabilize your country'.<sup>71</sup>

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said, on June 4, that it is impossible to restore economic and social ties with the Donbas areas in the southeast of Ukraine until the border with Russia is under Kiev's control.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, Poroshenko has also stated that Ukraine's federalization is not a feasible option and any decentralization will not cover areas like national defence, national security, foreign policy, fight against corruption and territorial integrity. The constitutional reform in Ukraine aimed at decentralization is one of the measures of the Minsk II agreements.<sup>73</sup>

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov has said, on June 4, that Moscow cannot accept the discrimination faced by the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic States. He expressed concerns about the attempts of the authorities of Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn to 'narrow the use of the Russian language through reforming the education system'. He added that 'focus is on the problems with ensuring the rights of our fellow countrymen in the Baltic states and as you know, they are pursuing a policy towards building monoethnic states and uncovered discrimination of the Russian-speaking minority'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "Moldova Wants To Renew Economic Cooperation with Russia — PM", *Itar-Tass*, June 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798961>

<sup>70</sup> "Kazakhstan Suggests Setting Up SCO Expert Group To Study Islamic State", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/798841>

<sup>71</sup> "Russia Ready For Close Cooperation With Afghanistan's New Government — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798832>

<sup>72</sup> "Poroshenko Not Going To Lift Donbas Blockade Until Border Is Under Kiev's Control", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/798809>

<sup>73</sup> "Poroshenko Rules Out Ukraine's Federalization", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/798788>

<sup>74</sup> "Moscow Urges World To Influence Baltic States Infringing On Russian-Speakers' Rights", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798777>

During a meeting of the Council of Defence Ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) held in Dushanbe on June 4, it was agreed to upgrade the military-technical cooperation within the organization. The CSTO Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha did not specify the measures but added that the legal framework and legislations will need to be updated as well.<sup>75</sup>

A large group of the Russian Navy ships has been included in the country's naval task force in the Mediterranean. The Baltic fleet spokesperson stated that 'Korolev large landing ship of the Baltic Fleet has arrived in the designated mission area and joined the permanent task force of the Russian Navy ships in the Mediterranean Sea'. Also, four ships of the Black Sea Fleet have been sent to the Mediterranean to fulfil tasks within the Russian Navy's permanent task force.<sup>76</sup>

The chairman of China's International Energy Group company board of directors Chen Zhijun has said that Chinese businesses intend to participate in energy projects in Crimea, including the supply of equipment for oil and gas extraction. He said this during a meeting with Crimean leader Sergey Aksyonov held in Simferopol on June 3.<sup>77</sup>

Russia's State Corporation for Atomic Energy Rosatom and Indonesia have signed a memorandum of cooperation in the development of nuclear energy in Indonesia. In April 2015, the Russian-Indonesian consortium had won a tender for the construction of a 10-MW multifunctional high-temperature gas-cooled reactor in Indonesia.<sup>78</sup>

## India-Russia Relations

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **India to study prospects of oil and gas pipeline supplies from Russia; Russia's NLMK steelmaker may redirect transformer steel from EU to India because of new duties.**

India's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan has met with his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak in Vienna on June 4. It was stated that India will conduct a joint study for exploring the feasibility of crude and gas pipelines from Russia to India. The two sides also reviewed existing Indian investment projects in Russia and discussed possibility of working together in exploration and production sector.<sup>79</sup>

Russian steelmaker NLMK's President Oleg Bagrin has said, on June 4, that it may redirect a portion of transformer steel volumes from the European Union to India against the background

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<sup>75</sup> "Post-Soviet Security Bloc Defence Ministers Agree To Change Military-Technical Policy", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/798748>

<sup>76</sup> "Russia Defence Ministry Reinforces Its Naval Task Force In Mediterranean", *Itar-Tass*, June 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/798556>

<sup>77</sup> "Chinese Business To Join Oil, Gas Projects in Crimea", *Itar-Tass*, June 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798438>

<sup>78</sup> "Russia, Indonesia Sign Memorandum Of Cooperation In Atomic Energy", *Itar-Tass*, June 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798243>

<sup>79</sup> "India To Study Prospects Of Oil And Gas Pipeline Supplies from Russia", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798951>

of duties introduced by the European Union on supplies of Russian products. There is also a potential of increasing sales volumes on the markets of Turkey, Middle East and South-east Asia. NLMK holds an approx 25 per cent share of the Indian electrical steel market. Earlier, the European Union had imposed an antidumping import duty on the transformer steel from May 14, 2015 for a period of six months. The measure is aimed against steelmakers from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, United States and Russia.<sup>80</sup>

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

### Iran

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Tehran says Syria is in war with 'savage' terrorists; Kerry injury will not slow Iran talks, US officials say.**

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani has said that Iran will spare no political and economic support for the Syrian government and expressed hope that Syria will emerge victorious in the war against "savage and adventurous" terrorists. "In the campaign against terrorism Iran has always been helping the regional countries" he added.<sup>81</sup>

Negotiations with Iran about its nuclear programme will continue despite US Secretary of State John Kerry's recent injury, US officials said. Mr Kerry had been holding talks over the future of Iran's nuclear programme in Geneva, Switzerland, one day before his accident. Experts see any potential agreement as a key diplomatic achievement for the Obama administration. The deadline to build on the already achieved "framework agreement" is the June 30. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf told reporters that the deadline would not change. "To be very clear, the secretary is absolutely committed to moving forward with the negotiations, to proceeding with them on the exact same timetable as before his accident," Ms Harf said.<sup>82</sup>

### Iraq and Syria

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Islamic State bomb attack 'kills 45 police officers' in Iraq; ISIL seizes territory from Syria rebels in Aleppo; Iraqi troops advance against ISIS in Beiji.**

At least 45 Iraqi police officers have been killed in an attack by Islamic State (IS) militants in Anbar province, security officials said. Suicide bombers rammed three vehicles packed with

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<sup>80</sup> "Russia's NLMK May Redirect Transformer Steel From EU to India Because Of Duties", *Itar-Tass*, June 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/798926>

<sup>81</sup> "Tehran Says Syria Is In War With 'Savage' Terrorists", *Tehran Times*, June 16, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=247136](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=247136)

<sup>82</sup> "Kerry Injury Will Not Slow Iran Talks, US Officials Say", *BBC News*, June 2, 2015 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32964010>

explosives into a base in the Tharthar area, on a road connecting the cities of Falluja and Samarra. Several high-ranking officers were among the casualties. Several senior officers were killed and the commander of the 9th Brigade, Brig Gen Moussa Haider, was among the 33 wounded, the source added.<sup>83</sup>

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group has seized more territory from Syrian rebels in Aleppo province near the border with Turkey. The advance by the armed group threatens to cut off supply lines used by Syrian rebel factions fighting both ISIL and the Syrian government. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said rebel groups have sent reinforcements to ward off the offensive, which has seen four villages and a town previously held by the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front fall to ISIL fighters.<sup>84</sup>

Iraqi troops backed by Shiite militias recaptured key parts of the northern refinery town of Beiji from ISIS militants. The commander of the Interior Ministry's Quick Reaction Forces, Brig. Gen. Nassir al-Fartousi, told state TV that the Iraqi flag was raised over a local government building in Beiji and that troops were advancing to other areas. The spokesman of Joint Operations Command, Brig. Gen. Saad Maan Ibrahim, said the security forces "are now controlling" the downtown Beiji area, describing the advance as an "important victory. The enemy has suffered a defeat and has sustained heavy losses and we hope that the whole city will be cleared within a few days," he added.<sup>85</sup>

## The Gulf

(June 1-7, 2015)

### ● Yemen's Houthis agree to talks as Saudi airstrikes continue; Pakistan denies Saudi Arabia nuclear sale speculation

Yemen's Houthi rebels agreed to join United Nations-backed peace talks in Geneva planned for June 14, a day after their opponents in the exiled government confirmed their attendance. A Saudi-led coalition of Arab states has been bombing Houthi forces, the strongest faction in Yemen's civil war, for over two months in an attempt to restore President Abdu-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who has fled to Saudi Arabia. Around 2,000 people have been killed and half a million displaced by the fighting. Coalition bombings killed around 58 people across Yemen on June 3 and June 4, the state news agency Saba, controlled by the Houthis, said. Forty-eight people, most of them women and children, were killed in air strikes on their houses in the Houthi heartland in the rural far north adjoining Saudi Arabia.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Iraq: Islamic State Bomb Attack 'Kills 45 Police Officers', *BBC News*, June 1, 2015 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32961448>

<sup>84</sup> "ISIL Seizes Territory from Syria Rebels in Aleppo", *Aljazeera*, June 3, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/isil-seizes-territory-syria-rebels-aleppo-150602154413816.html>

<sup>85</sup> "Iraqi Troops Advance Against ISIS in Beiji", *Daily Star*, June 8, 2015 at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jun-08/301018-iraqi-troops-advance-against-isis-in-beiji.ashx>

<sup>86</sup> "Yemen's Houthis Agree To Talks As Air Strikes Continue", *Aljazeera*, June 4, 2015 at <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/4/yemens-houthis-agree-to-talks.html>

Pakistan's foreign secretary hotly denied his country could sell Saudi Arabia an "off-the-shelf" nuclear weapon, after days of high-level talks in Washington. After meetings at the White House, Pentagon and State Department, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry described the suggestions Pakistan could sell a weapon as "unfounded, baseless and untrue." Pakistan's nuclear programme has nothing to do with any other country," he told reporters. "This is a deterrence that we develop in response to a threat perception that we have from our east. That's it. Pakistan is not talking to Saudi Arabia on nuclear issues, period."<sup>87</sup>

## F. The United State of America

### National

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Deputy Defence Secretary Work pledges transparency in DoD laboratory review; Kendall to lead DoD anthrax laboratory review team; Cable shows US embassy knew of anti-trafficking advocate's flaws; Reports: US economic picture mixed, but growth has returned; Kendall cites progress on f-35 performance, schedule, cost; US Senate mulls barriers to closing Guantanamo; Obama signs bill reforming lapsed surveillance programme; US Senate moves toward final votes on NSA reform bill.**

On June 3, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work promised transparency in the Defence Department's comprehensive review of its laboratory procedures, processes, and protocols associated with inactivating spore-forming anthrax. Speaking with Pentagon reporters, Work emphasized that public safety is the department's top concern, and he provided background on the DoD laboratories and their processes. Along with determining the cause of the inadvertent shipment of low concentrations of live anthrax, Work pledged transparency and accountability in the department's review.<sup>88</sup> On June 3, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work announced that the Defence Department's top acquisitions official will lead a comprehensive review of DoD's laboratory procedures, processes and protocols associated with inactivating spore-forming anthrax. Speaking with Pentagon reporters following Work's announcement, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, discussed his plans for the review. Kendall said he is assembling a team of government and private-sector experts to examine the inactivation processes. "They will report preliminary findings and recommendations by the end of June," he said. According to Kendall, the final report will depend upon the completion of the separate Centre of Disease Control investigation, and will focus on two primary questions. As part of DoD's review of these processes, Kendall said more than 400 batches are being tested to determine how many lots were not completely inactivated. Discussing risk to the public and to workers who may have handled sample boxes in the transportation process, Jones said, "we believe that the risk is zero for the general public as well as for the people who have handled this

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<sup>87</sup> "Pakistan Denies Saudi Arabia Nuclear Sale Speculation", *Gulf News* June 5, 2015 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/asia/pakistan/pakistan-denies-saudi-arabia-nuclear-sale-speculation-1.1530295>

<sup>88</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Work Pledges Transparency in DoD Laboratory Review", *DoD News*, June 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128969>

box.”<sup>89</sup> Earlier a leading Cambodian newspaper reported that the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh knew that a prominent anti-trafficking activist had lied about her background, and suspected that one of her non-profits had been mismanaging funds. And yet, the story makes clear, the U.S. Embassy chose not to act. The *Phnom Penh Post* newspaper said on June 1 that the U.S. Embassy in the Cambodian capital knew for years that disgraced anti-trafficking activist Somaly Mam had engaged in deceptive practices. The embassy also suspected that local non-profit AFESIP – which operates shelters in Cambodia for victims of sex trafficking, and which Somaly Mam co-founded in 1996 – had “mismanaged” its funding.<sup>90</sup>

Experts at the U.S. central bank said on June 3 that the U.S. economy started growing again in April and May after shrinking slightly in the first few months of the year. The assessment came from a survey of businesses across the nation designed to give Federal Reserve officials an up-to-date view of the economy as they consider changing the key interest rate two weeks from now. The Fed has slashed rates nearly to zero during the financial crisis in a bid to boost economic growth and cut unemployment. In its report on June 3, the Fed said manufacturing had improved in most areas, except for the energy industry, where falling oil prices have hurt investment. The survey, called the “Beige Book,” collects anecdotal reports of business activity across the nation. In this case, the reports showed rising auto sales, increased demand for loans and more consumer spending. The recent blend of gloomy and positive economic data is complicating the task of the Federal Reserve as it tries to steer the economy toward full employment and stable prices.<sup>91</sup>

The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter programme is making progress on performance, schedule and cost, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, told U.S. reporters last week during a teleconference from Norway. Kendall was in Oslo to attend the two-day F-35 CEO Conference, an annual meeting in which senior U.S. government leaders, international partners and industry members discuss the F-35 programme’s status and strategic outlook. This was the first year a partner nation hosted the high-level meeting. Kendall said next year he hopes to hold the CEO meeting at the first operational base for the F-35, after the Marine Corps’ F-35B reaches initial operational capability, or IOC, later this year. IOC refers to fielding F-35 squadrons capable of handling a range of combat missions. For the Marine Corps, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, or VMFA-121, known as the Green Knights and based at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, will be the first F-35B operational squadron. For partners and U.S. foreign military sales customers, commitment to such a block buy could save them money that Kendall said he’d like to see reach “double digits.” Block buys will occur in fiscal years 2018, 2019 and 2020, he added.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., “Kendall to Lead DoD Anthrax Laboratory Review Team”, *DoD News*, June 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128975>

<sup>90</sup> Carmichael, Robert, “Cable Shows US Embassy Knew of Anti-Trafficking Advocate’s Flaws”, *VOA News*, June 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/cable-shows-us-embassy-knew-of-anti-trafficking-advocates-flaws/2804043.html>

<sup>91</sup> Randle, Jim, “Reports: US Economic Picture Mixed, But Growth Has Returned”, *VOA News*, June 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reports-paint-mixed-picture-of-us-economy/2806090.html>

<sup>92</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, “Kendall Cites Progress on F-35 Performance, Schedule, Cost”, *DoD News*, June 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128947>

The U.S. Senate is considering legislation that could make it even tougher for President Barack Obama to fulfil a central pledge from his 2008 campaign: closing the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On June 3, the Senate began debate on the National Defence Authorization Act, a policy bill that sets forth congressional guidance for all Pentagon spending and operations for 2016. Championed by John McCain of Arizona, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the bill allows for closing Guantanamo – but only if the president submits a plan for doing so that both houses of Congress approve. The NDAA also erects hurdles for transferring detainees out of the camp. Established by the former George W. Bush administration after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Guantanamo Bay facility once held nearly 800 enemy combatants captured in the war on terrorism. That number has dwindled to 122, and nearly half of those have been approved for transfer to other countries.<sup>93</sup>

President Barack Obama on June 2 signed a bill to reform and restart the bulk collection of Americans' telephone records, a program that expired earlier this week. The president said the USA Freedom Act "protects civil liberties and our national security." The legislation mandates that private telecommunications companies, rather than the National Security Agency, will collect and retain phone records nationwide. Federal authorities will need a court order to review those records and look for points of contact with known or suspected terrorists abroad. Earlier on June 2, the Senate voted 67-32 to approve the measure and send it to Obama, after days of intense and heartfelt debate about protecting national security and safeguarding civil liberties. The bill enjoyed strong Democratic support but divided majority Republicans, some of whom wanted to resurrect the once-secret government program exposed by fugitive former NSA contractor Edward Snowden. Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky warned of a less secure America, calling the vote "a resounding victory for those who currently plot against our homeland."<sup>94</sup>

## International: Asia

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **President Obama: No military answer to Iran's nuclear programme; US expects Iran to cut enriched uranium stocks by June 30; Coalition air power leads fight against ISIL, general says; Airstrikes damage ISIL positions in Syria and Iraq; Myanmar should treat Rohingya as citizens: U.S. diplomat; Defence Secretary Carter gets aerial view of Strait of Malacca; US pledges \$18 million for Vietnam to buy patrol boats; Carter meets with Vietnamese leaders, signs vision statement; US, South Korea conduct anti-submarine exercise; Robots from South Korea, U.S. Win DARPA finals; Obama sternly warns China about South China Sea expansion; US ally sees importance of China despite tensions in South China Sea; President**

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<sup>93</sup> Bowman, Michael, "US Senate Mulls Barriers to Closing Guantanamo", *VOA News*, June 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/senate-mulls-barriers-closing-guantanamo/2807747.html>

<sup>94</sup> Bowman, Michael, "Obama Signs Bill Reforming Lapsed Surveillance Programme", *VOA News*, June 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-senate-approves-reform-lapsed-surveillance-program/2805383.html>; "US Senate Moves Toward Final Votes on NSA Reform Bill", *VOA News*, June 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-senate-moves-toward-final-votes-on-nsa-reform-bill/2804077.html>

**Obama: China 'put out feelers' on joining TPP; Massive computer hack to put cybersecurity atop US-China talks.**

U.S. President Barack Obama says diplomacy, not military action, is the only way to stop Iran from building a nuclear bomb. Obama made his comments in an interview with Israel's Channel 2 television, parts of which were broadcast on June 1. "I can, I think, demonstrate, not based on any hope but on facts and evidence and analysis, that the best way to prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapon is a verifiable tough agreement," the president said. "A military solution will not fix it. Even if the United States participates, it would temporarily slow down an Iranian nuclear programme but it will not eliminate it." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly warned that any nuclear deal with Iran would be a bad deal and still leave Iran with the ability to build a bomb, putting Israel in grave danger. Netanyahu's non-stop denouncement of the nuclear talks - especially his appearance before the U.S. Congress in March - has angered the Obama administration. But President Obama said in the interview that he understands Israel's "concerns" and "fears." He has said many times that Israel's security is a top U.S. priority.<sup>95</sup> However, the United States expects Iran to reduce its stockpile of low enriched uranium to the levels required under a deal with major powers by a June 30 deadline, the U.S. State Department said on June 3. "If they don't, that'll be a problem," State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf told reporters at her daily briefing, saying the Iranians had always gotten to the prescribed levels under interim nuclear deals. "We expect that they will." Talks among officials from world powers on curbing Iran's controversial nuclear programme resumed in Vienna on June 3, and the Iranian delegation will join the negotiations on June 4, U.S. and European Union officials said.<sup>96</sup>

Despite facing one of the most complex operational environments in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), coalition air power has enabled nearly every victory on the battlefield, a senior U.S. Central Command official said on June 5. During a telephonic call with Pentagon reporters, Air Force Lt. Gen. John W. Hesterman III, Combined Forces Air Component commander for Centcom, discussed the complexity and effectiveness of the air campaign against ISIL. Hesterman expressed pride in the multinational air coalition that formed "very quickly" demonstrating international commitment to defeating ISIL. Each nation brings capabilities, the general said, such as command and control, airlift, fire support and aerial refuelling to a very complex operational environment creating a coalition greater than the sum of its parts. The general said the air coalition is having a "profound" effect on the enemy.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on June 7.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> "Schwartz, Ken, Obama: No Military Answer to Iran's Nuclear Programme", *VOA News*, June 01, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-no-military-answer-to-iran-nuclear-program/2803919.html>

<sup>96</sup> "US Expects Iran to Cut Enriched Uranium Stocks by June 30", *Reuters*, June 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-us-expects-iran-to-reduce-enriched-uranium-stocks-by-june-30/2806080.html>

<sup>97</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Coalition Air Power Leads Fight Against ISIL, General Says", *DoD News*, June 5, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128983>

<sup>98</sup> "Airstrikes Damage ISIL positions in Syria and Iraq", *DoD News*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128988>

On June 3, Assistant Secretary of State Anne Sherman at a news conference in Bangkok chastised Myanmar, also known as Burma, for its treatment of the Rohingya minority group. Sherman said, "The Rohingya need to be treated as citizens of Burma". She spoke a day after touring refugee camps in Indonesia where hundreds of Rohingya and other migrants are being temporarily sheltered. Since last month, thousands of desperate migrants from Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh have reached the shores of Southeast Asian countries. Thousands more are thought to be stranded in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, where they are on rickety, overcrowded boats with dwindling supplies. On June 1, U.S. President Barack Obama said part of the reason the Rohingya are fleeing is because they are being "discriminated against significantly" in Myanmar. Washington would like to see "all Burmese leaders" speak up on the Rohingya issue, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, according to Sherman.<sup>99</sup>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter and his staff flew with U.S. Marines aboard an MV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft to get a bird's-eye view of the Strait of Malacca off the coast of Singapore, May 29. Carter's visit to Singapore and the flight to observe one of the world's busiest and most important shipping lanes was part of his 10-day trip in the Asia-Pacific region. In Singapore, Carter attended the 14th International Institute for Strategic Studies Asia Security Summit, known as the Shangri-La Dialogue. At the summit he met with important leaders in the defence and security community and spoke about the United States' advocacy for equality in economic opportunity. "The United States wants a future in which an Indonesian fisherman, an energy executive from Malaysia, an entrepreneur from Singapore, a small business owner from California or a Chinese business woman, just to name a few, have the security and opportunity to rise and prosper," Carter said at the summit. The highlight for the Marines was the opportunity to fly Carter aboard an MV-22B Osprey to survey the strait.<sup>100</sup>

U.S. Defence Secretary Ashton Carter has pledged \$18 million to help Vietnam buy American-made coast guard patrol boats to improve its maritime defence capabilities. Carter is in the communist state to boost military ties. As part of that effort, he and his Vietnamese counterpart signed a "vision statement" Monday to guide the expansion of bilateral cooperation. At a naval base in Haiphong, Carter toured a patrol boat that had been rammed and damaged by a Chinese ship during a confrontation last year in waters claimed by Vietnam in the South China Sea.<sup>101</sup> On June 1, Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with President Truong Tan Sang, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Defence Minister Gen. Phung Quang Thanh in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi, Pentagon officials reported. In a statement summarizing the secretary's interaction with the Vietnamese leaders, officials said Carter signed a joint vision statement for the bilateral defence relationship between the United States and Vietnam after his meeting with Thanh and discussed defence cooperation and regional security issues in all of his meetings. In his meetings, Carter discussed progress on legacy of war issues, support for Vietnamese peacekeeping training and

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<sup>99</sup> "US: Myanmar Should Treat Rohingya as Citizens", *VOA News*, June 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-myanmar-should-treat-rohingya-as-citizens/2805506.html>

<sup>100</sup> Mains, Ryan, "Carter Gets Aerial View of Strait of Malacca", *DoD News*, June 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128960>

<sup>101</sup> "US Pledges \$18 Million for Vietnam to Buy Patrol Boats", *VOA News*, June 01, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-pledges-18-million-for-vietnam-to-buy-patrol-boats/2802695.html>

operations, and cooperation on search-and-rescue and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the statement said, adding that Carter and his counterparts expressed a desire to leverage the joint vision statement to open the door to greater military-to-military cooperation that would allow the United States and Vietnam to more effectively work together to promote regional and global security. Carter also discussed maritime security issues and the South China Sea, pledging continued U.S. support to build Vietnamese maritime security capacity and reiterating the U.S. commitment to a peaceful resolution to disputed claims there made in accordance with international law.<sup>102</sup>

The United States and South Korea have kicked off a major anti-submarine drill, weeks after North Korea claimed it had successfully tested a submarine-launched ballistic missile. The South's Defence Ministry released a statement on June 1, calling the drill "the largest joint anti-submarine exercise the allies have ever staged, in terms of its scale and number of vessels involved." The exercise, which will run through June 3 in waters off the southern resort island of Jeju, involves more than 10 vessels, including a South Korean Aegis destroyer, as well as submarines surveillance planes and helicopters. The drills come amid growing concern about the expansion of the North's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.<sup>103</sup>

A robot from South Korea took first prize and two American robots took second and third prizes in POMONA, California on June 7, 2015 in the two-day robotic challenge finals held by the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency. Twenty-three human-robot teams participating in the DARPA Robotics Challenge, or DRC, finals competed for \$3.5 million in prizes, working to get through eight tasks in an hour, under their own on-board power and with severely degraded communications between robot and operator. A dozen U.S. teams and 11 from Japan, Germany, Italy, South Korea and Hong Kong competed in the outdoor competition. DARPA launched the DRC in response to the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan, in 2011 and the need for help to save lives in the toxic environment there. The DRC's goal was to accelerate progress in robotics so robots more quickly can gain the dexterity and robustness they need to enter areas too dangerous for people and mitigate disaster impacts. Robot tasks were relevant to disaster response — driving alone, walking through rubble, tripping circuit breakers, using a tool to cut a hole in a wall, turning valves and climbing stairs. All the winners said they would put most of the prize money into robotics research and share a portion with their team members.<sup>104</sup>

On June 1, U.S. President Barack Obama sternly warned China that its land reclamation projects in the South China Sea are counterproductive and a threat to Southeast Asian prosperity. He told a group of young Southeast Asian leaders visiting the United States that "it may be that some" of China's territorial claims to the waters are legitimate. "But they shouldn't just try to establish that based on throwing elbows and pushing people out of the way," President Obama said as he

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<sup>102</sup> "Carter Meets With Vietnamese Leaders, Signs Vision Statement", *DoD News*, June 2, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128952>

<sup>103</sup> "US, South Korea Conduct Anti-Submarine Exercise", *VOA News*, June 01, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-south-korea-conduct-anti-submarine-exercise/2802700.html>

<sup>104</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "Robots from South Korea, U.S. Win DARPA Finals", *DoD News*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128989>

thrust his elbows outward in front of a lectern at the White House. The American leader said the United States does not have a territorial claim to the region, but wants the disputes over the waters China and other countries are claiming to be settled peacefully.<sup>105</sup> Even though tensions over the disputed islands in the South China Sea have recently been heightened, analysts believe countries in the region face a conundrum: speaking out aggressively against China while at the same time improving economic ties with the Asian giant. This balance is becoming evident in the Philippines, a treaty ally of the U.S. and an important trading partner with China. “China has become an important trading partner of the Philippines,” said the Philippine ambassador to the United States, Jose Cuisia, in an interview with VOA. “Our commercial relationship continues to grow.” The comments by the ambassador come after the recently concluded Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, where U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter announced the launch of a new Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative.<sup>106</sup>

President Barack Obama says, China has started to “put out feelers” about possibly joining the new Trans-Pacific trade agreement. Obama told public radio’s *Marketplace* on June 3, “If we have 11 of the leading economies in the Asia-Pacific region who have agreed to enforceable labour standards, enforceable environmental standards, strong I.P. [internet protocol] protections... then China is going to have to at least take those international norms into account.” The president said Chinese officials have reached out to the White House and Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and suggested Beijing does not want to be left out of the TPP’s comprehensive scale and scope. The Trans-Pacific trade deal, which is still being negotiated, would bring together at least 12 Asia-Pacific nations, including the United States. Obama says the U.S. still engages China on a bilateral economic level on issues surrounding its currency, subsidies and intellectual property theft. But he adds it would help if the world’s second-largest economy was surrounded by countries operating under high standards. He said that results in a level playing field that will help America shape international commerce for a long time. TPP negotiations, when concluded, will govern 40 percent of U.S. imports and exports. The countries involved accounted for about \$1.5 trillion worth of trade in goods in 2012 and \$242 billion worth of services in 2011. They are responsible for 40 percent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) and 26 percent of global trade. Obama has made Congressional passage of a final deal a major goal. He is also pushing Congress to give him fast-track authority — allowing him to negotiate conditions in trade agreements without the need for Congressional approval.<sup>107</sup>

The hack of millions of U.S. government personnel files, and allegations that the attack may have originated in China, will put cybersecurity at the top of the upcoming U.S.-China summit later this month, according to news reports. The breach of computer systems of the Office of Personnel Management was disclosed on June 4 by the Obama administration, which said records of up to 4 million current and former federal employees may have been compromised. Investigators “are

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<sup>105</sup> Bredemeier, Ken, “Obama Sternly Warns China About South China Sea Expansion”, *VOA News*, June 01, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-sternly-warns-china-about-south-china-sea-expansion/2803899.html>

<sup>106</sup> Ali, Idrees, “US Ally Sees Importance of China Despite Tensions in South China Sea”, *VOA News*, June 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/philippines-china-relations-still-important/2805378.html>

<sup>107</sup> Beattie, Victor, “Obama: China ‘Put Out Feelers’ on Joining TPP”, *VOA News*, June 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-china-put-out-feelers-about-joining-tpp/2806949.html>

aware of the threat that is emanating from China,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest said on June 5. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei called the accusations “irresponsible” and noted that China also is a victim of cyberattacks. Accusations of a Chinese role in the attack, including possible state sponsorship, could further strain ties between Washington and Beijing. Tensions are already heightened over Chinese assertiveness in pursuit of territorial claims in the South China Sea.<sup>108</sup>

## India-US Relations

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Defence Secretary Carter, Indian Prime Minister discuss issues in New Delhi; U.S., India sign 10-Year Defence Framework agreement; India, US clear 2 ground-breaking defence projects as Carter holds talks; Carter visit builds on relationship between United States, India; Taslima Nasrin moved to US following death threats in India; Aggressive maritime moves by the Chinese in the South China Sea have helped countries in the region align closer with the U.S: Carter.**

According to a DoD news release, Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 3. Carter is on a 10-day trip focused on the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. The two leaders discussed President Barack Obama’s successful January 2015 visit to New Delhi and agreed to follow up on key outcomes from that visit, the release said. They agreed to continue to build momentum under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative, including the completion of two “pathfinder” project agreements, the release said. Carter also reaffirmed support for the Knowledge Partnership in Defence Studies, pointing to education as a strategic enabler and voicing enthusiasm for working with India to shape the strategic thinking of the next generation of military leaders. The two leaders agreed that the strategic convergence between the U.S. rebalance and India’s “Act East” opens more opportunities for engagement. They also discussed many issues of mutual concern, including the Asia-Pacific, regional security, and counterterrorism.<sup>109</sup>

In India, Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar signed a 10-year defence framework agreement on June 3, highlighting the growth of defence cooperation between the two countries. The agreement signed is an outgrowth of a meeting that was held between President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2015. Out of that meeting grew the Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI). The idea is for India and the United States to work closely together to develop military capabilities both can use. The agreement included plans to cooperate in developing a mobile solar energy power source that could be used in remote areas and in developing a lightweight protective suit effective in chemical and biological hazard environments. He also spoke of the convergence between Prime Minister Modi’s “Make In India” policy and the DTTI. “The heart of that is to create cooperative

<sup>108</sup> “Massive Computer Hack to Put Cybersecurity Atop US-China Talks”, *VOA News*, June 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-china-cyberattack/2810231.html>

<sup>109</sup> “Carter, Indian Prime Minister Discuss Issues in New Delhi”, *DoD News*, June 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128978>

technology and industrial relationships that are not just the buyer-seller kind," the secretary said. "Both we and the Indians want to move beyond that, and there's no reason why that can't occur in the sense that industry wants to do it. We're very willing to be flexible, creative. We are being that with a number of pathfinder projects." The agreement requires both countries to cut through the "historical burden of bureaucracy," he said.<sup>110</sup>

India and the United States have sealed an agreement to jointly develop protective gear for soldiers against biological and chemical warfare, and another on building generators, defence officials said on June 3. The projects were cleared as U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter held talks with Indian leaders to expand security ties between the countries that were on opposite sides of the Cold War but have since drawn closer against the rising weight of China. The United States has become one of the top sources of weapons for the Indian military, upstaging Russia in recent years, and now under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make-in-India" programme offered joint development and production of military technologies. While the two projects approved are modest in scale, India and the United States are also exploring collaboration at the higher end of technology, Carter told reporters.<sup>111</sup>

A joint statement issued by U.S. and Indian officials said Parrikar and Carter discussed the India-U.S. defence relationship and the broader India-U.S. strategic partnership, and that they reaffirmed their commitment to expand and deepen the bilateral defence relationship. The two defence leaders also reviewed the existing and emerging regional security dynamics, the statement said. Parrikar and Carter signed the 2015 Framework for the India-U.S. Defence Relationship, which builds upon the previous framework and successes to guide the bilateral defence and strategic partnership for the next 10 years, officials said. The new framework agreement provides avenues for high-level strategic discussions, continued exchanges between armed forces of both countries and strengthening of defence capabilities, they added. In addition, building on the areas of agreement during President Barack Obama's visit to India in January, the statement said, Parrikar and Carter agreed to expedite discussions to take forward cooperation on jet engines, aircraft carrier design and construction and other areas. The two also agreed to pursue co-development and co-production projects that will offer tangible opportunities for American defence industries to build defence partnership with the Indian industries, including in manufacturing under a national programme geared toward making India a manufacturing hub.<sup>112</sup>

Controversial exiled Bangladeshi feminist author Taslima Nasrin, who moved to India in 2004 and announced later that it was the country where she had her "second home," has been relocated to the United States by a U.S.-based advocacy group known for its support of secular and humanist writers. This follows new death threats she received recently. In a statement, the Washington, D.C.-based Centre for Inquiry said this week that Nasrin had been named as one of the next

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<sup>110</sup> Garamone, Jim, "U.S., India Sign 10-Year Defence Framework Agreement", *DoD News*, June 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128973>

<sup>111</sup> "India, US Clear 2 Ground-breaking Defense Projects as Carter Holds Talks", *Reuters*, June 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-india-us-clear-two-ground-breaking-defense-projects-as-carter-holds-talks/2805958.html>

<sup>112</sup> "Carter Visit Builds on Relationship Between United States, India", *DoD News*, June 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128970>

targets for murder by al-Qaida-linked extremist groups in Bangladesh, which prompted the organization to assist her in moving to safety in the U.S., "alleviating the immediate threat to her life." "Because of the very real danger to her life, Taslima has decided to leave India. We at the Centre for Inquiry are doing all we can to keep her out of harm's way," a CFI statement said.<sup>113</sup>

The United States and India signed a new defence pact and a 10-year defence cooperation framework this week that officials say represent a new dynamic in their efforts to speed up their security relationship. They also say the recent aggressive maritime moves by the Chinese in the South China Sea have helped countries in the region align closer with the U.S. These agreements and the further cooperation between the U.S. and Asian militaries are being seen as another sign by the two sides to fend off the ever growing influence by the Chinese military in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Before traveling to Vietnam and India, Carter said at the annual Shangri-la Defence Dialogue in Singapore that China's aggressive land reclamation and militarization in the South China Sea are driving countries in the region to seek stronger cooperation with the United States. "Many, many countries are expressing publicly and of course to the United States their concern," Carter said. "Many of them, as a consequence, want to strengthen their relationships with the United States and others of their neighbours and partners."<sup>114</sup>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Two Indian naval ships make port call to Australia; Indian Air Force concludes humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in earthquake hit Nepal.**

Two ships of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet (INS Satpura and INS Kamorta) called on the port of Freemantle, Perth, Australia on June 4, 2015. It may be recalled that four ships of the Eastern Fleet are on an operational deployment to South Indian Ocean and South China Sea since mid-May 2015. As a part of the deployment, INS Satpura, the indigenously built guided missile stealth frigate and INS Kamorta, the latest indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare corvette had participated in IMDEX 15 and SIMBEX at Singapore. This visit to Australia is aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing inter-operability between navies of the two countries. During the stay in harbour, various activities such as official calls, reception on board, ship open to visitors, guided tours for Indian naval personnel and professional interaction between personnel of both the navies, are planned.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Rahman, Shaikh Azizur, "Taslima Nasrin Moved to US Following Death Threats in India", *VOA News*, June 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/taslma-nasrin-moved-to-us-following-death-threats-in-india/2806843.html>

<sup>114</sup> Bao, Li, "US, India Sign Defence Pact Countering China's Influence", *VOA News*, June 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-india-sign-defense-pact-countering-chinese-influence/2808540.html>

<sup>115</sup> "Indian Naval Ships Enter Freemantle (Perth), Australia," *PIB*, June 04, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122292>

The Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a mammoth Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) task from April 25, 2015 to June 4, 2015 in earthquake hit Nepal. The IAF responded very quickly to the earthquake that struck Nepal and swung into action and routed one C-130J aircraft, two C-17, one IL-76, airlifting 295 NDRF personnel, 46.5 tonnes of load and five sniffer dogs. Lots of relief material for over a month was airlifted like water, field hospitals, blankets, tents, Paramedics etc. Large scale relief & rescue operations were carried out by Mi-17 V5 and Mi-17 helicopters from detachments at Pokhara and Kathmandu. These operations were carried out to far flung inaccessible areas at earthquake affected places that included Lukla, Dhading, Millanchi, Gorkha, Chautara, Charikot, Melum, Aroghat, Dhunche, Trishuli, and other remote villages. During the relief & rescue operations, a total of 1677 sorties by various aircraft were carried out carrying 1348.995 tonnes of load and evacuating 5188 persons and 780 casualties.<sup>116</sup>

## International

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Islamic State group prepared to use chemical weapons; Russia and China oppose a US-led request to impose sanctions on two Libyans accused of obstructing UN talks.**

According to reports, the Islamic State group has shown it is prepared to use chemical weapons and is likely to have among its recruits the technical expertise to develop them. The Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has said, "the use of chlorine by Daesh, and its recruitment of highly technically trained professionals, including from the West, have revealed far more serious efforts in chemical weapons development." Daesh is the Arabic acronym for IS. She further said that "Daesh is likely to have amongst its tens of thousands of recruits the technical expertise necessary to further refine precursor materials and build chemical weapons." The use of chlorine in homemade bombs has been reported in several parts of Iraq and Syria, with car and roadside bombs easy to rig with chlorine canisters.<sup>117</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, Russia and China have opposed a US-led request to impose sanctions on two Libyans accused of obstructing UN talks on forming a national unity government. Britain, France, Spain and the United States had sought the measures to shore up efforts by UN envoy Bernardino Leon to clinch a political deal before the start of Ramadan on June 17. The four countries asked that a global travel ban and an assets freeze be imposed on Abdul Rahman Swehli, a politician from Misrata, and Othman Maliqta, commander of the Zintani Qaqa brigade. Russia spoke out against the move, arguing that the request had not been prepared properly but in a rush and that it lacked evidence or documents on the two Libyans' actions. China advocated a more cautious approach as the political talks were at a critical junction. The sanctions request by the four countries was further complicated when Libya's UN Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi sent a letter to the council, casting doubt over whether the measures would be helpful. The two Libyans

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<sup>116</sup> "IAF Concludes Operations in Earthquake Hit Nepal," *PIB*, June 04, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122295>

<sup>117</sup> "Australia: IS Working To Develop Chemical Weapons," *Defence News*, June 07 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/06/07/australia-islamic-state-working-develop-chemical-weapons/28646395/>

are not considered high-profile, but the decision to target them first was aimed at sending a message to more senior-ranking officials that they must get on board. Libyan factions agreed during Geneva talks in January to set up a national unity government to restore stability that has been shattered since the 2011 fall of Moammar Gadhafi.<sup>118</sup>

### III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

#### Jammu & Kashmir

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **JK telecom attacks: Police arrests Hizbul Mujahideen workers; BSF jawan injured as Pakistan violates ceasefire; Kashmir 'unfinished agenda of Partition,' says Pakistan Army Chief; Sikh youths clash with Jammu police over posters of Bhindranwale; Army guns down 3 infiltrators in Kupwara.**

In yet another incident of militants targeting a communication facility in Kashmir, a grenade was thrown at a mobile transmission tower in a downtown locality of Srinagar on June 1, causing panic in the area. The attack comes after a series of strikes on communication facilities by militants in north Kashmir's Sopore and Pattan townships in Baramulla district and Handwara in Kupwara district which have left two persons dead.<sup>119</sup> The suspended mobile and internet services were later restored throughout the Kashmir valley on June 4 following J&K police arresting as well as detaining over a hundred suspected Hizbul Mujahideen supporters who'd gone about distributing pamphlets and threatening mobile tower operators to close down services. The police arrested four Hizbul Mujahideen men on June 3 after attacks on mobile towers. A senior police officer said the four were involved in the attacks in North Kashmir. Sources added all four are "over ground Hizb workers"; their chief was arrested from Badambagh in Sopore where many mobile towers are located.<sup>120</sup>

One Border Security Force jawan has been injured as Pakistan broke the ceasefire agreement for the third time on June 1, the latest incident occurred in the Hiranagar Sector of Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier in the day, Pakistan troops violated the ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Krishna Ghati Sector in Poonch District by firing at Indian forward posts twice using automatic weapons and rocket projectile grenades.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>118</sup> "Russia, China Block UN Libya Sanctions," *Defence News*, June 07, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/06/07/russia-china-block-un-libya-sanctions/28646463/>

<sup>119</sup> "After North Kashmir, Militants Target Mobile Tower in Srinagar", *The Hindu*, June 1, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/militants-target-mobile-phone-facility-in-kashmir/article7271250.ece>

<sup>120</sup> Pandit, M Saleem, "Hizbul Workers Arrested, Mobile Services Restored in Kashmir", *The Times of India*, June 5, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Hizbul-workers-arrested-mobile-services-restored-in-Kashmir/articleshow/47548229.cms>

<sup>121</sup> "Third Ceasefire By Pakistan Troops in J-K, One BSF Jawan Hurt", *Business Standard*, June 1, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/third-ceasefire-by-pakistan-troops-in-j-k-one-bsf-jawan-hurt-115060100911\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/third-ceasefire-by-pakistan-troops-in-j-k-one-bsf-jawan-hurt-115060100911_1.html)

Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif, while addressing a conference at the National Defence University in Islamabad on June 3 said that Pakistan and Kashmir are inseparable, and Kashmir is “an unfinished agenda of partition”. “While our enemies are supporting terrorism to stoke sub-conventional conflicts and destabilize our country, we are fully determined, capable of defeating nefarious designs,” *Dawn* online quoted him as saying. The army chief’s comments follow a flurry of similar statements that India was involved in stoking terrorism in Pakistan.<sup>122</sup>

An indefinite curfew imposed in parts of Jammu following violence over Sikh militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale’s posters continued for a second day on June 5. Authorities also ordered the suspension of Internet services to check the spread of rumours in Jammu. The curfew was clamped on June 4 in Satwari and Mirian Sahib areas of the city. Street protests erupted in many places in Jammu on June 5 as Sikhs demanded action against those responsible for the killing of a Sikh youth, during police firing on Sikh protesters at Gadigarh area on June 4.<sup>123</sup>

Hours after sneaking into Jammu and Kashmir’s Kupwara district from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, three suspected Islamic militants were killed in a gun-battle with Indian troops on June 6. A defence spokesman said that the Army soldiers defending the Line of Control (LoC) in Tootmar Gali (pass) of Nowgam sector in Kupwara intercepted the militants shortly before midnight on June 5 leading to the fierce encounter. A statement issued by Army in Srinagar added that the corpses of the militants were recovered with three AK-47 (300 rounds), five UBGL with nine UBGL rounds, five Chinese grenades, three GPS and five radio sets.<sup>124</sup>

## Northeast India

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **18 Army personnel killed in Manipur ambush; Ulfa (I), NSCN (K) and others own responsibility; PM task force recommends Army to guard Indo-Myanmar border; NSCN-K militants attack Assam Rifles camp in Arunachal.**

At least 20 jawans of 6 Dogra infantry regiment were killed in an RPG attack in an ambush by unidentified militants on June 4 in Manipur’s Moltuk valley in Chandel district bordering Myanmar. The jawans were patrolling along the secluded New Samtal Road about 90km from Imphal when they came under heavy attack with bombs and automatic rifles from different sides at the jungles near Paroulam village, police sources said. The 6 Dogra is being de-inducted from the Moltuk valley.<sup>125</sup> Following the attack, the Leimakhong (Manipur)-based 57 Mountain Division of the Army launched one of the biggest combing operations in the hilly terrain of the state which

<sup>122</sup> “Kashmir Unfinished Agenda: Pak Army Chief”, *The Hindu*, June 4, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/kashmir-unfinished-agenda-pak-army-chief/article7279507.ece>

<sup>123</sup> “Curfew Continues In Jammu, Internet Services Suspended”, *Greater Kashmir*, June 5, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/jammu/curfew-continues-in-jammu-internet-services-suspended/188367.html>

<sup>124</sup> “Army Guns Down 3 Infiltrators”, *The Asian Age*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/army-guns-down-3-infiltrators-612>

<sup>125</sup> Kalita, Prabin, “Ulfa, NSCN and Two Others Own Responsibility For Manipur Ambush That Left 20 Jawans Dead”, *The Times of India*, Jun 4, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Ulfa-NSCN-and-two-others-own-responsibility-for-Manipur-ambush-that-left-20-jawans-dead/articleshow/47543406.cms>

shares a 353 km porous border with Myanmar on the east. Army chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag arrived in Imphal on June 5 to review the situation even as NSCN (K) and two Meitei outfits Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) and Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) have claimed responsibility for the ambush in a joint statement. Uifa (I) leader Paresh Baruah on June 4 had made a similar claim that the ambush was carried out from the instructions of NSCN (K) supremo SS Khaplang, who is also the chairman of the United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW), a newly-floated conglomerate of four outfits, NSCN (K), Uifa (I), NDFB (S) and KLO.<sup>126</sup>

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level Task Force on the North-East wants the army to be pulled out of counter-insurgency duties in Manipur and Nagaland, and re-deployed east to guard the porous border with Myanmar, government sources said. The task force will recommend that police in the troubled states be given the lead role in counter-insurgency operations, sources told *The Indian Express*. Led by RN Ravi, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the PM's envoy for peace talks with Nagaland insurgents, the task force's recommendations were finalised last month, and are due to be formally presented to Modi this month.<sup>127</sup>

Suspected militants from the NSCN-Khaplang outfit on June 7 attacked a camp of the Assam Rifles in Arunachal Pradesh. However, no causality was reported. Heavily armed militants started firing indiscriminately at the camp in Tirap district in early hours, prompting retaliatory firing by the para-military Assam Rifles personnel, an Assam Rifles spokesman said. The militants fled after retaliation by the Assam Rifles, he said.<sup>128</sup>

## Left-wing Extremism

(June 1-7, 2015)

- **Maharashtra to have Unified command to tackle Naxalism; New anti-Maoist policy soon: Government; Police claims to have killed six Maoists in Chhattisgarh; Home Ministry sets to get control of the IAP.**

Aiming to tackle the growing menace of Naxalism, Maharashtra government has decided to set up a unified command under the Chief Minister, which will study the existing policies and strategies adopted by other states to combat Maoist terror. The committee will also co-ordinate with other states and the Centre on the security apparatus put in place to combat Naxalite activities, the official said.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Kalita, Prabin, "Army Launches Massive Hunt Operation In Manipur Against Militants", *The Times of India*, June 5, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Army-launches-massive-hunt-operation-in-Manipur-against-militants-after-deadliest-attack-in-33-years/articleshow/47556477.cms>

<sup>127</sup> Swami, Praveen, "Manipur Ambush: Let Army Guard Myanmar Border, Modi's Task Force Recommends", *The Indian Express*, June 6, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/manipur-ambush-pm-modis-task-force-wants-army-out-of-counter-insurgency-duties-in-north-east/>

<sup>128</sup> "NSCN-K Militants Attack Assam Rifles Camp in Arunachal", *The Assam Tribune*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jun0715/at044>

<sup>129</sup> "Maharashtra to Establish Unified Command Under Chief Minister To Tackle Naxalism", *The Economic Times*, June 5, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/maharashtra-to-establish-unified-command-under-chief-minister-to-tackle-naxalism/articleshow/47551299.cms>

The government's new anti-Maoist policy is all set to become a reality soon with most Maoist-hit states favouring it, official sources said on June 5. "The new anti-Naxal policy will be a reality soon as most of the states concerned have already given suggestions (to the home ministry) and viewpoints on it to the central government," they told *IANS*. Once cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), the new policy is expected to pave the way for multi-pronged interventions in areas of security and development, the sources said.<sup>130</sup>

At least six Maoists were killed in an encounter in Kondagav district of Chhattisgarh on June 6, the police claimed. "An encounter took place between a team of the District Reserve Guard of the Kondagav district police and the Maoists near Timdi village of Kondagav this evening. At least six Maoists were killed. We have so far managed to recover two bodies of women Maoists," Inspector-General of Police (Bastar range) S.R. Kalluri said. Mr. Kalluri said a "Maoist camp" was busted during the encounter. "Three 12-bore rifles, around 15 backpacks and other material were recovered from the spot," he said.<sup>131</sup>

The Union Home Ministry will get control of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), a development scheme for Maoist-affected states, after Rajnath Singh reportedly took up the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The IAP, which functioned under the Planning Commission, had been transferred to NITI Aayog after it replaced the Plan panel. Union Home Secretary L C Goyal confirmed that the Home Ministry was set to get control of the IAP. "The NITI Aayog is not an implementing agency. It is the Home Ministry which is coordinating with other ministries to bring development in Maoist-affected states. It is almost certain we will get the IAP," said a senior Home Ministry official.<sup>132</sup>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### United Nations

(May 26-June 8, 2015)

#### UN in Africa

- **Mali, Nigeria, Burundi and South Sudan in the spotlight, Libya talks for unity government begin, UNSOM mandate extended as the transition proceeds; CAR abuses to be investigated; EU migration plans under Fire from UN Chief, Member States.**

A Bangladeshi peacekeeper was killed in a suspected terrorist attack in the Malian capital Bamako

<sup>130</sup> "New Anti-Maoist Policy Soon: Government", *Business Standard*, June 5, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/new-anti-maoist-policy-soon-government-115060501151\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/new-anti-maoist-policy-soon-government-115060501151_1.html)

<sup>131</sup> Dahat, Pavan, "Six Maoists Killed in Chhattisgarh", *The Hindu*, June 7, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/six-maoists-killed-in-chhattisgarh/article7290483.ece>

<sup>132</sup> Singh, Vijaita, "Home To Control Scheme For Maoist-Affected States", *The Indian Express*, June 7, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/home-to-control-scheme-for-maoist-affected-states/>

taking the toll in the MINUSMA to 40 since the mission was set up in 2013.<sup>133</sup> A few days later, the head of the UN mission in Mali escaped narrowly as his convoy triggered a landmine blast.<sup>134</sup>

The Boko Haram is suspected of using children to perpetrate nearly 75 per cent of suicide attacks in its area of operation since 2014. The number of suicide bombing cases has also increased since 2015, with 26 incidents on the record.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, there are fears of the Boko Haram moving to Niger, Chad and Cameroon to escape the government's crackdown.<sup>136</sup> In Nigeria, the state's forces have also been asked to respect human rights while countering terrorism.<sup>137</sup>

The UN began consultations with all interested parties to end the political turmoil in Burundi. The consultation is being facilitated by Said Djinnit, the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes. UN officials also met the in-charge of the Burundian Mission to the UN to emphasize adherence to UN-Backed Arusha Accord.<sup>138</sup> Adama Dieng, the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide warned that those found guilty will be referred to the International Court of Justice.<sup>139</sup>

The number of Protection of Civilians sites in South Sudan have been increased, adding to the responsibilities of the UNMISS. The International Organisation for Migration and the UNMISS are coordinating to make adequate arrangements for the new sites.<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, the worsening situation in the country has evoked a joint response from the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng and the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Jennifer Welsh. There is serious concern regarding the suffering of women in this violence.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>133</sup> "Militants Kill Bangladeshi UN Peacekeeper in Mali", May 27, 2015, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/militants-kill-bangladeshi-un-peacekeepers-mali-87604>

<sup>134</sup> "Three Wounded as UN Convoy Triggers Landmines in Mali: UN Sources", May 28, 2015 at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2015/May-28/299606-three-wounded-as-un-convoy-triggers-landmines-in-mali-un-sources.ashx>

<sup>135</sup> "Nigeria: UN Warns Of 'Alarming' Spike In Suicide Attacks By Women And Girls", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50967#.VXk89fmqqko>

<sup>136</sup> "UN: Fight Against Boko Haram Requires Regional Might", May 28, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-united-nations-boko-haram-fight-nigerian-regional-support/2795545.html>

<sup>137</sup> "Citing 'Horrible Acts Of Cruelty' in Nigeria, UN Rights Chief Urges Justice For Victims", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51066#.VXpk-Pmqqko>

<sup>138</sup> "Burundi: Senior UN Officials Step up Engagement to Ease Country's Political Crisis", May 28, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50996#.VXldlfmqqko>

<sup>139</sup> "In Burundi, UN Special Adviser Urges All Parties to Engage in Talks to Calm Tensions", May 31, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51013#.VXlvJfmqqko>

<sup>140</sup> "UN South Sudan Envoy Describes 'Great Challenge' Of Protecting Civilians on Visit to Renovated Camp", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50966#.VXk8wvmqqko>

<sup>141</sup> "South Sudan: UN Officials Call For International Engagement To De-Escalate Country's Conflict", May 29, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51000#.VXljVfmqqko>

The Secretary General has expressed opposition to the EU proposal to interject smuggler boats militarily and hoped that a more comprehensive solution would be found to the problem of migration.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, the EU Executive Commission's proposal of a weighted index of state economies and capacities on the basis of which the number of refugees from across the Mediterranean will be settled in various countries of Europe is also being debated. A few days later, given Libyan opposition to the proposal, the Security Council has deferred the adoption of the Resolution authorizing military action against smugglers.<sup>143</sup> Nearly 40,000 migrants from Africa and Middle East have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to escape poverty and war in their homelands since January 2015.<sup>144</sup> As the UN was preparing to bring the warring parties to the table, the Western nations wanted to blacklist two spoilers, one each with the Government in exile and the other with Libya Dawn, for preventing the talks from resuming. Russia and China however blocked the proposal temporarily.<sup>145</sup> The UN envoy meanwhile presented a draft proposal for a unity government to the two sides on June 8.

The mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has been extended until August 2015.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile, the Special Envoy Nicholas Kay, applauded the transition in Somalia that had been made possible due to the cooperation between the UN, African Union and the Federal Government.<sup>147</sup>

The accusation of sexual abuse by French peacekeepers in the Central African Republic is to be investigated by an independent review panel.<sup>148</sup>

## UN in Asia

### ● North Korea hoodwinks again; Nepal pre-monsoon rehabilitation ongoing; Rohingyas discussed in the Security Council

Despite doubts surfacing about the submarine ballistic missile test by North Korea, South Korea has requested for a UN investigation to know if North Korea has violated the ban that prevents

<sup>142</sup> "EU Migration Plans Under Fire From UN Chief, Member States", May 27, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/un-chief-cool-eu-smuggler-boat-destruction-plan-141205382.html>

<sup>143</sup> "Bid To Gain UN Approval for EU Migrant Mission 'Paused' – Diplomats", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/bid-to-gain-un-approval-f/1891334.html>

<sup>144</sup> "Migrant Flow of 40,000 since January 2015 – UN", May 30, 2015, at <http://www.rte.ie/news/2015/0530/704888-over-4-200-migrants-rescued-in-mediterranean/>

<sup>145</sup> "Russia, China Block Proposed UN Blacklisting of Two Libyans", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3112833/Russia-China-block-proposed-UN-blacklisting-two-Libyans.html>

<sup>146</sup> "Security Council Extends UN Mission In Somalia Until August", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50968#.VXk9mPmqkko>

<sup>147</sup> "Somalia: UN Envoy Applauds Successes as Country 'Comes Together'", June 8, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51089#.VXqmcvmqkko>

<sup>148</sup> "Central African Republic: UN Chief To Launch Independent Inquiry Into Sexual Abuse Case", June 3, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51046#.VXmbm\\_mqkko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51046#.VXmbm_mqkko)

North Korea from conducting such tests.<sup>149</sup>

According to the UNDP, approximately 500,000 houses have been destroyed in the April 25 earthquake in Nepal. In 14 of the worst affected districts, 15,000 children require therapeutic food to deal with acute malnutrition.<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, Medical Camp Kits (MCKs) are being distributed in relief camps ahead of the monsoon since there is little time to put in place permanent facilities for health care.<sup>151</sup>

The UN Security Council held its first closed door meeting to discuss situation of rights of minorities, particularly the Rohingyas stranded in Southeast Asian waters. The Human Rights High commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein briefed the Security Council on the discrimination faced by the community. Russia however suggested that the issue be considered by the Human Rights Council instead.<sup>152</sup> The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees has raised a request of \$13 million to help with arrival, information and addressing the root causes of their migration to Southeast Asian countries.<sup>153</sup>

## UN in Middle East

- **IS threats looms large; Yemen moves towards talks; Iraq falls short of finances for relief; Barrel bombing continues in Syria; UNRWA turns 65; Iran drags its feet over inspections of military sites by IAEA;**

The General Assembly adopted a non-binding resolution condemning the destruction of archaeological sites at Hatra and Nimrud in Iraq by the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL). The Director General of UNESCO expressed concern regarding the use of illegal trade in cultural artefacts to finance terrorist activities.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, the Secretary General informed the Security Council that there are nearly 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters from over a 100 countries in the ISIL now, an increase of over 70 per cent since November 2014.<sup>155</sup> According to the Interpol, it is also

<sup>149</sup> "Kim Jong-un Claims 'Photo Shopped' North Korea Missile Launch Was 'Eye-Opening Miracle'", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/11629529/Kim-Jong-un-claims-photoshopped-North-Korea-missile-launch-was-eye-opening-miracle.html>

<sup>150</sup> "Some 500,000 Homes And Temples Across Nepal Damaged By Earthquake", UN Official Says, May 26, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50969#.VXIS\\_\\_mqqko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50969#.VXIS__mqqko)

<sup>151</sup> "In Nepal, UN Rushes To Replace Quake-Damaged Healthcare Facilities Ahead of Monsoon", June 1, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51015#.VXlwh\\_mqqko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51015#.VXlwh_mqqko)

<sup>152</sup> "U.N. Council Has First-Ever Briefing on Rights in Myanmar", May 28, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/u-n-council-first-ever-briefing-rights-myanmar-185207831.html>

<sup>153</sup> "UN Refugee Agency Seeks \$13 Million To Beef Up Protections For Boat Arrivals in Southeast Asia", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51071#.VXplufmqqko>

<sup>154</sup> "UN General Assembly Calls for an Immediate Halt to 'Wanton' Destruction of Iraq's Cultural Heritage", May 28, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50992#.VXlc\\_Pmqqko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50992#.VXlc_Pmqqko) and "UN Nations Agree to Action to Save Iraqi Cultural Sites", May 28, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/un-nations-agree-action-save-iraqi-cultural-sites-195507868.html>

<sup>155</sup> "At Debate, UN and Security Council Renew Pledge To Counter Foreign Terrorist Fighters", May 29, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51005#.VXIjkPmqqko>

gaining support of groups from Africa and Southeast Asia.<sup>156</sup> The group is also making a base in Libya.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile Australia submitted a third national's name for inclusion in the targeted sanction list of the UN for his recruitment bids for the IS.<sup>158</sup>

The UN special envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed urged all parties to return to dialogue. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia held some talks attended by Saleh-related groups and Oman hosted another consultation attended by Houthi groups.<sup>159</sup> The new proposed date for talks is June 14, 2015.<sup>160</sup> Both the government in exile and the Houthis have agreed to join the talks.<sup>161</sup>

The death toll in the fighting with the ISIL in Iraq was 1031 in May 2015.<sup>162</sup> Iraq is also voicing the need for more effort from the international coalition fighting the IS, as it feels that the aerial bombing helps little when the IS operates in small units and is on the move constantly. There is also shortfall in the relief aid available to UN agencies.<sup>163</sup> The UN has raised a demand for \$670 million for continuing its relief work on Iraq.<sup>164</sup>

The UN World Food Programme has called for humanitarian pauses in Syria to enable the farmers to harvest and transport the crops within Syria.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, the Syrian Air Force dropped barrel bombs on the city of Aleppo, killing 70 people. The attack was condemned by the UN.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> "Interpol: IS Group Gains Support in Africa, Asia", May 29, 2015, at <http://echoofindia.com/united-nations-interpol-group-gains-support-africa-asia-86254>

<sup>157</sup> "Libya: UN Envoy Hopes New Draft of Political Deal Can Be Agreed within Four Weeks", May 29, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51006#.VXljjvmqqko>

<sup>158</sup> "Australian ISIS Recruiter Neil Prakash Added To UN List Of Counterterrorism Sanctions", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.ibtimes.com/australian-isis-recruiter-neil-prakash-added-un-list-counterterrorism-sanctions-1951851>

<sup>159</sup> "UN Envoy Opens Yemen Talks as Coalition Pounds Rebels", May 31, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/un-envoy-opens-yemen/1883058.html>

<sup>160</sup> "U.N. Aims For June 14 Yemen Talks in Geneva, Say Diplomats", June 3, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/03/us-yemen-security-un-idUSKBN0OJ2ZA20150603>

<sup>161</sup> "Yemen's Houthis Agree To UN Talks", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-agree-to-un-talks>

<sup>162</sup> "U.N.: 1,031 Iraqis Killed Last Month in Conflict Against Islamic State", June 1, 2015, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/01/u-n-1031-iraqis-killed-last-month-in-conflict-against-islamic-state/>

<sup>163</sup> "United Nations Warns It May Be Forced To Close Aid Programs In Iraq Due To Funding Shortage", June 3, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-03/united-nations-running-out-of-money-to-provide-human-relief-iraq/6516452>

<sup>164</sup> "UN Appeals For \$670 Million Of Humanitarian Aid for Iraq", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/world/europe/story/un-appeals-670-million-humanitarian-aid-iraq-20150604>

<sup>165</sup> "Pause in Syria Fighting Critical For Farmers To Harvest Crops, Get It To Those In Need – UN", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50964#.VXk8ZPmqqko>

<sup>166</sup> "Syria: UN Envoy Condemns Death of At Least 70 Civilians in Aleppo", May 31, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51011#.VXlvBfmqqko>

Meanwhile, a fact-finding team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be visiting Syria to probe the allegations of use of chlorine against civilians.<sup>167</sup>

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) marked its 65<sup>th</sup> year on June 2, 2015. The Agency was praised for its work among displaced Palestinians in West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>168</sup> The UNRWA will be building 600 dwellings in Gaza for those displaced in the skirmish last year. The funds for this, \$19.7 million, will be provided by the UAE Red Crescent.<sup>169</sup>

Iran has ruled out the inspection of military sites and interviews with scientists from the nuclear deal.<sup>170</sup> Meanwhile, as the June 30, 2015 deadline for finalizing the nuclear deal with Iran draws closer, the P5+Germany are reported to have come to some understanding on how sanctions ought to be brought back in case Iran fails to comply with its obligations once the sanctions are lifted. To prevent future rounds on voting, it appears that the UNSC will pass a resolution on the “snapback mechanisms” which will automatically come into play if Iran is found wanting.<sup>171</sup>

## UN in Europe

- **Kosovo urged to act on Serb rehabilitation; Cyprus headed for a united federal set up; European energy majors urge carbon pricing; Climate Change action in Germany; UNFCCC meets in Bonn, G7 endorses UN climate change initiatives, UNOSA conference seeks to use satellite technology for studying climate change.**

In his quarterly update on the situation in Kosovo, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Kosovo Farid Zarif informed the Security Council that Kosovo needed to fulfil its promise of establishing an Association of Serb-majority municipalities, as also establish a special court to follow up on the EU investigation on 1653 missing persons.<sup>172</sup>

The UN brokered talks among the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders are progressing towards the establishment up of a federal but united Cyprus. The two sides agreed on the need for more crossing points among the two parts, connecting their electricity grids, establishing telephone interoperability, prevent interference of radio frequencies.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>167</sup> “Fact-Finding Team Heads To Syria To Probe Toxic Chemical Use”, June 2, 2015, at <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2015/06/02/4325721/fact-finding-team-heads-to-syria.html>

<sup>168</sup> “After 65 Years, UN Agency Remains ‘Vital Stabilizing Factor’ For Palestine Refugees in Middle East – Ban”, June 2, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51029#.VXmVXPmqkko>

<sup>169</sup> “UN-Backed Project To Provide Hundreds Of New Housing Units To Palestine Refugees in Gaza”, June 3, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51044#.VXmbo\\_mqkko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51044#.VXmbo_mqkko)

<sup>170</sup> “Iran rejects site inspections in a nuclear deal”, May 30, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-iran-rejects-site-inspections-in-a-nuclear-deal-2090659>

<sup>171</sup> “Exclusive: Six Powers Agree Way to Restore U.N. Sanctions in Push for Iran Deal – Sources”, May 31, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/31/us-iran-nuclear-idUSKBN0OG05220150531>

<sup>172</sup> “Serbia and Kosovo must not squander chance to overcome challenges, Security Council told”, May 26, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50975#.VXITYfmqkko>

<sup>173</sup> “UN Envoy Announces Steps by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Leaders Towards Joint Vision For United Cyprus”, May 28, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50990#.VXIb-\\_mqkko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50990#.VXIb-_mqkko)

Six European energy majors- BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Total, Statoil, Eni and the BG Group- have urged Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to facilitate their dialogue with the UN and other willing governments on imposing a fee for carbon emissions. US companies Exxonmobil and Chevron have not endorsed this proposal.<sup>174</sup>

The UNFCCC commenced the 11-day meeting (June 1-11, 2015) in Bonn, Germany to discuss the draft of the Climate Change convention that is likely to be adopted in December 2015.<sup>175</sup> At the G7 Summit on June 7-8, 2015 in Germany, the Secretary General outlined the draft plan of action to counter extremism through good governance.<sup>176</sup> The G7 countries also affirmed their desire to support the UN's Climate Change agenda and accept binding emission cuts.<sup>177</sup>

The UN/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation was held in Bonn from May 26-28, 2015. The conference was organized by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in cooperation with the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). The aim of the conference was to tailor the satellite technology for disaster risk assessment, climate change monitoring and achievement of sustainable development goals of different countries.<sup>178</sup>

## On the Way to SDGs

- **Bill Clinton flags the importance of health initiatives for development; Comics to promote SDGs; Volunteers to help achieve SDGs.**

At a meeting of the ECOSOC to discuss the importance of partnerships in the post-2015 development agenda, former US President Bill Clinton cited the partnership of the Clinton Health Initiative with the Rwandan Government to boost the health system of the country.<sup>179</sup>

*Reading with Pictures*, a non-profit group led by Josh Elder is to partner with the UN to bring out 17 comics to spread the message of the Self Development Goals to be adopted by the UN in September 2015.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>174</sup> "Climate Change: Six Major Energy Companies Write To United Nations To Request Help In Setting Up Carbon Pricing Scheme", May 31, 2015, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/climate-change-major-energy-companies-write-to-un-to-request-help-in-setting-up-carbon-pricing-scheme-10288009.html>

<sup>175</sup> "Nations Meet In Germany To Refine Global Climate Deal", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/06/04/climate-meeting-bonn-germany/28418441/>

<sup>176</sup> "At G7 Summit, Ban Outlines Draft UN Action Plan To Prevent Violent Extremism", June 8, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51084#.VXqlyvmqqko>

<sup>177</sup> "G-7 Adds Thrust to UN Climate Talks With Ambitious Target", June 8, 2015, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/g-7-adds-thrust-to-un-climate-talks-with-ambitious-target-1433780975>

<sup>178</sup> "Earth Observation For The Post-2015 Development Agenda - United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation", May 26, 2015, at <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2015/unisos453.html>

<sup>179</sup> "At Main UN Economic and Social Body, Former US President Clinton Calls for Partnerships to Boost Health", May 28, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50994#.VXIdKvmqqko>

<sup>180</sup> "Comics Uniting Nations Wants To Make Everyone 'Heroes For Change'", May 28, 2015, at <http://www.techtimes.com/articles/56219/20150528/comics-uniting-nations-wants-to-make-everyone-heroes-of-change.htm>

The State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015 published by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), discusses how volunteers may be able to contribute to better governance for effective implementation of the Self Development Goals.<sup>181</sup>

### Miscellaneous

- **Tensions over violence in Ukraine; Human rights to be protected by trade and investment agreements; LLDCs give a Call for Action; Food insecurity reduces.**

There is growing suspicion in the UN of Russian support to rebels in eastern Ukraine. The ICRC, which has designated the conflict as an internal civil conflict, is yet to pronounce anything otherwise as of now. The fighting has claimed 6417 lives and the stakes could rise higher if Ukraine joins the International Criminal Court and presses for a case against Russia.<sup>182</sup> Meanwhile, the OSCE observers have informed the UN that number of ceasefire violations have increased.<sup>183</sup> At the UN, Russia and the western nations had a face-off on the increase in violence in eastern Ukraine.<sup>184</sup>

A meeting of human rights officials of the UN raised concerns regarding Bilateral Investment Treaties (BIT) and Free Trade Area (FTA) agreements that often impinge on the human rights of people. The specific concern related to the "rights to life, food, water and sanitation, health, housing, education, science and culture, improved labour standards, an independent judiciary, a clean environment and the right not to be subjected to forced resettlement". They recommended that such investment and trade agreements must be finalized after consultation with labour unions, consumer unions, environmental protection groups and health professionals.<sup>185</sup>

In Zambia, representatives of least-developed landlocked countries met to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation with countries of transit and other partners in development. The "Call to Action" adopted urged the countries to improve their structural economic conditions and increase their participation in international trade.<sup>186</sup>

The *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015* (SOFI) report, jointly published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) states that the numbers of hungry people have reduced by 216 million since 1990-1992, of which a 100 million were pushed out of the 'hungry' category

<sup>181</sup> "Volunteers Can Contribute To The New Global Development Agenda's Success – UN Report", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51072#.VXppKfmqqko>

<sup>182</sup> "U.N. Finds Growing Signs of Russian Involvement in Ukraine War", June 1, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/01/us-ukraine-crisis-un-idUSKBN0OH2SK20150601>

<sup>183</sup> "OSCE Says Cease-Fire Violations in Ukraine More Frequent", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2015/06/05/3754556/osce-say-cease-fire-violations.html>

<sup>184</sup> "Russia, Western Nations Trade Barbs Over Ukraine at UN Meeting", June 5, 2015, at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-western-nations-trade-barbs-over-ukraine-at-un-meeting/523172.html>

<sup>185</sup> "UN Experts Voice Concern Over Adverse Impact Of Free Trade And Investment Agreements On Human Rights", June 2, 2015, at <http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16031&LangID=E>

<sup>186</sup> "In Zambia, UN Forum Urges Faster Development Action For Landlocked Developing Nations", June 4, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51053#.VXpjGfmqqko>

since 2012. According to the Director of IFAD, hunger can be eradicated through more investment in rural areas.<sup>187</sup>

## India and the UN

(May 26-June 8, 2015)

- **India and UN mark Peacekeepers' Day; Security Council discusses protection of journalists, India endorses it; Yoga Day preparations on; India lends its voice to making cultural diversity visible in the UN; Nikhil Seth to head UNITAR; India acts on non-communicable diseases; India has 194.6 million underfed people.**

On the occasion of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on May 29, India unveiled a virtual wall memorial on the website of the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York. India has lost 161 peacekeepers since 1952 in the line of duty. India has also proposed a memorial for the brave peacekeepers on the premises of the UN in New York.<sup>188</sup> In her message read at the UN, the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj expressed a sense of pride at India's peacekeeping credentials.<sup>189</sup> Two Indians were among the 126 men awarded the Dag Hammarskjold Medal at a solemn ceremony on the occasion.<sup>190</sup> Meanwhile, an Indian peacekeeper of the rank of a colonel was injured in the ongoing violence in the vicinity of UNMISS premises in Malakal, South Sudan.<sup>191</sup>

At an open debate of the Security Council on 'Protection of Journalists in Conflict Situations' on May 27, the Permanent Representative of India, Asoke Mukerji, said that journalists are a distinct category of civilians whose protection must be ensured as part of the peacekeeping mandate. He said states must be made responsible for preventing activities of non-state terrorist groups.<sup>192</sup> He also emphasised the need for journalists to remain neutral and impartial so that the states can ensure their protection.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>187</sup> "Joint UN Report Says Rate of World Hunger Dropping amid Wider Eradication Efforts", May 27, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50978#.VXIUIPmqkko>

<sup>188</sup> "India Launches Virtual Memorial Wall to Honour Its UN Peacekeepers", *HDTV News*, May 30, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-launches-virtual-memorial-wall-to-honour-its-un-peacekeepers-767173>

<sup>189</sup> "India Proud Of Its Contribution to UN Peacekeeping: Sushma Swaraj", *Zee News*, May 28, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-proud-of-its-contribution-to-un-peacekeeping-sushma-swaraj\\_1603572.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-proud-of-its-contribution-to-un-peacekeeping-sushma-swaraj_1603572.html)

<sup>190</sup> "Two Fallen Indian Peacekeepers Awarded Prestigious UN Medal", *Zee News*, May 29, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/two-fallen-indian-peacekeepers-awarded-prestigious-un-medal\\_1604146.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/two-fallen-indian-peacekeepers-awarded-prestigious-un-medal_1604146.html)

<sup>191</sup> "Indian Peacekeeper Injured in Fresh Firing in South Sudan", *Zee News*, May 29, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/indian-peacekeeper-injured-in-fresh-firing-in-south-sudan\\_1603604.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/indian-peacekeeper-injured-in-fresh-firing-in-south-sudan_1603604.html). Also see "Indian Colonel Injured in Fresh Firing in South Sudan", *The New Indian Express*, May 29, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/Indian-Colonel-Injured-in-Fresh-Firing-in-South-Sudan/2015/05/29/article2839393.ece>

<sup>192</sup> "Make Nations Act Against Non-State Outfits: India Tells UNSC", May 28, 2015, *Business Standard*, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/make-nations-act-against-non-state-outfits-india-tells-uns-115052800694\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/make-nations-act-against-non-state-outfits-india-tells-uns-115052800694_1.html)

<sup>193</sup> "Journalists Should Adhere to 'Strict Neutrality, Impartiality' to Ensure Protection, Says India", *The New Indian Express*, May 28, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Journalists-Should-Adhere-to-Strict-Neutrality-Impartiality-to-Ensure-Protection-Says-India/2015/05/28/article2837302.ece>

Preparations are on for the celebration of the First International Yoga Day on June 21. A proposal to this effect was proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2014 while speaking at the General Assembly. The Resolution supporting the idea was adopted on December 11, 2014.<sup>194</sup> At the UN, the event will be attended by the Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj.<sup>195</sup> 100 cities in the US will organise Yogathons that day.<sup>196</sup>

A resolution supported by India and several countries of Southeast Asia resulted in the celebration of June 1, 2015 as the Vesak Day at the UN. The resolution adopted in December 2014, also allows this day, along with Diwali, Gurupurab and the Yom Kippur day to be observed as days with no formal meetings at the UN.<sup>197</sup>

Nikhil Seth, a former official of the Indian Foreign Service and on the UN roll since 1993, has been appointed as the head of the United Nations International Training and Research Institute (UNITAR). UNITAR is an autonomous institution in the UN system that aims to “develop capacities of individuals, organisations and institutions to enhance global decision-making and to support country-level action for shaping a better future”.<sup>198</sup>

As part of the WHO’s Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Control Non-Communicable Diseases 2013-2020, India is the first country to set up national targets for reduction of unnatural deaths due to these diseases by 25 per cent by 2025. Health and other related sectors will receive detailed guidelines for reduction of household air pollution caused by the use of solid fuels and other means to control the diseases.<sup>199</sup>

The Report on Food Insecurity in the World 2015 published by the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme, records that in 2014-2015. India has the highest number of under-fed population at 194.6 million, which is down from 210.1 million in 1990-92. China in the meantime is down to 133.8 million from a high of 289 million in 1990-92. Of the 129 countries monitored by the FAO, 72 have achieved the MDG target of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> “India’s Modi to Perform Yoga at Mass Public Event”, *Reuters*, May 28, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/28/us-india-yoga-idUSKBN0OD0VO20150528>.

<sup>195</sup> “Sushma Swaraj To Represent India at United Nations on Yoga Day”, June 5, 2015, at, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sushma-swaraj-to-represent-india-at-the-united-nations-on-international-yoga-day/article7285630.ece>

<sup>196</sup> “100 US Cities To Host Yogathon on 1st International Yoga Day”, May 29, 2015 at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/100-us-cities-to-host-yogathon-on-1st-international-yoga-day\\_1603644.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/100-us-cities-to-host-yogathon-on-1st-international-yoga-day_1603644.html)

<sup>197</sup> “India Adds Spiritual Dimension to ‘Act East’ Policy”, June 07, 2015, at <http://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world/india-adds-spiritual-dimension-to-act-east-policy-24859.html>

<sup>198</sup> “Ban Appoints Indian Diplomat As Head of UNITAR”, June 8, 2015, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ban-appoints-indian-diplomat-as-head-of-unitar-115060801335\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ban-appoints-indian-diplomat-as-head-of-unitar-115060801335_1.html)

<sup>199</sup> “WHO: India First To Adapt Global Monitoring Framework On No communicable Diseases”, (date not available), at <http://www.unic.org.in/display.php?E=13975&K=>.

<sup>200</sup> “India Tops World Hunger List With 194 Million People: United Nations Report”, May 28, 2015, at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-world-hunger-list-china-united-nations-report/1/440811.html>. For more details see “India misses global hunger reduction targets: report”, May 27, 2015 at <http://www.livemint.com/Home-Page/RD2m0Dbk0fsWEFeBZdOmSI/India-misses-global-hunger-reduction-targets-report.html>