

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Gulbin Sultana

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives

Gunjan Singh

China

Titli Basu

Japan and the Korean Peninsula

Rajorshi Roy

Russia and Central Asia

Saroj Bishoyi

United States of America

Amit Kumar

Defence Reviews

Rajbala Rana

Internal Security Reviews

Arpita Anant

UN Reviews

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

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

CONTENTS

In This Issue	Page
I. COUNTRY REVIEWS	2-21
A. South Asia	2-4
B. East Asia	4-7
C. Russia	8-14
D. United States of America	14-21
II. DEFENCE REVIEW	21-22
III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW	23-27
IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS	27

I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **The biannual meeting of the directors general of the border forces of Bangladesh and India held in India; Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur agree to closely work together for a permanent solution on the issue of the illegal migration; Fourth blogger killed by militants.**

The biannual meeting of the directors general of the border forces of Bangladesh and India began on August 3 with management of the redrawn border and rest of the frontier among a host of issues on the agenda. The BSF delegation was led by Director General DK Pathak, while the 20-member BGB team, which reached India on August 2, was headed by Director General Major General Aziz Ahmed.¹

Amid a recent wave of risky illegal migration, Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur have agreed to closely work together for a permanent solution to the protracted problem. The agreement was reached at a meeting between Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmood Ali and his Malaysian counterpart Anifah Haji Aman on August 5 in Kuala Lumpur. The two foreign ministers also discussed in detail the root cause of the irregular movement of people, which is the continuous persecution of Rohingya ethnic minority people in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.²

Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy, a Gonojagoron Mancha activist, is the fourth blogger to have been killed this year by suspected Islamist militants in Bangladesh. He was hacked to death inside his house in Dhaka in broad daylight on August 7.³ The United States and the United Kingdom have condemned the killing.⁴

¹ "BGB, BSF to Talk Management Of Redrawn Borders", *The Daily Star*, August 03, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bgb-bsf-talk-management-redrawn-borders-120865>.

² "Dhaka, KL Agree To Check Illegal Migration", *The Daily Star*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/dhaka-kl-agree-check-illegal-migration-123070>.

³ "Bangladesh Blogger Niladri Hacked To Death in Dhaka", *The Daily Star*, August 8, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/blogger-killed-once-again-123493>.

⁴ "US, UK Condemn", *The Daily Star*, August 9, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/us-uk-too-condemn-123976>.

Sri Lanka

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka's inflation rate fell below zero percent; Two Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force ships visit Colombo Port.**

Sri Lanka's inflation rate fell below zero percent recording a marginal deflation of 0.2 percent for the month of July. The Bank attributed the decline recorded on year-on year basis to the high base that prevailed in July 2014, prior to several significant reductions in energy prices since September 2014. Annual average inflation declined to 1.3 percent in July 2015 from 1.7 percent in previous month.⁵

The two Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force ships, "Ikazuchi" and "Murasame" arrived at the Port of Colombo on a goodwill and supply visit on August 7, 2015. The Head of the Mission, Commander Escort Division One, Captain Atsushi Nakasuji and the ships' Commanding Officers, Commander Kazuharu Hokazono and Commander Kenji Fujil paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Area Commander of the Western Naval Command, Commodore KG Paul at the Western Naval Command Headquarters in Colombo.⁶

Maldives

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Indian Foreign Secretary visits the Maldives; President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayoom sends letter to the Indian Prime Minister; Protest over the constitutional amendment; Maldivian Vice President visits Egypt and Malta.**

Indian Foreign Secretary, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar went to the Maldives as part of his friendly visits to the countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). At his meeting with the Vice President Ahmed Adheeb on August 3 during his visit to the Maldives, the Indian Foreign Secretary said that India would always help and support the Maldives.⁷

President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayoom has sent a letter to the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The Maldivian Foreign Secretary, Dr. Ali Naseer who visited India has passed the President's letter to the Indian Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj. Foreign Ministry said that in a visit to the Indian Foreign Minister, the Maldivian Foreign

⁵ "Sri Lanka Records Marginal Deflation for July 2015", *Colombo Page*, August 3, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Aug03_1438582124CH.php.

⁶ "Two Japanese Naval Ships Arrive in Sri Lanka's Colombo Port", *ColomboPage*, August 8, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Aug08_1439009471CH.php.

⁷ "Indian Foreign Secretary Arrives in Maldives", *SunOnline*, August 3, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/category/1/2>. "Indian Foreign Secretary: India will always help the Maldives", *SunOnline*, August 3, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/31422>.

Secretary discussed strengthening relationship of the two countries. The Maldivian Foreign Secretary also met with the Indian Foreign Secretary, S. Jaishankar and discussed economic ties of the two countries.⁸

A protest has been held against the amendment to the Constitution that allows foreign investors above US\$ 1 billion to own land in the Maldives. Several politicians took part in the protest held on August 7, near Artificial Beach on Boduthakurufaanu Magu. The protestors raised their voice against the amendment with different banners; and the protestors said that such a change should be made with a vote of the people. A petition was also started to calling for a vote under the power authorized to the President under Article 115-P of the Constitution. President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayoom has said that under the amendment, land would be given to foreign investments about US\$ 1 billion after the Parliament passes to do so. The President also has said that only businesses authorised by the government can be conducted on the lands given to foreign investors and their investments would boost the development of the country.⁹

Maldivian Vice President Ahmed Adeb left for Egypt and Malta on an official trip on August 5.¹⁰ Maldivian Vice President Ahmed Adeb during his state visit to Malta, met the President of Malta, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and handed over a letter sent to her by Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen. VP Adeb went to Malta after concluding his state visit to Egypt to attend the opening ceremony of the new Suez Canal. His visit to Egypt and Malta counts as his first and second state visit to a foreign country after he was appointed by President Yameen to replace former VP Mohamed Jameel.¹¹

B. East Asia

China

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **China approves a new food security law; Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers meet and discuss ties; China and US discuss terrorism; Chinese navy conducts exercises in South China Sea.**

China introduced food safety laws which will get effective from October 1. Under these laws China's top court has demanded the introduction of heavy penalties for people breaking these laws. According to *China Daily*, "The Standing Committee of China's

⁸ "President Yamin has Sent a Letter to the Indian Prime Minister", *SunOnline*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/31497>.

⁹ "Protestors against Foreign Ownership of Land", *SunOnline*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/31493>.

¹⁰ "VP Leaves for Egypt", *SunOnline*, August 5, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/31448>.

¹¹ "VP Meets Malta President", *SunOnline*, August 9, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/31520>.

National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, adopted an amendment to the 2009 Food Safety Law in April". These laws are essential as the Chinese people have been facing a number of incidents of food safety scandals.¹²

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the ongoing 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting. During the meeting Wang Yi said that, "China is willing to strengthen the strategic coordination with Russia on Asia-Pacific affairs to promote a common, cooperative, comprehensive and sustainable Asian security concept and jointly safeguard regional peace, stability and development".¹³

As a part of the second China-US consultation on anti-terrorism issues, senior diplomats from China and the United States met in Beijing on August 4. Both sides agreed that, "the China-US efforts in enhancing bilateral and multilateral anti-terror cooperation serve the shared interests of both countries".¹⁴

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted its first ever largest live ammunition drill in the South China Sea, as reported by Chinese media. According to the PLA Daily, "The exercise involved more than 100 naval vessels, dozens of aircraft and a number of electronic warfare units in a sophisticated electronic warfare scenario".¹⁵

Japan

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida attended the 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur; Defence Ministry requests ¥5.2 trillion budget for fiscal 2016; Prime Minister Abe attends the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony; Foreign Minister of Japan-North Korea met in Malaysia; Nago construction suspended for a month.**

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and State Minister Minoru Kiuchi attended the 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on August 6. During the meeting, the leaders discussed the need to respond to the huge infrastructure demand in Asia. Japan pledged to support the ASEAN community building in 2015 and integration initiatives in 2016 and beyond, centred on the provision of \$110 billion for quality

¹² "Tough Penalties Urged Under New Food Safety Law", *China Daily*, August 5, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-08/05/content_21511150.htm, accessed on August 7, 2015

¹³ "China, Russia Pledge To Boost Bilateral Ties", *China Daily*, August 5, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-08/05/content_21510691.htm, accessed on August 7, 2015

¹⁴ "China and US Discuss Ways To Fight Terror", By Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, August 5, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-08/05/content_21502489.htm, accessed on August 7, 2015

¹⁵ "Navy Stages Live-Ammo Drill in S. China Sea", By Zhao Lei, *China Daily*, August 3, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-08/03/content_21483771.htm, accessed on August 7, 2015

infrastructure investment in five years. This will be done through the newly pronounced Partnership for Quality Infrastructure in addition to Japan-Mekong cooperation on the scale of ¥750 billion in the next three years. Additionally, regional issues including North Korea, South China Sea and Japan-China-ROK trilateral cooperation were discussed during the meeting.¹⁶

The Defence Ministry is reportedly requesting for a ¥5.2 trillion budget for fiscal 2016. This contains ¥140 billion for US military realignment expenditure including the contentious design to relocate US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Japanese defence outlay has increased for last three years since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe assumed office.¹⁷

At the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stressed that Japan has a duty of achieving a nuclear weapons-world free. Abe said that it is unfortunate that a draft final document was not approved at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). He expressed Japanese determination to engage in larger initiatives to achieve a nuclear weapons free world.¹⁸ Meanwhile, he drew some criticism for not including Japan's three nonnuclear principles in the annual memorial.¹⁹

During a meeting on August 6 in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of a regional security forum, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida called on his North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong to make sure Pyongyang honours the 2014 bilateral accord and quickly draft a report detailing the results of an enquiry into the abduction issue.²⁰

On August 4, the central government decided to suspend the continuing construction connected to the replacement facility for the US Marines Air Station Futenma for a month. Yoshihide Suga, the Chief Cabinet Secretary stressed that serious discussions will be held with Okinawa during this time on the contentious relocation project. Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga has repeatedly opposed base in Okinawa.²¹

¹⁶ The 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Japan, August 7, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_000362.html

¹⁷ "Japan Defence Ministry to Seek Record-High ¥5.2 Trillion Budget For Next Fiscal Year", *Kyodo*, August 9, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/09/national/politics-diplomacy/ministry-to-see-record-high-%C2%A55-2-trillion-defense-budget-for-next-fiscal-year/>

¹⁸ Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, August 6, 2015 at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0806speech.html

¹⁹ "Reiji Yoshida, Exclusion of Nonnuclear Principles From Abe's Hiroshima Speech Causes Stir," *The Japan Times*, August 6, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/06/national/politics-diplomacy/exclusion-nonnuclear-principles-abes-hiroshima-speech-causes-stir/>

²⁰ "Japan, N. Korea Foreign Ministers Meet in Kuala Lumpur," *Kyodo*, August 6, at <https://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2015/08/367740.html>

²¹ Reiji Yoshida, "In Surprise Move, Government To Suspend Nago Construction For One Month", *The Japan Times*, August 4, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/04/national/politics-diplomacy/surprise-move-government-suspend-nago-construction-one-month/#.VdXEIVK6a1t>

The Korean Peninsula

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se attended the 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting; President Park attended the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Restoration of the Gyeongwon Line; Former South Korean first lady Lee Hee-ho went on a four-day private visit to North Korea to improve inter-Korea relations.**

On August 6, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se attended the 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Foreign Minister Yun appreciated the strong functional cooperation in finance, health, education and various other sectors between the ASEAN+3 countries. With regard to the trilateral ROK-Japan-China cooperation, Yun said that Seoul as the chair of mechanism hosted the first trilateral meeting in three years. He also made a case for strongly responding to North Korean provocations, make progress toward its denuclearization and improve inter-Korean relations.²²

The Korea Rail Network Authority is ready to reinstate a part of a disconnected Gyeongwon Line, the inter-Korean railway adjoining the Demilitarized Zone. President Park while attending the Ground-breaking Ceremony for the Restoration of the Gyeongwon Line at Baengmagoji Station in Cheolwon said the "August 5, 2015, will be remembered as a historic day when we gave voice to our collective resolve to peacefully reunite our nation and make practical preparations for unification". The planned restoration spans 9.3 kilometres.²³

Former South Korean first lady Lee Hee-ho went on a four-day private visit to North Korea on August 5 during which she did not have a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The objective was to reduce tension between the two Koreas as this year marks the 70th anniversary of Korea's liberation. Kim Dae-jung Peace Centre is the organizer for her trip. During her stay in Pyongyang, she paid a visit to children and maternity hospital, nursery facility.²⁴

²² Foreign Minister Attends the 16th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK*, August 6, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20

²³ Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Restoration of the Gyeongwon Line, *Korean Net*, August 5, 2015 at <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=129353&pageIndex=1>

²⁴ "(3rd LD) Ex-First Lady Visits N. Korea on Hope Of Better Inter-Korean Ties," *Yonhap News Agency*, August 5, 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2015/08/04/0401000000AEN20150804005053315.html>

C. Russia

National

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Russia destroys 350 tonnes of banned food; Russian government adopts Kuril Islands development program; Russian military merges Air Force and Space Command.**

Russia has destroyed 350 tonnes of food that were illegally imported from the West. Earlier, it was announced that President Putin had signed a decree on destroying the imported foodstuffs that came under the purview of Russia's food embargo. This embargo was imposed as a countermeasure to western sanctions against Moscow over developments in Ukraine.²⁵

The Russian government has, on August 10, adopted a program for social and economic development of the Far East's Kuril Islands to 2025. The tasks outlined in the programme include construction of cargo-passenger vessels, helicopters for ongoing air and sea passenger and cargo transportation between the Kuril Islands, Sakhalin, Kamchatka and the mainland. The programme also sets the tasks to reconstruct road infrastructures in the Kunashir Island, establishment of a modern system for analysis and prevention of natural calamities, as well as integration of Kuril grids into the national system, construction of houses and engineering infrastructures in Kunashir, Paramushir, Iturup and Shikotan, modernization of the energy infrastructures, construction and reconstruction of social facilities and development of the Kuril islands' tourism potential.²⁶

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has, on August 3, announced the creation of a new branch of Russia's armed forces: the Aerospace Forces, which brings the air force and the recently created Aerospace Defence Forces under one unified command. He stated that air forces, anti-air and anti-missile defences, and space forces will now be under a unified command structure.²⁷

²⁵ "About 350 Tonnes Of Banned Food Destroyed In Russia In 2 Days — Watchdog", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/813229>

²⁶ "Russian Government Adopts Kuril Islands Development Programme", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/813414>

²⁷ "Russian Military Merges Air Force and Space Command", *The Moscow Times*, August 3, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russian-military-merges-air-force-and-space-command/526672.html>

Russia: International

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Russia approves agreement with Pakistan on North-South pipeline; Belarus invites Pakistan to develop military technical cooperation; Russian and Egyptian Foreign Ministers discuss the situation in the Middle East; 20 agreements and contracts signed during the Russia-China Volga-Yangtze dialogue; Russia invites Japan to cooperate in joint economic development of Kuril Islands; United States extends sanctions against Russia to marine oil and gas field; Russian and Greek Prime Ministers discuss economic cooperation; Russian Foreign Minister says Syria ready to join the international coalition in the fight against the Islamic State; Russia critical of US plan to give air cover to rebels in Syria.**

The Russian government has endorsed a draft agreement with Pakistan on cooperation on the North-South gas pipeline project. According to the government resolution, 'the agreement is geared to create favourable conditions for the construction of the North-South gas pipeline from the city of Karachi to the city of Lahore in Pakistan with Russia's participation. It is effective in a period of 25 years with possible automatic extension every five years. The project provides for a maximum use of Russian technologies, materials, equipment and products and engagement of Russian research, design and building organizations. The Pakistani side undertakes to grant the rights to use land plots necessary for the project implementation and carry out research route laying works. Works under the agreement will be controlled and coordinated by the Russian energy ministry and Pakistani ministry of oil and natural resources'.²⁸

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has invited Pakistan to develop military technical cooperation with it. During a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, held in Minsk on August 10, Mr. Lukashenko noted that 'cooperation potential the two countries had could be better realized outside the limits of purely bilateral cooperation. Of special importance here are joint projects and mutual support within the United Nations and other international organizations'. This comes against the backdrop of the Belarus-Pakistan joint commission on military technical cooperation holding its first ever meeting in Minsk in early August. The Belarus-Pakistan trade in 2014 was US\$ 58.2 million, with Belarus' exports to Pakistan being valued at US\$ 42.6 million and imports being US\$ 15.6 million.²⁹

²⁸ "Russian Government Approves Agreement With Pakistan On North-South Gas Pipeline", *Itar-Tass*, August 6, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/812870>

²⁹ "Belarusian President Invites Pakistan To Develop Military Technical Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/813581>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry have discussed the situation in the Middle East in general and Syria in particular. During the meeting, both sides stressed on the importance of 'continuing active efforts with the aim of finding a political settlement of the crisis in Syria, including mobilizing international support for the process of reaching national accord'. They also discussed prospects of Russia-Egypt bilateral cooperation.³⁰

Russia and China have signed 9 agreements on cooperation between the countries' regions and more than 10 commercial agreements and contracts between private companies during the Russian-Chinese Volga-Yangtze dialogue which took place in China's south-west city of Cheng-tu on August 7. This includes an agreement on construction of a cement plant in Russia's Ulyanovsk Region worth more than 50 billion roubles (US\$ 782 million) and a US\$ 2 billion chemical plant in Russia.³¹

Russia has invited Japan to cooperate in joint economic development of the Kuril Islands. This was stated by Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Presidential Plenipotentiary Yuri Trutnev on August 7 during an interview with Japan's NHK TV channel.³²

The United States has, on August 7, extended its sanctions against the Russian economy to Yuzhno-Kirinskoe oil and gas field in the Sea of Okhotsk. The field will be under sanctions in export regulation.³³

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has met with his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras, in Egypt on August 7, wherein they discussed economic and energy cooperation between the two countries. It was also agreed to intensify contacts between them at the technical level in order to prepare for the ninth joint interdepartmental commission's meeting scheduled to be held in November 2015.³⁴

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said, on August 9, that Damascus can agree to join the international coalition in the fight against the Islamic State (IS). He stated 'a year ago we learned the U.S. would lead a coalition to fight IS in Iraq and Syria. Iraq's government has agreed, the Syrian government has never been requested, though, I am sure, if Damascus were approached it could agree. It can be possible to discuss the initiative on the coalition against IS at the UN Security Council in order to give full

³⁰ "Russian and Egyptian Foreign Ministers Discuss Situation in Middle East", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/813545>

³¹ "20 Agreements And Contracts Signed At Russian-Chinese Volga-Yangtze Dialogue", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/813213>

³² "Russia Invites Japan To Cooperate In Joint Economic Development Of Kuril Islands", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/813072>

³³ "United States Extends Sanctions Against Russia To Marine Oil And Gas Field", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/813165>

³⁴ "Russian, Greek Premiers Discuss Economic Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/813059>

legitimacy to it and to offer support from the international community. In that case, we would not have any ambiguities - who is shelling who, why and despite of whose positions'.³⁵

Russia has criticized U.S. plans to provide together with Turkey air cover for Syrian rebels, saying any support for rivals of Russian ally Syrian President Bashar Assad hampered Damascus' fight against the Islamic State. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that 'Moscow has stressed multiple times that helping the Syrian opposition, let alone helping with financial or [military] technical means, would lead to a further destabilization of the situation in the country'.³⁶

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Russia and U.S. reach agreement over UN draft on chemical attacks in Syria; Russia rules out sending troops to Syria; Russian, US and Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministers hold a trilateral meeting in Qatar; Russian Foreign Minister meets Hamas Chief and invites him to Moscow; Russia and Qatar to coordinate activities in the energy sphere; Cost of Turkish Stream is estimated at €11.4 billion; Russia files revised Arctic shelf expansion claim to the UN; Russian and EU Foreign Ministers discuss Ukraine, Syria and anti-terrorism efforts; Russia and Norway start joint work to adjust borders between them; Russia's Rosatom and Vietnam sign deal on Ninh Thuan 1 nuclear power plant construction; Russia delivers two RD-181 rocket engines to the US.**

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said, on August 3, that he had reached an agreement with his Russian counterpart on a draft UN resolution aimed at identifying the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. Attributing responsibility for chemical weapons attacks would pave the way for action by the 15-member Security Council. The body has already threatened consequences for such attacks, which could include sanctions.³⁷

Russian President's press secretary Dmitry Peskov has, on August 4, ruled out the use of Russian troops in the Syrian conflict. Commenting on the statement by Russian airborne troops commander Vladimir Shamanov who said that Russian paratroopers were ready to go to Syria if they were ordered to, the Kremlin spokesman said, "there ought to be no

³⁵ "Lavrov Adamant Damascus Ready To Participate In International Structures Fighting IS", *Itar-Tass*, August 7, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/813344>

³⁶ "Russia Critical of U.S. Plan to Give Rebels Air Cover in Syria", *The Moscow Times*, August 3, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-critical-of-us-plan-to-give-rebels-air-cover-in-syria/526650.html>

³⁷ "Russia, U.S. Reach Agreement Over UN Draft on Chemical Attacks in Syria", *The Moscow Times*, August 6, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-us-reach-agreement-over-un-draft-on-chemical-attacks-in-syria/527068.html>

doubts that Russian airborne troops will fulfil any order from their commander-in-chief."³⁸

Russian, US and Saudi Foreign Ministers have held a trilateral meeting in Qatar on August 3. The key issues discussed involve the crises in Syria, Libya and Yemen, international efforts to combat the Islamic State group and Iran's role in regional affairs after last month's signing of Iran's nuclear deal.³⁹

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has met with Hamas leader Khaled Mashal in Qatar on August 3 and invited him to visit Moscow. In a statement released in Gaza, a Hamas official said a delegation led by Mashal briefed Lavrov on conditions in the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of last summer's war with Israel.⁴⁰

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during a visit to Qatar on August 3, has said that the two countries will coordinate their steps in the energy sphere including the gas sector. He added that 'the results of negotiations confirmed the desire of both countries to build up cooperation in various spheres. We are ready to intensify our ties in the fields of security, law enforcement and finance. We confirmed determination to coordinate actions in the world gas market both at the bilateral level and in the context of a forum of gas exporting countries. Russia welcomes the interest of the Qatari partners to intensify the work of Qatari investment funds in Russia'.⁴¹

Gazprom estimates that the cost of construction of four pipelines for the Turkish stream to be approx €11.4 billion. On August 7, Russia had sent two offers to Turkey, related to the intergovernmental agreements on the Turkish Stream. Earlier, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak had stated that Moscow was ready to sign an intergovernmental agreement on 1 line of the Turkish Stream within 1-2 weeks.⁴²

Russia has, on August 4, submitted a revised application to the United Nations seeking the expansion of its Arctic shelf border. The application cites the Lomonosov Ridge, Mendeleev-Alpha Rise and Chukchi Plateau as belonging to "submarine elevations that are natural components of the continental margin." The Podvodnikov and Chukchi Basins

³⁸ "Use of Russian Troops In Syria Is Out Of Question — Kremlin Spokesman", *Itar-Tass*, August 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/812583>

³⁹ "Top Russian, U.S. and Saudi Diplomats To Meet in Qatar", *Al Arabiya News*, August 3, 2015 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/08/02/Top-Russian-U-S-and-Saudi-diplomats-to-meet-in-Qatar.html>

⁴⁰ "Russian FM Meets Hamas Chief, Invites Him to Moscow – Official", *The Moscow Times*, August 3, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-fm-meets-hamas-chief-invites-him-to-moscow--official/526671.html>

⁴¹ "Russia and Qatar To Coordinate Activities In Energy Sphere — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, August 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/812360>

⁴² "Cost of Turkish Stream is Estimated At €11.4 Billion — Gazprom", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/813604>

separating the three areas are also listed in the claim. Russia's revised application claims the listed areas do not fall under the 350-nautical mile rule due to them being natural components of the continent. The application lists geodetic coordinates and calculated distances used in the partial revised submission.⁴³

The situation in Ukraine and Syria was in focus during the meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, Federica Mogherin, held in Kuala Lumpur on August 6.⁴⁴

The Russian Consulate General in the Norwegian city of Kirkenes has stated that for the first time since 1947, Russia and Norway have begun to adjust the border between the two states. He added that 'in accordance with an Agreement between the USSR and Norway governments on the regime of the Soviet-Norwegian border and the settlement of frontier disputes and incidents of December 29, 1949, the border adjustment work should be carried out every 25 years'. The border between Norway and Russia runs mainly through rivers, lakes and marshes that are constantly shifting. The aim of the charting is to move the border to areas of the river that are the deepest. The goal is that neither country will lose any territory. The frontier between Norway and Russia consists of a 195.7-kilometer land border between Sor-Varanger, Norway, and Pechengsky district, Russia, and a 23.2-kilometer marine border in the Varangerfjord. It further consists of a border between the two countries' exclusive economic zones in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean.⁴⁵

Russian nuclear energy corporation Rosatom and Vietnam's state-owned Vietnam Electricity (VPN) have signed the master framework agreement on implementation of the first phase of Ninh Thuan 1 nuclear power plant construction project. The two countries had signed the agreement on the first nuclear power plant construction in Vietnam in October 2010. The agreement stipulates construction of two units of Ninh Thuan nuclear power plants with the capacity of 1,200 MW each.⁴⁶

Russia has delivered the first two rocket engines RD-181 for the Antares carrier rocket to the United States under a previously signed contract. Russia plans to deliver four RD-181 engines to the United States this year with another four expected to be delivered in 2016. The first blast off of the US Antares rocket with Russian-made RD-181 engines is

⁴³ "Russia Files Revised Arctic Shelf Expansion Claim to UN", *Sputnik News*, August 4, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150804/1025370215.html>

⁴⁴ "Lavrov, Mogherini Discuss Ukraine, Syria, Anti-Terrorism Efforts", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/812869>

⁴⁵ "Norway, Russia Start Joint Work To Adjust Border Between Them", *Itar-Tass*, August 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/812531>

⁴⁶ "Russia's Rosatom and Vietnam Sign Deal On Ninh Thuan 1 Nuclear Power Plant Construction", *Itar-Tass*, August 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/812218>

scheduled for March 1, 2016. Earlier these rockets were equipped with the AJ-26 engines built on the basis of Soviet NK-33 engines.⁴⁷

D. The United State of America

National

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Department of Defence announces the death of Master Sgt. McKenna Jr.; Holmes sentenced to life in prison after a jury splits; Republican candidates sought tougher positions on border security and illegal immigration in the first debate; Donald Trump leads Republican presidential race; Immigration key focus in presidential debate; State Department stands by the accuracy of its annual global report on human rights.**

On August 9, the Department of Defence announced the death of Master Sgt. Peter A. McKenna Jr., a soldier who was supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel. He died on August 8, in Kabul, Afghanistan, of wounds when he was attacked by enemy small arms fire. McKenna was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.⁴⁸

A jury in the western U.S. state of Colorado has declined to rule out the death penalty for 27-year-old James Holmes, who was found guilty last month in the 2012 shooting deaths of 12 moviegoers near Denver.⁴⁹ On August 7, Holmes was sentenced to life in prison after a jury failed to agree on the death penalty.⁵⁰

In the first debate of the 2016 presidential race, Republican candidates have sought to distinguish themselves from each other — and President Barack Obama — with ever-tougher positions on border security and illegal immigration, claiming current measures are failing. And yet by many standards, the situation is not nearly as urgent as it was during last summer's crisis and has improved steadily and markedly in some respects

⁴⁷ "First Two Russian Rd-181 Rocket Engines Delivered to US", *Itar-Tass*, August 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/812412>

⁴⁸ "DoD Identifies Army Casualty", *DoD News*, August 9, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/613338/dod-identifies-army-casualty>

⁴⁹ "US Jury Declines to Rule Out Death Penalty in Theatre Massacre", *VOA News*, August 03, 2015 3 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-jury-declines-to-rule-out-death-penalty-in-theatre-massacre/2897033.html>; and, Schwartz, Ken, "Colorado Movie Theatre Gunman Sentenced to Life in Prison", *VOA News*, August 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/colorado-movie-theater-guman-sentenced-to-life-in-prison/2908354.html>

⁵⁰ Richardson, Valerie, "James Holmes Sentenced To Life In Prison For Colorado Massacre After Jury Splits", *The Washington Times*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/aug/7/james-holmes-to-get-life-sentence-after-jury-fails/?page=all>

over the past decade or so — partly because of actions taken by the U.S. government, but also because of factors beyond Washington's control. The declining trends have been attributed to a variety of factors, including the overall sluggish economy in the U.S., the decline in this country's construction industry, and better opportunities in Mexico, according to a report by Rogelio Saenz, dean of the College of Public Policy at the University of Texas at San Antonio.⁵¹

On August 6, Donald Trump, billionaire real estate businessman and television personality, was centre stage as 10 leading Republican presidential candidates looked for a break-out moment at their first debate on the road to the November 2016 election. The real estate mogul and nine others squared off in Cleveland, Ohio for the debate that gave Americans their first look at the major Republican candidates, six months before the first nominating contest in the Midwestern state of Iowa.⁵² On August 3, immigration was a key focus as Republicans hoping to be the next U.S. president took part in a forum ahead of the party's first official debate.⁵³

The U.S. State Department is standing by the accuracy of its annual global report on human trafficking, following a *Reuters* news report that accused senior diplomats of manipulating the rankings of more than a dozen strategically important countries. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said on August 4 that the report was "objective" and "credible." The report, released last week, ranked 188 countries on how they combat human trafficking, and listed 23 as Tier 3 for failing to meet minimum standards to fight human trafficking, including Iran, Syria, Russia and North Korea. A *Reuters* examination, based on interviews with more than a dozen sources in Washington and foreign capitals, shows that the government office set up to independently grade global efforts to fight human trafficking was repeatedly overruled by senior American diplomats and pressured into inflating assessments of 14 strategically important countries in this year's Trafficking

⁵¹ "Despite Rhetoric, Border Security Less Urgent in 2015", *The Associated Press*, August. 4, 2015 at http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/08/04/us/ap-us-gop-2016-immigration.html?_r=0

⁵² Nordwall, Smita and Gallo, William, "Trump Takes Centre Stage in First Republican Debate", *VOA News*, August 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-takes-center-stage-in-first-republican-debate/2905207.html>

⁵³ "Republican Candidates Focus on Immigration Ahead of First Debate", *VOA News*, August 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republican-candidates-focus-on-immigration-ahead-of-first-debate/2899192.html>

in Persons report.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, a Republican presidential candidate, said the report set a "dangerous precedent."⁵⁵

International: Asia

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **President Obama vigorously defends Iranian nuclear deal; Obama thinks nuclear deal with Tehran could eventually lead to Syria's long-running civil war solution; Obama administration officials slams democrat Sen. Schumer's opposition to the nuclear deal; U.S.-led coalition continue to attack the IS militant groups in Iraq and Syria; Ankara opens Incirlik airbase to fight against IS, amidst doubt; US gets ready to provide aid to Myanmar flood victims; ASEAN foreign ministers: land reclamation in the SCS "increased tensions" in the region; Philippines and the US urge end to island-building in SCS; North Korea defends its nuclear programme; Japan expressed "serious concern" over allegations of US spying Japanese officials; Kerry says TPP trade deal have made "good progress" toward reaching a final agreement.**

On August 5, President Barack Obama vigorously defended the international accord to restrain Iran's nuclear programme by saying it "cuts off all of Iran's pathways to a bomb." Obama said, in a nearly hour-long address at American University in Washington, "It is a very good deal".⁵⁶ In an interview aired on *CNN* on August 9, President Obama dismissed the importance of a tweet from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, showing an apparent silhouette of the American leader with a gun to his own head. President Obama also told *CNN*'s Fareed Zakaria that he thinks it possible that a nuclear deal with Tehran could eventually lead to bilateral cooperation aimed at finding a solution to Syria's long-running civil war. "I think that's possible," he said of any deal that keeps Syria intact and curbs the growth of Islamist terrorists in the region. "But I don't think it happens immediately," he said in the interview, which was conducted on August 6, hours before

⁵⁴ "Special Report - U.S. State Department Watered Down Human Trafficking Report", by Jason Szep and Matt Spetalnick, *Reuters*, August 4, 2015 at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/08/04/uk-usa-humantrafficking-disputes-special-idINKCN0Q821T20150804>; "Obama Political Staff Overruled Human Rights Experts On Slavery Report", by Zach Carter, *The Huffington Post*, August 3, 2015 at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/obama-human-trafficking_55bfe134e4b06363d5a33137?section=india&adsSiteOverride=in

⁵⁵ Richman, Mike, "US State Department Stands By Human Trafficking Report", *VOA News*, August 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/state-department-stands-by-human-trafficking-report/2902061.html>

⁵⁶ Pande, Aru, "Obama: Iran Nuclear Accord a 'Very Good Deal'", *VOA News*, August 05, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-to-deliver-major-speech-defending-iran-nuclear-negotiations/2902342.html>

key Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer said he would oppose the deal in an upcoming Senate vote.⁵⁷

On August 7, in response to the democrat senator, Chuck Schumer's opposition to the nuclear deal, the White House spokesman Josh Earnest said that it is "disappointed" but not "surprised" that one of the top Democrats in the U.S. Senate came out against the pending nuclear deal with Iran. Schumer has had a difference of opinion with President Barack Obama going back to 2003, referring to Schumer's vote and support for the U.S.-led war in Iraq.⁵⁸ Current and former White House officials pounced on Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) after his opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran was made public, implying it might become an obstacle to his serving as the next Senate Democratic leader. Secretary of State John Kerry said on August 7 that he "profoundly disagrees" with the decision from Schumer and the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), to oppose the nuclear accord with Iran.⁵⁹

On August 8, 2014, the United States started to bomb Islamic State (IS) targets in Iraq. Since then, the U.S.-led coalition has hit the militant group in Iraq and Syria with more than 6,000 air strikes. Even though the group has lost some territory, it has shown tough resilience and continues to pose a threat to vulnerable communities in the region, most recently in Turkish areas close to the Syrian border.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the US military said it has deployed F-16 fighter jets to a Turkish air field, as coalition air strikes continue against IS militants in Iraq and Syria. This comes after months of pressure from Washington on Ankara to open Incirlik airbase. The first U.S. drone airstrike was launched on August 5 against the IS extremists in Syria. The air offensive against IS continued overnight, with U.S.-led forces conducting 16 air strikes in Iraq and seven in Syria. The Pentagon said U.S. forces carried out their first attack on IS from Turkey into Syria with a drone strike. However, the extent of the U.S. use of Turkey's airbases remains unknown. Observers warn the coming weeks will be crucial for Ankara in answering growing questions over its commitment to the war against the Islamic State.⁶¹

⁵⁷ "Obama Brushes Off Attacks on Iran Deal", *VOA News*, August 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/president-barack-obama-brushes-off-attacks-on-iran-deal/2909263.html>

⁵⁸ "WH 'Disappointed' Key Democrat Opposes Iran Deal", *VOA News*, August 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/key-us-democrat-schumer-announces-opposition-to-iran-deal/2905229.html>

⁵⁹ Fabian, Jordan, "Obama Allies Slam Schumer On Iran Opposition", *The Hill*, August 07, 2015 at <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/250539-obama-allies-slam-schumer-on-iran-opposition>

⁶⁰ Hoke, Zlatica, "IS Continues Attacks Despite 6,000 Airstrikes", *VOA News*, August 07, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/islamic-state-continues-attacks-despite-6000-airstrikes/2908391.html>

⁶¹ Victoria Macchi, "US Sends F-16s to Turkish Air Base for Anti-IS Efforts", *VOA News*, August 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-sends-f16s-to-turkish-air-base-for-anti-islamic-state-efforts/2909332.html>; and, Jones, Dorian, "Ankara Commitment to IS Strikes Doubted", *VOA News*,

On August 5, speaking in Kuala Lumpur, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S. Embassy in Yangon is working closely with Myanmar officials to determine priorities for the aid. Kerry said the U.S. will provide \$600,000 in disaster assistance to Myanmar, also known as Burma. In Myanmar, as international aid efforts have accelerated after the disaster affected tens of thousands across the country.⁶²

According to Southeast Asian foreign ministers, land reclamation in the South China Sea has "increased tensions" in the region. The comments came on August 6 after members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) concluded their summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The ASEAN expressed "serious concerns" about China's construction work, noting some ministers are worried the activities may "undermine peace, security and stability in the South China Sea."⁶³ Earlier, Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario in a statement said that his country would endorse a U.S. call for stopping all work on disputed outcroppings and any military activities. The U.S. has been raising concerns over China's project to convert reefs and shoals in the Spratlys into manmade islands and carrying out military activities.⁶⁴ On August 6, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry directly called on China to stop building artificial islands in the South China Sea and halt construction efforts on the disputed lands. During ASEAN forum, Kerry called it "essential" to maintain freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.⁶⁵

On August 6, North Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ri Tong Il defended the country's nuclear programme, saying Pyongyang's decision on whether it would carry out another nuclear test would depend on the United States. The spokesman was summarizing a statement made by North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong earlier in the day at the ASEAN Regional Forum in the Malaysian capital, an annual security conference organized by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. On resuming six party talks, the U.S. officials have said they are willing to conduct informal talks with

August 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-commitment-to-striking-islamic-state-in-question/2904066.html>

⁶² Lin, Theingi and Aye, Su Mon, "US Readies Aid for Myanmar Flood Victims", *VOA News*, August 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-readies-aid-for-myanmar-flood-victims/2903069.html>

⁶³ Herman, Steve, "ASEAN Concerned About S. China Sea Dispute", *VOA News*, August 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/asean-south-china-sea-dispute/2904134.html>

⁶⁴ Orendain, Simone, "US, Philippines Urge End to Island-building in S. China Sea", *VOA News*, August 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-urges-end-to-island-building-in-south-china-sea/2899298.html>

⁶⁵ Dockins, Pamela, "Kerry: US Will Not Accept S. China Sea Restrictions", *VOA News*, August 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-hiroshima-anniversary-a-powerful-reminder-of-cost-of-war/2903700.html>

North Korea without conditions, but Pyongyang must first suspend its nuclear programme before formal negotiations can again take place.⁶⁶

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed "serious concern" over allegations the United States spied on senior Japanese government and business officials. "If it is true these Japanese individuals were targeted, it could shake the relationship of trust in our alliance and I would have to express serious concerns," Yoshihide Suga, Japan's top government spokesman quoted Abe as telling Biden. Abe also called for an investigation into the matter during a phone call with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, said Yoshihide Suga, Japan's top government spokesman. Suga said Biden apologized for the matter, noting it has "stirred up debate in Japan." He did not say whether Biden specifically confirmed the spying. Media whistleblower *WikiLeaks* last week published documents it says show the U.S. spied on 35 companies, government ministries and individuals in Japan.⁶⁷

On August 4, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the 12 nations negotiating the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal have made "good progress" toward reaching a final agreement, but that some details remain to be worked out. Kerry highlighted a series of goals for the pact as he spoke during a visit to Singapore, saying the deal would not only create economic opportunities for the countries involved, but also serve as a show of support for "good governance, transparency and accountability."⁶⁸ However, there was no consensus on how soon talks to conclude the TPP trade pact could be revived after the 12 parties failed to reach a deal at what was intended to be the concluding round last week in Hawaii.⁶⁹

India-US Relations

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **US wants India "more deeply embedded" in regional and global trade architectures; the US legislative branch continues its efforts on immigration concerns; President Obama unveils an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

During an interactive session held after her talk on India-US relations at the Indian Consulate in New York on August 4, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central

⁶⁶ Padden, Brian, "North Korea Defends Its Nuclear Programme", *VOA News*, August 06, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/north-korea-defends-nuclear-program/2904377.html>

⁶⁷ "Japan Expresses 'Serious Concern' Over US Spying Reports", *VOA News*, August 05, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/japan-expresses-serious-concern-over-us-spying-reports/2902231.html>

⁶⁸ "Dockins, Pamela, Kerry Hails Progress Toward Pacific Trade Deal", *VOA News*, August 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-hails-progress-toward-pacific-trade-deal/2899216.html>

⁶⁹ Herman, Steve, "Outlook Mixed After TPP Talks End", *VOA News*, August 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/outlook-mixed-after-tpp-talks-end/2896361.html>

Asian Affairs, Nisha Desai Biswal said that America would like to see India "more deeply embedded" in regional and global trade architecture. She stressed that India's membership in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation will make the forum a stronger organisation. She underscored that the US and Indian leaders have welcomed India joining the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) at an "appropriate time" and said India's membership in the forum will make body stronger. She said, "We think that India's membership in the APEC will make APEC a stronger organisation since as the third largest economy India has much to contribute". She added, India also has to have the "trade posture and policies" that allow the member states of APEC to feel that there is an approach that would benefit the collective.⁷⁰

On visa issues, Assistant Secretary Biswal said the legislative branch is working its way through immigration reform in the US. She noted that India has been and continues to be among the largest recipient of H1B and L1 work visas. She said, "We understand that there are continuing concerns on the Indian side and this is something we are looking closely at as the legislation works its way through Congress to see at what point we may take up some of these issues".⁷¹

On August 3, US President Barack Obama has unveiled an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the country's coal-burning power plants, with the White House hoping that nations like India and China will be fully on board for a landmark climate change deal in Paris. "No challenge poses a greater threat to our future and future generations than a change in climate," Obama said, warning: "There is such a thing as being too late."⁷² Declaring climate change the greatest threat facing the world, Obama said the regulation requiring the power sector to cut its emissions by 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030 would reduce Americans' energy bills and improve the health of vulnerable populations nationwide. The plan, which also mandates a shift to renewable energy from

⁷⁰ "India Should be Part of Regional and Global Trade Structures: US", *Press Trust of India*, August 5, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-should-be-part-of-regional-and-global-trade-structures-us-1204064>; and, "Intense Time Ahead For US-India Relations: Nisha Desai Biswal", *The Indian Panorama*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.theindianpanorama.com/united-states-america/new-york-news/intense-time-ahead-for-us-india-relations-nisha-desai-biswal-news-44998/>

⁷¹ "US wants to see India more embedded in global trade structure", *The Economic Times*, August 5, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-08-05/news/65243421_1_indian-consulate-totalisation-biswal

⁷² "Obama Unveils Major Climate Change Plan", *The New Indian Express*, August 4, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/Obama-Unveils-Major-Climate-Change-Plan/2015/08/04/article2957120.ece>; "Obama Says No Challenge Greater Threat to US Future Than Climate Change", *Reuters*, August 4, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Obama-says-no-challenge-greater-threat-to-US-future-than-climate-change/articleshow/48336645.cms>.

coal-fired electricity, is meant to put the United States in a strong position at international talks in Paris later this year on reaching a deal to curb global warming.⁷³

II. Defence Reviews

National

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Transgression of Indian air space by unidentified aircraft along the border; Measures taken to de stress young officers of the Indian Army.**

The Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has given the details of transgression of Indian airspace by unidentified aircraft along the border in the year 2014 and 2015 (up to 3.8.2015) to the Lok Sabha. The details of transgression are as follows:

Year	Total Number
2014	18
2015 (up to 3.8.2015)	02

The minister said that strengthening of Air Defence mechanism including enhancing the capability to detect any intrusion in Indian airspace depends upon national security and operational requirement of the defence forces. The government reviews the security mechanism from time to time.⁷⁴

The Defence Minister has informed the Lok Sabha that the government had ordered a study into stress levels encountered by young officers of the Indian Army. Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had undertaken a study on "Factors causing distress among Young Officers of Indian Army" with the following objectives:

- a) Study the level of distress prevailing among the young officers.
- b) Study the causal factor that create distress among young officers and deplete their resources to cope with it.

⁷³ "The Trouble with Obama's Clean Power Plan", By Chip Knappenberger, *CNN News*, August 5, 2015 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/04/opinions/knappenberger>

⁷⁴ "Unidentified Aircraft," PIB, August 07, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=124545>

c) Suggest remedial measures to manage stress among young officers.

The study was taken up in November 2012 and the final report along with executive summary of the study has been received by Government for implementation. The minister listed the measures taken to de stress the young officers which include introduction of Yoga, Meditation, regular Interaction by seniors, Buddy system, liberalized leave policy and wide spread dissemination of reading materials on management of stress in appropriate languages.⁷⁵

International

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **German military to invest billions of euros to resolve recurring military hardware problems; Mistral helicopter carriers deal between Russia and France cancelled.**

Reports say that the German military is to invest billions of euros to resolve recurring problems with its aircraft, helicopters and other military equipment. Germany will invest up to \$6.5 billion in the next seven to eight years to ensure improvements in these areas. Germany's military has come in for repeated criticism from media in recent times over the state of its weaponry. Only four of military's 39 NH90 helicopters are currently useable. The G36 assault rifle became the butt of jokes following reports it had trouble firing straight in high temperatures. The army has since stop using the rifle.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, according to reports, the two Mistral helicopter carriers deal between Russia and France has been cancelled and Russia would be refunded the advance payments. France will also repay Russia's costs, including training 400 sailors and stripping off equipment and shipping it back to Russia. Russia provided €893 million (US \$978 million) in advance payment for the two Mistral helicopter carriers. The widely reported figure of €785 million was cited as incorrect by German officials. Egypt, backed by Saudi Arabia, is interested in buying the two Mistrals as part of a plan to form a regional maritime force.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "Stress Level of Defence Personnel," *PIB*, August 07, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=124540>

⁷⁶ "Berlin To Spend Billions of Euros Upgrading Military Hardware," *Defence News*, August 07, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/08/07/berlin-spend-billions-euros-upgrading-military-hardware/31302981/>

⁷⁷ "Mistral Dispute With Russia Settled, France Eyes Exports," *Defence News*, August 09, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/ships/2015/08/09/mistral-dispute-russia-settled-france-eyes-exports/31278439/>

III. Internal Security Reviews

Jammu & Kashmir

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Attack on BSF convoy in JK, 2 jawans, militant killed; Two militants, two army personnel killed in encounters near LoC in Kashmir.**

Militants, on August 5, attacked a BSF convoy on Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Udhampur killing two soldiers of the border guarding force and injuring 11 others, while one of the two terrorists involved in the strike was shot dead in retaliatory fire and the other arrested. The militants hurled grenades and opened indiscriminate fire on the convoy when it reached Nassu belt on its way from Jammu to Srinagar, IG Jammu, Danish Rana said, adding that the BSF jawans retaliated, killing one of the two militants. Giving details about the incident, Chaudhary, DC, Udhampur, said one of the two militants escaped from the encounter site was later arrested from a school building in a nearby hamlet. "The hostages taken by the militant have been freed," he said, adding that no student was present in the school in the wake of a call for a strike over the demand for setting up an AIIMS in the region.⁷⁸ The captured Pakistani terrorist, Usman alias Qasim Khan of Faisalabad, a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit, is now in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The NIA has taken over Usman's interrogation to know more about the LeT network in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in India.⁷⁹

Two militants and a soldier were killed on August 9 in gunbattle during infiltration bids by ultras at Keran and Tangdhar sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. An infiltration bid was foiled along the LoC in Keran sector of north Kashmir's Kupwara district on August 9 in which two militants were killed, an army officer said. The alert troops guarding the LoC noticed a group of militants trying to sneak into this side Jumagund Nar in Keran sector, he said, adding the troops challenged the militants who indulged in indiscriminate firing. The troops returned the fire and in an ensuing encounter two militants were killed, the officer said. In an overnight encounter between the security forces and infiltrating militants near Ragni post in Taya forests near the LoC in Tangdhar sector, an army jawan was killed and two others were injured. "One jawan

⁷⁸ "Attack on BSF Convoy on J&K Highway, 2 Jawans, Militant Killed", *The Economic Times*, August 5, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/attack-on-bsf-convoy-on-jk-highway-2-jawans-militant-killed/articleshow/48354502.cms?cfmid=11001094>

⁷⁹ "Pakistani Terrorist Brought to Kashmir Valley", *The Times of India*, August 8, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/srinagar/Pakistani-terrorist-brought-to-Kashmir-Valley/articleshow/48402703.cms>

made the supreme sacrifice while two others were injured in the operation against militants in Tangdhar sector of Kupwara district," the Army official said.⁸⁰

Northeast India

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Centre, NSCN (IM) sign Naga peace accord; India and Bangladesh agree to jointly check infiltration; Two hardcore NDFB(S) militants and a MTFa ultra nabbed in Assam.**

The six-decade-old NSCN (IM)-led Naga militancy marked an end on August 3 with the signing of a framework agreement between the Government of India and the Naga militant outfit. Government interlocutor for Naga peace talks RN Ravi signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of India while NSCN (IM) general secretary Th Muivah, was the signatory on behalf of the militant outfit. The historic agreement was signed in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his 7 Race Course Road House, in an event that was kept under tight wraps till the final moments. The signing ceremony was attended by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Army chief Dalbir Singh, Nagaland Chief Minister TR Zeliang, Union Minister of State for DoNER Dr Jitendra Singh, besides National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and a few Naga MLAs and NSCN (IM)'s top leadership barring Chairman Isak Chise Swu, who is currently undergoing treatment. The Centre has clarified that the agreement would be released at a later date.⁸¹ Meanwhile, amid mounting pressure from opposition Congress, the Government sought to allay fears of neighbouring states of Nagaland by assuring them that they would be consulted before the final agreement with NSCN-IM was signed. This was conveyed by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to Nagaland Chief Minister T R Zeliang who called on him in New Delhi on August 7. Singh told Zeliang that the Central government has made it clear to NSCN-IM that their main demand of integration of Naga inhabited areas would not be met but more powers would be given to local bodies like autonomous district council, the sources said. This comes at a time when Congress which rules all the three states protested for not having consulted the neighbouring states of Nagaland before signing the initial accord with NSCN-IM.⁸²

⁸⁰ "Two Militants, Two Army Personnel Killed Near LoC in Kashmir", *The Economic Times*, August 9, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/two-militants-two-army-personnel-killed-near-loc-in-kashmir/articleshow/48410629.cms?cfmid=11001094>

⁸¹ Barooah, Kalyan, "Centre, NSCN (IM) Sign Naga Peace Accord", *The Assam Tribune*, August 4, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=aug0415/at050>

⁸² "North Eastern States To Be Taken Into Confidence Before Final Naga Pact", *The Economic Times*, August 7, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/north-eastern-states-to-be-taken-into-confidence-before-final-naga-pact/articleshow/48394814.cms>

India and Bangladesh on August 6 agreed to deploy Quick Reaction Teams to thwart illegal infiltration and criminal activities across the international border, besides stepping up joint patrolling in vulnerable areas. Reiterating the need for effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan for better border management, the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) agreed to prevent cross-border criminal activities and “irregular movement”. A joint statement was signed at the end of the conference of DGs of BSF and BGB. Director General of BGB, Major General Aziz Ahmed led a 22-member Bangladesh delegation to India to jointly chair the 41st Border Coordination Conference. The 24-member Indian delegation was led by DG, BSF DK Pathak.⁸³

Two hardcore NDFB(S) militants and a Muslim Tiger Force of Assam (MTFA) rebel have been apprehended by security forces in two separate incidents in Assam on August 8. Acting on specific information, army and police personnel launched a joint operation in Chirang district and apprehended two hardcore NDFB(S) militants, a defence spokesman said in Guwahati. The militants have been identified as Philip Basumatary alias B Phangka and Bipin Brahma alias B Bindw. A 7 .62 mm pistol, some ammunition and a grenade were also recovered from the two militants. In another incident, a joint team of the police and army nabbed a Muslim Tiger Force of Assam (MTFA) militant during an operation in Fakiragram area of Kokrajhar district. The militant has been identified as Mominul Ali and a pistol and some ammunition have been recovered from his possession, the spokesman added.⁸⁴

Left-wing Extremism

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Maoist sub-zonal commander nabbed in National capital; 5,000 additional ITBP troops for Chhattisgarh; Police arrest 26 Naxals in Chhattisgarh’s Bijapur; Police step up propaganda war against Naxals in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh.**

A 26-year-old Maoist Chandeshwar Yadav, wanted in Jharkhand for ambushing a police patrol party in 2014, was arrested from west Delhi's Kapashera area on August 2, said Delhi police. Yadav, who carries a reward of Rs. 5 lakh on its head, is the sub-zonal commander of banned Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist). He was absconding after carrying out an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast and firing in an ambush on a patrolling police party on December 23, 2014. One policeman died and

⁸³ “India, Bangla To Jointly Check Infiltration”, *The Assam Tribune*, August 7, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=aug0715/at055>

⁸⁴ “Two Hardcore NDFB(S) Militants and a MTFA Ultra Nabbed in Assam”, *The Economic Times*, August 8, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/two-hardcore-ndfbs-militants-and-a-mtfa-ultra-nabbed-in-assam/articleshow/48404470.cms?cfmid=11001094>

another was injured in the attack at Itkhori town in Chatra district, around 150 km from Ranchi. Police said Yadav was the key executioner of the ambush. Yadav had taken shelter in a Kapashera colony where most of the dwellers are from Bihar and Jharkhand.⁸⁵

In order to give a boost to anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh's worst affected areas, Centre has sanctioned additional deployment of 5,000 troops of mountain-warfare trained ITBP in the state. Officials said five battalions of the Sino-India border guarding force will soon take positions in Bastar, Narayanpur, Rajnandgaon and Kondagaon districts of the state which have witnessed maximum violence in the recent past in the entire Left Wing Extremism (LWE) hit areas of the country. With this, the total deployment of central security forces including CRPF and Border Security Force will come to about 40,000 personnel in the central Indian state. According to the new blueprint for operations, officials said, two Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) units will be based in Narayanpur and one each in Rajnandgaon, Kondagaon and the notorious 'Keshkal' valley in Bastar district of the state.⁸⁶

In a major crackdown on the outlawed CPI (Maoist), 26 Naxals have been arrested from different places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district over past three days, police said on August 5. The arrested Naxals, against whom warrants were long pending, were involved in several incidents including loot, arson, murder, attacks on security personnel and triggering bomb blasts, Bijapur Additional Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela told PTI. Most of them were working as sangham members (lower rung), while others served in LOS (local operation squad) in the past, Elesela said.⁸⁷

The Chhattisgarh police has launched a video campaign involving surrendered Maoists to counter Naxal propaganda in insurgency-hit Bastar. The police made short films featuring around 20 senior Naxal leaders who have surrendered recently, to narrate their ordeals during their days of rebel life apparently to dissuade the local tribal youths not to bite the ideological bait thrown at them by the ultras. The short films with duration of 15-20 minutes were being exhibited in remote areas in Bastar region not only to woo the rebels to lay down arms and join the mainstream but also to prevent the gullible tribal youths from being indoctrinated in Naxal ideology, police sources said in Raipur on August 29. "The strategy is paying off. No less than 30 ultras have surrendered before police in the past three four weeks ever since we have launched the video war in Bastar. In at least a

⁸⁵ "Maoist Held in Delhi", *Business Standard*, August 3, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/maoist-held-in-delhi-115080300457_1.html

⁸⁶ "Anti-Naxal ops: 5,000 Additional ITBP Troops To Be Deployed in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, August 4, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/anti-naxal-ops-5000-additional-itbp-troops-to-be-deployed-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/48348466.cms?cfmid=11001094>

⁸⁷ "26 Naxals Held In Police Crackdown in Chhattisgarh", *The Times of India*, August 5, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/26-naxals-held-in-police-crackdown-in-Chhattisgarh/articleshow/48361506.cms>

dozen villages, Maoists faced stiff resistance to their recruitment drive from locals”, the sources in state intelligence bureau (SIB) said in Raipur.⁸⁸

IV. United Nations Reviews

India and the UN

(August 3-9, 2015)

- **Italy drags India to Hamburg-based tribunal for trial of accused Italian marines; India endorses SDGs; Tribute: A satellite named Kalam.**

The Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs have decided to challenge the Italian decision to approach the International Tribunal on Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in the case of two of their marines accused of firing on Indian fishermen, who sadly lost their lives on February 15, 2015. Indian officials feel that since the incident occurred in Indian territorial waters, the international tribunal should not have jurisdiction in this matter.⁸⁹

As consensus was reached on the Self Development Goals (SDGs) to be adopted in September 2015, Amit Narang, Counsellor in the Indian Mission to the UN said that India was proud to be part of the new consensus, even though it felt that there was room for improvement on some of the goals. He also said that India’s own development goals coincided with the SDGs and some of them were already being pursued.⁹⁰

In a follow up on a decision taken at the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, the Global Satellite being launched by CANEUS (Canada-Europe-US-Asia) Organization on Space Technologies for Societal Applications in collaboration with UN agencies including the UN office for Outer Space Affairs, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to help with disaster risk reduction will be named UN Kalam Global Sat to recognize the contribution made by late President Abdul Kalam in the development of space technology and move towards fulfilling his vision.⁹¹

⁸⁸ “Police Launches Video War To Counter Naxals”, *The Asian Age*, August 9, 2015 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/police-launches-video-war-counter-naxals-621>

⁸⁹ “India to Contest Italy’s Decision On Marines in ITLOS”, *Zee News*, August 3, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-to-contest-italys-decision-on-marines-in-itlos_1641049.html

⁹⁰ “Post-2015 SDGs Already Being Implemented, India Tells UN”, *The Economic Times*, August 4, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-08-04/news/65204564_1_digital-india-post-2015-development-agenda-sustainable-development-goals

⁹¹ “While India Decides On A Tribute, UN Is Getting Ready To Launch A Global Satellite Named After Dr Kalam!”, August 6, 2015, at <http://www.indiatimes.com/news/world/while-india-decides-on-a-tribute-un-is-getting-ready-to-launch-a-global-satellite-named-after-dr-kalam-243922.html>