

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

August 31 – September 6, 9 (1), 2015

Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Yaqoob-ul Hassan

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Gulbin Sultana

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives

Gunjan Singh

China

Titli Basu

Japan and the Korean Peninsula

Rajorshi Roy

Russia and Central Asia

Manpreet Sohanpal

Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

Saroj Bishoyi

United States of America

Amit Kumar

Defence Reviews

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रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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

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

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Indian envoy rejects strategic swing in relations; President Ghani assures 2019 election would be transparent on regional level; Afghan government and Taliban likely to resume peace talks; RECCA participants endorse Afghanistan's key role for regional cooperation; Regional trade to benefit Afghans the most; President wants Afghan-Iran border to be a trade hub.**

India's ambassador to Afghanistan has rejected media reports that his government is heading for a strategic shift in relations with Kabul. Ambassador Amar Sinha says New Delhi is not revising its strategic partnership with Kabul and its foreign minister is not skipping a regional summit in Kabul this week to express New Delhi's displeasure over the Afghan unity government's outreach to its regional arch-rival, Pakistan. "Strategic partnerships are built on much more solid foundations, and that can't be undone because of one meeting not happening at a senior [leadership] level," he told *Radio Free Afghanistan*. "During the past 18 months, we have had seven summit-level meetings [between our leaders]." Quoting unnamed senior diplomatic sources, a report in India's *The Hindu* daily said that Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj is skipping the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) in Kabul on September 3 and September 4 because the country is "stung by Afghanistan's security and strategic shift toward Pakistan in the past year. Sinha, however, said Swaraj has to miss the meeting because of previous engagements. But India will be represented by Sujata Mehta, a deputy foreign minister responsible for economic relations and international development assistance.¹

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said that the Presidential election in 2019 would be the most transparent election on regional level. While talking to the participants of Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on September 5, President Ghani said it is impossible to solve all problems at one time. He said the Electoral Reform Commission that was assigned to review the electoral system has completed its task and sent necessary suggestions to the Presidential Palace. He further said these suggestions would be discussed in the cabinet meeting for bringing necessary reforms to the election system. President Ghani reiterated that the reforms would pave way for more transparent elections in the future.²

¹ "Indian Envoy Rejects Strategic Swing in Relations with Afghanistan", *Daily Afghanistan Times*, September 1, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/indian-envoy-rejects-strategic-swing-in-relations-with-afghanistan/>

² "President Ghani: Election 2019 Would Be The Most Transparent On Regional Level", *Khaama Press*, September 5, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-election-2019-would-be-the-most-transparent-on-regional-level-3869>

Talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan are likely to resume this week when Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz leaves for Kabul to attend the sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). According to the Dawn, a senior diplomat said that they were thinking over an invitation to RECCA conference. Two RECCA conferences will be held followed by a ministerial meeting, on September 3 and 4. A meeting between Pakistani and Afghan officials is expected to take place on the sidelines of the events, to discuss issues that have disturbed the process of normalisation of ties between the two nations.³

The halted peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban likely to resume this month. According to media reports, upon a request from Afghan government, the governments of Pakistan and China put all efforts in to convince Taliban to resume peace talks. The report further states that signals have been given by the leadership of Taliban that peace talks could resume in the second week of September in Pakistan and that the process could continue. The first round of face-to-face talks between Afghan government and Taliban took place in Pakistan at the end of July where both sides exchanged their demands and the participants agreed to hold another round of talks soon. But this round was postponed due to the death report of the group's Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Afghanistan was expecting that the relations with Pakistan would get better following the arrangement of face-to-face talks but it worsened in the aftermath of deadly attacks in Kabul.⁴

The participants of Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) endorsed Afghanistan's key role for regional cooperation. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani inaugurated the second day of conference with his speech insisting on expansion of economic relations between Afghanistan and the region while pointing towards the investment opportunities in the country. He said Afghanistan could be turned into a key a regional transit hub and reiterated the Afghan government's efforts and commitments to turn this into a reality. President Ghani said he is hopeful that the ongoing violence conclude in the near future and Asia and once again turn into an economic continent with Afghanistan to play a connective role for the countries and people. He called on regional countries to cooperate in a bid to improve the economy of the region and emphasized that the regional Muslim countries should denounce violence and war in a bid to improve and maintain security in the region. In the meantime, the Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Arjun Bahadur Thapa said Afghanistan could become a hub for regional cooperation.⁵

³ "Talks Between Pakistan, Afghanistan Likely to Resume This Week", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 2, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13000

⁴ "Afghan Government, Taliban Peace Talks Likely To Resume This Month", *Khaama Press*, September 3, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-government-taliban-peace-talks-likely-to-resume-this-month-3861>

⁵ "RECCA Participants Endorses Afghanistan's Key Role For Regional Cooperation", *Khaama Press*, September 4, 2015 at, <http://www.khaama.com/recca-participants-endorses-afghanistans-key-role-for-regional-cooperation-1471>

The Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) on September 5 termed the sixth two-day Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (REECA) that began on September 5 in Kabul as vital for the economic development of Afghanistan and re-integrating regional economies. Mohammad Qurban Haqjo said Afghanistan should be credited for creating the RECCA 10 years back with the main purpose to boost economic activities on regional level something that would ultimately benefit Afghanistan the most. Haqjo, however, suggested the RECCA should have a secretariat to implement agreements and pledges made in the summits. He said the RECCA's previous summits lacked practical implementation of the pledges and Afghanistan should stress in the ongoing meeting implementation of economic cooperation pledges.⁶

Kabul has always tried to improve trade ties with Tehran, President Ashraf Ghani said on September 5, desiring greater bilateral cooperation in the wake of the Iran-US agreement. During a meeting with Iran's Interior Minister Abdul Raza Rahmani Fazli at the Presidential Palace here, Ghani stressed the need for enhanced cooperation between the neighbours in diverse fields. The Afghan-Iran border should be a focal point of economic and security cooperation, the president remarked. "We want noticeable progress in bilateral collaboration, as both nations have common opportunities and challenges." In a statement from his office, the president said the Afghan government -- mindful of the ground realities -- had always advocated for a political settlement of issues.⁷

Pakistan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Aziz rejects US claims about Pakistan's inaction against the Haqqani network; People are happy with Karachi operation; Aziz to explore if talks can be revived; PM, Army chief discuss security of CPEC projects; Pakistan raises LoC issue at UNSC.**

Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz rejected on August 31 the US claims that Pakistan had not adequately acted against the Haqqani network and said the terrorist group had been significantly damaged in the military operation in North Waziristan. "The infrastructure of the Haqqani network in North Waziristan, which included IED (Improvised Explosive Device) factories and a number of other capacities, including communication, has been disrupted, so what is left here may be very limited compared to the capacity they still have in Afghanistan," Mr Aziz said at a media briefing along with visiting German Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier after their talks at the Foreign Ministry.⁸

⁶ "Regional Trade to Benefit Afghans the Most: Haqjo", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 6, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13018

⁷ "President Wants Afghan-Iran Border to be a Trade Hub", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 6, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13019

⁸ "Aziz Rejects US Claims About Haqqani Network", *Dawn*, September 1, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1204107/aziz-rejects-us-claims-about-haqqani-network>

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on September 2 said that people were happy with the ongoing operation in Karachi, adding that incidents of kidnappings for ransom, target killings and extortion had receded to a new low and assured the masses that street crimes would also be controlled. Addressing a public gathering in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir city of Bagh, he expressed concern over the bloodshed on the Line of Control (LoC)/ Working Boundary, and warned that it could destroy international peace. "Our patience on ceasefire violations must not be taken as a sign of weakness. The bloodshed on the border may destroy global peace as the Pakistan Army is already fighting against terrorism to make the world more peaceful," he said. He vowed that it was the government's mission to win the war against terror and give peace as a gift to the world. He warned India not to mistake Pakistan's silence on the neighbouring country's ceasefire violations as a sign of weakness.⁹

When Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz travels to Kabul on September 4 for attending a regional conference, he will try on the side-lines to explore if the Afghan leadership is interested in reviving the peace dialogue with Taliban that was suspended weeks ago following the revelation about Mullah Omar's death. During his day-long visit, Mr Aziz will attend the ministerial meeting of sixth edition of Regional Economic Conference on Afghanistan and meet Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and other leaders. Pakistan will take a decision on its future line of action regarding ties with Afghanistan and the reconciliation process after Mr Aziz's return. According to a senior official, Pakistan is fully convinced that the way forward lay in an 'intra-Afghan dialogue', but would ask the Afghan leaders to make a choice between the reconciliation route and fighting the insurgents. The visit takes place amid heightened tensions between the two countries over allegations that terrorist groups involved in violence in Afghanistan continue to have sanctuaries in Pakistani territory. High profile attacks in Kabul last month had derailed the efforts started after the change of government in Kabul for normalisation of ties.¹⁰

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on September 4 consulted Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif on the security of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. This was the second meeting between the two in a week. "Matters relating to security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects came under discussion during the meeting in addition to a conversation on the prevailing internal security situation," an official spokesman said. Pakistan and China earlier this year launched the \$46 billion CPEC, which includes connectivity, energy and infrastructure projects. The corridor estimated to be about 3,000km long would link Gwadar port to China's Xinjiang province. Unrest has been a major source of concern for the CPEC and the military soon after the inauguration of the project during President Xi Jinping's visit

⁹ "People are Happy With Karachi Operation, Says Prime Minister", *The News*, September 1, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39415-People-are-happy-with-Karachi-operationsays-prime-minister>

¹⁰ "Aziz to Explore If Afghans Are Interested In Reviving Reconciliation Process", *Dawn*, September, 4, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1204832/aziz-to-explore-if-afghans-are-interested-in-reviving-reconciliation-process>

to Islamabad had announced the establishment of a 10,000-strong special force for protecting the CPEC projects and the Chinese workers associated with them.¹¹

Pakistan has urged the UN Security Council to “take notice” of the escalating incidents of firing by Indian troops across the Line of Control (LoC) in the disputed Kashmir region and the Working Boundary in which a large number of civilians had been killed and injured, it was officially stated on September 4. In a letter to the President of the UN Security Council Ambassador Vitaly Churkin of Russia, which holds the rotational presidency of the 15-member body for the month of September, Pakistan’s UN Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi emphasised that India should be asked to abide by the 2003 ceasefire agreement. In doing so, Ambassador Lodhi has taken the issue of India’s “provocative” actions to the highest level of the United Nations. In her letter, the Pakistani envoy gave details of breaches of the ceasefire and pointed out that there had been a spike in such violence in the last a couple of months. These violations have involved the use of small arms as well as heavy mortar fire, and had targeted innocent civilians including women and children. She requested the president to circulate the letter as an official document of the Security Council.¹²

Bangladesh

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **USAID chief vows deep engagement; Bangladesh-US exercise for disaster preparedness held in Dhaka; UN special envoy for freedom of religion visits Bangladesh.**

Visiting USAID Administrator Alfonso Lenhardt assured of remaining deeply engaged with Bangladesh in various development fields and exploring further opportunities for cooperation in its post-2015 development journey. The USAID chief made the assurance when he called on Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali at the foreign ministry on August 30. He also congratulated the Bangladesh government for accomplishing enviable successes in attaining many of the MDG goals particularly in the areas of health and women empowerment. The USAID Administrator also called on Environment and Forest Minister Anwar Hossain Manju at his Secretariat office and assured of US support to mitigate climate change effects in Bangladesh. During the meeting, Alfonso Lenhardt also lauded the steps taken by the Bangladesh government for adaptation of climate change. US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat and USAID Mission Director Janina Jaruzelski were present during the meeting.¹³

¹¹ “Sharif, Army Chief Discuss Security of CPEC Projects”, *Dawn*, September, 5, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1205028/sharif-army-chief-discuss-security-of-cpec-projects>

¹² “Pakistan Raises Indian Aggression Issue at UNSC”, *The News*, September 6, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39477-Pakistan-raises-Indian-aggression-issue-at-UNSC>

¹³ “USAID Chief Vows Deep Engagement”, *The Daily Star*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/usa-id-chief-vows-deep-engagement-135493>.

Bangladesh Armed Forces and US Army Pacific began the sixth civil-military annual disaster preparedness exercise in Dhaka on August 30. High officials of both the Bangladesh and US armies and disaster management and relief ministry attended the inaugural event at the Army Golf Club. A wide range of Bangladeshi and international government and non-government organisations were engaged during the 5-day exercise known as “Pacific Resilience”. More than 150 participants took part in a phased table-top exercise and 350 participated in a field training exercise of the Pacific Resilience Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange. The exercise reviewed and evaluated Dhaka city earthquake response plans, practice logistical and medical emergency scenarios, and identify current gaps in plans and procedures.¹⁴

United Nations Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt arrived in the capital on August 30 for a nine-day mission to assess the state of freedom of religion or belief regarding gender, women, children, and particularly religious minority or indigenous community issues in the country. He will meet government officials, representatives of religious or belief communities and minority and indigenous communities. He will share his preliminary findings with the media on September 9. Bielefeldt will present a report with his conclusions and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in 2016.¹⁵

Sri Lanka

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Eighth Parliament begins its session; NPC passes resolution on international probe on war crimes; Sri Lanka Central Bank receives \$1.1 billion from India's RBI currency swap; Sri Lanka, UAE explore ways to strengthen trade and investment ties; Sri Lanka armed forces annual joint field exercise Cormorant Strike kicks off; Australia, Sri Lanka navies held joint exercise enhancing defence ties.**

The inaugural session of the eighth Parliament was held on September 1. United National Party (UNP) Parliamentarian Karu Jayasuriya was unanimously elected as the new Speaker. The newly elected members of Parliament later took oaths before the new Speaker. United National Party (UNP) Parliamentarian Lakshman Kiriella was appointed as the Leader of the House and UNP MP Gayantha Karunathilake was appointed as the Chief Government Whip.¹⁶ Leader of the Tamil party, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan was appointed as the Opposition Leader and the Leader of Sri Lanka's Marxist party, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayake was appointed as Chief Opposition

¹⁴ “Bangladesh-US Exercise for Disaster Preparedness Begins in Dhaka”, *The Daily Star*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-us-exercise-disaster-preparedness-begins-dhaka-135331>.

¹⁵ “UN Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion in Town”, *The Daily Star*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/un-special-envoy-freedom-religion-town-135304>.

¹⁶ “Kiriella Leader of the House, Gayantha Chief Government Whip”, *Colombo Gazette*, September 1, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/01/kiriella-leader-of-the-house-gayantha-chief-government-whip/>.

Whip.¹⁷ 42 Cabinet Ministers including the Prime Minister as the Minister of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs took oaths at the Presidential Secretariat on September 4.¹⁸

The Northern Provincial Council (NPC) demanded an international probe into the alleged war crimes committed towards the end of civil war with the LTTE, while dismissing the domestic mechanism backed by the US and the international community. In a resolution passed on September 1, the NPC questioned the legal possibilities of conducting a credible domestic investigation in preference to an international mechanism.¹⁹

Sri Lanka's Central Bank received the \$1.1 billion from the \$1.5 billion swap agreement with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) signed earlier this year. The RBI and the Central Bank signed the Special Currency Swap Agreement on July 17. Under the arrangement, the Central Bank can draw up to US\$ 1.1 billion for a maximum period of six months. This is in addition to the US\$ 400 million received in April 2015 by the Central Bank under the currency swap facility availed by the RBI to central banks of SAARC member countries.²⁰

Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates explored ways to strengthen the bilateral ties between the two countries, especially in trade and investment. The discussions took place when the UAE Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nayhan met with his Sri Lankan counterpart Minister Mangala Samaraweera on September 4 at the Ministry. The UAE Foreign Minister visited Sri Lanka on the invitation of the Sri Lankan government. The UAE Foreign Minister also called on President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.²¹

The three-week long joint military exercise involving thousands of Sri Lankan armed forces personnel and representatives from foreign countries commenced on September 3, in Kokilai in the East for the sixth consecutive year. The joint field exercise, known as the 'Exercise - Cormorant Strike VI - 2015', is organized by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) with the participation of over 2500 tri-service personnel of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Planned and executed by the Directorate of Training at the Army Headquarters, this year's exercise involve 2500 infantrymen, including largely the Commandos and Special Forces of the Army, 245 sailors and 140 airmen. In addition, 53 foreign military personnel from Bangladesh, China, India,

¹⁷ "Tamil Party Leader Becomes Opposition Leader In Sri Lanka Parliament", *Colombopage*, September 3, 2015, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep03_1441259087CH.php. "Marxist party leader Chief Opposition Whip of Sri Lanka Parliament", *ColomboPage*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep03_1441290668CH.php.

¹⁸ "Sri Lanka's New Cabinet Ministers", *ColomboPage*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep04_1441355791CH.php.

¹⁹ "NPC Resolution Rejects Domestic Mechanism", *Colombo Gazette*, September 1, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/01/npc-resolution-rejects-domestic-mechanism/>.

²⁰ "Sri Lanka Central Bank Receives \$1.1 Billion from India's RBI Currency Swap", *ColomboPage*, September 4, 2015, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep04_1441307703CH.php.

²¹ "Sri Lanka, UAE Explore Ways to Strengthen Trade and Investment Ties ", *ColomboPage*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep04_1441376137CH.php.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan and the US, joined the mega exercise. The Exercise, covering Pulmoddai to North of Arugam Bay in the East is to be coupled with simultaneous mock seaborne and airborne operations and is slated to further promote special operation capabilities and maintain combat readiness at all levels with a view to transmitting and sharing the sea of experiences the Sri Lanka Army had gathered.²²

Sri Lanka Navy ships 'Sagara' and SLNS 'Samudura' engaged in a joint exercise with a visiting Australian naval ship 'HMAS Melbourne' on September 2 in the seas off Colombo. The Australian naval ship 'HMAS Melbourne' arrived at the Port of Colombo on August 29, on a five-day goodwill visit and left on September 2 for the next mission.²³

Maldives

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **President thanks India for assistance; 39% decline in the Gross International Reserves.**

President Abdulla Yameen has expressed his gratitude to the government of India for its long-lasting assistance to the Maldives. The President made this remark while speaking at a ceremony in Noonu Landhoo, held to inaugurate a new power station in the island. He said that the two countries have maintained an exceptional friendship and close bilateral relations, and this has been the case during all governments. "These relations have been maintained by all our governments. The best relations with India were established during President Maumoon's 30 years," he said. President Yameen said that Maldives would always welcome Indian investments.²⁴

Central bank Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) has said that at the end of July 2015, Gross International Reserves stood at \$692.5 million, which is the equivalent of 4.2 months of imports. According to the Monthly *Economic Review* for August 2015, this constitutes a decline of 39 percent compared to the corresponding period last year. Gross International Reserves stood at \$703.7 million at the end of May 2015, and at \$712.2 million at the end of June 2015. At the end of July 2015, Usable Reserves amounted to \$213.5 million which is an increase of 41 percent in annual terms and a decline of 9 percent in monthly terms. Gross International Reserves also increased in annual terms despite the decline in monthly terms.²⁵

²² "Sri Lanka Armed Forces Annual Joint Field Exercise Cormorant Strike Kicks Off", *ColomboPage*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep04_1441306859CH.php.

²³ "Australia, Sri Lanka Navies in Joint Exercise Enhancing Defence Ties", *ColomboPage*, September 3, 2015, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Sep03_1441264460CH.php.

²⁴ "President Thanks India for Assistance", *SunOnline*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32119>.

²⁵ "Reserves in Terms of Months of Imports Declines to 4.2", *SunOnline*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32109>.

B. East Asia

China

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **President Xi Jinping meets with the South African counterpart; China and Thailand discuss bilateral relations; China and Myanmar discuss safety and stability on the border; China and Ethiopia discuss bilateral cooperation; Chinese President Xi and Premier Li meet with world leaders.**

The Chinese President Xi Jinping met with the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma on September 4. They discussed the upcoming China-Africa Summit, which is scheduled for late 2015. They also discussed bilateral cooperation and relations.²⁶

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Thailand on September 4. They discussed the China-Thailand railway project. The Thai Ministers were in China to attend the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and victory in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.²⁷ Li also met with the President of Myanmar who is visiting China to attend the anniversary. They discussed safety and stability on the border.²⁸

Li Keqiang met with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and discussed bilateral cooperation and relations.²⁹ Li also met with the Russian President,³⁰ the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,³¹ and the President of Egypt³² and Republic of Korea³³.

A number of leaders were in China to attend the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and victory in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. During the events the

²⁶ "Xi: Summit in S. Africa to Have Our Full Support", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 5, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/05/content_21792169.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

²⁷ "Deputy Thai PM Hails 'Family' Relationship with China", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/04/content_21789080.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

²⁸ "China and Myanmar Focus on Border Safety", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/04/content_21789052.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

²⁹ "China Happy To Boost Ethiopian Ties", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/04/content_21789050.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁰ "Li and Putin Discuss Bilateral Ties, Global Issues", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/03/content_21785132.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³¹ "Li Tells Ban China will Continue To Support UN", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/03/content_21785109.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³² "Li Keqiang Meets Egypt President", *China Daily*, September 2, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/02/content_21780779.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³³ "Li and Park Agree on Developing Strategic Partnership", *China Daily*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/03/content_21785134.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

Chinese President met with the President of Russia,³⁴ President of Uzbekistan,³⁵ President of Tajikistan,³⁶ President of Venezuela³⁷ and President of Sudan.³⁸ During the meetings both sides discussed the existing bilateral relations and also ways to improve the relationship.

Japan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Japan-South Korea summit is likely in the end of October; South Korea intends to send KDX-II-class destroyer Dae Jo-yeong to the international fleet review by the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF) in October; Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida is scheduled to visit Iran in October to discuss energy, infrastructure and other economic issues.**

Reports suggests that first formal Japan-South Korea summit is likely in the end of October in Seoul on the side-lines of a China-Japan-South Korea meeting scheduled from October 31-November 1. In case this happens, this will be the first meeting since both Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun Hye came to power. Both leaders are likely to discuss developments in the Korean Peninsula, and few bilateral issues including the contentious comfort women issue. The Japan-South Korea relations have suffered since Prime Minister Abe came to power in December 2012 owing to the Seoul's sentiments on comfort women.³⁹

South Korean Defence Ministry confirmed that it intends to send a naval vessel, KDX-II-class destroyer Dae Jo-yeong, to the international fleet review by the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF) on October 18 for the first time since 2002. Moreover, the ship will also participate in a joint MSDF search and rescue exercise aimed at joint-response to maritime mishaps.⁴⁰

³⁴ "China and Russia Seal Raft of Energy Deals", By Li Xiaokun/Du Juan, *China Daily*, September 4, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-09/04/content_21786683.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁵ "Li and Karimov Discuss Enhancing Ties", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/03/content_21785159.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁶ "Xi Meets Tajikistan President", *China Daily*, September 2, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/02/content_21780697.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁷ "Xi Seeks Greater Collaboration With Venezuela", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, September 1, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/01/content_21772174.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁸ "China-Sudan Oil Deals Boost Economic Growth", *China Daily*, September 1, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/01/content_21772246.htm, accessed on September 7, 2015

³⁹ "Abe-Park First Summit Eyed For Late October", *Kyodo*, September 3, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/03/national/politics-diplomacy/despite-tensions-seoul-beijing-look-hold-joint-summit-tokyo-late-october/#.Ve5tQIK6a1t>

⁴⁰ "South Korea to Join Fleet Review In Japan For First Time Since 2002", *Kyodo*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/07/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-join-fleet-review-japan-first-time-since-2002/#.Ve6CfVK6a1t>

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida is scheduled to visit Iran in October to discuss bilateral investment agreement for conceivable economic opportunities for Japanese companies in the Iranian market with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif. Japanese media reports suggested that Tokyo intends to establish bilateral committee to handle energy and infrastructure and other economic issues.⁴¹

Japanese Foreign Minister protested against Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov's comment made on September 3 that the disputed Kuril Islands was settled in 1945 and dismissed the likelihood of any negotiation with Japan on the Island issue. Besides, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's European Affairs Bureau Hajime Hayashi registered objection to Morgulov's remarks with Evgeny Afanasiev, Russian Ambassador to Japan.⁴²

The Korean Peninsula

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Sixth Park-Xi summit meeting held in Beijing; Both Koreas decided on family reunions from October 20-26 at Mount Geumgangsan; US-South Korea conduct joint anti-biological drill to increase the collective response against possible biological attacks; United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon defends his attendance at the Chinese military parade; UN special rapporteur on the North Korea's human rights situation reached Seoul.**

South Korean President Park Geun-hye held meeting with her Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People on September 2. Both leaders reportedly discussed security situation in the Korean Peninsula and noted the significance of inter-Korean consultations, unification issue, and recommencement of dialogue through the Six-Party Talks, bilateral, regional and international issues. Moreover, both nations decided to cooperate and exchange views for hosting the Pyeong Chang Winter Olympics in 2018 and the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022. Both Presidents focused on the importance of Korea-China-Japan trilateral cooperation framework for regional peace and stability. Furthermore, the leaders talk over the intersection between the Seoul's Eurasia Initiative and the Beijing's One Belt, One Road initiative and discussed the potentials for connecting them during implementation.⁴³

⁴¹ "Worried about Being Left Out Of Investment Bonanza, Japan Eyes Sending Foreign Minister to Iran", *Kyodo, JJI*, September 5, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/05/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-eyes-sending-foreign-minister-to-iran-seeks-investment-pact/#.Ve6HLIK6a1t>

⁴² "Russian Remarks Over Disputed Islands 'Unproductive And False, Kishida Says", *Kyodo, JJI*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/04/national/politics-diplomacy/refusing-discuss-isle-row-japan-called-russias-official-stance/#.Ve6OZFK6a1t>

⁴³ "President holds summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Office of the President", September 2, 2015 at <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Press-Releases/view?articleId=3126&pageIndex=1&gov=>

Both Koreas decided to hold two rounds of reunions of 100 family members from each side from October 20-26 at Mount Geumgangsan. On September 15, both Koreas are scheduled to share lists of 450 applicants from which a final list of 100 will be by October 8.⁴⁴

The US-South Korea joint anti-biological drill called the Able Response 15 started on September 7. The defence ministry stated that the objective of the joint drill is to increase the collective response against possible biological attacks. Beside the defence departments, the drill includes the local health ministry.⁴⁵

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has defended his attendance at the Chinese military parade commemorating the end of World War II. Japan earlier complained about his presence at the parade arguing that it compromises UN's neutrality. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscored that UN is an "impartial body" and said that while he noted Japanese objection but "learning from the past and also looking for a better future" was the objective of his visit to China. He further noted that the event demonstrated the commitment of Chinese people.⁴⁶

On September 6, Marzuki Darusman, the UN special rapporteur on the North Korea's human rights situation reached Seoul to evaluate the influence of latest developments in inter-Korean relations. During his five day visit, he is scheduled to meet with bureaucrats, and civil society. Darusman will reportedly use the data gathered throughout this visit in a report to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2016.⁴⁷

C. Russia

Russia: Domestic Affairs

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Russia holds the Eastern Economic Forum meeting in Vladivostok; Russia can deny access to subsoil assets of Black Sea and Sea of Azov; Russians real incomes may decrease by 4-5 per cent in 2015; Depreciating rouble triggers guest worker exodus from Russia; Human rights organization fined US\$ 9,000 for violating Russia's law on NGOs; Putin agrees with cabinet on switchover to one-year budget; Russia's Reserve Fund grows by 9.2 per cent in August to reach US\$ 69.4 billion; Russia held 79 military exercises in August 2015; Rosneft may sue Lukoil.**

⁴⁴ "Koreas Agree To Hold Family Reunions In Late Oct", *The Korea Herald*, September 8, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150908000577>

⁴⁵ "S. Korea, U.S. Launch Joint 3-Day Drill Against Bio Threats," *Yonhap News Agency*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150907000688>

⁴⁶ "U.N. Chief Rebuffs Japanese Concern Over His Attendance At China Military Parade", *Yonhap News Agency*, September 5, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/09/120_186253.html

⁴⁷ "U.N. Rapporteur On N.K. Human Rights Arrives in Seoul", *Yonhap News Agency*, September 6, 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2015/09/06/0301000000AEN20150906000900315.html>

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev has said, on September 3, that around 80 agreements worth 1.3 trillion roubles were signed at the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF 2015) held in Vladivostok. He also stated that the EEF, aimed at attracting investments in Russia's Far East, will become an annual event from hereon.⁴⁸

According to new rules approved by the Russian government, holders of Ukrainian licenses could be denied the right to use subsoil assets of the Black and Azov seas in case of a threat to the defence and security of the Russian Federation. The decree affects licenses issued by Ukraine before the reunification of Crimea with Russia.⁴⁹

Russia's Labour Minister Maxim Topilin has said, on September 4, that Russians may see their real incomes decrease by 4-5 per cent in 2015.⁵⁰

Russia's ombudsman Boris Titov has said, in Vladivostok on September 4 that the falling rouble has triggered an exodus of guest workers from Russia. He was speaking during the side-line of the Eastern Economic Forum. He also stated that the 'mandatory examination in the Russian language for labour migrants breeds corruption'.⁵¹

A Moscow district justice court has imposed a fine of 600,000 roubles (approx US\$ 9,000) on the Memorial human rights centre for violating the Russian law on Non-government organizations listed as foreign agents. Memorial has been charged with distribution of materials without attributing its source. The law on foreign agent NGOs was adopted in 2012. It binds non-government organizations carrying out political activities and financed from abroad to receive a status of "foreign agents" and be put on a special register. Such organizations are obliged to indicate their status while publishing their materials in the internet and media outlets. Violation of this requirement is punishable by a fine.⁵²

Russian President Vladimir Putin has supported a switchover to one-year budget planning. He added that 'given how difficult it is to determine the way global markets will behave under the current conditions in the future, it is important to shift to one year budget.'⁵³

The Russian Finance Ministry has stated that Russia's Reserve Fund grew by 9.2 per cent in August to touch 4.7 trillion roubles (US\$ 69.4 billion) as of September 1, 2015. The National

⁴⁸ "Some 80 Agreements Totalling A,3 Trillion Roubles Signed at EEF 2015 — Trutnev", *Itar-Tass*, September 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/819048>

⁴⁹ "Russia Can Deny Access To Subsoil Assets Of Black Sea And Sea Of Azov — Decree", *Itar-Tass*, September 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/817810>

⁵⁰ "Russians' Real Incomes May Decrease by 4-5% in 2015", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819000>

⁵¹ "Falling Rouble Triggers Guest Worker Exodus From Russia — Business Ombudsman", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818887>

⁵² "Human Rights Organization Fined \$9,000 For Violating Russia's Law on NGOs", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818903>

⁵³ "Putin Agrees With Cabinet On Switchover To One-Year Budget", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818744>

Welfare Fund also witnessed an increase of 11.5 per cent in August to touch 4.904 trillion roubles (US\$ 72.5 billion).⁵⁴

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said that the Russian army held 79 military exercises in August and is now preparing for the Center-2015 strategic command and staff exercises.⁵⁵

Russia's state oil company Rosneft is 'ready for constructive cooperation with Lukoil, but if that oil major continues its destructive activities related to unfair competition, the company will take necessary steps to protect the interests of shareholders using all legal instruments'. This has been Rosneft's statement on the dispute with Lukoil on the Vostochno-Taimyrskoye area. Earlier, Lukoil-West Siberia, the subsidiary of Lukoil had won the tender for the development of the Vostochno-Taimyrsky oil and gas field. Rosneft in turn filed a claim to Moscow Arbitration to invalidate the result of the tender on the ground of major violations. Vostochno-Taimyrsky subsoil area is situated in Krasnoyarsk Region near the Khatanga river mouth. The area was split into the onshore and the offshore portions, making it possible for Lukoil to bid for the onshore portion. Resources of the onshore area equal 4.5 million tonnes of oil, 9.3 billion cubic meters of gas and 0.5 million tonnes of condensate.⁵⁶

Russia: International

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Putin attends China's Victory Day celebrations; Putin says China ready to invest US\$ 18 billion in Russia's oil refinery and infrastructure projects; Russian Defence Minister says military cooperation with China contributes to global stability; Russia and China to set up an economic development alliance; Putin and Chinese Deputy Prime Minister hope Russia and China work 'fruitfully' in the Russian Far East; Rosneft signs deal of intent to supply liquefied hydrocarbon gas and propylene to China; Putin stresses upon strategic importance of boosting ties with Asia-Pacific Region; Russian and US Foreign Ministers discuss developments in Syria; Russia continues military-technical cooperation with Syria; Lavrov says Assad continues to be the legitimate leader of Syria.**

President Putin has attended China's Victory Day celebrations that were held in Beijing on September 3. The two leaders have also signed a number of agreements. This includes agreements on a) the construction and operation of a ropeway across the Amur River between Blagoveshchensk in the Russian Far East and China's Heihe region; b) guidelines for the work of the Russian-Chinese Committee of Friendship, Peace and Development; c) the mutual allocation of land sites for the accommodation of the general consulate of Russia in Shanghai

⁵⁴ "Russia's Reserve Fund Grows By 9.2% In August To About \$69.4 bln", *Itar-Tass*, September 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818286>

⁵⁵ "Total of 79 Military Drills Held By Russia's Armed Forces In August — Defense Minister", *Itar-Tass*, August 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/817490>

⁵⁶ "Russia's Rosneft Oil Giant Is Ready To Sue Lukoil Oil Company — Statement", *Itar-Tass*, August 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/817617>

and China's general consulate in St. Petersburg. Other agreements signed include a) memorandum between Vnesheconombank - the Russian Export Centre and the people's government of the Guangdong province and Sinotrans Guangdong b) agreement between the Russian Direct Investment Fund, Vnesheconombank and the Chinese Silk Road Fund on cooperation in investment in the priority sectors of Russia's and China's economies. An agreement was also signed between the Russian Railways company and China Yingkou Port Group on cooperation for the 'practical implementation of the intentions' to link the initiatives of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt projects. Meanwhile, President Putin has said that despite economic problems in both Russia and China, all large scale bilateral projects will be implemented in the future.⁵⁷

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, in an interview held on September 1, that Chinese companies are ready to invest more than 100 billion roubles (US\$ 18 billion under the current exchange rate) in different projects in Siberia and the Far East. This includes construction of an oil refinery and a clinker plant in Amur Region, Nizhneleninskoye-Tongjiang and Blagoveshchensk-Heihe bridges, and a metallurgical plant and a brick factory in Yakutia.⁵⁸

Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said, during his meeting with the Vice-Chairman of China's Central Military Commission in -Fan Changlong, held in Beijing on September 2, that the 'Russian-Chinese military cooperation is a basis for the strategic bilateral ties that helps to stabilize the global situation'. He added that the 'consolidated position of the two countries has a stabilizing impact on the international situation' and their joint military drills are 'the most significant aspect' of their military cooperation.⁵⁹

Moscow and Beijing have signed a memorandum of understanding to set up a Russian-Chinese economic alliance aimed at fostering cooperation on Beijing's Silk Road East-West trading route. The document was signed on September 4 during the side-lines of the Second Beijing International Economic Forum BIEF-2015 that took place in Beijing during President Vladimir Putin's visit to the country. During the forum, Russian companies and organisations presented more than 30 investments projects.⁶⁰

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has expressed hope that Chinese investments will step up their investments in Russia's Far East. During a meeting with China's Deputy Prime Minister Wang Yang, held on the side-lines of the Eastern Economic Forum on September 4, Putin

⁵⁷ "Russia, China Sign A Package Of Joint Documents", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818524>

⁵⁸ "China Ready To Invest \$18bln In Oil Refinery, 3 Plants In Siberia, Other Projects — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/817889>

⁵⁹ "Russia-China Military Cooperation Contributes To Global Stability — Defence Minister", *Itar-Tass*, September 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818087>

⁶⁰ "Russia, China to Set Up Economic Development Alliance", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818853>

stated that he held constructive dialogue with Mr. Yang on how the two countries can implement the projects in the Far East.⁶¹

Rosneft, Avestra Chemical SA and Manzhouli Far East Gas Co. Ltd have signed a trilateral cooperation agreement of intent for the supply of propylene and various types of liquefied hydrocarbon gases (LHG) to China. According to the document, the long-term supply of LHG and propylene produced by Rosneft in the range of 60,000 to 200,000 tonnes per year is being discussed apart from using terminals of Far East Gas for trans-shipment of the petroleum products. Harbin Railways, Petro China and Avestra are the shareholders of the Far East Gas company. The total planned capacity of the terminal is up to 3 million tonnes of LHG and propylene per year.⁶²

President Vladimir Putin has stressed upon the important role of strengthening Russia's ties with the Asia-Pacific region and termed the region a driving force in world economic growth. He added that Russia has 'huge resources and is capable of ensuring enhanced growth of the region's economy. Creation of a so-called energy bridge is one of the key tasks for Russia and the Asia-Pacific Region countries. The Eurasian integration opens new possibilities for the mutually beneficial cooperation in trade and cooperation of the Asia-Pacific Region'.⁶³

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry had a telephone conversation on September 5. They discussed 'various aspects of the Syrian crisis, fight against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups and the UN efforts aimed at promoting a political process in Syria in line with provisions of the Geneva communique of June 30, 2012'.⁶⁴

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, on September 3, that Russia continues to support the military-technical cooperation with Syria. Earlier, he had refuted media reports about possible participation of Russian armed forces in airstrikes against the Islamic State (IS) terrorist organization.⁶⁵

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Syrian President Bashar Assad continues to be the legitimate leader of the country despite the claims of Western politicians. He added that

⁶¹ "Putin, Chinese Deputy PM Hope Russia and China Work Fruitfully in Far East", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818811>

⁶² "Rosneft Signs Deal Of Intent To Supply Liquefied Hydrocarbon Gas, Propylene to China", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818711>

⁶³ "Putin Stresses Strategic Importance Of Boosting Ties with Asia-Pacific Region", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818765>

⁶⁴ "Lavrov, Kerry Discuss Syria By Phone", *Itar-Tass*, September 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819081>

⁶⁵ "Russia Continues Military-Technical Cooperation With Syria — Kremlin Spokesman", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818552>

the demand for Assad's resignation as a precondition for the struggle against terrorism is completely unrealistic and counterproductive.⁶⁶

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Lavrov and Syrian opposition discuss Putin's anti-terror initiative; Russia and Egypt to cooperate in the creation of nuclear free zone in the Middle East; Russian and Tajik Presidents discuss armed attacks in Dushanbe; Abkhazia and Venezuela explore visa-free travel; Russia and Venezuela may coordinate efforts to encourage rise in oil prices; Russia's Foreign Ministry notes the reduction in ceasefire violations in Donbas; Putin says Kiev not implementing conditions of political settlement; Ukraine's security council adopts draft new military doctrine calling Russia 'aggressor'; Japan's JBIC to provide US\$ 800 million loan for Russia's port infrastructure; Russian and US diplomats discuss steps to implement the Iranian nuclear deal; US sanctions Russian arms export agency for non-proliferation violation; Russia takes over UN Security Council presidency.**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has met with the general coordinator of the Executive Office of the Syrian National Coordination Committee for the Forces of Democratic Change (NCC) Hasan Abdel Azim; representatives of the leadership of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation and the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union as well as members of the Assyrian community, in Moscow on August 31. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that 'the sides considered concrete steps in the interests of unifying the Syrian opposition on a constructive basis for the purpose of working out the general platform for a meaningful dialogue with the Syrian government'. Lavrov, in turn, told the Syrian opposition members about Russia's efforts to implement the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin to form a broad anti-terror coalition that will unite the Syrian and Iraqi armies, detachments of moderate Syrian opposition, the Kurdish volunteer forces and the main regional and international players involved in the Syrian conflict in the interests of joint counteraction to the growing terrorist threat. The representatives of Syrian opposition also held consultations with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov who is also the Russian President's special representative for the Middle East and Africa.⁶⁷

Russia and Egypt have 'pledged to cooperate in their efforts' to create a nuclear free weapons zone and other WMD in the Middle East. This was stated by Russian Foreign Ministry after talks, held in Moscow on September 4, with an Egyptian delegation led by Egypt's Deputy Foreign Minister Hisham Badr. The agenda included 'a wide range of non-proliferation and arms control issues'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "Lavrov: Assad is Legitimate Leader Despite West's Claims", *Itar-Tass*, September 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/817774>

⁶⁷ "Lavrov and Syrian Opposition Discuss Putin's Anti-Terror Initiative — Russian ForMin", *Itar-Tass*, August 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/817687>

⁶⁸ "Russia and Egypt To Cooperate In Creation Of Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819012>

Russian President Vladimir Putin had a telephone conversation with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rakhmon on September 5 wherein they discussed the recent armed attacks in Tajikistan. On September 4, armed groups had attacked Tajikistan's two defence facilities - the Defence Ministry's central apparatus and a police station in the town of Vakhdat that lies around 10 kms east of Dushanbe. The country's Interior Ministry has said that its law enforcement agencies are carrying out joint operations against the gang of former Deputy Defence Minister Abdulakhim Nazarzoda who has been holding up in the Ramit mountain gorge. Mr. Nazarzoda was a field commander of the Tajik armed opposition during the civil war of the 1990's. Post the peace deal of 1997, Mr. Nazarzoda was commissioned to the Tajik army under the programme of reintegration of former opposition gunmen. In 2014, he was promoted to the rank of Major General and appointed deputy defence minister. Meanwhile, President Putin has viewed these developments as an attempt to destabilise the situation in Tajikistan and assured the Tajik government of Russia's support. He will also hold a separate meeting with Mr. Rakhmon during the side-lines of the CSTO summit due to be held in Dushanbe later in September.⁶⁹

Abkhazia's 'Foreign Minister' Vyacheslav Chirikba has said, on September 3, that steps have been initiated to sign a visa free travel agreement with Venezuela. He added that the proposed agreement 'is similar to the one signed between Abkhazia and South Ossetia - on visa-free travel for citizens'. Venezuela recognises the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁷⁰

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, on September 3, that Russia and Venezuela may coordinate efforts to 'encourage the upward dynamics of oil prices'. During the talks held between President Putin and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in Beijing on September 3, the two countries noted that 'unstable oil prices were not in their interests and they should certainly take action in terms of coordination to encourage upward dynamics in oil prices'.⁷¹

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova has said, on September 3, that Moscow has 'noted with satisfaction the systematic decline in the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas'.⁷²

President Vladimir Putin has said, on September 4, that the four key conditions of political settlement in Ukraine are not being implemented by Kiev, while the proposed changes are of a purely declarative nature. The four conditions are - amendments to the Constitution be

⁶⁹ "Putin and Rakhmon Have Agreed To Hold A Separate Meeting at the CSTO Summit", *Itar-Tass*, September 5, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819076>

⁷⁰ "Abkhazia, Venezuela Eye Visa-Free Travel — Foreign Minister", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/818484>

⁷¹ "Russia, Venezuela May Coordinate Efforts To Encourage Rise In Oil Prices — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818565>

⁷² "Russia Notes Reduction In Number Of Ceasefire Violations in Donbas — Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/818577>

coordinated with Donbas; law on elections to local self-government bodies be coordinated with Donbass; law on amnesty be adopted; and law on a special status of these territories be enacted.⁷³

Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council has adopted a draft of a new state military doctrine on September 2. According to Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, 'the draft of the military doctrine for the first time in the history of Ukraine's independence defines the enemy and aggressor, which Russia is'. He added that 'after consideration by Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, the document is to be approved by the Ukrainian president's decree'.⁷⁴

Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) will provide a credit line worth US\$ 700-800 million for the infrastructure development of Russian ports of Nakhodka and Vostochniy. This was stated by the Senior Managing Director of JBIC Tadashi Maeda on September 3 during the side-line of the Eastern Economic Forum held in Vladivostok.⁷⁵

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has met with the US deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Moscow Lynne Tracy on September 3 wherein they discussed the steps needed to be taken for implementing the Iranian nuclear deal. They also discussed 'a number of current issues of Russian-US relations'.⁷⁶

The United States has imposed sanctions on Russia's state arms export agency and four defence industry enterprises for alleged violations of international arms control regimes restricting export of nuclear and missile technologies to Iran, North Korea and Syria. The Russian Foreign Ministry in a statement criticised the U.S. move as the latest example of Washington's desire 'to punish us for the rigorous pursuit of national interests, and for the free choice of the inhabitants of Crimea and Sevastopol'. It also accused the U.S. of systematically destroying all possible avenues for normalizing U.S.-Russian relations in the future. The Russian defence industry firms that were involved in the alleged violations are fighter jet manufacturer MiG, high-precision weapons maker Instrument Design Bureau (KBP) Tula, NPO Mashinostroyeniya — a rocket and missile design bureau and Katod in Novosibirsk, which makes night-vision optics, among other things. The sanctions prevent any

⁷³ "Kiev Does Not Implement Conditions Of Political Settlement — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/818750>

⁷⁴ "Ukraine's Security Council Adopts Draft New Military Doctrine Calling Russia "Aggressor"", *Itar-Tass*, September 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/818318>

⁷⁵ "Japan's JBIC Will Provide Loans Of Up To \$800 Million For Russian Ports' Infrastructure", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818583>

⁷⁶ "Russian, US Diplomats Discuss Steps To Implement Iran Nuclear Deal", *Itar-Tass*, September 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/818601>

U.S. companies or government agencies from doing business with the sanctioned Russian arms entities.⁷⁷

Russia has, on September 1, assumed the one-month rotational presidency of the United Nations Security Council. Russia's presidency in the key UN body coincides with the 70th session of the General Assembly.⁷⁸

Russia-India Relations

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Rosneft sells 15 per cent in Vankorneft to ONGC.**

Rosneft has sold a 15 per cent stake in Vankorneft to ONGC. Under the terms of the agreement, after the deal is closed ONGC will be presented with two seats on the Board of Directors of Vankorneft, while Rosneft will retain full control of infrastructure of the Vankor cluster. The deal is worth US\$ 1.25 billion. Vankorneft was established in 2004 to develop the Vankor oil and gas field. This was a major Russian deposit discovered in the last 25 years. The Vankor deposit, located 142 km from the town of Igarka in the north of East Siberia, had recoverable reserves of 500 million tonnes of oil and condensate and 182 billion cubic meters of natural gas as of January 1, 2014. The Vankor cluster consists of 23 license areas located in the Krasnoyarsk region and partly in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District.⁷⁹

D. Central Asia

Kazakhstan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Kazakh President Nazarbayev visits China and signs deals worth US\$ 23 billion; IMF welcomes structural reforms in Kazakhstan; Kazakhstan and Pakistan sign a number of agreements; IAEA and Kazakhstan agree to create a nuclear fuel bank in Kazakhstan.**

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev held bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and representatives of political and business circles during an August 30-September 1 state visit to Beijing. He also participated in parade dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Allied victory in the Asia Pacific theatre during World War II. On August 31, Nazarbayev and Xi signed the joint declaration on a new stage of comprehensive strategic cooperation, and witnessed the signing of 11 bilateral intergovernmental and commercial agreements. The total

⁷⁷ "U.S. Sanctions Russian Arms Export Agency for Non-Proliferation Violation", *The Moscow Times*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/us-sanctions-russian-arms-export-agency-for-non-proliferation-violation/529292.html>

⁷⁸ "Russia Takes Over UN Security Council Presidency", *Itar-Tass*, September 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/817768>

⁷⁹ "Russia's Rosneft sells 15% in Vankorneft to India's ONGC", *Itar-Tass*, September 4, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/818658>

cost of the 45 joint projects approved during visit can reach US\$ 23 billion. The largest projects are dedicated to expanding production at the Pavlodar Aluminium Plant and constructing a factory to produce machinery and equipment for the petroleum industry in the Mangystau Oblast in West Kazakhstan. It was also stated that CNPC plans to build a plant for the production of large-diameter pipes for the oil and gas industry of Kazakhstan. In addition, CNPC intends to construct the high school of choreography in Astana.⁸⁰

The Director of IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department, Masood Ahmed has paid a visit to Kazakhstan during September 2-4 wherein he met with Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov, National Bank Governor Kelimbetov and other senior officials. They exchanged views on the impacts of lower oil prices, the slowdown in Russia and China, and spill overs from volatility in global financial markets, as well as focused on how to improve growth prospects over the near and medium term and the policy response needed to withstand future shocks. IMF has welcomed the recent action by the National Bank to float the Tenge and appreciated Kazakhstan's decision to put in place the policies needed to ensure macroeconomic and financial stability.⁸¹

The governments of Kazakhstan and Pakistan have signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) on investment and trade, defence, strategic studies and training of foreign services during Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's two-day trip to Astana during August 25-26. Mr. Sharif also held a meeting with Kazakh Prime Minister, Karim Massimov and Foreign Minister, Yerlan Idrissov. Transit was a topic of discussion in all meetings. In his discussions with Sharif, Nazarbayev commented that Kazakhstan's Nurly Zhol economic programme, China's New Silk Road Economic Belt initiative and the Karakoram road that connects Pakistan and China will enhance cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, and the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway will now link landlocked Kazakhstan with Pakistan's seaports.⁸²

Kazakhstan and IAEA have, on August 27, signed an agreement to set up a low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel 'bank' in Kazakhstan. Operated by Kazakhstan and expected to start operations in 2017, the IAEA LEU Bank will be a physical reserve of LEU – the basic ingredient of nuclear fuel – and act as a supplier of last resort for the agency's Member States in case they cannot obtain LEU on the global commercial market or otherwise.⁸³

⁸⁰ "Nazarbayev's State Visit to China Results in Deals Worth \$23 Billion", *The Astana Times*, September 3, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/09/nazarbayevs-state-visit-to-china-results-in-deals-worth-23-billion/>

⁸¹ "IMF Welcomes Bold Structural Reforms in Kazakhstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15721-imf-welcomes-bold-structural-reforms-in-kazakhstan>

⁸² "Kazakhstan, Pakistan Sign Investment, Defence and Diplomatic Training Agreements during Sharif's Visit", *The Astana Times*, August 28, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/08/kazakhstan-pakistan-sign-investment-defence-and-diplomatic-training-agreements-during-sharifs-visit/>

⁸³ "IAEA and Kazakhstan Agree To Create Nuclear Fuel Bank", *KZ Newslines*, August 31, 2015 at <http://kznewsline.com/iaea-and-kazakhstan-agree-to-create-nuclear-fuel-bank/>

Kyrgyzstan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Iran to help build hydro power plants in Kyrgyzstan; Kyrgyzstan and China adopt cooperation programme for 2015-2025; Kyrgyzstan inaugurates China financed power line; OSCE helps to set up early warning and border conflict prevention groups in Kyrgyzstan; Deputy Foreign Minister of Qatar visits Bishkek; Kyrgyz President meets Gazprom chief; Election campaign kicks off in Kyrgyzstan.**

Kyrgyzstan and Iran have agreed to cooperate in construction of large hydro power plants in Kyrgyzstan during Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev's official visit to Tehran on September 5. The two leaders also discussed the project to build the China-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran railroad. President Rouhani also emphasized the importance of building rail and motor roads and said Iran is ready to give Kyrgyzstan access to Iranian seaports. President Atambayev said that Kyrgyzstan supports Iran's intention to raise its status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He added that Iran's full membership of the SCO would help to strengthen the common economic potential of its member states and contribute to the organization's development.⁸⁴

Kyrgyzstan has, on August 28, inaugurated a Chinese-financed power line. The 450-kilometer Datka-Kemin power line is expected to save Kyrgyzstan millions in transit fees, as its electricity will no longer pass through neighbouring Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The US\$ 390 million deal to build the power line was struck with the Chinese Tebian Electric Apparatus Stock Company (TBEA) in 2010.⁸⁵

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev, during his visit to Beijing to participate in China's Victory Day celebrations, has met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Following the meeting, 3 documents were signed and 1 programme was adopted. This includes the programme of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and China during 2015-2025. The sides also signed a border cooperation programme to bolster contacts between border regions of Kyrgyzstan and China, and an intergovernmental agreement on technological and economic cooperation envisaging a gratis grant. Head of the Kyrgyz presidential administration's foreign policy department Sapar Isakov had said that the grant would amount to 350 million yuans and be spent on the renovation of roads in Bishkek. The money will be given to Kyrgyzstan at the request of President Atambayev as part of a larger grant of one billion yuans the republic is set to receive within three years. The entire grant will be spent on repairs and construction of roads in

⁸⁴ "Iran to Help Build Hydro Power Plants in Kyrgyzstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15718-iran-to-help-build-hydro-power-plants-in-kyrgyzstan>

⁸⁵ "Kyrgyzstan Hails 'Historic' China-Financed Power Line", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-hails-historic-china-financed-power-line/27214119.html>

Bishkek. The foreign ministries of Kyrgyzstan and China have also signed a cooperation agreement.⁸⁶

The OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Kyrgyz State Border Service Border have jointly opened early warning groups for conflict prevention in the border cities of Talas, northern Kyrgyzstan, and the city of Osh, in the south of the country. The setting up of the groups is aimed at developing mechanisms for interaction of the Kyrgyz border officers with the local communities to improve exchange of information. The groups will consist of representatives of the local government, law enforcement agencies and residents. They will be led by the Kyrgyz State Border Service. The launch of the groups is part of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek project "Enhancing the ability of the Kyrgyz Government to engage in regional cooperation in border security and management" aimed at strengthening of inter-agency co-operation. The Centre in Bishkek has been developing the early warning system in Kyrgyzstan since 2012.⁸⁷

A delegation from Qatar headed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdurahman Al-Thani visited Kyrgyzstan during September 3-4. The two sides discussed the implementation of agreements at the highest level, as well as issues of political-diplomatic, trade-economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. In particular, they discussed the organization of mutual exchanges at the highest levels, the state of the legal framework and ways to improve the mechanism of interaction at intergovernmental level. They also focused on investment cooperation. The officials, including representatives from the ministries of energy, agriculture and municipality as well as the country's mining company, the government commission on mining and the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, presented areas that Qatar can invest in, particularly in the fields of agriculture, mining and energy.⁸⁸

Chairman of Gazprom Alexey Miller has met with President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev in Bishkek on September 1. During the meeting they discussed the company's activities for the development of gas distribution system in the country and reconstruction of gas supply, gasification of regions and construction of main gas pipelines. Mr. Miller spoke about the implementation of all obligations by the company, including the beginning of the final section of the second phase of gas pipeline on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, which will be completed in 2016 and thereby increase the possibility of gas supply to the north of the country. They also paid attention to the implementation of socially-oriented programmes of Gazprom in Kyrgyzstan.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ "China, Kyrgyzstan Sign Programme Of Cooperation Till 2025", *Interfax*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?y=2&id=615524>

⁸⁷ "OSCE Helps To Set Up Early Warning And Border Conflict Prevention Groups in Kyrgyzstan", *OSCE*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/179136>

⁸⁸ "Qatari Delegation Visited Kyrgyzstan", *Kabar*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/13820>

⁸⁹ "Atambayev and Miller Discuss Activities Of Gazprom For Development On Gas Distribution System of the KR", *Kabar*, September 1, 2015 at <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/economics/full/13766>

Kyrgyzstan has, on September 4, officially kicked off the parliamentary election campaign with 14 political parties to contest 120 seats in the Jogorku Kenesh. The Central Election Commission has said that under Kyrgyz law campaigning can officially begin exactly one month before the October 4 vote. The commission said 34 political parties in total have applied to run but that two dozen parties didn't meet the requirements, which include the payment of about \$77,000 for an election registration fee.⁹⁰

Uzbekistan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Karimov rules out foreign military bases in Uzbekistan; Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan discuss border demarcation; Karimov participates in China's victory day parade.**

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has said that no foreign military bases will be allowed to set up in Uzbekistan. He added that Uzbek military will not get involved in any type of military operations abroad. Karimov's statement was made a few days after the United States said it had asked Tashkent to join the multinational coalition against the Islamic State group.⁹¹

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan officials have held a regular meeting of the Joint Uzbek-Kazakh demarcation commission in Shymkent (Kazakhstan) during 24-28, August 2015. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, the sides continued to prepare the final documents on demarcation of the Uzbek-Kazakh state border. The talks were held in a spirit of good-neighbourliness and mutual interests.⁹²

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on August 3. During discussions, President Xi said that China and Uzbekistan will push the two countries' strategic partnership and promote an all-round cooperation in various fields, to benefit peoples of the two countries and make active contributions to the regional development and stability. He added that China appreciates Uzbek support on building the Silk Road Economic Belt and would like to strengthen the cooperation in the fields of transportation and infrastructure and expanding trade and investment in Uzbekistan. President Xi also urged the two countries to strengthen their cooperation in security matters.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Election Campaign Kicks Off In Kyrgyzstan", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-election-campaign/27227520.html>

⁹¹ "Karimov Says No Foreign Military Bases In Uzbekistan", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, September 1, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/uzbekistan-karimov-no-foreign-bases/27220352.html>

⁹² "Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan Discuss Border Demarcation", *UzDaily*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-33434.htm>

⁹³ "China-Xi/Uzbek President", *CCTV News Content*, September 3, 2015 at <http://newscontent.cctv.com/NewJsp/news.jsp?fileId=314154>

Tajikistan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Tajik and Chinese central banks sign currency swap deal; Tajik Islamic Party banned and given deadline to stop activities; Tajikistan says attacks on police staged by Islamic State sympathisers; Tajik President visits China; Tajik Foreign Minister meets with President of Afghanistan.**

The central bank of Tajikistan has, on September 6, signed a currency swap agreement worth approx. 3.2 billion yuan (US\$ 500 million) with the central bank of China. The document is valid for three years and can be extended upon mutual agreement. The agreement aims to support the balance of international payments, the exchange rate of the Tajik national currency, the country's energy, agrarian and mining sectors, and development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Tajikistan.⁹⁴

The Tajik Justice Ministry has, on August 28, banned the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and given the only officially registered Islamic party in the former Soviet Union 10 days to halt all activities. According to a statement issued by the ministry, the Islamic Renaissance Party cannot legally continue its activities because the Justice Ministry says the party does not have enough members to qualify as an officially registered party. The ministry said that all the party's branches in 58 cities and districts across Tajikistan have been closed. The statement adds that the IRPT will not be able to hold a scheduled party congress and that a temporary headquarters set up in a private home in Dushanbe was illegal. IRPT was the only officially registered Islamic party in the former Soviet Union, and was represented in the Tajik parliament for 15 years until it failed to meet the threshold for parliamentary representation during elections held in March 2015.⁹⁵

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon has said that the September 4 attacks on police had been staged by militants sympathetic towards the Islamic State and their aim is to undermine his rule. Earlier, nine policemen were killed in gun attacks in Dushanbe and the nearby city of Vahdat. According to the police, the insurgents, led by a sacked deputy defence minister, General Abdukhalim Nazarzoda, then fled to a gorge where they were surrounded by security forces. During a two-day operation 17 rebels were killed, including four insurgents. The attacks came amid rising tension between Rakhmon's government and the Islamist opposition. More than 500 Tajiks have joined Islamic State fighters, according to police estimates. Rakhmon said nearly 50 came from Vahdat and 11 had been killed in Syria and Iraq.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ "Tajikistan and China Central Banks Sign Currency Swap Deal", *The Times of Central Asia*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15719-tajikistan-and-china-central-banks-sign-currency-swap-deal>

⁹⁵ "Tajik Islamic Party Banned, Given Deadline To Stop Activities", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, September 1, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik-islamic-party-banned/27213877.html>

⁹⁶ "Tajik Leader Says Attacks On Police Staged By Islamic State Sympathizers: Media", *Reuters*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/06/us-tajikistan-violence-idUSKCN0R60HI20150906>

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon has visited China on September 2 wherein he participated in events marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Chinese President Xi, during talks with his Tajik counterpart, stated that will China will encourage domestic firms to help Tajikistan develop the economy and support financial cooperation between the two sides. He added that China would like to push forward cooperation regarding the Silk Road Economic Belt in line with Tajikistan's energy, transport and grain strategies. The two leaders witnessed the signing of agreements concerning the economy, technology and cultural exchange. This includes an agreement between the Amonatbank State Savings Bank of Tajikistan and China Development Bank, and an agreement on cooperation between Tajikistan's Khatlon province and Henan Province of China for the construction of an agro-industrial complex.⁹⁷

Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Aslov has met with Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani in Kabul on September 5 within the framework of the Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VI). The key issues discussed include the steps needed to improve cooperation in the field of construction of railways and roads, training of Afghan specialists in educational institutions of Tajikistan, and strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in the fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking.⁹⁸

Turkmenistan

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Engineering works start on Turkmen segment of TAPI gas pipeline; Turkmen President gives instructions to reduce the number of officials at the government level.**

Specialists from the Institute of Oil and Gas under Turkmengaz have, on September 4, started engineering survey of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. They will hold technical and geological examination of the 215-meter territory in the southeast of the country — from Galkanysh deposit to the border with Afghanistan. The exercise is expected to be completed by early December.⁹⁹

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov has spoken about the need to reduce the number of officials at the government level. He said that the government structure should be flexible and effective while the current structure is unnecessarily big and therefore affects work of all agencies. He referred to the agricultural sector as an example of how the government should work and said that at present more than 90 per cent of agricultural farms

⁹⁷ "Xi Meets Tajikistan President", *China Daily*, September 2, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/02/content_21780697.htm

⁹⁸ "Minister of Foreign Affairs Meets with President of Afghanistan", *Khovar*, September 5, 2015 at <http://www.khovar.tj/eng/content/minister-foreign-affairs-meets-president-afghanistan>

⁹⁹ "Engineering Works Start On Turkmen Segment of TAPI Gas Pipeline", *AKIpress*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.akipress.com/news:564599/>

operate under market economy. The Turkmen President has instructed officials to prepare proposals on reducing unnecessary administrative structures and submit them for his consideration by October 1.¹⁰⁰

E. West Asia

Iran

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **N. Korea seeks to boost trade with Iran; Chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran says world powers have agreed to immediately lift all sanctions on Iran as part of the deal on the country's nuclear programme; Democratic Sen. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland announces support for the Iran nuclear deal; Resistance forced U.S. to accept Iran's nuclear rights: Larijani.**

North Korea is seeking to expand cooperation with Iran in oil, agriculture, and fishery sectors, said the North Korean ambassador to Iran Kang Sam Hyon. Although North Korea is under sanctions and is grappling with various economic challenges, but the country is doing its best to overcome obstacles and to expand its trading ties with Iran.¹⁰¹

Speaking in an interview with the Chinese Central Television, *CCTV*, Ali Akbar Salehi said depending on an approval from the Iranian Parliament, Iran might allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to visit non-nuclear sites under some conditions. But he emphasized that Iran will guard its national interests and will hold to its remaining red lines.¹⁰²

The announcement means that at least 34 senators -- the number required by the Constitution to sustain a veto -- will back Obama's expected veto of a Republican resolution to disapprove of the deal. Mikulski is retiring at the end of her term. While majorities of both the GOP-controlled House and Senate are poised to vote against the agreement, supporters of the multinational accord that aims to curb Iran's nuclear programme are also hoping to get the 41 votes needed to filibuster the bill and prevent it from even getting to a final vote in the Senate.¹⁰³

The speaker of Iran's parliament says Tehran's resistance during nuclear talks left no way for Washington but to accept Iran's legitimate rights to nuclear technology. "The Americans

¹⁰⁰ "Berdymukhamedov Criticizes Work Of Ministries And Instructs To Reduce Number Of Officials", *AKIpress*, September 7, 2015 at <http://www.akipress.com/news:564669/>

¹⁰¹ "N. Korea Seeking To Boost Trade with Iran: Envoy", *Tehran Times*, 31 August 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249039. Accessed on 18 September 2015

¹⁰² "Salehi: 5+1 Accepts Single-Stage Sanctions Relief", *Tehran Times*, 31 August 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249048.

¹⁰³ "Obama Secures Iran Nuclear Deal", *Tehran Times*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249136. Accessed on September 18, 2015

continued to bully us even during the negotiations, but ultimately and thank God, the Islamic Republic of Iran managed to fulfil some of its demands and to put several things in the deal which are in our favour," Ali Larijani said in an interview with *CNN*.¹⁰⁴

Syria

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Syria holds Turkey responsible for every terror crime in al-Fo'a and Kafraya towns in Idleb; Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi discusses with Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister Amir Abdullahian the importance of Iranian-Syrian cooperation.**

In a letter sent by Foreign and Expatriates Ministry to the United Nations Security Council, Syria condemned the silence of the UNSC towards the crimes being perpetrated against the people of al-Fo'a and Kafraya towns, which are besieged by armed terrorist organizations. The ministry clarified that the terrorist organizations, which are supported by the Saudi and Qatari governments and the Turkish leadership, daily fire rockets on the two besieged towns and kill many people, most of them are children, women and elderly. It called on the UNSC to implement the relevant resolution on counterterrorism and to adopt immediate measures against Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey to stop supporting terrorist organizations in Syria.¹⁰⁵

During the meeting, al-Halqi appreciated Iran, as government and people, for its support to the Syrian people that eases the impacts of war and unfair economic siege through boosting constituents of service and livelihood affairs.¹⁰⁶

Israel and Palestine

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Mahmoud Abbas could soon step down as Palestinian president; Recent JMCC poll reveals the leader holds just 16 percent public support.**

According to a poll carried out by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC) in August 2015, despite the low support rate, a continued decline in trust for the government and political leaders fails to surface any viable contenders for a potential successor.

¹⁰⁴ "Resistance Forced U.S. to Accept Iran's Nuclear Rights: Larijani", *Tehran Times*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249130. Accessed on September 18, 2015

¹⁰⁵ "syria Holds Turkey Responsible For Every Terror Crime In Al-Fo'a And Kafraya Towns in Idleb", *Syria Times*, September 1, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/19408-syria-holds-turkey-responsible-for-every-terror-crime-in-al-fo-a-and-kafraya-towns-in-idleb>. Accessed on September 18, 2015

¹⁰⁶ "Al-Halqi Discusses With Abdullahian Means To Boost Cooperation, Iranian Ideas To Solve Crisis in Syria", *Syria Times*, September 2, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/19441-al-halqi-discusses-with-abdullahian-means-to-boost-cooperation-iranian-ideas-to-solve-crisis-in-syria>. Accessed on September 18, 2015

Imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti was the strongest contender for presidential elections, holding 10.5 percent of the vote. Ismail Haniyeh, PM of the Hamas-run government in the Gaza Strip, trailed close behind Barghouti gaining 9.8 percent support.

Deposed Fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan was supported by 5.1 percent, and an additional 3.3 percent said they would elect head peace process negotiator Saeb Erekat, the JMCC poll reported. The apparent absence of a popular successor is underlined by the largest proportion of the poll — the 33.6 percent of Palestinians who said they did not know who they would vote for if new elections were to take place. The JMCC poll results also revealed that there is “no sympathy for or any noteworthy presence of ISIS or Salafist movements in the Palestinian territories,” with 3.8 percent of participants saying they were sympathetic to the movements. When asked the question: “How would you define yourself- only in one word- in terms of particular affiliation?”, the majority — 32.4 percent — answered Palestinian, 16.8 percent said Muslim, 6.8 percent said Fatah, and 2.7 percent answered Hamas.¹⁰⁷

F. The United State of America

National

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Unemployment rate fell to the lowest level since 2008; Defence Department assessment team surveys for Guantanamo prisoner transfer; Defence secretary Carter speaks on strategy to meet future challenges; Anti-establishment candidates popular in 2016 presidential race; Trump stumbles on a few international affairs issues.**

According to report, the U.S. unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in 7 1/2 years in August but job growth fell short of expectations, offering mixed signals about the economy. The US Labour Department released a report on September 4 which shows a jobless rate of 5.1 percent, down two-tenths of a percent from the previous month, meaning roughly 8 million people seeking work remain unemployed. The report also says the U.S. economy had a net gain of 173,000 jobs, which is less than most economists had predicted.¹⁰⁸

Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis told reporters on September 4 that a Defence Department assessment team is surveying Joint Base Charleston’s Navy Consolidated Brig in South Carolina as a potential prison to house detainees after the wartime prison at Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, closes. As directed by Defence Secretary Ash Carter, the assessment team is working with prison staffs to determine the costs of housing detainees, in addition to assessing the facilities for force protection, troop housing, security, transportation,

¹⁰⁷ “Poll: Abbas Holds 16 Percent Support Rate among Palestinian Public”, *Palestine Chronicles*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/poll-abbas-holds-16-percent-support-rate-among-palestinian-pubic/>. Accessed on September 18, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ “US Unemployment Rate Lowest Since 2008”, *VOA News*, September 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-unemployment-rate-is-lowest-since-2008/2947017.html>

information security, contracting and other operational issues. In an August 20 briefing with reporters, Carter said he directed assessment teams to perform the facility surveys so that DoD, the White House and Congress can “chart a responsible way forward and a plan, so that we can close the detention facility at Guantanamo and close this chapter in our history once and for all.”¹⁰⁹

Addressing some 5,000 delegates at the 97th American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, defence secretary Carter said that the desire to defend those who defend the nation shaped his commitments to the force, a national security strategy that meets this century’s needs and plans for the force of the future where innovation and technology are pillars of American strength. Carter said in the next few years, about 1.5 million veterans from the 9/11 generation will join the 2.5 million people who have already left the military. He added, every strategic decision should be a step to keep the nation safe and protect its allies and friends now and in the future.¹¹⁰

In the Presidential race for the White House in 2016, there is surge in popularity of anti-establishment candidates in both parties. In towns across Iowa, the crowds supporting Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders, a U.S. senator from Vermont, are growing. It’s a similar story for businessman Donald Trump, a Republican candidate who has been speaking to overflow crowds in the state. In a recent Des Moines Register/Bloomberg Politics poll of likely voters in the upcoming Iowa caucuses, both Sanders and Trump are surging in popularity.¹¹¹

Donald Trump, republican presidential frontrunner for 2016 election, stumbled on a few international affairs issues and grew impatient over questions about foreign leaders during a telephone interview to Hugh Hewitt, a popular conservative radio host, Hewitt asked Trump if he is familiar with General Qassim Suleimani, the commander of the Quds Force. Trump responded by saying the Kurds have been “horribly mistreated.” Hewitt interrupted by saying that he was referring to the Quds, not the Kurds. Trump, a billionaire real estate mogul, said he thought Hewitt had mentioned the “Kurds.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Cronk, Terri Moon, “DoD Team Surveys Charleston Site for Guantanamo Prisoner Transfer”, *DoD News*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/616006/dod-team-surveys-charleston-site-for-guantanamo-prisoner-transfer>

¹¹⁰ Cronk, Terri Moon, “Carter Addresses Legion Convention on Force of Future”, *DoD News*, September 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/615564/carter-addresses-legion-convention-on-force-of-future>

¹¹¹ Farabaugh, Kane, “Anti-Establishment Candidates Popular on Iowa Campaign Trail”, *VOA News*, September 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/anti-establishment-candidates-popular-iowa-campaign-trail/2948956.html>

¹¹² “Richman, Mike, Trump Reveals Lack of Knowledge on Foreign Policy”, *VOA News*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-reveals-lack-knowledge-foreign-policy/2947174.html>

International: Asia

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **US and Afghanistan doubt Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism; US asks Pakistan to do more in its fight against terrorism; US trains Afghans to counter IED threats; U.S. shuts embassy in Dushanbe amidst attacks; Another key democratic Senator Ben Cardin opposes Iran nuclear deal; Congress prepares for a fiery debate on nuclear deal; Coalition forces continue to fight against ISIL forces; Turkey helps fight ISIL forces; US-South Arabia emphasize importance of their strategic relationship; Carter says North Korea cannot defeat "us or our allies"; Ahead of President Xi's first state visit, US asks to release lawyers.**

Amid deliberations in the U.S. Congress to withhold the last instalment of its annual \$1 billion aid package to Pakistan as part of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), the State Department has recently designated Abdul Aziz Haqqani as a specially designated global terrorist under Executive Order 13224, which targets terrorists and those providing support to acts of terrorism. Aziz Haqqani is a senior member of the Haqqani network and brother of the network's leader Sirajuddin Haqqani.¹¹³ Earlier on August 31, the White House spokesman Josh Earnest said that U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice indicated on "a number of occasions" to leaders in Islamabad during her trip to Pakistan that they can do more to confront extremist groups.¹¹⁴

According to a report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, in the first six months of 2015, 22 percent of Afghan civilian casualties were caused by improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The team of coalition service members, Defence Department civilians and contractors at Resolute Support Headquarters in Kabul, trains, advises and assists Afghan national defence and security forces on how to identify and disarm IEDs and unexploded ordnance and collect evidence following detonation. The counter-IED staff also brings awareness directly to civilians. The counter-IED programme will be placing billboards and producing radio and television commercials throughout Afghanistan to continue to reach civilians and educate them on IED awareness.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Alikozai, Hasib Danish, "US, Afghanistan Still Doubt Pakistan's Commitment in Fight Against Militants", *VOA News*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-afghanisgtan-still-doubt-pakistans-commitment-in-fight-against-militants/2939798.html>

¹¹⁴ "US Urges Pakistan to Confront Extremist Groups", *VOA News*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-urges-pakistan-to-confront-extremist-groups/2939827.html>

¹¹⁵ Edgar, Charity, "Empowering Afghan Citizens to Counter IED Threats", *DoD News*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/616344/empowering-afghan-citizens-to-counter-ied-threats>

On September 4, at least eight policemen and two gunmen were killed in Tajikistan in attacks the authorities in the Central Asian nation blamed on forces loyal to the country's own deputy defence minister. This prompted the U.S. embassy in Dushanbe, the Tajik capital, to shut.¹¹⁶

Ben Cardin of Maryland, a key Democratic U.S. senator, has come out against the Iranian nuclear deal. Cardin is the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and considered to be one of the most influential senators. His decision is seen as a setback to a push by the Obama administration to win the 41 Democratic votes needed to be able to block a vote of disapproval by the Senate.¹¹⁷ Iran nuclear deal will be centre stage in Congress when lawmakers return from a month-long recess next week and almost immediately launch into what promises to be passionate and rancorous debate on a pact that has enormous implications for U.S. and global security.¹¹⁸

Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on September 6 that U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria and Iraq.¹¹⁹ Marine Corps Brig. Gen Kevin J. Killea, chief of staff of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, said that Turkey's help in the fight against the ISIL has broadened the reach of the coalition. Last week, Turkey began conducting anti-ISIL air strikes after its contributions were formalized as part of the CJTF-OIR process necessary for integrating coalition members into the fight. Killea said, "Our Turkish military counterparts are now included in the CJTF air-tasking order...resulting in a seamless level of coordination and synchronization of air operations."¹²⁰

During a meeting with Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's defence minister, Defence Secretary Ash Carter in Washington on September 4 reaffirmed the importance of the U.S.-Saudi Arabia strategic relationship. In a statement summarizing the meeting, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said that the leaders discussed mutual concerns in the region, including the ongoing crisis in Yemen and the importance of reaching a negotiated political settlement there.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ "At Least 10 Killed in Armed Attacks in Tajikistan, US Embassy Shut", *Reuters*, September 04, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/tajikistan-clashes/2948379.html>

¹¹⁷ Saine, Cindy, "Key Democratic Senator Cardin Opposes Iran Nuclear Deal", *DoD News*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/key-democratic-senator-cardin-opposes-iran-nuclear-deal/2948253.html>

¹¹⁸ Bowman, Michael, "US Congress Prepares to Debate Iran Nuclear Deal", *VOA News*, September 3, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-congress-prepares-to-debate-iran-nuclear-deal-/2943956.html>

¹¹⁹ "Airstrikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq", *DOD News*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/616368/airstrikes-hit-isil-in-syria-iraq>

¹²⁰ Pellerin, Cheryl, "General: Turkey's Help Extends Inherent Resolve's Reach", *DoD News*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/616322/general-turkeys-help-extends-inherent-resolves-reach>

¹²¹ "Carter Reaffirms U.S.-Saudi Strategic Relationship's Importance", *DoD News*, September 4, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/616352/carter-reaffirms-us-saudi-strategic-relationships-importance>

In the wake of escalating tensions between North and South Korea, on September 1, U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter said "We need to make sure that North Koreans always understand that any provocation with them will be dealt with, and they stand no chance of defeating us and our allies in South Korea". The most recent spat between the two Koreas stemmed from a landmine blast that injured two South Korean service members.¹²²

Ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's first state visit to Washington later this month, the United States has called for the release of Chinese lawyer Zhang Kai and a group of religious figures, including Christian pastors, accused of threatening public order and national security. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Samantha Power, has also launched a campaign for the release of 20 women prisoners of conscience, including Chinese attorney Wang Yu.¹²³

India-US Relations

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **US rules out any role in reviving India-Pakistan dialogue; Australian Defence Minister Andrews says Australia wants to join Indian, Japan and US military exercise; India makes a pitch with the US to locate a 'root server'; Telephonics will invest in India; More Chinese and Indians immigrating to the United States than Mexicans.**

Ruling out any role for itself in the revival of Indo-Pak dialogue, the US said that it is for India and Pakistan to reduce tensions between them and decide on their relationship. US State Department Spokesman Mark Toner said on August 31 that "About relations (between Pakistan and) India that's really a matter between the two countries. But we certainly want to see reduction in tensions between India and Pakistan". Recently US Secretary of State John Kerry also said that he wanted the two nations to continue to "work together", with constructive dialogue, to resolve their issues.¹²⁴

During his recent visit to India, Australian Defence Minister Kevin Andrews expressed Australia's interests to join India, the United States and Japan in joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean, widening participation in multilateral drills as China's influence in the region grows. Defence Minister Andrews said expanding the exercises to include more countries would help avoid military mistakes in a region where China and India are increasingly

¹²² "Carter: N. Korea Has 'No Chance' Defeating S. Korea, US", *VOA News*, September 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ash-carter-north-korea-has-no-chance-to-defeat-south-korea/2942426.html>

¹²³ "Beattie, Victor, US Demands Release of 2 Detained Chinese Lawyers", *VOA News*, September 02, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-demands-release-of-2-detained-chinese-lawyers/2941922.html>

¹²⁴ Mark C. Toner, Deputy Spokesperson, Daily Press Briefing, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/08/246473.htm>; and, "It's for India, Pakistan to Decide on Their Relationship: US", *Press Trust of India*, September 01, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/its-for-india-pakistan-to-decide-on-their-relationship-us-1212958>.

competing. He said, "Exercising together is one way to avoid some kind of miscalculation happening."¹²⁵

According to news reports, India has made a bid to be a major player in global Internet governance by making a pitch with the US to locate a 'root server' in India. There are only 13 such servers, of which 10 are in the US, two in Europe and one in Japan. Indian officials told *The Economic Times* that the US is favourably disposed to the idea. A root name server, as it's technically known, is at the base of the Internet. These servers translate readable host names into IP addresses, which is how a user gets to the right portal link.¹²⁶ Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) said in a statement that Internet (in India) has reached an inflection point. The consolidated numbers affirm the fact that Internet in India has now become inclusive, which augurs well for the industry and society at large".¹²⁷

SP Shukla, group president for aerospace and defence business at Mahindra, told *the Economic Times* that Telephonics, part of US-listed Griffon Company, will invest about \$10 million in the next one year. The joint venture, formed between Mahindra Defence Systems and Telephonics in 2013, makes electronic surveillance and communication systems for the Indian aerospace and defence market. Shukla said, "Increase in ownership goes to show Telephonics has faith in the capability of the joint venture." The government, which has raised the foreign direct investment limit in defence to 49 per cent, gave permission to Telephonics to increase its shareholding in August. It is the first private company in the Indian defence sector to receive the nod.¹²⁸

According to a report released in May by Eric Jensen, a statistician/demographer with the Census Bureau's Population Division, more Asians than Mexicans are now immigrating to the United States. Jensen also noted that, based on his research, China alone replaced Mexico in 2013 as the leading country sending immigrants to the United States. Other Asian nations sending large numbers of immigrants to this country in 2013 included India, Korea, the Philippines, and Japan. In fact, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) for 2013 indicated that after China, which sent 147,000 immigrants to the United States, India had moved into second place, with 129,000 immigrants to the States. Mexico sent 125,000 immigrants.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ "Australia Hopes to Join India-US-Japan Naval Drills", *Reuters*, September 03, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-australia-hopes-to-join-india-us-japan-naval-drills/2946665.html>

¹²⁶ Samanta, Pranab Dhal, "Internet Governance: US Considering India's Pitch To Locate 'Root Server'", *The Economic Times*, September 3, 2015 at <http://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/internet/internet-governance-us-considering-indias-pitch-to-locate-root-server/48782461>

¹²⁷ Koshy, Jacob, "To Assert Global Clout, India Wants Own Internet Root Server Like US", *Huffington Post*, September 3, 2015 at http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/09/03/root-servers_n_8080896.html

¹²⁸ Mandavia, Megha, "US Telephonics Corporation to hike stake in Mahindra defence JV to 49 per cent", September 4, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-telephonics-corporation-to-hike-stake-in-mahindra-defence-jv-to-49-per-cent/articleshow/48789752.cms>

¹²⁹ Mass, Warren, "Census Shows More Immigrants Coming From China, India Than Mexico", *New American*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/immigration/item/21495-census-shows->

II. Defence Reviews

National

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Sixth Indo-Maldives joint training exercise underway in Trivandrum; Four Indian naval ships are on a visit to Dubai.**

The sixth Indo-Maldives joint training exercise started on August 31, 2015 at Pangode Military Station, Trivandrum. The aim of this joint exercise is to acquaint both the forces with each other's operating procedure. The exercise will also lead to increased understanding and interoperability between the two Armies. A total of 45 soldiers each from the Maldivian National Defence Force and the Indian Army (BIHAR Regiment) will take part in this exercise. Varied training activities are being conducted to enhance interoperability and jointness between the two defence forces. The joint training will conclude with a tactical exercise. The closing ceremony is scheduled on September 13.¹³⁰

Indian Naval Ships Deepak, Delhi, Tabar and Trishul are on a visit to Dubai and shall remain there till September 8, 2015. The ships are part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet based at Mumbai and are on a long-range deployment to the Persian Gulf to enhance bilateral ties with friendly regional navies. During the visit, the warships are scheduled to have professional interactions with the defence forces of the host countries for enhancing co-operation and sharing the nuances of naval operations including disaster management and combating maritime threats of terrorism and piracy. India and UAE enjoy bilateral relations for a long time with treaties and agreements on extradition, mutual legal assistance in criminal and civil matters, judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters, combating trafficking in narcotics, civil aviation, cultural exchange and information cooperation. UAE is today India's second largest trading partner and naval cooperation between the two countries have increased steadily since the inaugural Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks in January 2007, which covered the entire gamut of IN-UAEN cooperation.¹³¹

more-immigrants-coming-from-china-india-than-mexico; "Legal Immigrants from India on H-1B and F1 visas surpass Mexicans entering the US", *The American Bazar*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2015/08/31/legal-immigrants-from-india-on-h-1b-and-f1-visas-surpass-mexicans-entering-the-us/>

¹³⁰ "Indo-Maldives Joint Military Exercise," *PIB*, September, 07, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=126683>

¹³¹ "Indian Navy's Western Fleet Ships Visit United Arab Emirates," *PIB*, September, 05, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=126652>

International

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **US government gives contract to Willard Marine to supply four patrol boats to the Philippines.**

Reports say that US government has contracted US boat builder Willard Marine to supply patrol boats to the Philippines. The Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group will take delivery of four new patrol vessels from Willard Marine in November 2015. Willard Marine has been contracted to build the vessels by the US Department of State. The vessels are intended as a donation to bolster the PNP Maritime Group's search-and-rescue (SAR) and law enforcement capabilities.¹³²

Meanwhile, according to reports, the UK Royal Air Force (RAF) has received the second of three Boeing RC-135W Airseeker intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft. The aircraft is set to be deployed on operations very soon. This delivery is seven months ahead of schedule, with the final aircraft set to arrive in the UK by the end of 2017. Since delivery of the first Airseeker in 2014, over 60 improvements have been incorporated into the second aircraft. Modifications in the aircraft range from upgrades to the mission systems to engine improvements providing increased fuel efficiency and durability. The first aircraft will be retrofitted with these enhancements at a later date.¹³³

III. Internal Security Reviews

Jammu & Kashmir

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Udhampur attack: NIA arrests man who helped LeT terrorists enter India from PoK; Four militants, soldier killed in Handwara encounter.**

The National Investigation Agency on September 1 arrested another over-ground operative of Lashkar-e-Taiba - identified as Showkat Ahmed Bhat, who had arranged transportation for the four Pakistani terrorists including captured Mohammad Naved Yakub within Kashmir soon after they infiltrated from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir on June 2 this year. Bhat, a resident of Khadermoh area in Pulwama district, is allegedly an old operative who worked for

¹³² "Philippines to Receive Four New Patrol Boats from the US," *IHS Jane's*, September 06, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/54053/philippines-to-receive-four-new-patrol-boats-from-the-us>

¹³³ "UK Receives Second Airseeker ISR Aircraft," *IHS Jane's*, September 04, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/54024/uk-receives-second-airseeker-isr-aircraft>

LeT. He was detained by Jammu and Kashmir police after which he was handed over to the federal probe agency.¹³⁴

Four militants and a soldier were killed in a gun battle in northern Jammu and Kashmir on September 3, a day after a jawan died in a skirmish in the militancy-hit state. The fresh encounter began in the Vilgam area of Handwara around 8:30pm on September 2. The operation was conducted by the Rashtriya Rifles, para forces and a special operations group of police. On September 2, a jawan was killed when militants fired at security forces. A militant - identified as Riyaz Ahmad of Brath Kalan in Sopore - was also killed when the army razed the house where the militants were holed up. According to officials, Ahmad was a local commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Ahmad is believed to be involved in the recent attacks on telecom operators in Sopore.¹³⁵

Northeast India

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **NIA probes Maoist presence in Cachar district of Assam; Manipur: Death toll rises to eight in Churachandpur Violence; Security forces gunned down Bodo militant in Kokrajhar; GNLA warns non-tribals ahead of GHADC polls.**

At a time when senior Maoists are being arrested from Cachar district in Barak Valley, the National Investigating Agency (NIA) is exploring options to look for possible clues of Maoist base in South Assam. A day after three Maoists supporters were arrested, a team of officers from NIA, IB and CID (Kolkata) visited Katigorah in Cachar district. A police source said the Maoists are trying to create a red corridor connecting Manipur and Assam using the bordering areas of Cachar district. Rajveer Singh, SP of Cachar said that since this is an inter-State issue, hence the NIA and other investigating teams visited the locale to take stock of the situation. "Nirmala Biswas, one of the senior Maoist leaders and the head of the women wing in the valley and who was arrested recently has been involved in a number of attacks on police and security officials," Singh informed. A case has been registered against the six Maoist cadres under Section 17 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention (UAP) Act 1967 and the Maoist supporters have been charged with Section 19 of the same Act.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ "NIA Arrests Lashkar Man Who Arranged Trip for Naved", *The Times of India*, September 2, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/NIA-arrests-Lashkar-man-who-arranged-trip-for-Naved/articleshow/48766906.cms>

¹³⁵ Rashid, Toufiq, "Four militants, Soldier Killed In North Kashmir Encounter", *Hindustan Times*, September 3, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/four-militants-soldier-killed-in-north-kashmir-encounter/article1-1386887.aspx>

¹³⁶ "NIA Probing Maoist Presence In Cachar", *The Assam Tribune*, August 31, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=aug3115/at056>

Violence erupted in Manipur's Churachandpur district headquarters during protests against the passing of three Assembly Bills on August 31 aimed at protecting the State's indigenous people. The protesters contend that the Bills will affect the interest of the tribals. A day after a mob attacked the houses of a Minister and five legislators in Churachandpur town, two more persons said to be agitators were killed while few others sustained injury allegedly in police action on September 1, sources said. One of the injured reportedly succumbed to the injury. With three victims on August 31, the death toll has risen to eight on September 1, it added. Police said the incident happened when the agitators allegedly tried to storm and torch the Churachandpur police station on September 1. Curfew was imposed in the town on August 31.¹³⁷

Security forces on September 3 gunned down a hardcore militant of Bodo insurgent outfit NDFB (S) involved in the killing of Adivasis in Kokrajhar district on December 23 last year. Bhaigo Boro alias B Bilaigra was shot dead by a joint team of Assam Police and the Army deployed in Kokrajhar, defence spokesman Lt Col Suneet Newton said. Some arms and ammunition, including an AK-56 rifle with magazine, 18 used cases, 32 rounds of ammunition and two hand grenades, were recovered during the operation.¹³⁸

Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) has threatened retaliation against non-tribals who vote or fight in the upcoming GHADC polls. "Any non-tribal candidate taking part in the upcoming election or even to cast their vote in the election will be responsible for their own fate. Any political parties or individuals involved in doing so will have to contend with the GNLA", said a release by the outfit. Contending that GHADC was solely meant for the benefit and welfare of the Garos only, the outfit threatened all involved in modifying the heritage or customary laws.¹³⁹

Left-wing Extremism

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **Six Maoists arrested in Chhattisgarh; Maoists surrender en masse in Orissa; Assistant commandant critically injured in Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh; Maoists kill abducted constable in Bastar.**

Six members of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) were arrested by the police from different parts of Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh on September 1. The arrested Maoists include a couple, Madavi Joga and Madavi Gangi, who worked for Maoists' military company no.2 and carried a reward of Rs. 8 lakhs on each. "Madavi Joga and Madavi Gangi

¹³⁷ Samom, Sobhapati, "Violence Hits Manipur Hill Town", *The Assam Tribune*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep0215/oth050>

¹³⁸ "Bodo Militant Gunned Down in Kokrajhar", *The Assam Tribune*, September 3, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep0315/at045>

¹³⁹ "GNLA Warns Non-Tribals Before GHADC Polls", *The Assam Tribune*, September 5, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep0515/oth052>

were involved in some major attacks on police teams in last ten years including the Ranibodali school attack in which 55 policemen were massacred and the attack on Gidam police station in Dantewada," informed Dantewada district Superintendent of Police (SP) Kamlochan Kashyap. Apart from the Maoist couple, Dantewada police also arrested Bhima Kunjam, Jayram Raut, Madkam Bhima and Podia alias Pillu Madavi from Bacheli area of the district.¹⁴⁰

A hard-core Maoist named Mesha Muschaski, who was carrying Rs.1 lakh reward on his head, surrendered in Malkangiri district of Odisha. Along with him, around 125 Maoist supporters also promised to part ways with the violent ultras and lead normal life. All of them surrendered before Malkangiri collector D. Prasantkumar Reddy and Superintendent of Police (SP) Mitrabhanu Mohapatra. According to police sources, Mesha as well as others were from Silakota area, a Maoist-infested remote region of the district. Mesha was associated with Podia Dalam of outlawed CPI (Maoist) organisation for past five years. The other Maoist supporters were members of 'Jan Militia', a frontal organisation of Maoists.¹⁴¹

An assistant commandant of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was critically injured on September 4 when Maoists attacked him at a weekly market in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. Police said CRPF's 111 battalion assistant commandant Vijay Malik went to the weekly market to buy some essentials where a group of three Maoist rebels attacked him with sharp edged weapons, critically injuring him. Maoists later fled into the nearby forest area.¹⁴²

An auxiliary constable of the Chhattisgarh police, abducted by Maoists on August 31, was found dead in Sukma district of the restive Bastar region on September 5. Pila Das, posted at the Pollampalli station in Sukma, was abducted from Gorgonda while returning to his base camp from Dornapal in a passenger vehicle. His body was found near the Pollampalli market. A resident of Kankerlanka, Pila Das joined the anti-Maoist militia Salwa Judum as a Special Police Officer (SPO) in 2006 and actively took part in the operations against the Naxals in Bastar. He was recruited as an auxiliary constable in 2011.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Dahat, Pavan, "Six Maoists Arrested in Dantewada", *The Hindu*, September 1, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/six-maoists-arrested-in-dantewada/article7604175.ece>

¹⁴¹ "Maoist Surrenders", *The Hindu*, September 2, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maoist-surrenders/article7605221.ece>

¹⁴² John, Joseph, "CRPF Assistant Commandant Injured In Maoist Attack in Bastar", *The Times of India*, September 4, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/CRPF-assistant-commandant-injured-in-Maoist-attack-in-Bastar/articleshow/48804027.cms>

¹⁴³ Dahat, Pavan, "Maoists Kill Abducted Constable in Bastar", *The Hindu*, September 6, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/maoists-kill-abducted-constable-in-bastar/article7619765.ece>

IV. United Nations Reviews

India and the UN

(August 31-September 6, 2015)

- **PMDJY to get UN-based partner; UNDP neglecting developing countries: India; India to host UNESCO's natural heritage conservation centre; Pakistan-India spar over Jammu and Kashmir at UN; UAE to support CCIT.**

The Government of India has decided to partner with the UN-based "Better than Cash Alliance" as its research, technical and policy partner to further the reach and working of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana launched nearly a year back. Having opened 175 million bank accounts, including for those in the unorganised sector, the programme aims to stimulate inclusive growth through the digitisation of money transfers to the needy. The programme has already secured an entry into the Guinness Book of World Record for the opening of 10 million bank accounts in one week.¹⁴⁴

At the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board of UNDP held on September 01, 2015, Prakash Gupta, a Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of India said that the UNDP has not paid adequate heed to the interests of developing countries in recent years and this does not augur well for the 2030 development agenda. He made specific reference to the UNDP not paying heed to a request from the G 77 countries and China for the removal of 3 out of a 100 indicators in the integrated Results and Resources Framework for the last one year.¹⁴⁵

India figures in the UNESCO list of 9 countries that have been selected to host centres of cultural heritage. Thus, the first among these, a centre for World Natural Heritage Management & Training will be set up at the Wildlife Institute of India. An agreement to this effect was signed between the UNESCO and the Director General (Forests) and Special Secretary to Government of India on behalf of Government India.¹⁴⁶

At the fourth conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the world, Acting Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan Murtaza Javed Abbasi raised the un-resolved issue of Jammu and Kashmir in the sub-continent and called for a plebiscite to be held to let people realise their right to self-determination. He argued that festering conflicts such as these prevented the

¹⁴⁴ "India Announces New Partnership to Accelerate Financial Inclusion for Everyone", September 1, 2015, at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/india-announces-new-partnership-to-accelerate-financial-inclusion-for-everyone-300135712.html>. Also see "India teams up with UN-backed alliance to accelerate financial inclusion for all", *UN News*, September 03, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51792#.VfvwX9Kqqko>

¹⁴⁵ "India criticises UNDP for ignoring developing countries", *Zee News*, September 02, 2015 at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-criticises-undp-for-ignoring-developing-countries_1666201.html

¹⁴⁶ "India To Have World's First Natural Heritage And Training Centre", September 2, 2015 at <http://www.tehelka.com/2015/09/india-to-have-worlds-first-natural-heritage-and-training-center/>

region from realizing its development potential.¹⁴⁷ The Indian Speaker, Sumitra Mahajan, objected to Pakistan raising a non-relevant issue at the conference since the theme of the conference was the 2030 development agenda. She urged Pakistan to think of the development of its people instead.¹⁴⁸ Pakistan's Permanent Representative, Maleeha Lodhi, also sent a letter to the UN Security Council regarding shelling by India across the border in Jammu and Kashmir which has resulted in casualties on the Pakistan side.¹⁴⁹

Within a month of the PM's visit to UAE, the visiting Foreign Minister of the country, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has expressed his country's support for the India-backed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) to be adopted by the UN. This is significant considering that several OIC countries have not supported the CCIT and UAE has offered to help in arriving at a consensus.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ "Pakistan Again Rakes Up Kashmir Issue at United Nations," *NDTV News*, September 3, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pakistan-again-rakes-up-kashmir-issue-at-united-nations-1213684>

¹⁴⁸ "India strongly rejects Pakistan raising Kashmir at UN", *Business Standard*, September 03, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-strongly-rejects-pak-raising-kashmir-at-un-115090300025_1.html

¹⁴⁹ "Maleeha Lodhi calls on UN to take note of Indian Aggression", *GeoTV News*, September 05, 2015, at <http://www.geo.tv/article-196421-Maliha-Lodhi-calls-on-UN-to-take-notice-of-Indian-aggression->

¹⁵⁰ "UAE backs India's UN move to choke terror fund", *The Indian Express*, September 3, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/uae-backs-indias-un-move-to-choke-terror-fund/>. Also see "Sushma Swaraj calls for extradition of certain individuals from UAE to India", *DNA News*, September 3, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-sushma-swaraj-calls-for-extradition-of-certain-individuals-from-uae-to-india-2121588>