

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

September 14 – September 20, 9 (3), 2015

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Afghanistan

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Karzai had ordered not to attack the Taliban training centre; Taliban arrive in Badakhshan through Chetral; Turkmenistan to start work on TAPI December; Afghans Leaving country in large numbers; Former War lords join hands in military operations in north; NUG prodded to review peace talks.**

The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had ordered the security officials not to attack the training centres belonging to the Taliban militants in central Logar province, it has been reported. According to the local security officials quoted by *BBC*, the former president had ordered to prevent military operation on the training centre despite the Taliban militants were using the centre as launching pad for suicide attacks in Logar and capital Kabul. Provincial police Chief Gen. Daud Ahmadi said around 200 militants were trained by militants hailing from Pakistan and Chechnya in the training centre. He said the training centre was located in Zarghoon city but the Karzai had ordered that no military operation should be launched by issuing a written order. Gen. Ahmadi further added that the main motive behind Karzai's decision to prevent the operation while he was serving as the President of the country has not been ascertained so far.<sup>1</sup>

Dozens of Taliban militants have just crossed border into north-eastern Badakhshan province from Pakistan. Senator Gulalai Akbari told Parliament session on September 13 that the group arrived through Pakistan's Chetral area which is on the border with Badakhshan. Akbari who is from the same province said that the leader of the group is Mawlawi Fasih-uddin who crossed the border with his group on September 13. She said if government pays attention, 200 to 300 militants won't be able to enter this province at one time. Badakhshan was among the comparatively safe provinces of Afghanistan but in the past three years it has witnessed deadly clashes between security forces and Taliban as well as other incidents of insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities in Turkmenistan have said the building works of the long delayed \$10 billion Trans-Afghanistan gas pipeline will likely start in December. A government official in Turkmenistan has said the work on Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline is expected to start early in December. Supported by the United States and the Asian Development Bank, the gas pipeline will help Turkmenistan to find new consumers in Asia

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<sup>1</sup> "Karzai had Ordered Not To Attack the Taliban Training Centre In Logar", *Khaama Press*, September 14, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/karzai-had-ordered-not-to-attack-the-taliban-training-center-in-logar-1514>

<sup>2</sup> "Dozens of Taliban Arrive in Badakhshan through Pakistan's Chetral", *Khaama Press*, September 14, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/dozens-of-taliban-arrive-in-badakhshan-through-pakistans-chetral-3907>

via Afghanistan. "Turkmen gas ... plans to start building the TAPI pipeline in early December," the official speaking on the condition of anonymity told *Reuters*. The official further added "The Turkmen stretch of the pipeline (to the Afghan border) will be built by a (Turkmen) oil and gas pipeline construction firm."<sup>3</sup>

As the country's economy tumbles and unemployment rises in war-hit Afghanistan, embassies of some countries such as Iran and Turkey are being swamped with people applying for visas to transit through their countries in a bid to reach Europe. Many Afghans, who stood in line for hours on September 16, told to scribe that they were disillusioned with government for not providing them with job opportunities. Many said that they had no choice but to take a risk and flee to Europe – despite knowing they were putting their lives at risk. Owners of transportation companies meanwhile said they can transport up to 1,200 people on a daily bases – half of which make it across the border into Iran.<sup>4</sup>

The acting provincial governor of northern Balkh province Ata Mohammad Noor has followed the First Vice President Gen. Abdul Rashid in leading military operations against the militant groups in northern parts of Afghanistan. The operations were conducted in different parts of northern Balkh, Jawzjan and Sar-e-Pul provinces of Afghanistan, according to the provincial government media office. The operations were jointly conducted by the Afghan National Police, National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghan national Army, Afghan Police Special Operations Forces, Quick Reaction Forces and security personnel from the other departments. Faizabad district in northern Jawzjan province was the starting point of the coordinated operations where various villages were cleared of the militants with the local officials saying the areas were mainly used to plan and coordinate attacks in Balkh province.<sup>5</sup>

The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC) and Afghan Women's Network on September 18 asked the National Unity Government (NUG) to seriously review the peace process and the formation of the High Peace Council (HPC). They said that this time an active representative of women should be involved in the talks. "The civil society organizations are urging the government to increase the number of women in the HPC up to 30 percent," said Qamar Niazi, member of HRRAC. Fawzia Kofi, an MP, meanwhile said government should review the peace process. "The NUG should review the peace process and should start the peace talks and do its assignment at the first step," she added. A number of women activists meanwhile term the HPC as a symbolic organization.<sup>6</sup>

The newly appointed Taliban group chief Mullah Akhtar Mansoor has issued a statement amid fears that the group may split into factions due to persistent rift following Mullah

<sup>3</sup> "Turkmenistan to Start Work on \$10 Billion Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline in December", *Khaama Press*, September 15, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/turkmenistan-to-start-work-on-10-billion-trans-afghanistan-pipeline-in-december-1519>

<sup>4</sup> "Queues Grow at Embassies as Afghans Seek Visas", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 17, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=13108](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13108)

<sup>5</sup> "Noor Follows Gen. Dostum in Leading Military Operations In North", *Khaama Press*, September 18, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/noor-follows-gen-dostum-in-leading-military-operations-in-north-1530>

<sup>6</sup> "NUG Prodded to Review Peace Talks", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 19, 2015, at [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=13122](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13122)

Mohammad Omar's death – the group's founder and supreme leader. In his statement, Mullah Mansoor urged the Taliban group members not to distance themselves from the formation of the group's new leadership – apparently pointing towards the dissident Taliban commanders who oppose his appointment as the new Taliban group chief. Mullah Mansoor warned that such moves will only prove beneficial to the group's enemies and will harm the Taliban group leadership. He said the Taliban group under his leadership welcomes any steps and efforts that are for the betterment of the group's jihadi efforts, insisting that the leadership needs their commitment and contribution. This comes as reports emerged earlier today suggesting persistent differences among the Taliban leadership as talks between the newly appointed Taliban group chief Mullah Akhtar Mansoor and the dissatisfied Taliban commanders failed to resolve tensions as a result of Mullah Mansoor's appointment.<sup>7</sup>

## Pakistan

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **CPEC industrial parks deferred; Threat of military rule looming; Army going to stay in Waziristan for a while; PM safe under democracy; \$34.28 bn foreign remittances in last two years; Made foreign policy in Parliament; PAF camp stormed by TTP; Baluch Nationals to get united.**

The government has deferred the plan to set up special economic zones and industrial parks on both sides of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) till 2018 due to growing shortage of electricity in the country. According to media reports "Establishment of special economic zones and industrial parks along with the CPEC will further increase the demand for electricity so the government has thought it advisable to defer this plan unless the power generation increases to a considerable level," the sources told *the scribe* on September 14. When contacted, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal said the government was taking swift measures to establish economic zones and industrial parks on both sides of the CPEC but the plan has been deferred for some time due to shortage of electricity in the country. "We will definitely set up the economic zones along with CPEC because everything that has been planned would be carried out in a befitting manner. The changes in the plan are quite a routine matter but these will not affect the CPEC project in any way," he said.<sup>8</sup>

As the opposition and government members argued over the perceived tense civil-military relationship, Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani declared on September 15 that the constitutional safeguards against military takeovers had become redundant. "I believe that Article 6 has become redundant. Our weaknesses have made it redundant. In my eyes, no constitutional clause can protect democracy. Only the people can protect democracy provided they are given ownership of the system," he observed at the end of a debate held in the upper house to

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<sup>7</sup> "Mullah Mansoor Issues Statement Amid Fears Of Taliban Split Into Two Factions", *Khaama Press*, September 20, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/mullah-mansoor-issues-statement-amid-fears-of-taliban-split-into-two-factions-1542>

<sup>8</sup> "Govt Defers Plan of CPEC Industrial Parks", *The News*, September 15, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39667-Govt-defers-plan-of-CPEC-industrial-parks>

commemorate the International Day of Democracy. During the debate, PPP senators alleged that there was a “disconnect” between the civil and military leaderships and they were not on the same page. But Iqbal Zafar Jhagra of the PML-N claimed that there was “no challenge to the democratic system due to the civil-military relationship”.<sup>9</sup>

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif, assured the tribesmen of South Waziristan Agency on September 16 that having paid the price for operational successes, terrorists would never be allowed to return and the Pakistan Army will not go back till the job was fully done. During his visit to South Waziristan, the army chief urged the tribal people to continue supporting security and rehabilitating operations to achieve the end objective of enduring peace and prosperity in these areas. According to the ISPR, the COAS said that the Operation Zarb-e-Azb was in its final stages in the fewer left-out pockets. He said the Pakistan Army with the support of the entire nation had successfully evicted terrorists from the area. General Raheel appreciated the support of the tribal brethren in combating terrorism and acknowledged their sacrifices in the war against terrorism.<sup>10</sup>

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah said on September 16 that as long as parliament and democracy were present in country, no one could remove Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He said that the nation was showering praise on the Chief of the Army Staff General Raheel Sharif and the people need not worry about anything. Addressing a function in Lahore, Khursheed Shah was responding to the prime minister’s concerns that some people were trying to de-seat him. Khursheed Shah said that although the PM’s fear was quite possible, it could not happen with the co-existence of parliament and democracy. He went on to say that to curb the menace of corruption, action taken should be indiscriminate. Trying to address the issue of the roots of terrorism, he said that investigations should be carried out to identify when and where terrorism and corruption originated, adding why the Operation Zarb-e-Azb and other operations were needed.<sup>11</sup>

Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Resources Jam Kamal Khan on September 16 informed the Senate that overseas Pakistanis had sent home \$34.28 billion remittances in the last two fiscal years. Replying to a question during the Question Hour, the minister said \$18.45 billion foreign remittances were received in 2014-15 and \$15.83 billion during 2013-14. He said that Pakistan received the highest amount of remittances from the Middle Eastern countries, and the government was taking all possible steps to facilitate the overseas

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<sup>9</sup> “Safeguards against Military Rule Eroding: Rabbani”, *Dawn*, September 16, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1207272/safeguards-against-military-rule-eroding-rabbani>

<sup>10</sup> “Army Won’t Leave Waziristan Till Job Is Done: COAS”, *The News*, September 17, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39687-Army-won%E2%80%99t-leave-Waziristan-till-job-is-done-COAS>

<sup>11</sup> “No One Can Remove PM Till Parliament, Democracy Exist”, *The News*, September 17, 2015, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39688-No-one-can-remove-PM-till-parliament-democracy-exist>

Pakistanis. The number of banks for remittance distribution had also been increased to 25 from five to provide prompt facility to the overseas Pakistanis, he added.<sup>12</sup>

The opposition senators on September 17 demanded that foreign policy be formed in parliament and staged a walkout from the Upper House of Parliament in protest as they also rejected a briefing given by Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on the prime minister's visit to the US. Aziz said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would present Pakistan's position before the United Nations General Assembly as per the masses' wishes and a dossier was also ready regarding the Indian involvement in Pakistan. Aziz said Pakistan would, among other matters, highlight the issues of Kashmir, Indian interference and a threat to strategic balance in South Asia during the prime minister's forthcoming visits to the UN General Assembly session and the United States.<sup>13</sup>

In what appeared to be a precisely planned and executed attack, terrorists displayed their ability to breach the security of an Air Force camp near here on September 18 and carried out one of the deadliest assaults on a defence installation on the southern fringes of the provincial capital. Twenty-nine people, among them personnel of the Pakistan Air Force and military and some civilians, lost their lives and all 13 militants who had stormed the camp were also killed. The Darra Adamkhel chapter of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>14</sup>

Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal has emphasised the need for unity among nationalist political forces for defending the rights and interests of the people of Balochistan and safeguarding the resources of the province. Speaking at a lunch hosted in his honour by the Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) on September 19, Mr Mengal said that differences and lack of unity among democratic and nationalist forces in the past had damaged their struggle. Leaders of Awami National Party Dr Inyatullah and Nawab Abdul Zahir Kasi, PML-N leader Haji Lashkari Raisani, Senator Dr Jahanzeb Jamaldani and Sardar Nisar Ali Hazara also attended the gathering. Mr Mengal, who has served as chief minister of Balochistan, rejected the present coalition government's claim that there was improvement in the security situation in the province. Rather, he added, there were more disturbances now in Turbat, Awaran, some parts of northern Balochistan and Pakhtun-majority areas.<sup>15</sup>

## Bangladesh

(September 14-20, 2015)

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<sup>12</sup> "Pakistan Received \$34.28 Bn Foreign Remittances In Last Two Years, Senate Told", *The News*, September 17, 2015, at [http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39703-Pakistan-received-\\$3428-bn-foreign-remittances-in-last-two-years-Senate-told](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39703-Pakistan-received-$3428-bn-foreign-remittances-in-last-two-years-Senate-told)

<sup>13</sup> "Opposition Demands Foreign Policy Be Formed In Parliament", *The News*, September 18, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-39715-Opposition-demands-foreign-policy-be-formed-in-parliament>

<sup>14</sup> "Afghanistan-Based TTP Men Sneak Into Peshawar, Storm PAF Camp", *Dawn*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1207975/afghanistan-based-ttp-men-sneak-into-peshawar-storm-paf-camp>

<sup>15</sup> "Mengal calls for Joint Struggle For Rights Of All Nationalities", *Dawn*, September 20, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1208161/mengal-calls-for-joint-struggle-for-rights-of-all-nationalities>

- **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wins the 'Champions of the Earth' award; Iranian Foreign Minister visits Bangladesh; BSF returns Bangladeshis held for intrusion into India.**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been named as one of the winners of the UN's highest environmental accolade -- Champions of the Earth -- in recognition of Bangladesh's far-reaching initiatives to address climate change, says the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Serving as the PM of Bangladesh, one of the world's least developed countries, Hasina has proved that investing in climate change is conducive to achieving social and economic development, says a release of UNEP. The government currently earmarks 6-7 per cent of its annual budget -- some \$1 billion -- on climate change adaptation, with only 25 per cent of this coming from international donors. A Climate Change Fiscal Framework is also in the works to enable the government to track the demand and supply of climate change funds.<sup>16</sup>

Ending his daylong visit on September 16, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif outlined ways and means for mutual economic gains through wider collaboration in areas, including energy and trade between Iran and Bangladesh. Addressing a press conference in the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Zarif explained the reason for his visit, saying Iran considered Bangladesh extremely important as the latter stood for it in international forums. Javad Zarif said the two countries were discussing inking deals, including for avoiding double taxation and customs cooperation, for easing visas for officials and for cooperation in the energy sector once the sanctions were lifted. He also had a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and sought Bangladesh's support in implementation of the agreement. Visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Mohammad Javad Zarif makes a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Tejgaon office in Dhaka.<sup>17</sup>

Seventeen Bangladeshi people who were arrested near Haridaspur border area in India on September 17 were returned on September 18. Indian Border Security Force arrested them for illegally entering the Indian territory without any necessary documents. The 17, including five women and three children, hailing from Narail and Bagerhat, crossed border with the help of brokers paying Tk 700 per person. They were handed over to Benapole port police.<sup>18</sup> In another development Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has regretted its firing in which a Bangladeshi was killed and four others were injured on a border in Joypurhat Sadar upazila on September 18. Following a series of flag meetings between the BGB and the BSF, the Indian force has also agreed to carry out an investigation into the unprovoked firing by the BSF men who had entered Bangladesh, said Abdur Razzak Tarafdar, commander of Joypurhat 3 BGB

<sup>16</sup> "Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina Gets Champions of the Earth Award", *The Daily Star*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/hasina-wins-champions-the-earth-award-143458>.

<sup>17</sup> "Visiting Iran FM Sees Mutual Gain Through Trade", *The Daily Star*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/visiting-iran-fm-sees-mutual-gain-thru-energy-trade-144481>. "Bangladesh an Example of Religious Harmony", *The Daily Star*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-example-religious-harmony-144346>.

<sup>18</sup> "BSF Returns 17 Bangladeshis Held for Intrusion into India", *The Daily Star*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bsf-returns-17-bangladeshis-held-intrusion-india-145432>.

Battalion. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has demanded punishment to the BSF members involved in the incident of shooting the unarmed Bangladeshis.<sup>19</sup>

## Sri Lanka

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe makes his maiden visit to India; OHCHR report on Sri Lanka has been released; Sri Lankan Government to establish truth commission; The UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka meets President Maithripala Sirisena.**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe made a three day visit to India on September 14. During his visit, he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Pranab Mukherjee, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Transport Minister. Following bilateral discussions, the two Prime Ministers gave joint statements. During the visit, the two countries signed four MoUs including: agreement for orbit frequency coordination for a SAARC satellite; supply of medical equipment from India to the district hospital at Vavuniya in Sri Lanka; renewal of a pact for New Delhi's grant assistance to small development projects in the island nation, and exchange of letters for India's support to start emergency ambulance services in Sri Lanka. Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan during his meeting with Prime Minister Wickremesinghe proposed for setting up a 6 million tonne per annum (MTPA) greenfield refinery in Sri Lanka and developing the Upper Tank Farm at China Bay in Trincomalee on mutually acceptable terms.<sup>20</sup>

Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka which was released at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, called on the Sri Lankan government to establish a hybrid court which included international judges and lawyers to try all those involved in war crimes during the island nation's civil conflict between government troops and the LTTE.<sup>21</sup> The London based Global Tamil Forum (GTF) and the Tamil National alliance (TNA) welcomed the OHCHR report that strongly indicated war crimes and crimes against humanity were most likely committed by both sides to the conflict.<sup>22</sup> UN Secretary-General Ban ki-moon has also welcomed the report.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "Joypurhat Border: BSF Says Sorry for Firing", *The Daily Star*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bsf-says-sorry-firing-145849>.

<sup>20</sup> "Ranil in India on Three-Day Official Visit", *Colombo Gazette*, September 14, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/14/ranil-in-india-on-three-day-official-visit/>. "IOC Keen to Set up Greenfield Refinery in Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, September 17, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/17/ioc-keen-to-set-up-greenfield-refinery-in-sri-lanka/>. "India, Lanka Ink 4 Deals", *Deccan Herald*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/501223/india-lanka-ink-4-deals.html>.

<sup>21</sup> "TNA calls on Government To Accept Recommendations", *Colombo Gazette*, September 17, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/17/tna-calls-on-government-to-accept-recommendations/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Tamil Diaspora Back Zeid's Recommendations", *Colombo Gazette*, September 20, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/20/tamil-diaspora-back-zeids-recommendations/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Ban Backs War Crimes Report on Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, September 18, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/18/ban-backs-war-crimes-report-on-sri-lanka/>.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a response to the report, said that Sri Lanka took note of the Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the recommendations made by the High Commissioner. It also says that the government is open to continuing its engagement with the High Commissioner and his Office as well as the systems and procedures of the Human Rights Council, aimed at taking steps to safeguard and uphold the human rights of all her citizens.<sup>24</sup>

The Government of Sri Lanka informed the UN Human Rights Council that Sri Lanka will establish a truth commission and an office on missing persons. Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera told the Council during its 30th session on September 14 that the Sri Lankan Government will also ensure a political solution is evolved through constitutional amendments.<sup>25</sup>

The UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka, Subinay Nandy, had talks with President Maithripala Sirisena on September 15. During the meeting Nandi said the UN Secretary General has assured to support the President and the Government of Sri Lanka with the United Nations technical assistance and contributions to advance reconciliation and inclusive development through dialogue for a sustainable solution to the longstanding ethnic grievances.<sup>26</sup>

## Maldives

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **The Prosecutor General submits Nasheed's appeal case to Supreme Court; The port and free zone development with Dubai World cancelled; Political and human rights situation of the Maldives should not be determined based on one individual: Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Saudi Arabia extends an \$80 million loan for the second phase of the Hulhumalé Development Project.**

The Prosecutor General's (PG) Office has submitted the appeal case on the 13-year prison sentence against former president Mohamed Nasheed, to the Supreme Court. The case was rejected by High Court on September 10, 2015. PG Office said in a statement that the case was filed to High Court in accordance with Article 223 of the Constitution, and while it was rejected based on the premise that it should have been filed by Nasheed, no appeal case had been filed by Nasheed's team to this date. According to the statement, Nasheed's team had not participated in the appeal process initiated by the PG Office, and also refused to cooperate with any efforts in this regard. PG Office said that issues related to the procedural justice of the process had been highlighted in the case filed to Supreme Court, and also noted

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<sup>24</sup> "Government Says Report Not A Criminal Probe", *Colombo Gazette*, September 16, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/16/government-says-report-not-a-criminal-probe/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Government to Establish Truth Commission", *Colombo Gazette*, September 14, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/14/government-to-establish-truth-commission/>.

<sup>26</sup> "UN Official and President Sirisena Hold Talks", *Colombo Gazette*, September 15, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/09/15/un-official-and-president-sirisena-hold-talks/>.

that it is the responsibility of the judicial system to ensure that verdicts issued against defendants are sustained.<sup>27</sup>

The Government of Maldives has decided to cancel the Thilafushi port and free trade zone project with one of the biggest companies in the world in port development, Dubai Ports World (DP World). Member of the Board of Investment formed under the law of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. Mohamed Shainee told Media that when they discussed the proposal from DP World and found it not to be most beneficial for the country. Dr. Shainee said that although the project with DP World has come to a halt, they are now discussing with four other companies on different levels. And it includes companies from India, China and Saudi Arabia.<sup>28</sup>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein did not take into consideration the seriousness of the situation, when he urged to release a prisoner. This follows a remark by Hussein in his opening statement at the 30th session of the Human Rights Council on September 14, where he called on the Maldivian government to release former president Mohamed Nasheed. Foreign Ministry said in a press statement that the Maldivian delegation in their statement at the council clarified the political situation of the country, and said that to seek the release of an individual purely on the basis of his political standing is inappropriate, and clearly seeks to circumvent the rule of law. The ministry said that the political and human rights situation of the Maldives should not be determined based on one individual, and a holistic approach needs to be taken.<sup>29</sup>

The government has signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia for an \$80 million loan for the second phase of the Hulhumalé Development Project. The agreement was signed at a ceremony at Ministry of Finance and Treasury on September 14, by Minister of Finance of Maldives Abdulla Jihad and Vice Chairman of Saudi Fund for Development Yousef Al-Bassam. Providing details on the loan terms, Jihad said that it has a repayment period of 25 years, grace period of five years, and 2 per cent interest. The loan would be used for four main projects, which are a 1,200-metre sheet piling project, a project to connect phases one and two by bridges, a project for establishing channels between the economic zone and phase two mainland, and two phase two harbour projects.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "PG Submits Nasheed's Appeal Case to Supreme Court", *SunOnline*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32809>.

<sup>28</sup> "The Port and Free Zone Development with Dubai World Cancelled", *SunOnline*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32721>.

<sup>29</sup> "Foreign Ministry: Seriousness of Situation Ignored in UN High Commissioner's call to Release Prisoner", *SunOnline*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32651>.

<sup>30</sup> "Saudi Arabia Provides \$80 Million Loan for Hulhumalé Project", *SunOnline*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/32609>.

## B. East Asia

### China

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **China and ASEAN discuss Business to Business Platform; A new railway line to connect China and Thailand; Chinese President States that China is open to foreign media; Li Keqiang meets the Finance Minister of France; China sets harsh punishments for environmental blunders; Chinese Premier meets Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam.**

China and ASEAN countries concluded the 12<sup>th</sup> China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on September 19. During the meeting both sides signed a memorandum of understanding for cross-border Business-to-Business (B2B) platform to strengthen the trade ties. It is expected that this will help in promoting trade and bilateral ties.<sup>31</sup> During the meeting it was also concluded that China and Thailand will be beginning work on a railway line linking both the countries by the end of 2015.<sup>32</sup>

Before his upcoming visit to the United States, the Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Rupert Murdoch, executive chairman of the News Corp. in Beijing. During the meeting Xi said that China will 'continue to be more open to foreign media'. He further added that, "[We] welcome foreign media and correspondents to cover China stories, introducing China's development to the world, and helping the world grasp the opportunities [afforded by] China's development".<sup>33</sup>

On September 18, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Finance Minister of France Michel Sapin in Beijing. Sapin and Chinese Vice Premier Ma Kai co-chaired the third China-France High-Level Economic and Financial Dialogue (HED). Li said that such cooperation would help in improving the bilateral trade and relations.<sup>34</sup>

According to a deputy minister of environment, Zhai Qing, government officials will face disciplinary actions if they found responsible for environmental deterioration or neglecting concerned responsibilities. He further added that, "it (punishment) will be tried out in some pilot regions this year, and will be implemented across China next year".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "China and ASEAN Launch Cross-Border B2B Platform", By Fan Feifei, *China Daily*, September 20, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/20/content\\_21929910.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/20/content_21929910.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

<sup>32</sup> "Railway to Connect China, Thailand", *China Daily*, September 20, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/20/content\\_21929907.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/20/content_21929907.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

<sup>33</sup> "Xi Says China Open To Foreign Media, Eyeing Closer Co-Op with US", *China Daily*, September 18, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/18/content\\_21920731.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/18/content_21920731.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

<sup>34</sup> "Chinese Premier Meets with French Finance Minister", *China Daily*, September 18, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/18/content\\_21920563.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/18/content_21920563.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

<sup>35</sup> "Officials Face Punishment over Environmental Blunders", *China Daily*, September 17, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/17/content\\_21907922.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/17/content_21907922.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc on September 16. During the meeting Li asserted that maritime cooperation is highly important for China-Vietnam relationship. He also said that China's "Belt and Road" initiative should be rightly in sync with Vietnam's "Two Corridors and One Economic Circle" plan. Li also called for more cultural exchanges.<sup>36</sup>

## Japan

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Upper House approved new security bill package; Japan-Russia Foreign Minister meeting held in Moscow; Japan-China-South Korea held deputy director general level meeting in Seoul; Japan-Vietnam strengthen maritime cooperation.**

On September 19, the Upper House of the Japanese Diet approved the security bill package following intense debate inside and outside the Parliament. Ministry of Defence stated that security situation surrounding Japan is rapidly changing and these laws will enable Japan to take seamless responses to any situations strengthening Japanese security. Accordingly, Japan can help the US and other countries having close relations with Japan in case of an armed attack. Meanwhile, protests were held against the new security laws around the Diet. This development will considerably increase the scope of Self Defence Force activities in PKO.<sup>37</sup> Chinese ministry of defence read the development as a breach of pacifist constitution.<sup>38</sup>

Japan-Russia Foreign Minister three-day talks started in Moscow on September 20. Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov are scheduled to discuss Northern Territories/Southern Kuril territorial dispute, peace treaty and economic cooperation. Furthermore, Kishida's visit is expected to lay the foundation of President Vladimir Putin's visit to Japan in 2015.<sup>39</sup>

Japan-China-South Korea held deputy director general level meeting on September 15 in Seoul to discuss the preliminaries of the upcoming sixth trilateral summit. During the meeting, all parties discussed the means to build mutual trust and strengthen cooperation. Previously, China and South Korea decided to hold a trilateral meeting with Japan in October.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Premier Li Urges China, Vietnam to Maintain Maritime Stability", *China Daily*, September 16, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/16/content\\_21897324.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/16/content_21897324.htm), accessed on September 22, 2015

<sup>37</sup> Press Conference by the Defence Minister Nakatani, *MOD Japan*, September 19, 2015 <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/pressconf/2015/09/150918a.html>

<sup>38</sup> "Japan's New Security Bills Against Trend Of The Times: Defence Ministry", *Xinhua*, September 19, 2015 at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-09/19/c\\_134640071.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-09/19/c_134640071.htm)

<sup>39</sup> "Kishida in Moscow For Talks On Territorial Dispute," *Kyodo, Jiji*, September 21, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/21/national/politics-diplomacy/kishida-in-moscow-for-talks-on-territorial-dispute/#.Vg0kB1K6a1t>

<sup>40</sup> "Japan, China, South Korea Hold Talks On Trilateral Summit", *Kyodo*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/16/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-china-south-korea-hold-talks-trilateral-summit/#.Vg0ldVK6a1t>

Japan has agreed to offer ¥100 billion loans and additional used patrol ships to strengthen Vietnamese competences vis-à-vis maritime law enforcement in the South China Sea. Both countries are concerned about Chinese reclamation activities in the South China Sea and underscored that disputes need to be resolved peacefully and not by threat or use of force. Additionally, Japan and Vietnam coast guards signed a memorandum of cooperation to improve of human resources development.<sup>41</sup>

## The Korean Peninsula

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **The eighth Summit between South Korea and the EU took place in Seoul; South Korean President will participate in the 70th Session of the UNGA and Sustainable Development Summit; Foreign Minister Yun says South Korea and Japan must intensify efforts to strengthen bilateral ties; Amidst warnings, NK firm in its resolve to launch a satellite; South Korea technical team will visit North Korea to facilitate family reunions.**

The Eighth South Korea-EU was hosted in Seoul on September 15. South Korean President Park Geun-hye and President of the European Council Donald Tusk, and Commissioner Cecilia Malmström agreed to invest in comprehensive, mutually beneficial and future-oriented strategic partnership. Several issues were discussed including North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and strongly urged the North Korea to fulfil UNSC resolution obligation and stop further provocation. Furthermore, leaders called on North Korea to respond to diplomatic efforts aimed at resumption of Six-Party Talks. Besides, human rights situation in North Korea was also discussed.<sup>42</sup>

South Korean President Park Geun-hye is scheduled to visit New York in September 25-28 to participate in the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 and the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. President Park will also attend the Special forum on Saemaul Undong to be co-hosted by the UN Development Plan and OECD.<sup>43</sup>

On September 20, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se suggested that South Korea and Japan must intensify efforts to strengthen bilateral ties built on right understanding of their shared history as both nations celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of normalization of diplomatic

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<sup>41</sup> "Masaaki Kameda, Abe Pledges More Ships To Vietnam's Top Leader To Offset China", *The Japan Times*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/16/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-pledges-ships-vietnams-top-leader-offset-china/#.Vg0n3IK6a1t>

<sup>42</sup> The 8th Republic of Korea-European Union Summit Joint Press Statement, Office of President, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Press-Releases/view?articleId=3131&pageIndex=1&gov=>

<sup>43</sup> The President to attend UN Sustainable Development Summit and 70th UN General Assembly, Office of President, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Press-Releases/view?articleId=3133&pageIndex=1&gov=>

relations. Besides, a China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit meeting, first since 2012, is scheduled by the end of this year.<sup>44</sup>

Reports on September 18 indicated that North Korea is firm in its resolve to launch a satellite defying global appeals against the provocation. North Korean media reportedly said that any attempt to obstruct its plan for space development will face severe counteraction and reiterated its right to launch a satellite. Meanwhile, the US has cautioned that Pyongyang will have to suffer consequences if it continues with reckless provocations.<sup>45</sup>

South Korean Unification Ministry confirmed plans to send a technical team to North Korea to renovate amenities situated at Mount Kumgang for the upcoming family reunions scheduled on October 20-26. Earlier a technical team along with officials already visited the facilities to check their status and indicated that while there are no big issues, few things need to be repaired before the reunion. The same facilities were used for family reunions in February 2014.<sup>46</sup>

## C. Russia

### Russia: Domestic

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Around 2,500 Russian citizens fighting alongside Islamic State; Poll says Russians general satisfaction with life has fallen; Russians incomes fall at fastest pace in 8 months; Russian Arctic shelf recoverable reserves estimated at 447 million tonnes of oil and 10 trillion cubic meters of gas; Gazprom to launch drilling in Barents Sea in 2019 and in Kara Sea in 2018; Russian Energy Strategy to 2035 calls for giving independent companies access to export pipelines; Russian Energy Ministry leaves open possibility of oil output decline if crude prices decline further; Russia conducts military exercise involving 95,000 troops; Rosatom to develop nuclear reactor for long-range space missions; Poll shows Russians tiring of Ukrainian coverage; Russia starts work on developing electromagnetic catapult for aircraft carriers.**

The Chairperson of Russian Civic Chamber's commission on developing public diplomacy and supporting compatriots abroad Elena Sutormina has said, on September 17, that around 2,500 Russian nationals and 7,000 citizens of other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries are fighting alongside the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. She added that

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<sup>44</sup> "FM Yun Calls For Future-Oriented Ties With Japan Based On History Awareness", *The Korea Herald*, September 20, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150920000263>

<sup>45</sup> "N. Korea Renews Its Vow To Launch Satellite", *The Korea Herald*, September 20, 2015 <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150918001022>

<sup>46</sup> "S. Koreans To Visit NK Soon To Repair Facilities For Family Reunions", *The Korea Herald*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150918000567>

the IS recruiters pay special attention to remote auls and villages where young people have no prospects.<sup>47</sup>

Russia's national pollster VTsIOM has found that most of those polled are far less happy with life than they were a year ago. According to an August 22-23, 2015 poll, Russians satisfaction-with-life index in August 2015 was down by 21 points to 56 from 77 points in the same month last year. However, the poll does reveal the fact that people's opinion of the state of affairs in the economy is considerably higher than it was in the aftermath of the 2008-09 global economic crisis. VTsIOM specialists polled 1,600 men and women in 132 communities and cities in 46 regions, territories and republics of Russia. The error margin was no greater than 3.5 per cent.<sup>48</sup>

Russia's official federal statistics agency (Rosstat) has published a report on September 17, according to which Russians' wages in August fell at their fastest pace since the start of the year. The data also showed a continuing decline in capital investment, industrial output and retail spending. Average wages dropped by 6 per cent to 31,870 roubles (US\$ 485) per month. Inflation stood at 15.8 per cent. Official unemployment in August remained unchanged from July at 4.1 million people, or 5.3 per cent of the working population. Rather than laying off workers, many companies have responded to the economic crisis by cutting the hours and pay of their staff.<sup>49</sup>

Russian Deputy Energy Minister Kirill Molodtsov has said, on September 15, that the initial recoverable proven reserves of the Arctic shelf of Russia make up 447 million tonnes of oil and 10.142 trillion cubic meters of gas. According to the forecast of the Energy Ministry, the production of shelf oil will increase from the current 17 to 20 million tonnes by 2020.<sup>50</sup>

The Head of Gazprom's production Vsevolod Cherepanov has said that Gazprom will launch drilling in the Kara Sea in 2018 and Barents Sea in 2019. He added that the company has already carried out exploration drilling in the Kara Sea in 2015 and plans a scheduled interruption in this area for 2016-2017.<sup>51</sup>

First Deputy Minister of Energy Alexey Teksler has said that the Russian Energy Strategy to 2035 calls for 'giving independent gas producers access to export of pipeline gas'. He also confirmed plans for 'transition to market formation of domestic gas prices after 2020'. Earlier, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak had said that it was possible to grant access to independent gas producers to the Power of Siberia pipeline. He added that independent

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<sup>47</sup> "Around 2,500 Russian Citizens Fighting Alongside Islamic State — Civic Chamber", *Itar-Tass*, September 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/821862>

<sup>48</sup> "Russians' General Satisfaction With Life Dwindles — Poll", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/society/821207>

<sup>49</sup> "Russians' Incomes Fall at Fastest Pace in 8 Months", *The Moscow Times*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russians-incomes-fall-at-fastest-pace-in-8-months/531560.html>

<sup>50</sup> "Russian Arctic Shelf Recoverable Reserves Reach 447 mt of oil, 10 Trillion Cub m. Of Gas", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/821073>

<sup>51</sup> "Gazprom to Launch Drilling In Barents Sea in 2019, in Kara Sea in 2018", *Itar-Tass*, September 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/821482>

companies are likely to get an opportunity to sell gas to Gazprom at a competitive price, which is close to the export price. The Power of Siberia is a gas transportation system designed to deliver gas from the Yakutsk and Irkutsk gas production centres in Siberia to Russia's Far East and China. Its planned capacity is 61 billion cubic meters per year.<sup>52</sup>

Russia's First Deputy Energy Minister Alexei Texler does not rule out a decline in oil output if crude prices go down further. He stated that 'it is possible if the price is lower than the current level. It's obvious that amid such prices the Arctic shelf development will be out of the question. We base all our plans on boosting output in the Arctic on projections that we've announced of oil price growth to US\$ 80 per barrel within 5 years.<sup>53</sup>

Russia has on September 14 launched 2015's largest military exercises - Centre-2015 in the Central Military District. The drill involves about 95,000 troops, 7,000 pieces of military equipment and 170 warplanes and 20 ships. The manoeuvres will check the readiness of the military command and control bodies of the CSTO member states armed forces to manage the coalition force groupings in the localisation of an international armed conflict and blocking and destruction of illegal armed groups in the course of joint operations.<sup>54</sup>

Rosatom Deputy CEO for Innovation Management Vyacheslav Pershukov has said, on September 14, that the corporation will manufacture a prototype megawatt-class nuclear reactor by 2018 for long-range space flights. The project is expected to cost 20 billion roubles (US\$ 295 million).<sup>55</sup>

Russia's state-run pollster VTsIOM has reported, in a survey published on September 16, that Russians are becoming less interested in what is happening in neighbouring Ukraine amid reports of decreased military activity in the country. According to the poll, 71 per cent of Russians are currently following events in Ukraine, including 25 per cent of respondents who say they are following them closely. This is in contrast to January 2015, when 83 per cent said that they were following events in Ukraine, with 38 per cent doing so closely. The poll was conducted among 1,600 respondents with a margin of error not exceeding 3.5 percent.<sup>56</sup>

Russia has started developing an electromagnetic catapult for new-generation aircraft carriers with a prototype having already been made.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Russian Energy Strategy Includes Giving Independent Companies Access To Export Pipelines", *Itar-Tass*, September 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/822134>

<sup>53</sup> "Russian Energy Ministry Leaves Open Possibility Of Oil Output Decline If Crude Prices Drop", *Itar-Tass*, September 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/822161>

<sup>54</sup> "Major Military Exercise Involving 95,000 Troops Starts in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, September 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/820843>

<sup>55</sup> "Rosatom to Develop Nuclear Reactor For Long-Range Space Missions", *Itar-Tass*, September 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/science/820985>

<sup>56</sup> "Russians Tiring of Ukraine Coverage, Poll Shows", *Itar-Tass*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-tiring-of-ukraine-coverage-poll-shows/531132.html>

<sup>57</sup> "Aircraft Carrier Electromagnetic Catapult In Development in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, September 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/821618>

## Russia: International

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Russian Foreign Minister says that the US coalition against the Islamic State may have 'different purpose'; Putin says Russia will keep offering military-technical help to Damascus in the fight against the IS; Kremlin does not rule out possibility of dialogue with the US on Syria; Russia denies report of sending soldiers to Syria; President Putin has a telephone conversation with the King of Saudi Arabia; Foreign Minister Lavrov says that Russia and Turkey pursue common goals for Middle East settlement; Russian Defence Ministry to establish CSTO crisis response centre; CSTO members sign agreement on military contingent and cargo transportation.**

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has accused the US of not initiating air strikes against the Islamic State (IS) militants despite having information about their positions. He stated that 'our American counterparts either from the very beginning were establishing the coalition not thoroughly enough, or the idea was it should have the goals other from those declared. Analysis of the coalition's aviation causes weird impressions. The suspicions are besides the declared goal of fighting the Islamic State there is something else in that coalition's goals'. Mr. Lavrov added that it is 'absurd' to exclude the Syrian military from fighting the Islamic State (IS), as the governmental military is the most effective force on the ground'.<sup>58</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, during the summit meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) held in Dushanbe on September 15 that Russia will keep providing military-technical assistance to Damascus in the fight against the Islamic State terrorists. He also urged other countries to join Moscow and added 'it is evident that without an active participation of the Syrian authorities and military, without participation of the Syrian army inside the territory, as the military say, in fight against Islamic State, terrorists cannot be expelled from that country and from the region on the whole, the multi-national and multi-confessional Syrian people cannot be protected against destruction, enslavement and barbarity'. Mr. Putin proposed a broad coalition of the Syrian government, Kurdish militias, moderate opposition and other countries in the region to tackle the Islamic State threat.<sup>59</sup>

Russian Presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has, on September 15, emphasised on the importance of a dialogue between Russia and the US on Syria in order to find consensus and understanding of each other's positions. He added that Russia will not rule out the possibility of a dialogue between the two Presidents, but argued that so far there has been no arrangement on this front.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Lavrov: US Coalition Against Islamic State May Have Different Purposes", *Itar-Tass*, September 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/820762>

<sup>59</sup> "Russia will Keep Offering Military-Technical Help To Damascus In Fight with IS — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/821110>

<sup>60</sup> "Kremlin does not Rule Out Possibility Of Dialogue on Syria with US", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/821082>

Russia's Defence Ministry has denied media reports of Russian contract soldiers of the Eastern military district being sent to Syria. Earlier, the Gazeta.ru news portal had published report claiming that Russia's contract soldiers have refused to be sent to Syria. Earlier, Syria's Foreign Minister Walid Muallem had said that Damascus will ask Russia to send its troops to fight on the side of the Syrian army if such a need arose. Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has stated that Russia 'will consider Syria's request to send troops if Damascus asks for it, but it is hard to talk about hypothetically'.<sup>61</sup>

Russian President Putin had a telephone conversation with the King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud on September 16. The Kremlin press statement stated that the 'two leaders discussed issues pertaining to the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, taking into account the many clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces at the al-Aqsa Mosque and Temple Mount sites. They also expressed a mutual desire to promote further development in Russian-Saudi cooperation in priority areas and agreed to maintain regular bilateral contacts at various levels'.<sup>62</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia and Turkey are pursuing the same goal of achieving peaceful settlement in the Middle East despite the differences in their approach. During a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Feridun Sinirlioglu, held in Sochi on September 17, Mr. Lavrov added that the two countries 'improve the exchange of views on a whole range of international issues such as the situation in Syria and the entire Middle East region and North Africa'.<sup>63</sup>

Russia's Defence Ministry will establish a crisis response centre of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The new centre will be based at an information technology complex for software and hardware development, which is currently being equipped in one of the Russian Defence Ministry's military towns near Moscow. The centre is expected to help member states deal with major security threats.<sup>64</sup>

Member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), during the September 15 summit meeting in Dushanbe, have signed an agreement on military contingent and cargo transportation. The members have also decided to extend an agreement on the logistics and technical support of railways. Meanwhile, the decision on introducing a rotation of the post of the Secretary General of CSTO has been approved.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Russia's Defense Ministry Denies Report On Contract Soldiers Sent to Syria", *Itar-Tass*, September 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/822133>

<sup>62</sup> "Telephone Conversation With King Of Saudi Arabia Salman Bin Abdulaziz al-Saud", *President of Russia*, September 16, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50305>

<sup>63</sup> "Lavrov: Russia, Turkey Pursue Common Goals For Middle East Settlement", *Itar-Tass*, September 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/821852>

<sup>64</sup> "Russian Defense Ministry Creating Post-Soviet Military Bloc Crisis Response Center", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/821058>

<sup>65</sup> "Post-Soviet Military Bloc Signs Agreement On Military Contingent, Cargo Transportation", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/821130>

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Russia's UN envoy says that the UN is far from agreeing to a universal formula to expand the UNSC; Iran hopes for Russia's participation in financing construction of Bushehr's 2 new units; Russia has blocked US proposal for additional UN sanctions on South Sudan; US General sees U.S. air force's advantage over Russia shrinking; Ukraine introduces sanctions against 105 Russian companies and 388 officials; Gazprom says all strategic issues of winter package bilateral agreements with Ukraine have been settled; Russia's Foreign Ministry says Estonia's language policy violates rights of national minorities; Russia to establish an air base in Belarus; Russia-Kazakhstan inter-regional cooperation forum meeting takes place in Sochi.**

Russia's Permanent Representative at the UN Vitaly Churkin has said, on September 15, that the UN member countries are still far away from agreeing to a universal formula needed for expanding the UN Security Council. He stated that 'the problem is rooted not in the methodology of talks but - much deeper - in principled disagreements on key issues of the SC reforming'. He spoke following the UN resolution that postponed the debate with regard to the UNSC reform to the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. Russia had supported the resolution.<sup>66</sup>

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Ali Akbar Salehi has said, on September 15, that Iran 'hopes for Russia's assistance in financing a project for the construction of two new power units at the Bushehr nuclear power plant'. In November 2014, the two countries had signed a number of agreements on the construction of eight nuclear power units in Iran, including a contract for the construction of the Bushehr's second stage that provided for the building of two nuclear units with a possible expansion to four units. Earlier, Deputy Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Ahmadian had said that investments in the construction of Bushehr's two new power units might reach US\$ 30 billion. Russia and Iran also plan to build four more power units at other plants.<sup>67</sup>

Russia has, on September 16, objected to a U.S. bid to impose UNSC sanctions, including global travel ban and asset freeze, on South Sudan's army chief and a rebel commander for their roles in the country's more than 20-month conflict. Russia, Angola and Venezuela have requested that the proposal be put on hold. A hold does not mean the proposal is dead, but it delays its consideration. Diplomats have said that Angola wants to give the parties more time to implement the peace deal.<sup>68</sup>

The Commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe General Frank Gorenc has expressed concern over Russia's plans to increase the quantity and quality of its aircraft and field unmanned

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<sup>66</sup> "UN Countries Far From Universal Formula To Expand SC - Russia's UN Envoy", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/821049>

<sup>67</sup> "Iran Hopes For Russia's Participation In Financing Construction Of Bushehr's 2 New Units", *Itar-Tass*, September 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/821310>

<sup>68</sup> "Russia Blocks U.S. Proposal for More South Sudan Sanctions at UN", *The Moscow Times*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-blocks-us-proposal-for-more-south-sudan-sanctions-at-un/530935.html>

aircraft. He stated that ‘the advantage that we had from the air, I can honestly say, is shrinking. I don't think it's controversial to say they've closed the gap in capability’. Meanwhile, the U.S. Air Force is completing the first deployment of an unmanned MQ-1 Predator drone in Latvia, which will be the first such deployment in European airspace.<sup>69</sup>

Ukrainian President Poroshenko has approved a list under which Kiev has imposed sanctions on 105 Russian companies and 388 individuals. The companies under sanctions include Aeroflot and other air carriers like Transaero, Ural Airlines, Siberia and Orenburg Airline, Gazpromavia Airline, Gazprombank, Bank of Moscow and Kaspersky Laboratory. According to the document, sanctions against companies provide for ‘blocking of assets — temporary restriction of the company's right to use and dispose of owned property and suspension of performance of economic and financial obligations including prohibition of extending credits, loans, financial assistance, guarantees; prohibition of lending through purchase of securities; prohibition of securities' acquisitions’. Meanwhile, the key individuals sanctioned include Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu, Russian President's advisor Sergey Glazyev and State Duma Speaker Sergey Naryshkin. The document bans entry to the country, as well as blocks the individuals' assets placed in the country.<sup>70</sup>

Gazprom's CEO Alexey Miller has said, on September 16, that all fundamental issues of winter package bilateral agreements with Ukraine have been settled. He added that the price level will be comparable and competitive with Ukraine EU neighbours. Meanwhile, Gazprom will refrain from the Take or Pay clause for the next two quarters.<sup>71</sup>

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has said that Estonia's language policy is running counter to the recommendations from international human rights institutes on ensuring the rights of national minorities. She was commenting on the Estonian government's refusal to permit a number of Tallinn-based schools to continue educational ‘process’ in Russian.<sup>72</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has given the go-ahead for the signing of a contract that will lead to the establishment of a Russian air base in Belarus. A corresponding document was released on September 19 on the official internet-portal for legal information.<sup>73</sup>

The 12<sup>th</sup> Russia-Kazakhstan inter-regional cooperation forum meeting has taken place in Sochi on September 16. The theme for the 2015 meeting was ‘cooperation in agriculture sector and food security’. The meeting was attended by the Presidents of the two countries – Vladimir

<sup>69</sup> “General Sees U.S. Air Force's Advantage over Russia Shrinking”, *The Moscow Times*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/general-sees-us-air-forces-advantage-over-russia-shrinking/530634.html>

<sup>70</sup> “Ukraine Introduces Sanctions Against 105 Russian Companies And 388 Officials”, *Itar-Tass*, September 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/821658>

<sup>71</sup> “Gazprom: All Strategic Issues Of Winter Package Bilateral Agreements With Ukraine Settled”, *Itar-Tass*, September 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/821636>

<sup>72</sup> “Russian Foreign Ministry: Estonia's Language Policy Violates Rights Of National Minorities”, *Itar-Tass*, September 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/822221>

<sup>73</sup> “Putin Instructs Ministers to Ink Deal to Establish Air Base in Belarus”, *Sputnik News*, September 19, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150919/1027233115.html>

Putin and Nursultan Nazarbayev - apart from heads of 28 Russian and Kazakhstani regions. Their bilateral trade in 2014 stood at US\$ 21 billion.<sup>74</sup>

## India-Russia Relations

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Russia assures India of support on UNSC permanent seat bid; Russian defence firm signs contract to deliver spare parts for T-72 tanks to India.**

Russia has assured its support to India for permanent membership in the UN Security Council, days after it along with the US and China refused to contribute to the text for negotiations on reforms which was seen as a move to thwart India's bid for the seat. The assurance was made by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov during a meeting with Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs Sujata Mehta held on September 15 when the two sides held wide-ranging discussions on the agenda of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary session of the UN General Assembly.<sup>75</sup>

Russian defence enterprise Uralvagonzavod has signed a contract, at the Russia Arms Expo - 2015 arms exhibition held in September 2015, for the delivery of spare parts for T-72 tanks to India. The contract is for 2 years.<sup>76</sup>

## D. West Asia

### Iran

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Iran welcomes China's role in reconstructing Arak reactor; Leader calls political and cultural infiltration highly dangerous; European firms negotiating to boost Iran's oil production in Persian Gulf.**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran welcomes China's role in implementing a plan to reconstruct the Arak heavy-water reactor. China played a "constructive" role in the nuclear talks and the country should continue to play a positive role in implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, he said during a joint press conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on September 15. He also said that the governments are duty-bound to implement their commitments in the international areas and the U.S. government is committed to removing the sanctions.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> "XII Forum of Interregional Cooperation of Russia and Kazakhstan", *President of Russia*, September 16, 2015 at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50299>

<sup>75</sup> "Russia Assures India of Support on UNSC Permanent Seat Bid", *The Economic Times*, September 16, 2015, at [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/48988437.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/48988437.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>76</sup> "Russian Defense Firm Signs Contract To Deliver Spare Parts For T-72 Tanks to India", *Itar-Tass*, September 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/820861>

<sup>77</sup> "Iran Welcomes China's Role In Reconstructing Arak Reactor", *Tehran Times*, September 16, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=249436](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249436). Accessed on 20 September 2015

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said that the efforts by the enemy to infiltrate into the country are one of the major threats facing the Islamic Republic. The Leader made the remarks during a meeting with commanders and officials of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Tehran. "Economic and security infiltration are less important than intellectual, cultural and political infiltration; however, various officials especially the IRGC should prevent the infiltration powerfully," the Leader noted. He said that the enemy is seeking to infiltrate into the country culturally and gradually change the people's beliefs.<sup>78</sup>

Iran is negotiating with companies from France, Norway, Italy, and Ukraine to boost production of oil from its Persian Gulf's oilfields, according to the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC)'s Managing Director Saeid Hafezi. Hafezi said the oilfields' output is planned to be raised to 32,000 barrels per day (bpd), 130,000 bpd and 400,000 bpd in three short, mid and long-term periods, respectively, the *Shana News Agency* reported. He said IOOC has signed a preliminary agreement with a Norwegian-Austrian company for development of Esfandiar Oilfield.<sup>79</sup>

## Iraq and Syria

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Kurdistan president Barzani discusses with US delegation for liberating Mosul city; Syrian army has killed over 60 terrorists in the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus; Russia to join Syrian fight against terrorism.**

The presidency of the region said in a press statement received by *IraqiNews.com* that "the president of the Kurdistan region Massoud Barzani met with Deputy Brett McGurk, US Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones, the coordinator of the Special Forces in the US Army Gen. James Terry and Commander of US forces in Iraq, Gen. Tony Thomas," adding that "The two sides have held talk about the conditions on the ground to confront ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the preparations of Mosul liberation and how to defeat the terrorists, as well as discussing the political situation in the region and relations between Baghdad and the region." The presidency added, "the two sides discussed the joint work between the coalition forces and the Peshmerga alongside the Iraqi forces," indicating that "America confirmed its support for the Kurdistan region and help the Peshmerga forces."<sup>80</sup>

According to the official news agency (SANA), army units killed today 13 terrorists affiliated to the so-called the 'Jaish al-Islam' [Islam Army], including 2 ringleaders, in Harasta city and in and outside Duma city in Damascus countryside. The 'Jaish al-Fateh' terrorists, who are

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<sup>78</sup> "Leader Calls Political and Cultural Infiltration Highly Dangerous", *Tehran Times*, September 17, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=249459](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249459). Accessed on September 20, 2015

<sup>79</sup> "European Firms Negotiating to Boost Iran's Oil Production in Persian Gulf", *Tehran Times*, September 17, 2015 at [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=249507](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=249507). Accessed on September 20, 2015

<sup>80</sup> "Barzani Discusses with US Delegation the Preparations of Mosul Liberation", *Iraqi News*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/barzani-discusses-us-delegation-preparations-mosul-liberation/>. Accessed on September 18, 2015

linked to the Saudi regime, have received knockdown blows over the past few days as army units recaptured Abo Zied hill and surrounding hills overlooking Damascus-Homs highway in Harasta suburb in the wake of concentrated operations during which large numbers of terrorists were eliminated. Further terrorists affiliated to the al-Nusra Front were killed in Bosra al-Sham city in the south-eastern countryside of Daraa and in al-Hamedeyeh town in the north-western countryside of Quneitra as well as in Briqa town in the south-eastern countryside of the same province.<sup>81</sup>

Russia's participation in the fight against "ISIL" and "al-Nusra Front" terrorist organizations will turn the table on the parties which conspired against Syria and will prove that the United States and its anti-terror coalition have no clear strategy to fight "ISIL", Deputy Premier, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Walid al-Moallem has underlined. "We trust the leadership of the Russian Federation and its Determination to take part in the fight against terrorism," al-Moallem told the "Russia Today" Channel. He stressed that the Syrian government is not against holding political dialogue in parallel with terrorism fighting.<sup>82</sup>

## Israel and Palestine

(September 14-20 2015)

- **Clashes at Al Aqsa mosque on Temple Mount; Netanyahu tells Courts: Israel must impose harsh penalties on stone-throwers; Former Finance Minister of Israel endorses Saudi initiative for a two state solution.**

Muslims and Israeli police clashed at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on the Temple Mount for a second straight day on September 14, 2015, prompting at least three arrests, police said. Police said they entered the hilltop compound to ensure that Muslim youths massing there did not harass Jews or tourists during the morning visiting hours. The site is sacred to both Jews and Muslims. Security forces on September 14 found pipe bombs on the Temple Mount, in an operation carried out hours before Jews prepared to celebrate the New Year. The Shin Bet security service alerted police to the cache, apparently an effort by Palestinians to stock up on bombs, flares and rocks ahead of an organized riot.<sup>83</sup>

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has joined Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan's criticism of the Israeli court system's methods of dealing with the legal punishments given to stone-throwers. Netanyahu stressed that he wants severe minimum sentences to be imposed on those who throw stones or firebombs. Netanyahu also discussed the escalating violence on

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<sup>81</sup> "Syrian Forces Kill 60 Terrorists Linked to Saudi and Turkey Regimes", *Syria Times*, September 18, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/19664-syrian-army-kills-60-terrorists-linked-to-saudi-and-turkish-regimes>. Accessed on September 30, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> "Al-Moallem: We Trust Russia's Leadership, Determination to Take Part in the Fight against Terrorism", *Syria Times*, September 20, 2015 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/19688-al-moallem-we-trust-russia-s-leadership-determination-to-take-part-in-the-fight-against-terrorism>. Accessed on September 30, 2015

<sup>83</sup> "Fresh Clashes at Temple Mount after a Day of Clashes", *Times of Israel*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/clashes-resume-at-temple-mountain-after-day-of-violence/>. Accessed on September 18, 2015

Temple Mount, and said it was not Israel that was trying to change the status quo at the holy site. According to Netanyahu, it is the Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian Authority and the Islamist Movement in Israel that are flaming the tensions there.<sup>84</sup>

Yesh Atid party chairman Yair Lapid said that Israel should accept the Arab Peace Initiative, put forward in 2002 by Saudi Arabia, as the basis for negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab world. In a lengthy foreign policy speech, Lapid lambasted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a "failed diplomatic policy," and said it was unacceptable that Israel had yet to respond to the plan in the 13 years since it was first proposed by Saudi King Abdullah. He also accused Netanyahu of damaging relations with the United States by taking on the Obama administration over blocking the Iran nuclear deal, thereby weakening Israel's position in the region. Lapid said Israel's shared concerns with Gulf States over the Iran deal should have been seized as an opportunity for regional cooperation.

## The Gulf

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **UAE troops are close to Sanaa; King Salman calls on the international community for a quick redressal of the Al Aqsa crisis.**

As fighting rages on in Yemen, troops from the UAE that are part of a Saudi-led coalition battling Houthi rebels are pushing towards the country's rebel-held capital, Sanaa, after securing a strategic provincial city, the commander of an Emirati contingent said. They hope their campaign will push the rebels out and help restore Yemen's legitimate government, Emirati Brig-Gen. Ali Saif Al Kaabi told reporters during a visit to the front-lines, insisting the coalition forces were not "coming to occupy Yemen".<sup>85</sup>

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia, has appealed to UN chief Ban Ki-moon and members of the Security Council for "urgent measures" after clashes at occupied Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque compound, state media reported. "He called for serious and speedy international efforts and for the intervention of the Security Council to take all urgent measures to stop these violations," it said.<sup>86</sup>

## India and West Asia

(September 14-20 2015)

- **Death toll of Indians rises to 11 during Hajj.**

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<sup>84</sup> "Netanyahu Tells Court: Israel Must Impose Harsh Penalties on Stone Throwers", *Hareetz*, September 20, 2015 at <http://www.hareetz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.676788>. Accessed on 18 September 2015

<sup>85</sup> "UAE Troops Are Close to Sanaa: Commander al Kaabi", *Khaleej Times*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/uae-troops-are--close-to-sanaa>. Accessed on 30 September 2015

<sup>86</sup> "Saudi King Seeks Urgent UN Action on Al Aqsa", *Khaleej Times*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/region/saudi-arabia/saudi-king-seeks-urgent-un-action-on-al-aqsa>. Accessed on 30 September 2015

Reports from Mecca are indicating that the death toll of Indians during Hajj has increased to 11. Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup stated in tweets that “after opening of mortuary on Sunday night, officers working with family members have confirmed that 9 more Indians have sadly died” in the accident.<sup>87</sup>

## E. The United State of America

### National

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **DOD official says protections against cyber threats require change in culture; Need to change the narrative that Muslims represent terrorism and extremist ideologies; Military must embrace the future to remain the best force; Foreign policy issues dominated the Republican presidential debate on September 16.**

The US Defence Department's chief information officer, Terry Halvorsen said in Washington on September 17 that a change in culture is needed to protect against threats in the rapidly changing cyber domain. At the 6th Annual Billington Cybersecurity Summit, Halvorsen highlighted three areas in cyber culture he said need to be addressed: discipline, economics and enterprise. Halvorsen said, cyber, the fifth domain in warfare, is different from other warfare areas because of the rapid speed at which things change. He said that the United States is dependent on cyber more than probably any other nation, certainly more than any other military in the world. While that gives America some "really powerful advantages" in warfare and business, it also makes it the "most vulnerable to cyber interdiction."<sup>88</sup>

U.S. Representative Andre Carson, one of only two Muslims in Congress said that it is important to push back "against the narrative that Muslims represent terrorism and extremist ideologies". The Indiana Democrat told *VOA Urdu* that Muslims need to present a positive image to American society.<sup>89</sup>

On September 16, US Defence Secretary Ash Carter said that the military must embrace the future to remain the best force. Speaking at the Air Force Association's Air and Space Conference and Technology Exposition 2015 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Centre in National Harbour, Md., Carter said, "Reinventing the Aerospace Nation," could not be more appropriate in the year marking the 100th anniversary of the first successful use of combat aircraft. He said, "Over the past century, no nation has used air power to demonstrate its global reach, to compress time and space like the United States". He added today it's vital

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<sup>87</sup> "Makkah Crane Tragedy: Death Toll of Indians Rises to 11", *iFreepress*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.ifreepress.com/makkah-crane-tragedy-death-toll-of-indians-rises-to-11/>. Accessed on September 30, 2015

<sup>88</sup> Ferdinando, Lisa, "Cybersecurity Demands Culture Change, DoD Official Says", *DoD News*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617767/cybersecurity-demands-culture-change-dod-official-says>

<sup>89</sup> "Muslims Must Counter Negative Image in US, Congressmen Say", *VOA Urdu Service*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/muslims-counter-negative-image-united-states/2969802.html>

to innovate and reinvest in the people, strategies and technologies that will sustain the U.S. military's dominance into a second aerospace century.<sup>90</sup>

Foreign affairs such as Iran nuclear deal, a rising China and assertive Russia, and the Islamic State group were a central focus at the Republican presidential debate on September 16. Each of the 11 Republican candidates participated argued they offer the strongest alternative to what they see as the weak policies of President Barack Obama.<sup>91</sup>

## International: Asia

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **U.S. Congress fails to kill the Iran nuclear deal; Coalition against the ISIL requires "more than the military campaign to be successful"; Dempsey says Syrian refugee crisis could cause Europe to become "more involved in the Syrian conflict"; Syrian Kurd fighters against the ISIL supports Iraq's fight; US and Coalition forces continued to attack ISIL; DoD's rebalance strategy to the Asia-Pacific region safeguards U.S. interests and military access; U.S. and Chinese state and city officials sign the Climate Leaders Declaration; US warns North Korea to 'refrain' from aggravating regional tensions.**

As Iran makes the changes required so that economic sanctions can be lifted, the U.S. Congress has failed to kill the Iran nuclear deal, and in another month the accord will begin to go into effect. October 18 is Adoption Day, senior Obama administration officials announced at a state department briefing on September 17. On that day, they said, Iran will start to remove thousands of centrifuges and put them into storage.<sup>92</sup>

The US undersecretary of defence for policy, Christine E. Wormuth told before the Senate Armed Services Committee with Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the commander of U.S. Central Command that the coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has made gains, but it will take "more than the military campaign to be successful". Wormuth said, the coalition campaign has degraded ISIL's military capacity, removed some of its key leaders and enabled gains by local forces in Iraq and Syria. The undersecretary however said, "Achieving a lasting defeat against ISIL is going to require a continued commitment, strong leadership from the United States and the global coalition, as well as commitment and sacrifice from local forces in Iraq and Syria".<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Lyle, Amaani, "Carter: DoD Must Embrace Future to Remain Best Force", *DoD News*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617457/carter-dod-must-embrace-future-to-remain-best-force>

<sup>91</sup> Gallo, William, "Foreign Policy Dominates Republican Debate", *VOA News*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/foreign-policy-dominates-republican-debate/2967368.html>

<sup>92</sup> Dockins, Pamela, "Iran Nuclear Deal Withstands Final Vote in Congress", *VOA News*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-implementation-of-iran-nuclear-deal-to-go-forward/2967894.html>

<sup>93</sup> Ferdinando, Lisa, "'Continued Commitment' Needed in ISIL Fight, Defense Official Says", *DoD News*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617487/continued-commitment-needed-in-isil-fight-defense-official-says>

According to Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Syrian refugee crisis and the "terrible human suffering" could cause Europe to become "more involved in the Syrian conflict". Dempsey, who retires at the end of this month, said he could not predict if the current U.S. strategy for Syria would change. He added, "The reason I don't know is literally the refugee crisis". He said, the U.S. strategy focuses on efforts against the ISIL. The efforts include a partnership with the Iraqi government, trying to create a diplomatic path to Syria, and conducting air strikes in Iraq and Syria against ISIL. He was satisfied with the actions of the United States in carrying out the mission it planned. But he said, speaking as "General Dempsey" and "citizen Dempsey," there is no way anyone could be satisfied with the outcome.<sup>94</sup>

Speaking to reporters at the Pentagon via teleconference, U.S. Central Command Patrick Ryder said on September 18 that gains made by Syrian Kurd fighters against the ISIL have also lent support to Iraq's fight against the extremist group by disrupting ISIL's freedom of movement between the two countries. Ryder emphasized U.S. and coalition forces are also supporting and enabling Syrian Kurd opposition fighters in its train-and-equip programme.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq.<sup>96</sup>

The US assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific security affairs, David Shear told a Senate panel on September 17 that the Defence Department's rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region is a strategy that safeguards U.S. interests and military access, builds partner capabilities and preserves stability in that part of the world. Shear said, the strategy reflects U.S. interests and the importance of maritime peace and security in a critical part of the world. He added, it is also one part of a larger strategy to protect American interests in "international law, freedom of navigation, unimpeded lawful commerce, and peaceful resolution of disputes".<sup>97</sup>

At the conclusion of the two-day event on September 16, U.S. state and city officials and their Chinese counterparts signed the Climate Leaders Declaration, pledging to establish targets to

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<sup>94</sup> Ferdinando, Lisa, "Dempsey: 'Terrible Human Suffering' in Syrian Conflict", *DoD News*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617046/dempsey-terrible-human-suffering-in-syrian-conflict>; and, Babb, Carla, "Top US General: Refugee Crisis Likely to Galvanize Europe in Syrian Conflict", *VOA News*, September 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/refugee-crisis-likely-to-galvanize-europe-in-syria-conflict/2962180.html>

<sup>95</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "Centcom Spokesman: Syrian Kurd Fighters Disrupt ISIL Movement", *DoD News*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617879/centcom-spokesman-syrian-kurd-fighters-disrupt-isil-movement>

<sup>96</sup> "Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL Terrorists in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617812/airstrikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

<sup>97</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "DoD's Maritime Strategy Addresses Nation's Asia-Pacific Interests", *DoD News*, September 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/617759/dods-maritime-strategy-addresses-nations-asia-pacific-interests>

limit greenhouse emissions. The meeting, known as the U.S.-China Climate Leaders Summit, was the first of its kind at the provincial and city level between the two nations.<sup>98</sup>

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said on September 15 that North Korea "should refrain" from actions "that serve only to aggravate regional tensions and should focus instead on fulfilling its international obligations and commitments." The White House issued the statement after North Korea warned it is ready to use nuclear weapons against the United States at "any time."<sup>99</sup>

## India-US Relations

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Finance Minister Jaitley invites U.S. businesses to help raise bilateral trade to \$500 billion; US and Indian officials will address the first US-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue; India and the US officials start discussions to jointly develop a next-generation aircraft carrier; US says India's current policy of 49 per cent FDI limit not enough for transferring defence technologies.**

In his address at the 11th Indo-U.S. Economic Summit on September 14, India's Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that the Indian government was making every effort to put in place a predictable and fair tax regime, and invited U.S. businesses to help raise bilateral trade between India and the U.S. to \$500 billion. Finance Minister Jaitley said that "There is need for us to have several internal changes, including quick decision-making, stable policies, predictable tax regime and improve ease of doing business". He emphasised that "Our objective is to build on Indo-U.S. bilateral relations. We have a large number of resources while they have the capital".<sup>100</sup> He also expressed hope that the target of raising Indo-US bilateral trade to \$ 500 billion from \$ 100 billion currently would be achieved in the next few years. "There is a lot of space in the infrastructure sector... like roads, ports, railways and clean energy", Jaitley said.<sup>101</sup>

India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, US Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry will address the first US-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue which is scheduled in Washington next week. Other high-ranking government officials and business leaders from both countries will also address the US-India Business Council's 40th Annual Leadership Summit on September 21. Ajay Banga, chairman of USIBC said, "It's a privilege for

<sup>98</sup> Lee, Elizabeth, "US, China Commit to Reduce Emissions", *VOA News*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/american-chinese-cities-and-states-commit-to-reduce-emissions/2967332.html>

<sup>99</sup> Bredemeier, Ken, "US Warns N. Korea Against 'Provocations'", *VOA News*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-warns-north-korea-against-provocations/2964978.html>

<sup>100</sup> Raghavan, TCA Sharad, "Indo-U.S. Trade Can Grow To \$500 Billion Soon: Jaitley", *The Hindu*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/indous-trade-can-grow-to-500-billion-soon-says-union-finance-minister-arun-jaitley/article7651528.ece>

<sup>101</sup> "Jaitley Exhorts U.S. Firms To Invest More In Infra Sector", *The Hindu*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/business/finance-minister-arun-jaitley-exhorts-us-cos-to-invest-more-in-infra/article7651339.ece>

USIBC to host government and business leaders from both countries on the eve of the US-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue and on the occasion of the council's 40th anniversary".<sup>102</sup>

As per news reports, India and the US have started discussions to jointly develop a next-generation aircraft carrier to bolster the Indian Navy's blue-water capabilities. In January 2015, India and the US had announced the establishment of a working group for the proposed aircraft carrier, which held its first meeting in Washington in August 2015. In an interview to *PTI*, Keith Webster, Director and International Cooperation Office of the Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, said, "There was an incredible amount of time spent on answering questions from the Indian delegation specific to how do we manage acquisition of an aircraft carrier, which is a hugely complex journey".<sup>103</sup>

Keith Webster also said that the current policy of 49 per cent FDI limit is not enough for transfer of high-tech defence technologies involving intellectual property rights as India and the US are expected to hold talks on jet engine technology. However, India has given assurance to the US that it is willing to waive of the current 49 per cent FDI limit on a case by case basis if there is a compelling case. Webster said, "They would definitely consider doing that. Our industries and government, we made clear that where there is industry anxiety over control of technology it (FDI) has to be greater than 49 per cent".<sup>104</sup>

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

### Jammu & Kashmir

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Clashes mark first-ever international marathon in Kashmir Valley; Protests erupt as J&K Police recover 3 bullet-riddled bodies in north Kashmir; Ex-militant shot dead, 3-yr old son succumbs to injuries in north Kashmir.**

<sup>102</sup> "Biden, Kerry, Sushma to Kick off US-India Dialogue", *Zee News*, September 15, 2015 at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/biden-kerry-sushma-to-kick-off-us-india-dialogue\\_1797595.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/biden-kerry-sushma-to-kick-off-us-india-dialogue_1797595.html); and, "Sushma Swaraj, Joe Biden to Address USIBC Meet On Its 40th Anniversary", *The American Bazar*, September 15, 2015 at <http://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2015/09/15/sushma-swaraj-joe-biden-to-address-usibc-meet-on-its-40th-anniversary/>

<sup>103</sup> "India, US Discuss Plans To Develop Next-Generation Aircraft Carrier", *The Economic Times*, September 16, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-us-discuss-plans-to-develop-next-generation-aircraft-carrier/articleshow/48984033.cms?prtpage=1>; and, "India-US Plan To Develop Next Generation Aircraft Carrier", *Defence News*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.defencenews.in/defence-news-internal.aspx?id=W0zTj9fpzk0=>

<sup>104</sup> "India's 49% FDI Limit Not Enough For Defence Technology Transfer: US", *The Economic Times*, September 18, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indias-49-fdi-limit-not-enough-for-defence-technology-transfer-us/articleshow/49009484.cms?prtpage=1>; and, "India's 49% FDI Cap In Defence Hindrance For Technology Transfer: US", *DNA News*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-india-s-49-fdi-in-defence-not-enough-for-technology-transfer-us-2126257>

The first-ever international half marathon in the Kashmir Valley on September 13 was marred by protests and clashes between youths and the security forces. Pro-freedom slogans were raised and a Pakistani flag waved during the protests. The youth hurled stones at police and paramilitary forces and vandalised the venue, removing signboards and damaging the LED screens. As the situation turned out of control, police resorted to lathicharge and fired teargas shells to disperse the protesters. Later, the police registered a case against some youth for “molesting” the girl participants. The organisers of the marathon, however, said they had no idea about any molestation incident. The event was organised by Big 92.7 FM.<sup>105</sup>

J&K police, on September 14, recovered three bullet-riddled bodies of young men from an orchard in a north Kashmir village. Police identified the youths as Amir Qadir Rishi of Hardshiva Sopore, Ashiq Hussain Wani of Lolipora Pattan and Naveed Ahmad Khan of Batapora Sopore. Of the three, one was a law graduate who police claimed had joined the ranks of militants last year and another B. Tech student who disappeared from Chandigarh a year ago. With no clarity on who was behind the killings, the recovery of the bodies from Shutz Dangerpora sparked protests in Pattan and Palhalalan areas.<sup>106</sup> Later, on September 15, Hizbul Mujahideen claimed that the three youths killed had recently joined the militant outfit and alleged that they were killed by the Special Operation Group of police. Meanwhile, clashes broke out between locals and police in major towns of north Kashmir, a day after the bodies were discovered. The Geelani-led faction of Hurriyat Conference and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has called for a shutdown of Kashmir on September 16.<sup>107</sup>

An ex-member of the militant outfit Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen and his son received bullets injuries when unidentified gunmen hurled a grenade and opened indiscriminate firing at them in north Kashmir’s Segipora village on September 18. Bashir Ahmad Bhat, who was carrying his three year-old son in the arms, died on the spot while his son Burhan, who was shifted to Srinagar’s SKIMS Hospital, died on September 19. Just hours after the father-son duo was attacked, the body of a Hizbul Mujahideen militant was recovered from a field of Devbugh village of Tangmarg, 40 km away from Srinagar. Identified as Fayaz Ahmad Bhat, a resident of Wayil, Pattan area, the killing sparked spontaneous violent protests. Several parts of north Kashmir witnessed a shutdown. Security forces used tear smoke shells and resorted to aerial firing as people participating in the last rites clashed with the police.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Masood, Bashaarat, “J&K: Protests Mar Kashmir Valley’s First-Ever International Marathon Event”, *The Indian Express*, September 14, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/jks-first-international-half-marathon-turns-into-azadi-protest-pakistani-flag-waved/>

<sup>106</sup> Ehsan, Mir, “Protests Erupt As 3 Youths Found Shot In The Head in J&K Orchard”, *The Indian Express*, September 15, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/protests-erupt-as-3-youths-found-shot-in-the-head-in-jk-orchard/>

<sup>107</sup> Ehsan Mir, “Three Killed Youths Whose Bodies Were Found in J&K Orchard Were Ours: Hizbul Mujahideen”, *The Indian Express*, September 16, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/three-killed-youths-whose-bodies-were-found-in-jk-orchard-were-ours-hizbul-mujahideen/>

<sup>108</sup> Ashiq, Peerzada, “Militant’s Three-Year-Old Son Succumbs To Injuries”, *The Hindu*, September 19, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/father-threeyearold-son-killed-in-kashmir/article7668257.ece>

## Northeast India

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Three PREPAK ultras arrested in Manipur; Centre bans NSCN (K); Assam: Political parties oppose Centre's move; Joint operation intensified to wipe out NDFB(S).**

Three militants, including a woman militant cadre, belonging to different factions of People's Revolutionary Army of Kangleipak (PREPAK) were arrested by combined forces from different parts in Manipur since September 10. A combined team of Assam Rifles picked up a cadre of PREPAK (PRO) group identified as K Naoba, self-styled corporal from Thoubal district, an Assam Rifles release said. A woman militant cadre of outlawed PREPAK was arrested by a combined team of lady police of Imphal East district and Assam Rifles during a vehicular check on September 10, the release said. She was identified as Chanchan (38) of Nongkam village near Moreh border. Yet another cadre of PREPAK (VC) group, a self-styled Lance Corporal Chingsubam Lalit of Imphal West district was arrested by Assam Rifles from Koirengei area of Imphal East district on September 10.<sup>109</sup>

In the face of NSCN (K)'s continued hostility and violence against the Indian security personnel from their bases in Myanmar, the Centre has decided to declare NSCN (K) as an unlawful organisation for a period of 5 years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The decision to declare NSCN (K) an unlawful organisation was taken in a Cabinet meeting held in New Delhi on September 16.<sup>110</sup>

Nine Opposition political parties in Assam have strongly opposed the Centre's decision to provide shelter to the foreigners who entered India up to December 31, 2014 due to religious persecution in their own countries and decided to bring out a procession to the Raj Bhawan on September 19 in protest of this move. A meeting comprising AGP, AIUDF, CPI, Ganamukti Sangram Assam, CPI (ML), NCP, Liberal Democratic Party and Samajwadi Party, held under the auspices of the AGP, demanded that the Assam Accord should be the basis for detection and deportation of foreigners from Assam.<sup>111</sup>

Additional troops with air support have been pressed into action in an intensified counter-insurgency operation against the NDFB(S) militants along the Indo-Bhutan border. The operation, which aims to wipe out the very existence of the NDFB(S) on the international border, has been strategically planned against most of the top leaders of the outfit, including Bidai, who are believed to be hiding on the Indian side of the border. Approximately 3,500 troops of the Indian Army, along with the Assam Police, CAPF and IAF, have launched a

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<sup>109</sup> "3 PREPAK Ultras Held", *The Assam Tribune*, September 14, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep1415/oth051>

<sup>110</sup> "NSCN (K) Banned By Centre For 5 Years", *The Assam Tribune*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep1715/at056>

<sup>111</sup> "9 Political Parties Oppose Centre's Move", *The Assam Tribune*, September 17, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep1715/at053>

massive operation against the NDFB (S), covering the dense Ripu, Chirang, Manas, Sonai Rupai and Behali reserve forests in Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Sonitpur districts.<sup>112</sup>

## Left-wing Extremism

(September 14-20, 2015)

- **Five Maoists arrested in Jharkhand; Maoist commander surrenders in Dantewada; Telangana: Two 'Maoists' killed in encounter; Jharkhand Police claim to have unearthed Arvindji's hideout, killed 4 Maoists; Three Maoists killed in encounter in Odisha's Malkangiri.**

Five Maoist guerrillas, including a self-styled area commander, were arrested from Jharkhand's Palamu district on September 14, police said. The five belong to the Jharkhand Janmukti Parishad from Dunandur village in Palamu district. Acting on a tip-off about the presence of Maoist guerrillas, a joint team of police and the CRPF raided the village. Two locally-made rifles, cartridges, uniforms, letter-heads and other items were seized, Palamu Superintendent of Police Mayur Patel said. Many police cases are lodged against the Maoists in Hussainabad, Haidernager, Chattarpura and Padwa police stations.<sup>113</sup>

A Maoist Jan militia commander skilled in assembling and planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) surrendered in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Dantewada district. Madkam Kanna alias Kanna Rao turned himself before senior Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police officials citing disappointment with the ideology of the outlawed Maoist movement, a senior police official told PTI on September 16. After being associated with the banned CPI (Maoist) since 2006, Kanna has been instrumental in executing several Maoist incidents in the South Bastar region. Until recently, he was active in Maoist Konta Area Committee, the police official said.<sup>114</sup>

In what is described as the first encounter in newly-formed Telangana State, two Maoists were killed in an exchange of fire with the police in thick forests of Rangapuram village on September 15. The Naxals were identified as Sruthi alias Mahitha (23), native of Waddepally, Hanamkonda and an engineering graduate, and Vidyasagar Reddy alias Sagar (32), native of Dharmasagar Mandal of Warangal district. It is suspected that Karimnagar-Khammam-Warangal (KKW) Maoist party secretary Damodar and several others managed to escape from the spot. Police recovered two weapons – one .303 and a carbine and several kit bags —from the scene. However, the parents of Sruthi, Sudarshanam and Rama Devi, alleged that their daughter was killed in a fake encounter. They told the media that their daughter was arrested, tortured and killed in a cruel manner by the police. "She joined the Maoists to achieve

<sup>112</sup> Ray, Sanjoy, "Operation Intensified To Wipe Out NDFB(S)", *The Assam Tribune*, September 20, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep2015/at052>

<sup>113</sup> "Five Maoists Arrested in Jharkhand", *Business Standard*, September 14, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/five-maoists-arrested-in-jharkhand-115091401084\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/five-maoists-arrested-in-jharkhand-115091401084_1.html)

<sup>114</sup> "Maoist Commander Surrenders in Insurgency-Hit Dantewada", *The New Indian Express*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Maoist-Commander-Surrenders-in-Insurgency-hit-Dantewada/2015/09/16/article3030061.ece>

people's Telangana and to fight for the poor Adivasis. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Ministers and the police should own responsibility for her death," Sudarshanam said.<sup>115</sup>

Jharkhand Police claimed to have unearthed the hideout of central committee member of the CPI Maoist, Arvindji in a fortnight long operation that ended on September 14. The joint security forces comprising district police teams of Latehar and Garhwa of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh along with Jharkhand Armed police, CoBRA battalion of CRPF and India Reserve Battalion raided the Gotag forests of Latehar and zeroed in on a location from where huge quantity of arms, explosive material, codex wire have been found. The confirmation came late when the security forces ventured deep into the forest on foot almost 70 kms from Latehar district headquarter. SP Latehar, Anup Birthare, claimed that four Maoists were killed during the operation. The forces have found two rifles, 20 pressure cooker bombs, 70 ammunition, codex wire used as an explosive, BP helmets and diaries belonging to the Maoists.<sup>116</sup>

Three Maoists were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in a forest in Malkangiri district on September 19. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Special Operation Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF) launched an operation in Bhejaguda forest of Mathili area where they came face to face with a group of ultras, Malkangiri superintendent of police Mitrabhanu Mohapatra said. Thereafter, a fierce exchange of fire broke out in which three red rebels, including Darbha Maoist division area committee member Sunadhara and his two body guards were killed, while several others fled the spot, he said. A pistol, some sharp weapons, walkie-talkie sets, Maoist uniforms and several other Naxal materials including literature were recovered from the site. Sunadhara, who held an important position in Maoist hierarchy, was allegedly involved in many crimes in Mathili area in Odisha and adjoining Darbha region in Chhattisgarh, police said.<sup>117</sup>

### III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

#### India and the UN

(September 7-13, 2015)

- **India pledges continued support to Palestinian cause; India wins UNESCO Asia-Pacific awards; India endorses South-South cooperation; Debate in India on challenges of achieving SDGs; UNIC to work in J&K; Minister raises lifestyles debate in Paris;**

<sup>115</sup> Rao, Gollapudi Srinivasa, "Two Maoists Killed in Warangal Encounter", *The Hindu*, September 16, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/two-maoists-killed-in-warangal-encounter/article7657580.ece>

<sup>116</sup> Deogharia, Jaideep, "Arvindji's Hideout Found, 4 Maoists Killed: Police", *The Times of India*, September 17, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/Arvindjis-hideout-found-4-Maoists-killed-Police/articleshow/48991683.cms>

<sup>117</sup> "3 Maoists Killed In Encounter", *The Times of India*, September 19, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/3-Maoists-killed-in-encounter/articleshow/49024523.cms>

**India's ok for Palestine flag to be hoisted; Debt restructuring draft resolution finds favour with India; India could provide enablers for peacekeeping: USG, DFS; Hindi could be UN language.**

At a conference organized by the UN Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on "Israeli Settlements as an Obstacle To Peace...Possible Ways Forward", Ankan Banerji, a counsellor at the Indian Embassy in Brussels said that India supported the realization of an independent Palestinian state as laid out in the Quartet Roadmap and UN resolutions. He said that India provides \$1 million aid to the UN Relief Works Agency for Palestine annually and has given \$ 4 million towards the early recovery plan for Gaza. A secondary school for girls was inaugurated in Asera Al-Shamalyeh in Palestine in July 2015.<sup>118</sup>

India has won three UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage awards for conservation of cultural heritage. The "Award of Excellence" was given for the conservation of the Vadakkunathan temple in Kerala. The "Award of Distinction" was given to the Gothic-style J N Petit Institute in Mumbai. It also received an "Honourable Mention" for the restoration of the Parvati Nandan Ganapati Temple of the Shivaji-era in Pune.<sup>119</sup>

India's PR to the UN, Asoke Mukerji, participated in a UN event related to the experiences of South-South cooperation of the IBSA countries. He said that unlike North-South cooperation, the IBSA fund makes finances available without any conditionalities. What started in collaboration with the UNDP with a \$ 3 million corpus is now a \$30 million fund that has implemented 24 projects successfully.<sup>120</sup>

At consultation on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) organised by the UN office in India, along with the Niti Aayog, Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) and the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC), members of the Niti Aayog, expert analysts and scholars expressed their concerns regarding the ability of India to achieve the SDG goals given the lack of data on many parameters.<sup>121</sup>

The UN India Connect, the popular name given to the UN Information Centre (UNIC) by its current Director Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman, is to begin engaging the youth in Jammu and Kashmir through sports events. It hopes to organize several events especially around the theme of peace that the UN observes at the global level. It will involve various sections of the civil society, including the media, in these events.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> "India Underlines Unwavering Support To Palestinian Cause", *Zee News*, September 8, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-underlines-unwavering-support-to-palestinian-cause\\_1669322.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-underlines-unwavering-support-to-palestinian-cause_1669322.html)

<sup>119</sup> "India Wins UNESCO 'Award of Excellence' for Conserving Vadakkunathan Temple", *India Today*, September 9, 2015, at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/india-wins-unesco-award/1/468088.html>

<sup>120</sup> "IBSA does not Attach Strings To Its Cooperation: India", *The Economic Times*, September 9, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-09/news/66363448\\_1\\_south-south-cooperation-south-south-cooperation-trust-fund](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-09/news/66363448_1_south-south-cooperation-south-south-cooperation-trust-fund)

<sup>121</sup> "India in no Position To Meet SDGs", *The Hindu*, September 10, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-in-no-position-to-meet-sdgs/article7635948.ece>

<sup>122</sup> "United Nations to Work For Development, Peace In Jammu And Kashmir State: Kerpelman", September 10, 2015, at <http://www.scoopnews.in/det.aspx?q=50488>

At a meeting of 57 Ministers in Paris, Prakash Javadekar, India's Minister for environment said that the ecological footprint of the European nations is between 8 to 4 on a scale in which India's is 0.9. That is reason enough for the upcoming Paris conference to debate the whole questions of lifestyles.<sup>123</sup>

In a historic decision, the UN General Assembly voted to fly the flag of non-member observer states of the UN alongside that of member states in its precincts. The decision was favoured by 119 of the 193 member countries, with 8 members voting against the resolution and 45 abstaining. India voted in favour of the resolution.<sup>124</sup>

India has voted in favour of a draft resolution on 'Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes' in the General Assembly hoping for a fair and balanced resolution of the sovereign debt issue. 136 countries voted in favour, 41 abstained and 6 voted against the draft resolution. India's PR, Asoke Mukerji said that this issue was at the core of development related goals accepted by developing and developed countries.<sup>125</sup>

The visiting Under Secretary General, Department of Field Support of the UN, Atul Khare has requested India to contribute more 'enablers' (such as UAVs) to help in peacekeeping operations. Given the complexity of peacekeeping in some conflict areas, these enablers are crucial to the success of the missions.<sup>126</sup>

At the 10<sup>th</sup> Hindi Vishwa Sammelan organized in Bhopal, the Minister for Home Affairs, Rajnath Singh urged the government to take up the cause of making Hindi an official language of the UN considering it was the link language for so many people.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> "Ministers Gather in Paris to Inject Political Momentum into United Nations Process Related To Climate", September 10, 2015, at <http://krwgnews22.com/top-stories-29/ministers-gather-in-paris-to-inject-political-momentum-into-united-nations-process-related-1917.html>

<sup>124</sup> "U.N. General Assembly Approves Palestinian Request To Fly Its Flag", *Reuters*, September 10, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/10/us-palestinians-vatican-un-idUSKCN0RA2OY20150910>

<sup>125</sup> "India Backs Draft Resolution in UN on Sovereign Debt Principles", *The Economic Times*, September 11, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-11/news/66434863\\_1\\_resolution-sustainable-development-debt-sustainability](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-11/news/66434863_1_resolution-sustainable-development-debt-sustainability)

<sup>126</sup> "UN Peacekeeping Official Urges India To Increase Contributions", *The Economic Times*, September 11, 2015", at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-11/news/66434339\\_1\\_peacekeeping-indian-government-un-operations](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-09-11/news/66434339_1_peacekeeping-indian-government-un-operations)

<sup>127</sup> "Include Hindi as Official Language in UN: India", *India TV News*, September 13, 2015, at <http://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/include-hindi-as-official-language-in-un-india-54523.html>