

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

### A. South Asia

#### Afghanistan

- **NATO Chief Rasmussen urges the Afghan government to strive for free, fair and transparent elections in the 2014 presidential poll; Taliban rejects safe passage offer**

According to reports, NATO's chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen urged the Afghan government on October 19 to strive for free, fair and transparent elections in the 2014 presidential poll, and called it a critical juncture in the country's quest for peace. "I think it is essential for building trust and confidence between the Afghan people and the Afghan government that the presidential elections take place in a manner that is free, fair and transparent," Rasmussen said in an interview with Reuters on the airstrip at Camp Marmal, a military base near Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan. He made these remarks a day after President Hamid Karzai suggested that foreign members be removed from the election watchdog, in a step that could be seen as bolstering his grip on power.<sup>1</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the Taliban have rejected an offer of safe passage if they join the peace process. The peace process led is by the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban have said that it is a ploy to divide the Taliban.<sup>2</sup>

#### Pakistan

- **US Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan Marc Grossman to visit Islamabad; Incensed by the attack on Malala Yousafzai, a local jirga declares war on Taliban**

According to reports, US Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan Marc Grossman will arrive in Pakistan later this week to review ongoing efforts to end the conflict in the war-torn region by reaching out to the Taliban. Grossman will visit Islamabad during the weekend in a bid to gradually mend the otherwise troubled ties between the two countries. He is scheduled to meet civil and military authorities to discuss Pak-US relations as well as the current situation in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

In another development, reports noted that incensed by the attack on teenage child activist Malal Yousafzai, a local jirga has declared war on Taliban until the elimination of militancy from the picturesque valley. "The attack on Malala Yousafzai and other girls was a cowardly act which

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<sup>1</sup> "NATO chief calls for free elections in Afghanistan", *The Express Tribune*, October 19, 2012 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/453856/nato-chief-calls-for-free-elections-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>2</sup> "Afghan Reconciliation : Safe Passage offer fails to lure Taliban", *The Express Tribune*, October 15, 2012 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/451690/afghan-reconciliation-safe-passage-offer-fails-to-lure-taliban/>

<sup>3</sup> "Afghan endgame: US envoy Grossman to visit Islamabad later this week", *The Express Tribune*, October 18, 2012 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/453193/afghan-endgame-us-envoy-grossman-to-visit-islamabad-later-this-week/>

should be condemned on every platform,” Saifullah Khan, the chairperson of the Nepkikhel Aman Jirga, told a news conference at Swat Press Club on October 13, 2012.<sup>4</sup>

## B. Central Asia & Russia

### Central Asia

- **Foreign investment in Kyrgyzstan to increase by 17 per cent; Kyrgyzstan facing tough economic times on the basis of latest economic growth data; China begins construction on the third China-Central Asia pipeline; The US and Uzbekistan sign an anti-narcotics agreement; Bangladesh renews its desire to join the TAPI pipeline project; TAPI construction to start in 2017**

According to reports, Kyrgyzstan’s Economy Minister Temir Sariiev has said that foreign investment in Kyrgyzstan in 2013 is projected to be around US\$ 456.9 million. The figures are based on the assumption that Kyrgyzstan will accede to the Customs Union of which Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan are already members.<sup>5</sup>

Reports noted that the Kyrgyz government has run up a budget deficit of \$456 million in the first nine months of 2012 and at this rate, the full-year deficit will easily surpass the critical threshold of \$488 million, or 7.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>6</sup>

Reports noted that China has begun construction of the third China-Central Asia pipeline. The pipeline will extend from western province of Xinjiang and extend 4,584 miles to the southeast Fujian province. It will transport 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas annually, of which 25 bcm will be imported from Central Asian states. The remaining 5 bcm will come from the Xinjiang province. Construction of the fuel pipeline is expected to be completed in 2015 and is expected to cost US\$ 19.7 billion. China’s other two pipelines have a carrying capacity of 30 bcm and 17 bcm. The 30 bcm pipeline is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2012.<sup>7</sup>

According to reports, the U.S. anti-drugs agency (Drug Enforcement Administration-DEA) has inked a tentative anti narcotics deal with Uzbek officials to crack down on narcotics trafficking and the growing abuse of drugs within the Central Asian country. Uzbekistan’s anti-drugs agency reportedly seized around 12,000 pounds of narcotics in 2011, some 1,800 pounds more than the year before.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Incensed by Malala attack, Jirga declares war on Taliban”, *The Express Tribune*, October 14, 2012 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/451284/incensed-by-malala-attack-jirga-declares-war-on-taliban/>

<sup>5</sup> “Foreign investment in Kyrgyzstan to increase by 17%, minister says”, Central Asia Newswire, October 19, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13026>

<sup>6</sup> “No relief in sight for Kyrgyz economic woes”, Central Asia Newswire, October 18, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13012>

<sup>7</sup> “China’s third West-East pipeline begins construction”, Central Asia Newswire, October 16, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/uzbekistan/viewstory.aspx?id=13002>

<sup>8</sup> “US drugs agency, Uzbeks sign anti-narcotics accord”, Central Asia Newswire, October 11, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/uzbekistan/viewstory.aspx?id=12975>

In other developments, Bangladesh has renewed its request to participate in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project.<sup>9</sup>

Turkmenistan officials believe that the construction of the ambitious Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Indian (TAPI) gas pipeline will begin in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia expects Syrian opposition to support Geneva communiqué; Russia to export more weapons in 2012 than it did in the previous year; President Putin will discuss the gas issue with his Ukrainian counterpart during the latter's state visit to Moscow; Russia has written off debts to the tune of US20 billion to a few African countries; Russia studying the possibility of Rosneft privatization; The intercontinental Topol ballistic missile successfully test launched; British Petroleum's board approves a deal with Rosneft to sell its stake in TNK-BP joint consortium; The U.S. has said that there was 'serious military equipment' on Syria-Bound Jet from Russia**

According to reports, Russia expects the Syrian opposition to reaffirm its commitment to the Geneva communiqué which calls for a peaceful settlement in the country, after the upcoming meeting in Doha on October 17.<sup>11</sup>

President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia to export more weapons in 2012 than it did in the previous year.<sup>12</sup>

Reports noted that Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who is scheduled to official visit Russia on October 22, will discuss with President Putin prospects for bilateral cooperation in areas of energy, trade, transport and space sectors. The two Presidents have also planned to discuss humanitarian projects and topical issues on regional and international agenda.<sup>13</sup>

Russia has written off debts to the tune of US\$ 20 billion to many African countries. This is in addition to many international programmes of which are designed to help the countries of the region.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Bangladesh renews call to join TAPI pipeline project", Central Asia Newswire, October 16, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/turkmenistan/viewstory.aspx?id=12997>

<sup>10</sup> "TAPI construction to start in 2017, Turkmen official says", Central Asia Newswire, October 15, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/turkmenistan/viewstory.aspx?id=12989>

<sup>11</sup> "Russia expects Syrian opposition to support Geneva communiqué publicly", ITAR-TASS, October 15, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/546654.html>

<sup>12</sup> "Russia to export more weapons this year than in 2011", ITAR-TASS, October 17, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/548569.html>

<sup>13</sup> "Putin, Yanukovich to discuss gas issue in Moscow", ITAR-TASS, October 19, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/550276.html>

<sup>14</sup> "RF writes off debts to African countries", ITAR-TASS, October 18, 2012, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/549201.html>

First Vice-premier Igor Shuvalov has said that the Russian government has been studying the possibility of privatization of Rosneft in 2013-2014 under favourable market conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Reports noted that Russia has successfully test launched the Topol intercontinental ballistic missile from its northern cosmodrome in Plesetsk. The aim of the launch was to confirm stability of the main technical parameters of the missile within its design service life extended to 24 years and assess a possibility for further lengthening of its service life to 25 years.<sup>16</sup>

In other developments, reports noted that BP's board has approved a 27-billion-dollar deal with the Russian State oil company Rosneft to sell its stake in TNK-BP. Rosneft had offered US\$ 15-20 billion in cash for BP's 50 percent share in TNK-BP, plus a 10-20 percent stake in Rosneft. This should allow BP to get a seat on Rosneft's Board of Directors. The purchase of the BP stake by Rosneft will make it the biggest publicly listed oil company in the world if it also buys the other 50 percent of TNK-BP from a consortium of local oligarchs known as AAR for a reported 28 billion U.S. dollars.<sup>17</sup>

According to reports, the U.S. has said that "serious military equipment" was found on board a passenger plane forced down by Turkish fighter jets during a flight between Moscow and Damascus last week and that it has spoken to Russia about it.<sup>18</sup>

## C. West Asia

### Syria

- **Syrian community in India expresses solidarity with Syrian leadership; UN Peace Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi calls for ceasefire for Eid Al Adha holiday**

According to reports, UN Peace Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi met with President Assad on October 21 and called on both sides of the Syrian conflict for a unilateral ceasefire on account of the upcoming Muslim holiday of Eid Al Adha. The call coincided with a bombing in a predominantly Christian area of the Old City of Damascus that killed 13 people. This was the first such attack in this area since the conflict began. Syrian Christians who account for around 5 per cent of the population have sided with the regime fearing an Islamist backlash.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Govt studies possibility of Rosneft privatization", ITAR-TASS, October 19, 2012, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/550416.html>

<sup>16</sup> "Russia launches Topol ballistic missile from northern launching pad", ITAR-TASS, October 19, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/550373.html>

<sup>17</sup> "BP-Rosneft deal close to completion, Reuters says", -TASS, October 20, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/551110.html>

<sup>18</sup> "U.S. Says 'Serious Military Equipment' on Syria-Bound Jet", The Moscow Times, October 19, 2012, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/us-says-serious-military-equipment-on-syria-bound-jet/469957.html>

<sup>19</sup> "Brahimi urges truce as bomb rocks Damascus", The Jordan Times, October 21, 2012 at <http://jordantimes.com/brahimi-urges-truce-as-bomb-rocks-damascus>

In another development, according to reports, Syrian students and members of the Syrian community in India gathered outside the Syrian Embassy in New Delhi on October 21 to express their support for President Bashar Al-Assad and the Syrian leadership. In a statement issued by the India chapter of the National Union of Syrian Students, Syrian students criticised the roles of Arab and foreign countries in interfering in the conflict. Syrian Ambassador to India, Riyad Abbas, also provided an account of the factors affecting stability and security in Syria.<sup>20</sup>

## Lebanon

- **Lebanese security official killed in Beirut attack; Prime Minister Mikati suspends decision to resign; Police, protesters clash following bombing**

According to reports, the head of the Lebanese police Information Branch, Maj. Gen. Wissam Hasan, was killed on October 19 in a car bomb in Beirut, along with seven others. The blast is the first such attack in Beirut since 2008. Hasan was opposed to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. The Information Branch he headed had recently uncovered a bomb plot involving a top Syrian official and a former Lebanese minister seen as being close to President Assad. Leaders of the opposition March 14 movement, the Progressive Socialist Party and former Prime Minister Saad Hariri<sup>21</sup> have accused the Syrian president for the attack. Syria has condemned the attack. Lebanon has increasingly been affected by the repercussions of the Syrian conflict over the past few months.<sup>22</sup>

In another development, according to reports, Prime Minister Najib Mikati has suspended his decision to resign following the bombing that killed Hasan, until President Michel Sleiman finalises consultations with the National Dialogue Committee on the matter. Mikati was advised by Sleiman not to resign while the country faced this crisis. Mikati has said his decision was influenced by perceptions that the Lebanese Sunni community (to which Mikati belongs) was being targeted.<sup>23</sup>

In other developments, reports noted that protests took place following the attack with tensions running high particularly in the north of the country where Hasan hailed from.<sup>24</sup> Thousands of people gathered at Martyr's Square where Hasan was buried, and at the premier's office calling on the government to quit.<sup>25</sup> Hariri, who is also the head of the Future Movement, urged his

<sup>20</sup> "Syrian Students in India, Belgium and Luxemburg Reiterate Support to Syria", Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), October 21, 2012 at <http://sana.sy/eng/22/2012/10/21/448391.htm>

<sup>21</sup> "Hariri accuses Assad of assassinating Lebanese security official", The Daily Star, October 19, 2012 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-19/192047-hariri-accuses-assad-of-assassinating-lebanese-security-official.ashx#axzz2A0G4pddd>

<sup>22</sup> "Top security official killed in Beirut bombing", The Daily Star, October 19, 2012 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Oct-19/192029-sound-of-large-explosion-in-ashrafieh-beirut.ashx#axzz2A0G4pddd>

<sup>23</sup> "PM suspends resignation, opposition calls for 'day of rage'", The Daily Star, October 20, 2012 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-20/192140-mikati-says-suspends-decision-to-resign.ashx#axzz2A0G4pddd>

<sup>24</sup> "Protests in north, south, Beirut after Lebanon bombing", The Daily Star, October 19, 2012 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Oct-19/192062-protests-in-north-south-beirut-after-beirut-bombing.ashx#axzz2A0G4pddd>

<sup>25</sup> "Lebanon police teargas anti-PM protest at funeral", The Jordan Times, October 22, 2012 at <http://jordantimes.com/lebanon-police-teargas-anti-pm-protest-at-funeral>

supporters to end the violence.<sup>26</sup> The Lebanese Army was deployed in areas of Beirut following the start of the protests and has issued warnings to armed men to withdraw from the streets or face arrest.<sup>27</sup>

## Yemen

- **Several al Qaeda members and security forces killed in Yemen**

According to reports, about 15 soldiers were killed and 25 others were injured when al-Qaeda launched an attack on the 15th Brigade in the Shaqrah town in Abyan province on October 19, 2012. According to Yemeni military sources six suicide bombers in car managed to enter the 115th Brigade after a skirmish with guards. Eight al Qaeda militants were killed in the fighting that followed.<sup>28</sup> This incident has come after the incident in the previous day when nine al Qaeda militants were killed in the Jabalain area in the Ayban province where the militants were surrounded and raided by the 119 infantry brigade.<sup>29</sup>

## Bahrain

- **Bahrain summons Iran's charge d'affaires**

Reports noted that Bahrain summoned the Iranian charge d'affaires, Mahdi Islami, on October 15 to protest against "attributing baseless information to Bahraini officials" and against "interfering in domestic issues." Hamad Al Amer, the Bahraini foreign ministry undersecretary for regional affairs and the Gulf Cooperation Council has reportedly conveyed his government's displeasure with some Iranian statements which are being falsely attributed to Bahraini officials; and has informed that "Such actions cause sedition and divisions and incite Bahrain's sects against one another." Al Amer also demanded an end to the Iranian interference in Bahrain's domestic affairs and to incitement of some sections of society in Bahrain through the use of media.<sup>30</sup>

## Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi coastguard captures 15 Iranians while trying to infiltrate in to the Kingdom**

According to reports, the Saudi coastguard has arrested a group of Iranians who attempted to infiltrate the country by sea near Khafji in the northeastern frontier with Kuwait. Saudi Eastern

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<sup>26</sup> "Calm returns after police, protesters clash in Beirut", The Daily Star, October 21, 2012 at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-21/192219-police-clash-with-protesters-trying-to-storm-government-hq.ashx#axzz29cdSnSY1>

<sup>27</sup> "Army raids gunmen hideouts in Beirut following clashes", The Daily Star, October 22, 2012 at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-22/192282-casualties-in-beirut-clashes-following-hasan-funeral.ashx#axzz29cdSnSY1>

<sup>28</sup> "Al-Qaeda kills, wounds dozens of Yemeni troops", *Yemen Post*, October 19, 2012, at <http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=6120&MainCat=3>

<sup>29</sup> "Nine Qaeda Operatives Including Senior Leader Killed in Yemen Raid", *Yemen Post*, October 19, 2012, at <http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=100&SubID=6113&MainCat=3>

<sup>30</sup> "Bahrain summons Iran's charge d'affaires", *Gulf News*, October 15, 2012, at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-summons-iran-s-charge-d-affaires-1.1089729>



Province coastguard spokesman Colonel Khalid Al Arqubi stated that 14 Iranians were captured after they were dropped off on the shore by a boat. The driver of the boat was also chased later by the Saudi coast guard. Saudi officials have later confirmed that the boat is Iranian registered and the driver is an Iranian national.<sup>31</sup>

## D. Africa

- **Boko Haram carries out multiple blasts in Nigeria; Abdi Farah Shirdon appointed as Somalia's Prime Minister; Kenyan courts can try international pirates; France supports plan for African force in Mali; Large consignment of weapons belonging to Al-Shabaab seized in Puntland; South Africa to spend \$100 billion on infrastructure; South Sudan and Kenya to boost economic activities; Sixty suspected Al-shabab members detained in Kismayu; Iran and Egypt to resume commercial ties; 22 people killed in clashes in Bani Walid, Libya**

According to reports, Boko Haram carried out multiple bomb explosions in Nigeria's northern city of Maiduguri by using rocket-propelled grenades and improvised explosive devices and targeted locations used by the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) in the city. Army spokesman Lt Col Sagir Musa said that 24 militants were killed but denied reports that civilians or soldiers had died. He added that four Boko Haram militants were also arrested in connection with these blasts. However, witnesses mentioned that a primary school and a radio tower were set ablaze in the attack.<sup>32</sup>

In another development, reports noted that members of Somalia's parliament unanimously approved the appointment of Abdi Farah Shirdon, an ex-businessman nominated by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, as the new Prime Minister. Shirdon, who studied economics at Somalia National University in the 1970s, said that he would form an effective government to deal with current situation. Earlier in April 2012, he co-founded the Rajo Council (Hope Council) in Nairobi, which aimed to bring Somalis together to reclaim the country.<sup>33</sup>

According to reports, Kenya's Court of Appeal ruled that the country's courts have jurisdiction to try pirates caught in international waters since piracy off the coast of Somalia affected the economies of many nations including Kenya. The ruling follows a 2010 Kenyan High Court judgement which said that courts could only deal with offences carried out within the country's territory.<sup>34</sup>

Reports noted that amid escalating tensions over the threat posed by militants in Mali to regional and western security, France supported the plan for an African force comprising more than 6,000

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<sup>31</sup> "Saudi coastguard captures 15 Iranians", *Gulf News*, October 20, 2012, at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-coastguard-captures-15-iranians-1.1091704>

<sup>32</sup> "Nigeria's Maiduguri shaken by 'Boko Haram' blasts", *BBC News*, October 16, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19958107>

<sup>33</sup> "Somalia MPs approve Shirdon as the new prime minister", *BBC News*, October 17, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19979371>

<sup>34</sup> "Kenya rules courts can try Somali pirates", *BBC News*, October 18, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19992273>

troops from African nations to overthrow Islamist militants linked to al-Qaeda in northern Mali. To confront the growth of jihadist movement in Mali, French President François Hollande's government is also engaged with West African states that could begin operations inside Mali under international banner by promising intelligence and logistical support.<sup>35</sup>

Reports noted that according to Abdisamad Gallan, Governor of Bari region in Puntland State, a large consignment of arms destined for suspected Islamist militants in north-eastern Somalia was seized in Qandala, a coastal town in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. He elaborated that the boat carrying these weapons said to have come from Yemen and delivered sealed sacks full of land mines and artillery. It was further mentioned that this is one of the biggest seizures of al-Shabab weapons.<sup>36</sup>

According to reports, amid criticism that the president failed to control labour unrest spreading through much of South Africa, President Jacob Zuma announced plans to spend nearly \$100 billion in infrastructure to create jobs that would address issues like rising inequality, persistent poverty and low wages. Speaking at a conference on infrastructure, he said that the money would be spent on roads, bridges and ports in next three years, as part of a \$475 billion plan to upgrade the country's infrastructure over the next decade and a half. He also tried to ease tensions that led to strikes in which 75,000 workers went out of job.<sup>37</sup>

Reports noted that South Sudan's minister of Roads and Bridges, Gier Chuang Aluong, announced the plan to connect South Sudan and the neighbouring Kenya with a highway in order to boost economic activities between the two nations. The highway would connect Juba and Nadipal at the two countries' common border, helping commodities to be transported from the Kenyan port of Mombasa into South Sudan in big volumes and short period. Aluong said the plan would be supported jointly with the World Bank and the Kenyan government, saying a meeting was already held by the three bodies to implement the project.<sup>38</sup>

Reports emanating from Kismayu, the regional capital city of lower Shabelle region, in southern Somalia noted that police detained about sixty suspected Al-shabab members. The operations were conducted in the city to prevent possible attacks by the ousted Islamist militias. The arrested members, mostly young men, were believed to have affiliation to Al-shabab and were jailed in the central police station for further investigations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Africa force to take on Mali militants", *Financial Times*, October 18, 2012, at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f1296d58-1931-11e2-af4e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz29ztWGopW>

<sup>36</sup> "Somalia: 'Al-Shabab weapons seized in Puntland'", *BBC News*, October 19, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20003253>

<sup>37</sup> Lydia Polgreen (2012), "South Africa to Spend \$100 Billion for Jobs", *The New York Times*, October 19, 2012, at [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/20/world/africa/south-africa-president-jacob-zuma-unveils-100-billion-jobs-program.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/20/world/africa/south-africa-president-jacob-zuma-unveils-100-billion-jobs-program.html?_r=0)

<sup>38</sup> "South Sudan Announces Plan to Build Highway Connecting to Kenya", *Sudan Tribune*, quoted in All Africa, October 20, 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201210220029.html>

<sup>39</sup> "Somalia: Police detain 60 suspected Al-shabab members in Kismayu", *RBC Radio*, October 20, 2012, at <http://www.raxanreeb.com/2012/10/somalia-police-detain-60-suspected-al-shabab-members-in-kismayu/>

In other developments, according to reports, Seyyed Reza Nourani, the chairman of Iran's Union of Exporters and Importers of Agricultural Products, said that Iran and Egypt agreed to resume their commercial ties for the first time after the two countries severed their relations three decades ago. In this regard, an Egyptian business delegation visited Iran and held a meeting with Iranian officials and businessmen at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. The two sides discussed various business issues and agreed to start their commercial interactions with the trade of fruits and citrus.<sup>40</sup>

Separately, according to reports, at least 22 people were killed and 200 injured in fighting in Libya's town of Bani Walid between pro-government militia and gunmen in former leader Muammar Gaddafi's bastion.<sup>41</sup>

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

### Jammu & Kashmir

- **Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) challenged by Army; Cross LoC shelling kills civilians; Shootout in Srinagar leaves one killed and many injured; Gunfight rages in Sopore; Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants killed**

According to reports, Army has made it clear that Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) is not empowered to investigate alleged human rights violations against its soldiers posted in the State. Reacting strongly to the Army's contention, SHRC has said that it can act against any offender irrespective of rank and status. The Commission said that over the years it has taken up and even given recommendations in many cases of human rights violations involving Army. Probing a complaint against Army for allegedly using civilians for forced labour in north Kashmir's Kupwara district from 1990 to 2003, the SHRC had sought a report from the Secretary Ministry of Defence on the matter. The complaint was filed by MLA Langate Er Rasheed in 2009 alleging that 30 Rashtriya Rifles used people of 39 villages of Mawar area of Kupwara for forced labour to construct bunkers, extract timber and undertake night patrolling in the area. In 2010 the then Director General of Police J&K after probing the complaint had established that people of these villages were used by Army for forced labour.

In its latest response to SHRC notice, Army through Srinagar based 15 Corps has not only refuted the allegations but challenged the jurisdiction of Commission over them.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Iran, Egypt agree to resume commercial ties", *Tehran Times*, October 20, 2012, at <http://tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/102546-iran-egypt-agree-to-resume-commercial-ties>

<sup>41</sup> "Libya clashes in ex-Gaddafi bastion Bani Walid", *BBC News*, October 21, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20022213>

<sup>42</sup> "Army challenges SHRC jurisdiction", *Greater Kashmir*, October 15, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Oct/16/army-challenges-shrc-jurisdiction-81.asp>

In another development, according to reports, two civilians were killed in shelling and another died of cardiac arrest after Pakistani troops, allegedly, resorted to heavy firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Churunda village of Uri sector on October 16 following construction of new forward posts by India.<sup>43</sup>

According to reports, a hotel employee was shot dead near Pantha Chowk in Srinagar after militants fired on an Army convoy on October 19. Three others were also injured in the shooting incident.<sup>44</sup> While, a paramilitary CRPF man was injured in an ongoing encounter with militants in north Kashmir's Sopore area on October 20.

Reports noted that two Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) militants, including a top commander, were killed while three force personnel sustained injuries in a 24-hour gunfight in the north Kashmir town of Sopore.<sup>45</sup>

## North East India

- **Illegal Bangladeshis arrested in Tripura; Assam State Cabinet clears White Paper on influx; Nagaland legislators insist on Union Home Minister for early settlement of the Naga issue; Centre-NSCN (IM) inching towards settlement; Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) determine on Statehood demand; Ex-United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) cadres granted rehabilitation package**

According to reports, twelve Bangladeshis have been arrested in Tripura for illegally entering India. Police suspect that the men may have been involved in the recent attacks on Buddhist and Hindu temples in Chittagong in Bangladesh. The arrested illegal persons would be sent back to Bangladesh after legal formalities.<sup>46</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the State Cabinet of Assam on October 15 cleared the white paper prepared by the Government on the issue of infiltration by foreigners into the state and the measures taken to deal with the problem. The white paper will be made public soon.<sup>47</sup>

Reports noted that in a fresh attempt aimed at pressing the Centre to resolve the vexed Naga problem, a 19-member delegation of Joint Legislators Forum (JLF) called on Union Home Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde demanding settlement of the Naga issue ahead of the Assembly polls next year. The visit by the delegation has come at a time, when the Centre has shown some urgency

<sup>43</sup> "3 civilians die in cross-LoC shelling", *Greater Kashmir*, October 16, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Oct/17/3-civilians-die-in-cross-loc-shelling-36.asp>

<sup>44</sup> "1 killed, 3 injured in city shootout", *Greater Kashmir*, October 19, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Oct/20/1-killed-3-injured-in-city-shootout-60.asp>

<sup>45</sup> "2 Lashker militants killed", *Greater Kashmir*, October 21, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Oct/22/2-lashker-militants-killed-35.asp>

<sup>46</sup> "12 Bangladeshis arrested in Tripura", *The Assam Tribune*, October 16, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1612/at043>

<sup>47</sup> "Cabinet clears white paper on influx", *The Assam Tribune*, October 15, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1612/at06>

in resolving the Naga issue. The Union Home Minister last month hinted that a settlement could be reached by March next year. The delegation, meanwhile, also called on the NSCN (I-M) general secretary, Th. Muivah. According to reports the NSCN (I-M) has given an undertaking in writing that they would accept a solution within the purview of the Constitution of India.<sup>48</sup>

According to reports, the Centre and the formidable Naga militant outfit, NSCN (I-M) are inching towards a political settlement, ending over five decade long insurgency in the State. Political integration of Naga inhabited districts of neighbouring Manipur, Assam and Arunchal Pradesh are not part of the deal under negotiation. The much elusive memorandum of settlement being worked out in consultation with the NSCN (I-M) includes a proposal to convert Nagaland legislature into a bicameral Assembly by creating a second House, autonomous development councils, separate flag for the State, more autonomy, special status, formal recognition of the unique history of the Nagas, a slew of development projects, among others. The Naga militant group had demanded increasing the size of the 60-member Nagaland Assembly by 20 seats. The Centre reckons that bicameral legislature would take care of the demand to accommodate marginal tribal groups and sub-groups. The only condition is that the Assembly would not be allowed to be called Parliament, as has been suggested by the group.<sup>49</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) on October 19 reiterated its stand not to accept any form of economic package and maintained that the constitution of a State Level Steering Committee (SLSC) on special development package for Eastern Nagaland will have no meaning. It mentioned that the public resolution on June 12 at Tuensang, which was duly signed by all the six tribal presidents on behalf of the ENPO, had rejected the offers of the State Government. Based on the public resolution, it had been conveyed to the Chief Minister on June 22 that nothing less than full-fledged Statehood as demanded would be accepted by the ENPO.<sup>50</sup>

Reports noted that one year from the date of signing of MoS with the Government, the UPDS members have been provided rehabilitation package at a grant distribution ceremony at Diphu indoor stadium, in Karbi Anglong on October 19. During the grant distribution ceremony, a cheque of Rs 1.5 lakh was given to each 423 elsewhere-UPDS members as one time financial package. The UPDS militant organization came in cease fire agreement with the government in 2002 and later they signed MoS (Memorandum of Settlement) on November 25, 2011.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Nagaland legislators urge Shinde for early settlement", *The Assam Tribune*, October 15, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1612/oth05>

<sup>49</sup> "Centre, NSCN (IM) inching towards settlement", *The Assam Tribune*, October 16, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct1712/at05>

<sup>50</sup> "Eastern Nagas firm on Statehood demand", *The Assam Tribune*, October 19, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct2012/oth05>

<sup>51</sup> "Rehabilitation package to ex-UPDS cadres", *The Assam Tribune*, October 20, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=oct2112/state06>

## Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) News

- **Home Secretary level talks between India and Bangladesh held**

According to reports, the 13th meeting of the Home Secretaries of India and Bangladesh was held on 16-17 October 2012 at Dhaka. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. R.K. Singh, Union Home Secretary, Government of India. The Bangladesh delegation was led by Mr. C. Q. K. Mustaq Ahmed, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Bangladesh. The two Home Secretaries expressed satisfaction at the visit of both delegation to Agartala – Akhaura Integrated Check Post (ICP) to review the existing infrastructure, and noted that this would facilitate trade between Bangladesh and India, particularly North-East. They also welcomed the opening of several Land Ports/Integrated Check Posts for bilateral trade between Bangladesh and India. Both sides agreed to allow developmental work including construction of ICPs/LCSs within 150 yards of zero line. Both sides also agreed to constitute a high-level team to monitor development of border infrastructure.<sup>52</sup>

## III. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **New non-permanent members elected to UN Security Council; UN condemns bomb explosion in Beirut; UNSC demands end to external support to armed groups in the DRC; Six Indian UN peacekeepers wounded in eastern DRC; Biodiversity-related funding to developing countries to be doubled; UN report predicts slower growth for India in 2012-13**

In the elections to the UN Security Council, Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea and Rwanda were elected as non-permanent members by the General Assembly for two-year terms beginning January 01, 2013. The newly-elected members will replace Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa whose terms end on December 31, 2012.<sup>53</sup>

In another development, the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council condemned the bomb explosion in Beirut, Lebanon that resulted in numerous deaths and injuries. They also urged all political actors in the country to maintain their commitment to Lebanese unity.<sup>54</sup>

According to reports, the UNSC reinstated its condemnation of and demanded an end to all external support to the armed groups especially the March 23 Movement (M23) which have been destabilising the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The Council also called upon all countries in the region to condemn the M23 as well as other armed groups and to cooperate with the

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<sup>52</sup> "Joint Press Statement- Home Secretary Level talks between India and Bangladesh", *Press Information Bureau, GOI*, October 19, 2012 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=88532>

<sup>53</sup> "Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea and Rwanda obtain non-permanent seats on UN Security Council", October 18, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43320&Cr=Security+Council&Cr1=#.UIUkxG-7LNY>

<sup>54</sup> "Ban, Security Council condemn bombing in Lebanese capital, urge national unity", *UN News Centre*, October 19, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43337&Cr=lebanon&Cr1=syria#.UIURk2-7LNY>

Congolese authorities to disarm these groups.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, six Indian peacekeepers serving with the UN Organisation Stabilization Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) were wounded when their patrol was ambushed in North Kivu province of DRC.<sup>56</sup>

In other developments, at the Convention on Biological Diversity that concluded last week agreed to double biodiversity related funding to developing countries to enable implementation of goals on conservation. All parties also need to substantially increase domestic expenditures for biodiversity protection by 2015.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, a report released by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific noted that India's growth is likely to slow down to 5.9 per cent in 2012-13 from 6.5 per cent in 2011-12.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "UN Security Council condemns 'any and all outside' support to M23 armed group in eastern DR Congo", *UN News Centre*, October 19, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43339&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo#.UIURew-7LNY>

<sup>56</sup> "Six Indian UN peacekeepers wounded in an ambush in eastern Congo", *The Times of India*, October 19, 2012 at [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-19/india/34583174\\_1\\_indian-peacekeepers-congo-roger-meece](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-19/india/34583174_1_indian-peacekeepers-congo-roger-meece)

<sup>57</sup> "Developing nations to get more funds for biodiversity goals", *The Economic Times*, October 20, 2012 at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-20/news/34606584\\_1\\_biodiversity-biological-diversity-minister-jayanthi-natarajan](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-20/news/34606584_1_biodiversity-biological-diversity-minister-jayanthi-natarajan)

<sup>58</sup> UN report sees India growth dipping to 5.9% this fiscal year", *The Hindu Business Line*, October 18, 2012 at [http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/industry-and-economy/un-report-sees-india-growth-dipping-to-59-this-fiscal/article4009557.ece?homepage=true&ref=w1\\_home](http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/industry-and-economy/un-report-sees-india-growth-dipping-to-59-this-fiscal/article4009557.ece?homepage=true&ref=w1_home)